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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 17, 2023

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

FOOD DAY IN CANADA ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill S-227, An Act to establish Food Day in Canada, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC) moved that Bill S-227, An Act to establish Food Day in Canada, be concurred in.

[*English*]

The Speaker: 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 that to the Chair.

The hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that this carry on division.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. John Nater moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure and a privilege to rise in the House this morning, on a wonderful Monday morning, to start the week on a positive note and begin debate at third reading of Bill S-227, the food day in Canada act.

I would like to begin by thanking the members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food for quickly passing this bill at committee stage without amendment and sending it back to this House for the final stage of its legislative journey. I hope, and I suspect, that we will have no problem in getting Bill S-227 passed

in the very near future, but certainly before we rise for the summer, so that this year, on August 5, we can mark the first official nationwide food day in Canada.

I know that all those involved with this bill would like to see it passed in time for the 20th anniversary of the original world's longest barbecue, which happened in Elora under the organization of the late Anita Stewart in 2003. It was organized to help Canadian beef farmers during the bovine spongiform encephalopathy or mad cow crisis in that long, difficult summer of 2003.

As I often mention in this House and in other places, I am so proud to represent what I believe is one of the most vibrant agricultural ridings in Canada, if not the most vibrant.

When I spoke to Bill S-227 at second reading last fall, during what was Ontario Agriculture Week, I explained how it was the late Anita Stewart's vision and how she used her passion for Canadian food to bring hope to the Canadian beef industry in that terrible summer 20 years ago.

Although beef is often associated with southern Alberta, we have a proud beef industry in Ontario as well. In fact, in Perth—Wellington alone, there are more than 530 beef farmers. I would like to give a special shout-out to Perth County Beef Farmers and the Wellington County Cattlemen's Association for their support and continued advocacy for local farmers and farm families in the beef industry.

One of the many ways in which local organizations support beef farmers in my riding is the Optimist Club's beef barbecue in Alma. Alma is located just a hop, skip and a jump from Elora, where Anita Stewart's first longest barbecue event was hosted 20 years ago. Of course, the Alma Optimist Club's beef barbecue is synonymous with Ruth and Ray Grose from Alma, who, prior to their passing, had always been big proponents of this great event.

Perth—Wellington is also the home of the most dairy farmers and chicken farmers of any electoral district across Canada. What is more, there are hundreds of farmers and farm families in almost every major agricultural sector, including poultry, egg, pork and grains, including corn and soybeans. The farmers in Perth—Wellington number over 5,000 and they quite literally grow the food that continues along the agri-food supply chain to feed not only my constituents but hungry mouths across Canada and around the world.

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This bill and this day were not my idea, nor were they the original idea of Wellington County senator Robert Black. It was the idea and the vision of agriculture advocate and food activist Anita Stewart. What was originally a great event to support Canadian beef farmers and to promote locally grown food has now grown into an annual event that celebrates the rich heritage and proud traditions that are Canadian cuisine.

In her 2008 book, *Anita Stewart's Canada: The Food, the Recipes, the Stories*, Anita opens with this message:

Canadian cuisine is a menu of stories—a land of ultimate culinary possibilities! The richness and biodiversity of the indigenous harvest, our Original Palate, is the foundation of it all. Built solidly upon that base are our iconic ingredients—wheat, beef, apples—enriching and embroidering the culinary traditions of a multitude of immigrant groups who have gathered together from the four corners of the globe, men and women with a passion for this land which they now call “home”.

After five centuries or so, the real food of Canada is still largely found in the home kitchens scattered across the land, in our beautiful rural communities and in our ever-expanding vibrant cities. Likewise, our food producers are spread from ocean to ocean. Our collective challenge is to build and nurture the connection between those producers and consumers, urban and rural.

By being attentive to our food sources, not only do we keep the cash flowing for our producers but we also enable them to maintain and nurture diversity, creating a fabulous edible shopping list for us now and, even more important, for future generations.

● (1110)

So, join the party! Head to a market, buy local, go home, and cook with the rhythms of the seasons. Be true to your own culinary story. It's really that simple.

In that beautiful message, Anita Stewart describes not only the food of our nation, but also her life's work. Most importantly, it leaves behind powerful words and advice that all Canadians should carry, now that she is gone.

In that same cookbook, there is a picture of a farmer's laneway in Wellington County. It is a simple yet powerful reminder of where so much of our food comes from and how growing food is not only essential to sustain life, but it is also a way of life for so many farm families in Perth—Wellington and across Canada. It is for such dedicated advocacy for Canadian food that Anita Stewart would become a member of the Order of Canada, the founder of Cuisine Canada, and Canada's first food laureate at the University of Guelph.

In her life and in her book, she is so very effective at preserving the connection between a recipe and the farmers, fishers and hunters who produced and provided the ingredients. Whether they are indigenous, whether their families have lived here for generations or whether they are now new Canadians, they all build those connections.

In fact, just this past weekend, I enjoyed attending an event hosted by the Monkton Lions Club in support of relief efforts for Ukrainian refugees. Celebrating Orthodox Easter this past weekend, the Shtovba family invited community members in Monkton to participate and enjoy local food made according to Ukrainian traditions. We also enjoyed the ability to try our best at making pysanky, which is a Ukrainian Easter egg. I want to thank the Shtovba family for sharing that legacy with the community in Monkton, a community of about 200 or 300 in rural southern Ontario.

As we reach the final stages before passing this bill and seeing it receive royal assent, let us think about everyone along the food supply chain who contributes to making Canadian cuisine so wonderful. From the dairy farmer who is up before dawn for the early-morning milking to the grain farmer who prays for rain at the right time and works tirelessly to get their crops planted in time, to the farm families in beef, chicken, egg, pork, fruits, vegetables and every sector of Canadian agriculture, to every vendor at local farmers' markets, to the truck drivers, butchers, bakers, chefs and the friendly local grocers, they all work hard to not only feed us but enrich our national culture.

I am personally very proud to have grown up on our family farm in Logan Township. Our family farm was first bought by my grandfather in 1952. At that time, he used his Harley-Davidson motorcycle as a down payment for our family farm. I was proud, in my high school years, to work both on family farms in the community and also in the agriculture industry. My wife Justine's family farm, which she grew up on, was a century farm, in the Mogk family for over 100 years. For us, it is important that our own children appreciate and learn about their rural roots and the food that we grow right here at home.

As a father, I enjoy taking our children to many local farmers' markets, picking out produce grown quite literally by our neighbours, and then taking it home and preparing a meal together as a family. I should note that in that food preparation, there are certain parts I am simply not permitted to partake in. Ainsley, Bennett and Caroline, our three children, will say that I am not allowed to barbecue because “Daddy will simply burn it.”

Too often in our busy world, we rush through meals because we need to eat and move on to the next event in our busy schedules, but we must also remember, from time to time, to think about all the people who contribute to our food system and the cultural significance of the food that is grown.

I want to briefly thank many of the people who have contributed to the advancement of Bill S-227 and to food day in Canada more generally. While the bill stands in my name in this place, it is not my bill. The success of this legislation is the result of many people inside and outside of Parliament, who deserve to be thanked.

● (1115)

First and foremost, I thank Anita Stewart's four sons, Jeff, Brad, Mark and Paul, for their incredible support in helping us honour their mother's proud legacy. Thanks also go out to the current head of Food Day Canada, Crystal Mackay, for sharing her knowledge and expertise. I thank the University of Guelph's Dr. Charlotte Yates and the university's department of food science for their efforts in keeping Food Day Canada strong these past 20 years.

Private Members' Business

I would also like to thank the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and the member for Guelph, who have provided a strong Wellington County united force in seeing this bill advance to the finish line.

I would like to thank the member for Foothills, the member for Berthier—Maskinongé, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford and the member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington, who have all contributed to the discussion on this bill thus far in this place and in committee. Even if we cannot agree on who represents the greatest agricultural riding in Canada, we can all agree that Canadian agriculture is great and that we should we pass this bill as quickly as possible.

Of course, I would like to thank the Hon. Rob Black, who sponsored this bill in the other place and who has been a driving force behind the bill and celebrating Food Day Canada.

As I wrap up my remarks, I look forward to seeing Bill S-227 passed as soon as possible, and I invite all hon. members to join us in Wellington County, in Perth County or in any community across Canada this summer as we honour Anita Stewart's legacy and celebrate the first official food day across Canada.

I would like to end with the wise words of the late Anita Stewart, who said, "This food is Canada's natural wonder, rivalling any on earth. Hand in hand, we are privileged to bear witness to the extraordinary story of Canadian cuisine, its history and how it came to be. As a people, we are so young that our collective memory is intact. Restaurants may set benchmarks of excellence, and at times, even inspiration, but it is the dishes in this book from generations of home kitchens that define us as a culinary nation. Canada, the second largest nation on earth, was built on a foundation of honest, generous cooking. There is not just one Canadian cuisine; there are hundreds, depending upon ethnicity, climate and history. Our national cuisine is ultimately based in the land and the sea. It is defined by a mindset, a philosophy, an attitude, and it uses ingredients to speak volumes about the glorious culinary history of Canada. The world is truly richer for it."

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a foodie myself, I thank the hon. member for joining the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food and putting forward this bill. In my riding of Mississauga—Streetsville, there are many small businesses and restaurants that are part of our thriving food industry. Can the hon. member share what benefits this bill would have for them?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville for supporting this bill at committee. She hits an important note. There are many great agricultural ridings across Canada where primary production takes place, but in larger urban centres, there is also the importance of the food industry, whether through farmers' markets, local grocers or food production by restaurants and caterers. This bill would give us the opportunity to celebrate all parts of Canadian food from field to fork. Whether it be in rural ridings like Perth—Wellington or Beauce, or in Mississauga—Streetsville, we have the ability to celebrate Canadian food and all parts of the food supply chain.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and the bill he is sponsoring in the House. I think it is necessary to enshrine the importance of food in legislation.

I would like to hear his thoughts. We are passing good legislation that outlines great principles, but what does my colleague make of the fact that our agricultural community is currently sounding the alarm?

Last week, the UPA released another statement in which it mentioned that nearly one in 10 farms are considering ceasing operations over the coming year if there is no liquidity support to help farmers deal with the rising interest rates.

How does my colleague interpret the government's inaction? Does he, like me, think that these people deserve, at least, to have a positive response?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I am very worried about the state of agriculture in Canada. I often hear farmers and their families in my riding talk about their concerns.

[*English*]

There are many concerns I hear regularly from folks in my riding and across the country about the growing costs associated with production, whether it be the carbon tax, inflation or fertilizer tariffs. These are real concerns.

The member mentioned the growing number of farmers who are looking to get out of the industry in the next 10 years, those farmers who are looking to retirement and are not having that opportunity to pass on to the next generation a strong and proud family tradition of family farms. I am very concerned, like the member for Berthier—Maskinongé, about where agriculture goes from here.

Yes, this bill is a symbolic bill, but it is one opportunity for us to promote and defend the agriculture and agri-food industry, to stand up for farmers and farm families and to make sure agriculture remains not only a way of life but also the economic driver of our economy that it has been in the past and that I hope it will continue to be in the future.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a time when food prices are skyrocketing in this country and food insecurity is becoming more and more of a challenge. I wonder if the member could share with the House how this bill might be able to advance food security in the country.

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Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, food insecurity is a real concern I hear about in my riding. In a country as economically rich as Canada, where we have, quite literally, some of the most productive land in the world and where we produce high-quality Canadian food, the fact that there are still Canadians living food-insecure is an exceptionally unfortunate situation.

I would like to draw attention to groups in my riding, like the local community food centre, working so hard to end food insecurity and to ensure there are options in place so Canadians will not be missing meals and will have opportunity. They have provided me with such great guidance over the years on bills that have come before the House and on options we need to undertake going forward to ensure that no Canadian is food-insecure and that all Canadians are able to have the healthy and nutritious food that we, quite literally, produce in our own backyards.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to express the government's full support of Bill S-227, an act to establish food day in Canada. I thank the hon. member for Perth—Wellington for sponsoring this bill in support of the core economic sectors in our country: agriculture and food.

Food Day Canada is already Canada's culinary event of the year. Every Saturday of the long weekend in August, chefs, restaurateurs, food processors and Canadians from across the country gather to celebrate the best food and beverages in the world.

This bill would officially recognize that day in federal legislation. It would establish the first-ever national day to recognize that the federal government celebrates our farmers, food processors, and the entire agriculture and food sector across the country. Food day in Canada would strengthen the connections between consumers and farmers by celebrating the richness and diversity of the safe, high-quality local foods they produce.

We need to remind Canadians of the important contributions of Canadian agriculture and the food sector to the country's economic, social, health and environmental well-being. Across Canada, our food producers and processors drive our economy with more than \$130 billion in GDP and over \$80 billion in exports, and they account for one in nine jobs.

Food day in Canada would also remind us of the contributions to the consumer's plate of all the workers in agriculture, the agri-food sector and the farm gate. Over the past two years of the pandemic, farmers have really stepped up to ensure Canadians have the safe, high-quality local foods they need. The pandemic also renewed Canadians' commitment to the amazing local foods and beverages produced by our farmers and processors.

Over 90% of Canadians support seeking locally grown food at least some of the time, to support the local economy and to reduce the environmental impact or food miles. The creation of national food day would be an excellent way to strengthen ties between the farm and the city limits. From a warm strawberry right off the field in Ontario to an Alberta steak on a patio, the foods we love best are the foods that are closest to us. More and more, consumers today want to know where their food is coming from and how it is grown and raised. They want to reconnect with agriculture and support local economies.

By the same token, the agriculture and food sector has much to gain by strengthening its relationship with its customers. Forging direct links with Canadians can help support a dialogue on what matters to consumers and what the sector is doing. This can help ensure consumers are making informed decisions and can help shape the investments made by the sector to continuously improve production practices.

Along the way, I think many consumers would be impressed to see the advances made on Canadian farms in recent years. Gone are the days of pitchforks and horse-drawn plows. Farmers are using smart technologies to improve efficiency and to adopt a more sustainable farming practice. Technology has opened up a whole new world for food and farming, just as it has in other sectors of the economy. Precision agriculture techniques now allow pinpoint delivery of inputs, like water and fertilizer, down to the individual plants that need it. Not only does this save the farmer money, but it also takes the pressure off the environment because fewer inputs are needed. Farmers are now using drones to detect pests, identify areas that are nutrient-deficient and locate weeds. The sky is the limit for this technology.

Farmers have also made many advancements in the field of animal health and food safety. Many farms have strict biosecurity measures. For example, access to hog farms is governed by a shower-in, shower-out rule to protect the animals' health. The responsible use of animal-health products is another way farmers keep animals healthy while ensuring food safety.

● (1125)

Farmers take food safety seriously because it is fundamental to their business. More than ever, customers in Canada and abroad want to know where their food came from, how it was produced, what its environmental footprint was and whether the animals were well treated.

Public trust and confidence are precious, but they can be shattered in seconds by a single tweet. We know that we have to find new ways to strengthen our relationship with our consumers. That is why this bill to support food day in Canada is so important.

Yesterday, the government took another step to strengthen trust in Canadian food when we launched the agricomcommunication initiative. Agricomcommunication is all about better connecting Canadians with the agricultural sector. Agricomcommunication will help farmers tell Canadians their stories about how they are caring for our environment, caring for their animals and doubling down on sustainable practices. The initiative will help us gather more information to deepen producers' knowledge about the expectations of consumers. In that way, they can adapt to the changing demands of consumers here in Canada and around the world.

The first stream of the agricomcommunication initiative is backed by a federal investment of up to \$8 million over three years. This funding is helping the sector to inform Canadians about the great things producers are doing to produce their food in a sustainable way. Farmers have incredible stories to tell with respect to innovation, sustainability, productivity and so much more.

Sustainability is not only about the environment but also about competitiveness. For example, funding could help an organization develop digital communications to show consumers how farmers are fighting climate change through crop rotation and clean technology. It could help a non-profit organization host a field day to show the public how producers are caring for their animals or how well they look after their soil and water. It could help promote inspiring success stories about agricultural leaders.

Our government wholeheartedly supports food day in Canada to recognize the safety and security of our food supply, strengthen the connections from farm to table, support local farmers and celebrate our amazing local food.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is clearly in favour of establishing a food day. It was a pleasure to address this in committee, and it passed within minutes. It is not controversial.

The bill states that “Canada’s national sovereignty is dependent on the safety and security of our food supply”, that it “contributes to our nation’s social, environmental and economic well-being”, that it is important to support local farmers and that local foods need to be celebrated. All that is wonderful.

Unfortunately, I will be a bit of a killjoy this morning, because it is just lip service. Yes, we will vote in favour of the bill because it is important to establish this day. I think that we will be able to use it as a springboard for future initiatives; however, in reality, our agricultural industry is currently suffering. In response to the significant inflationary pressure, the Union des producteurs in Quebec and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture sent out messages and letters and expressly asked for meetings. Their requests were very, very reasonable and based on facts and data. They even made pre-budget requests, because they know how things work. They know when they need to do this.

There was very little in the budget; next to nothing, in fact. There was some clarification about Bill C-208 on farm succession after more than a year of waiting and more than a year of frozen transactions, especially in Quebec. That takes time. That was positive, but

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as for the rest, all we got were vague figures and the continuation of existing programs that barely work or are not working at all. I will provide some statistics. The people at UPA explained it for us.

The cost of inputs has risen by 43.3% overall, but in agriculture, it is up 69%. Inflation has risen by 55.4% on average, but in agriculture, it is up 64%. That refers to the cost of everything required to produce food. The increase in interest rates and the cost of debt servicing comes to 36.9% overall, but 58.5% in agriculture, because farms have a high debt load. As the previous speaker mentioned, gone are the days of pitchforks; Technologies have evolved and farmers now need tractors, which are expensive. We see farmers working in their fields and we think they are doing fine, but they still have not paid off their equipment. These producers are going into debt to feed us. I really want people to start understanding that, believing it and taking appropriate action.

The costs do not stop there. Transportation costs have risen by 33% in other sectors, but 49.9% in agriculture. Insurance costs have increased by 31.7% overall, but 49.6% in agriculture. The list goes on. Things have reached a point where two out of 10 farm businesses are now in poor or very poor financial shape. We are talking about 20% of farms. Five out of 10 farm businesses expect their financial situation to deteriorate in the next twelve months. Three out of 10 businesses have a negative residual balance. Things are not going well. Four out of 10 farm businesses report that rising interest rates could prevent them from meeting their financial obligations. For some, this will mean shutting down. More than six out of 10 businesses plan to reduce or delay investments because they are straining just to keep up with their payments. In this kind of situation, investing is out of the question. The government wants these businesses to invest money and says it will help them, but they are tapped out. To grasp the reality of this situation, we have to see what is happening on the ground.

A total of 18% of businesses are considering asking their financial institution for a capital holiday. Do members understand what it means to request a capital holiday from a financial institution? It means that things are going so badly for the business that it will only pay the interest on its loans. What a great future for agricultural production. I think that, as a federal government, we have a role to play in that. I think that we could meet the needs and boost cash flow. What is more, 14% of farms plan to reduce the size of their business because they cannot deliver. Here is the most troubling statistic: 11% of farms plan to cease operations or close their doors. That is more than one in 10 farms.

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● (1135)

We are mainly talking here about young farmers, the ones we talk about with a tear in our eye, while saying they are so great and wonderful. Perhaps it is time for us to show them how great and wonderful they really are by helping them. Farming is an ongoing, daily struggle, and we, as elected officials, need to have the utmost respect for these people who work seven days a week.

Given the current shortage of workers in almost every sector, let us survey agricultural businesses to find out who is interested in taking over the farm, in working seven days a week, 12 months a year. Let us find out who is interested in living in uncertainty with little support from governments and in being forced to compete with foreign products that do not meet the same standards.

I do not know how many times we have talked about reciprocity of standards. I want to give a shout-out to my colleague from Beauce, who is leading this fight with me at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. He often raises this issue. Something needs to be done. We cannot ask our farmers to meet very strict standards yet also let in junk. When they talk about increasing the level of glyphosate in food—like they did last year—when none of our local farmers asked for it, they are sending a very clear message, namely that we will adapt to international standards. That way, people can bring in stock with more junk than our farmers' products. Can we be serious for 30 seconds, impose the same requirements and support our people?

Chicken farmers have created a DNA test. It has been around for years, it works and it is ready to go. Why is it not in place yet? The DNA test determines whether the poultry coming in is spent fowl or fresh chicken. There is cheating in international trade. Trade is wonderful; we all need to trade, but that has to be a rigorous process.

We must not forget the most important part. There have been plenty of positive speeches and gestures here in the House of Commons, including overwhelming support from 293 members who voted in favour of the bill to protect supply management in future trade agreements. That is significant. All political parties and the vast majority of MPs supported it. Only 23 people opposed it. However, now the bill is stuck in committee. There is an obvious intent to hijack the bill, and some members are filibustering. They keep talking to kill time. Everyone's time is being wasted.

I would also point out that this is coming from a political party that is always talking about government spending. They have good reason to talk about government spending, but it is important to stop and think for a second about what it costs to have a committee meeting where the same person talks for two hours, delaying a crucial bill that we passed in 2021 but had to start over again because an election was called. Although some progress has been made and we are at roughly the same stage, the bill is currently stuck.

I do not really want to hear anyone say that the bill is going to pass anyway. Are we serious about supporting our producers? Our producers are watching us and watching the public committee meetings. They are not happy. They want transparency and honesty when it comes to support, and they want concrete action. My colleagues know that it is important to protect food security. I talk a lot about food resilience, food sovereignty. It really is important.

In closing, I would like to remind all my colleagues how much this reality hit home during the pandemic. This is a very serious issue. It is not just unpleasant for key sectors to be reliant on outside sources, it is actually very bad. I am talking about medical equipment, masks, ventilators. I am talking about food. That is basic. When we talk about key sectors, feeding the public is the foundation of everything. I am very pleased to support this bill. A food day will be wonderful. It needs to be used as a launch pad for what comes next. Let us do something meaningful and put our words into action.

● (1140)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I hope that the government heard the speech by the member from the Bloc Québécois today.

[English]

As people living in Canada are faced with the highest food prices they have ever experienced, it is time for the government to increase food security in this country. The NDP acknowledges that this bill could play a small part in that, yet there is still work to do so no one in Canada is going to bed hungry.

My colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford has been a champion in addressing the immediate food insecurity problem in this country, which is the price gouging for corporate profits at the grocery store. The leader of the NDP has been holding grocery chain CEOs accountable for this price gouging. The truth is that, while the grocery oligarchs in this country are making billions in profit, more children are going to bed hungry. This cannot stand because it is driving up food insecurity and hurting Canadians.

I recently asked the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development to explain how food insecurity in this country could be trending up when poverty rates are going down. The minister responded that the government realizes this disconnect and is now linking their poverty reduction council and their food policy council to talk about this. She admitted that, for too long, food was not included when talking about poverty, and this is something that is now being addressed. Food, a fundamental need, was not part of the considerations when the government was dealing with poverty. It seems unbelievable.

However, there is hope. The minister admitted that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food cannot do this work alone, and that the current shared mandate between those two ministries is needed to solve food insecurity. I agree and say to both of these ministers that they need to advance the solutions faster. People are going hungry, especially those living in poverty.

Almost one million people living in poverty in this country are persons with disabilities, and they are still waiting for financial support to come through the Canada disability benefit. The cost of groceries means they are skipping meals, as well as eliminating fresh fruits and vegetables from their diets. The Canada disability benefit, which would be established with the passing of Bill C-22, is needed now to offset this reality. Throughout the course of the committee study on Bill C-22, we heard about the suffering of people with disabilities living in poverty. Overwhelmingly, we heard that they are not eating enough meals daily and cannot keep up with the rising cost of food.

It is essential that the federal government step up with an emergency benefit immediately, so I again ask the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion to provide a disability emergency response benefit while Canadians wait for the currently unfunded Canada disability benefit.

Today, with the increasing cost of food, a growing number of households are becoming food insecure. People are relying now more than ever on charities, not-for-profits and places of worship in their communities to put a meal on the table. I want to take a moment to highlight some of those invaluable community partners in my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam. These are the organizations that are feeding the families that are unable to make ends meet: Share Food Bank, Immigrant Link Centre Society, The People's Pantry, Coquitlam Alliance, Tapestry and Hillside churches, Soroptimist International of TriCities, Tri-Cities Moms Group, Coquitlam farmers' market, Fresh Roots, School District No. 43, and the city of Coquitlam, which stepped up to quickly adapt their city kitchens during the pandemic and have sustained an affordable meal delivery program for vulnerable seniors in Coquitlam.

I thank them all for what they do to offset food insecurity and improve lives in our community. Thank goodness for these community groups. Strong local food systems are crucial to ensuring food security for all Canadians, and so too is a caring community that does the work to leave no one behind when government has not done its work to protect the most vulnerable. There is still much work to do in the House to enact laws and programs that protect Canadians from food insecurity.

As my NDP colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford has said, the NDP supports this bill and knows it can raise other key areas too, to encourage the government to establish more food security initiatives in Canada. Farming is one of those areas. My colleague has said that farmers can be one of our greatest tools in effectively combatting climate change, alongside feeding the world, and that with the enactment of this bill, farmers will become part of our national discourse.

In Canada, we have extensive arable land where food can be grown. We produce far more food than our population consumes. We are net exporters. We are one of the top agricultural producers in the world, and that is something we should definitely talk about more.

• (1145)

For example, do members know that Canada is the largest producer of lentils in the world? We produce almost twice as much as India. Between our two countries, we produce more than 50% of

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world's lentils, yet per capita, Canadians eat very few. That is a shame because lentils are high in protein and fibre and low in fat and calories. They are naturally gluten-free and have an exceptionally low glycemic index, making them suitable for a diabetic diet. The majority of Canadians do not know this.

From coast to coast to coast, Canada has local food that needs to be shared and eaten. We are a country with the ability to produce food locally for everyone, not just to give the bare minimum amount but to achieve the good, high-quality food we all need. We need that high level of nutrition. It is a very strong factor in the social determinants of health.

As New Democrats, a strong food system has been a central issue for us. In 2011, we ran on a commitment to introduce a Canadian food strategy that would combine health and environmental goals. We created a strategy called "Everybody eats: Our vision for a pan-Canadian food strategy", which focused on how food travels from the farm to the factory to the fork. It was comprehensive, and it forced the Liberals to act. It is now time for the Liberal government to do more to protect Canadian food systems in the new reality of increasing climate disasters.

I think about the recent devastating flood in B.C. that wiped out roads and limited supply chains for weeks, as food could not get in and out of the Lower Mainland. Realities like that are why this government needs to understand how and where food is grown and produced in Canada.

This bill has the potential to direct the Liberals to look at the concept of food miles and how far food goes to reach a table. Today our food is travelling long distances to make it to our plates. That is not food resiliency. In B.C., we have the ability to grow a lot of seasonal produce, and we need to understand those opportunities and build resiliency around them.

In closing, it is important that this bill be part of the journey, not the end of it. We have much work to do to build and rebuild resilient food infrastructure in this country. We have relied too much on imports for decades while letting our own food production dwindle, and we need to bring more food closer to home. We also need to reduce the amount of food we waste. That is why, in November 2022, I moved to introduce Bill C-304, an act to establish national food waste awareness day. I thank the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for seconding that bill.

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Having a day to recognize the impacts of wasted food on food insecurity and climate change will raise awareness, inspire change and contribute to a meaningful solution to make Canada's food system more secure. Each year, 60% of the food produced in Canada is thrown out, and half of it is fresh, edible and nutritious food that could help feed four million Canadians, one million of whom are children, who are struggling daily with access to healthy food. It would be one more tool we have in our policy tool box to remind Canadians of how important local food is, celebrate the farmers who produce it and start a conversation on how we, as parliamentarians, can better support food security so everybody has access to high-quality food and no one goes to bed hungry.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would start my interjection today by thanking the Hon. Rob Black for introducing Bill S-227 in the other place and the infamous and great member for Perth—Wellington for sponsoring it here in this chamber. Bill S-227, an act to establish food day in Canada, seeks to establish the Saturday of the August long weekend as food day here in Canada.

The purpose of this is obviously to recognize the roles our local farmers, producers and processors play in ensuring Canadians have access to safe agriculture and nutritious food. The tack I am going to take in my speech is to go through and review pretty much all the interjections that have occurred so far in the chamber to highlight some of the important things that have already been said about the bill and to look at how it would impact my great riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

I would like to start by noting that I, to be frank, knew very little about Anita Stewart before preparing for this speech, and I first want to offer my condolences to the Stewart family because, as has been noted, she passed away at the age of 73, not even a couple of years ago. What is interesting is that the origins of food day in Canada really go back 20 years. They are tied to a concern Anita had, which was born over the crisis we faced as a country, which was mad cow disease or BSE, and the importance of that.

I would like to note that my very first question here in the House of Commons, upon my election in late 2019, was:

I was very disappointed last week, when listening to the throne speech, to hear very little mention of rural Canada and our critical and diverse agricultural sector.

Ontario farmers are suffering from a lack of processing capacity and their inability to sell fed cattle to the United States. The government missed a critical deadline to apply to the World Organisation for Animal Health for negligible risk status. Why?

Unfortunately, I never got an answer to that, and I am still waiting to get an answer, but really, the origins of food day in Canada are based in Anita Stewart's concerns over that.

The Hon. Rob Black brought this up in his speeches on this bill, as he introduced it in the other place, highlighting his concerns over the lack of agricultural concern by the current government in the Speech from the Throne. I have, on the public record, spoken a couple of times to the fact that, for some reason, agriculture does not seem to be a top priority for the current government, and it needs to be.

I am not trying to be partisan here. I represent a riding. One of the reasons I got involved in politics was exactly to stand up for rural

Canada, particularly my farmers. Later in my speech, I will get into what the statistics are and how important agriculture is to my riding.

It is bigger than just Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. Obviously, something everybody in the House can appreciate is the importance of farming and agriculture to Canada and to Canadians. We are by far one of the largest producers and exporters of all agricultural products around the world, whether they are our cash crops, cattle, dairy or fruits and vegetables. I will get into specifics. We export. In our cities, for those members of the House who represent our more urban ridings, without food we cannot survive, so it is so important.

I will highlight a bit more of the history around BSE, as the member for Perth—Wellington highlighted in his first speech on this subject. He talked about how damaging BSE was to Canada and to our beef farmers. At the time, Canada was the third-largest exporter of beef in the world, to the tune of over \$4.1 billion. However, basically overnight, due to BSE, our beef producers saw their exports to the U.S. go from just under \$300 million a month to zero.

I am going to get into some specific stats to highlight my own great riding.

● (1150)

Between Bruce and Grey counties, there are over 4,124 farms. There are just shy of a million acres of farmland in my riding alone, and the average farm is about 240 acres. Between 13% and 20% of the local farms sell locally right to the consumer. There are over 400 farms that sell directly from the farm to the stands or are “pick your own”. There is also the diversity, with beef, dairy, pork, poultry, cash crops and orchards in particular. There are some of the best cideries and orchards in my riding, which produce by and large one of the largest percentages of apples in Canada. Beef in particular is what my riding is known for. In fact, there are over 200,000 beef cattle in my riding in a given year. I wish I could get them to vote, because then my results would likely be even better in federal elections.

This is really important for us, but so is the economic impact locally. There are over 13,400 people employed in the local food sector and over 4,117 businesses. There are cash receipts of over \$1 billion. Across the province, food alone is responsible for \$2.8 billion. This is from the farms in my riding, with total employees across the whole sector at over 42,000. This is a direct result of Bruce and Grey counties. Another important note is that between 54% and 69% of the farms in my area are small farms, meaning they are putting forth less than \$100,000 in revenue in a given year.

There are a few other points I want to highlight, which have been brought up by other colleagues in the House. One is how resilient our farmers are. They do not have the choice that many of us do. It does not matter what the weather is like or what type of personal issues they are facing. They need to get out there and work through them. They need to work through mental health issues, which is something else that Parliament and the government need to be focusing more efforts on for farmers in Canada.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, in his speech, highlighted how he loves to cook. I will not go that route. I am capable of cooking my Kraft Dinner and my Cheerios every day, which is about my limit, although I have expanded into chili. He talked about the importance of the media and how Canada does not cover how important food and our agriculture sector are for Canada. This really highlights the point about education and the importance of food day in Canada. This bill, which I am confident will pass, is all about education. I will be shocked if it does not pass with unanimous support.

Furthermore, as I highlighted earlier, Canada cannot survive without food. We need to continue to highlight what that means going forward, but it is bigger than just the mass production or processing of food. It is about small family farms.

The member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford talked about being a small-scale farmer himself. I guess I kind of qualify in that boat too. I grew up on the family farm, which I own now. I do not have the 700 ducks, couple hundred chickens and couple hundred turkeys and geese that I grew up raising. In fact, we hatched them all in the basement. We also had the dairy cow that my dad gave my mother for her birthday, which she milked twice a day by hand to keep the family fed. When one has five boys, that is all stuff that needs to happen.

Recognizing that I am running out of time, I just want to highlight in my wrap-up the importance of passing Bill S-227, which would establish a national food day in Canada. It is really all about education, but most importantly, it is about thanking farmers here in Canada.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to express the government's full support for Bill S-227, an act to establish food day in Canada.

• (1200)

[*English*]

This private member's bill was introduced by the Hon. Rob Black from the other place, and we are discussing it here. I want to give kudos to all members on the AGRI committee for working together and demonstrating that we can see bills like this move quickly. It would be good to see more of them come back to this House so we can see them pass in due time.

The Hon. Rob Black was also involved in the event held at the Kitchener Public Library this past Saturday to remember Ontario's Farmerettes. It was a really interesting event. I was not able to go in person as I was attending other events, but it was an opportunity to

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reminisce about the role that women played during the Second World War. There is a new book that details the labour shortages during the Second World War, which sparked the creation of the Farmerettes. I want to give a shout-out to Bonnie Sitter, the author and researcher of the book, who kept a promise to the Farmerettes that they would see their story in print. Hopefully we will see these stories be turned into a play by a theatre company in Blyth, Ontario.

The Farmerettes and the role they played began as a movement of women who took over the manual labour jobs in southern Ontario farms while men were serving in the Second World War. The women were compelled to do the work to keep food on the tables of their neighbours. One of these women was Mary Boucher, who is from the Waterloo region. This individual has contributed in many ways. I spoke with her last week, and it was interesting to hear her stories and about the role she played.

Most of the Farmerettes are now in their eighties and nineties, and many are no longer with us, but the role they played was instrumental in ensuring that we had good food. This is really important in the Waterloo region. Our community continues to grow, and we are noticing in the Waterloo region that we are actually growing up instead of out so that we protect farmlands and have good food.

What is great about the bill is that it provides us an opportunity to celebrate the contribution of this sector to Canada, which is something I am very proud of and I know all members are very proud of. We often do not recognize the people who do the work on the ground, which is why when it comes to farmers, the Farmerettes and their families, the hard work they contribute really needs to be celebrated. The bill would provide yet another opportunity to do so.

I look forward to seeing this debate continue, and I look forward to seeing a food day established in Canada. I am really pleased to see that members are working together to ensure that we continue to showcase those contributions.

From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank all the people who have contributed to this in the riding of Waterloo and across southern Ontario and Canada for the role they play. Please know that it is both noticed and appreciated. We are grateful to them.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for Waterloo. I will remind her that she has six minutes and 35 seconds remaining when the debate starts again.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

*The Budget***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from March 29 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 43(2)(a), I would like to inform the House that the remaining Conservative caucus speaking slots are hereby divided in two.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, within the budget, there has been great recognition of the significant achievement of the dental program and the expansion of the dental program, which is going to cover more Canadians in 2023. However, I want to add to that the grocery rebate program, which is going to help a good number of Canadians deal with the cost of inflation specifically for groceries. The Minister of Justice was recently in Winnipeg. We went to a local grocery store and experienced first-hand the degree of inflation on groceries. This aspect of the budget is very important for people of low income.

Would the member provide his thoughts on both those things?

• (1205)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, inflation certainly has been a real problem. That is no secret to anyone in the House, and it is no secret to any Canadian who has been out there trying to buy groceries in the last year or so. It is why another doubling of the GST rebate is important and why I think a larger conversation is important to have around a number of income support programs that were not designed to keep pace with this rate of inflation.

We know that when inflation goes back down to the target level, whenever that is going to happen, whether it is going to be by the end of this year, next year or two years from now, those prices will still be up and will not be going down. This means that for those income support programs, whether it is the GST rebate or others that do not factor inflation in, and there are some of them, we need to have a discussion in this country about how we raise the floor so they recognize that we have suffered a period of incredible inflation and that the household budgets of Canadians have permanently higher costs.

I am glad for what I see as a victory for the New Democrats, who have been pushing for a doubling of the GST rebate, first the initial one and then the second one. We are very much open to and feeling a sense of urgency about having conversations on other programs, including the establishment of the Canada disability benefit. The government has been promising that for a long time, but it has not given details of the idea for it. We know that people living with disabilities in Canada rightly feel an incredible sense of urgency and did so even before the pandemic, let alone this last period of inflation.

Let us get down to work, roll up our sleeves and make sure we are supporting Canadians who need help. This doubling of the GST rebate is only a start. There is a lot more work to do, and the New Democrats stand ready to do it and to do it expeditiously.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member from the wonderful province of Manitoba has done a lot of work with private sector unions and public sector unions over the years. He is a great advocate for working Canadians.

I was wondering if the hon. member could comment on the doubling of the tradespeople's tools deduction, which is another measure to help tradespeople and skilled tradespeople across the country.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, that is certainly important. Of course, one of the other places we have seen inflation that has been really meaningful in the Canadian economy is with respect to construction and the cost of inputs for building things. Of course, one of the inputs is the cost of tools. They have not been spared the effects of inflation in a period when supply has been very tight.

I think recognizing for tradespeople that the cost of their inputs has gone up and ensuring that the mechanisms designed to provide some relief for that keep pace with inflation are important. That is why the New Democrats have been proud to also support the trade mobility tax credit, both in the budget bill and in a private member's bill, to make sure that tradespeople are getting some of the same tax treatment that white collar workers get when they run their own business.

It is also why we are very proud to have fought for and won in this budget, and we are looking for the legislation to make it true as well, the measure that working people will be represented on the board of the growth fund, which is going to invest in the new energy economy in Canada. It is really important to have workers' voices at those tables, because the transition has to happen in a way that creates good-paying jobs for Canadian workers right here in Canada. Our efforts to ensure that workers have a voice on the board that will be making decisions about the growth fund is an example of that, as is our insistence to have real conditions about prevailing wages tied to federal investment in clean tech.

There are a number of wins for workers. It is one of the differences that having the New Democrats at the table has made, and we will continue to advocate for benefits like these for workers.

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• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we spent two weeks in our ridings, and now we are back in the House for a long stretch together. When I met with the people of Laurentides—Labelle, I saw that they are worried about access to affordable housing. I would like to hear my colleague's views on that because, in my riding at least, people have been talking about the housing crisis for years. For more than 10 years, community organizations have been predicting what would happen. The Quebec organization FRAPRU has been saying the same thing. I do not know if the situation is the same in my colleague's riding, but I would like to know what he thinks of what is in the budget for housing.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for raising the issue of the housing crisis. Certainly, the people in Elmwood—Transcona are feeling the squeeze in housing, as are people across the country from coast to coast to coast. The feeling is different depending on where one is. The problems manifest in different ways, but there is no question that people across the country are feeling those pressures. That is why it was a very specific focus for me in the budget speech to talk about the housing crisis.

Recently, I was attacked in the National Post for some of the comments I made in this place. I will wear it as a badge of honour, considering some of the positions that paper wants to take on a number of issues, let alone on housing. What I found curious about the criticism was that it said I was misrepresenting the housing crisis in order to defend the Liberals, which could not be further from the truth.

My point was that the Liberals and the Conservatives have far more in common on housing policy than anybody else does. Why is this the case? It is because they fundamentally accept that housing is a commodity and that profit should be the ultimate focus of housing policy. That has been true in this country for over 30 years now since the Liberals originally cut the national housing strategy in 1993. That was my point.

We are not going to get past the housing crisis or get to a point where we finally feel we are making progress if we do not centre housing as a public good in our housing policy, instead of a commodity. My opinion is that as long as we have Liberals and Conservatives running the country, we are not going to get to that point.

Ultimately, they are very concerned about protecting profit-making in the housing industry and reluctant to accept the idea that housing is a public good or human right. While they may want to do that rhetorically, in their policy, they still do not do it. That is why a lot of housing policy is not working, even though the Liberals have done more in the housing policy space than any government since 1993. There is a reason it is not working.

What is capitalism? It is a small number of people owning the means of production and everyone else being exploited. What is happening in our housing market is that a smaller and smaller group of people own the housing, and everyone else is being exploited. Unless we can be critical of capitalism as a model, we are

not actually going to fix housing policy in Canada. That was my point, and they are birds of a feather when it comes to that.

I am sorry the National Post column did not get the point originally. I hope it is much clearer now, and I am thankful for the opportunity to make that clarification.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always have a bit of a chuckle when I listen to Conservatives talk about removing the gatekeepers. My community of Langford is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in all of Canada. All around Langford, there are construction cranes and new housing projects going up. Despite that, the costs continue to rise for the average family. I will ask the member to cite that as an example, which I am sure is replicated in many cities across Canada.

There is a lot of construction going on, but it is not really the right kind. We need to make sure we are addressing the needs of Canadian families that cannot afford to buy in the market.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, the point I take my colleague to be making there is that if we judge the success of housing policy by how much money developers are making, that is not the same as Canadians getting access to housing they can afford to live in. We need to drop this metric as the principal metric and adopt Canadians actually getting into housing they can afford.

One thing I have not had much of a chance to talk about that I want to mention briefly is employment insurance. When interest rates go up and for-profit building stops, people get laid off. Right now, they do not have an employment insurance system that they can count on to support their mortgage payments, rent or groceries for their families. That is why the Liberals had better act with a sense of urgency that we have not seen.

A major disappointment with this budget is that the Liberals continue to promise employment insurance reform, but it is not coming. They warn of a recession. That is coming; it is why we need the EI system to be fully reformed, and we need it now.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

I would like to underscore Canada's remarkable recovery from the recession caused by COVID-19. In the past year, our country has had the strongest economic growth in the G7. An additional 865,000 Canadians are employed compared to prepandemic levels.

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In February alone, the labour force participation rate for prime-aged women in Canada reached a record high of 85.7%, supported by the Canada-wide early learning and child care system. Inflation has been falling for eight straight months, and the Bank of Canada expects it to continue falling to reach 2.6% by the end of the year. This is all encouraging news, but there remains much more work yet to do.

Many people across the country are still feeling the bite of higher prices. Our health care system and frontline workers continue to need our support. We have to make sure that Canada remains competitive and that Canadian workers are at the forefront of the global change in economies taking place around the world. We want to make sure that Canada seizes the incredible economic opportunity of a net-zero future. Over the course of the last two weeks, other members of the government and I have had the chance to travel across the country and share with Canadians the difference that this will make in their lives.

Let us talk about making life more affordable. Our budget proposes targeted supports and getting targeted relief to those who need it the most to help them make ends meet. Through the new one-time grocery rebate, we are going to support 11 million Canadians by putting money into their pockets and making life more affordable. This benefit will mean up to an extra \$467 for eligible couples with two children, up to an extra \$234 for single Canadians without children and an extra \$225 for seniors on average. This will make a real difference for many people. Take, for example, the couple who earns \$38,000 to support their two young children. Higher prices at the grocery store have strained their already tight budget, and right now, they are struggling to make ends meet. I heard these stories when I visited grocery stores in Gatineau, Edmonton and Kelowna. This grocery rebate will make it easier for them to put food on the table by providing them with \$467 right into their wallets. This is on top of the enhanced Canada workers benefit, Canada child benefit and GST credit they already receive.

[Translation]

When talking about a prudent fiscal approach, it is important to note that the new grocery rebate will help many Canadians make ends meet without adding fuel to the fire of inflation.

Canadians obviously want inflation to continue to come down and want interest rates to drop, and we do, too. Canada has a proud tradition of fiscal responsibility, and budget 2023 allows us to continue that tradition.

[English]

Budget 2023 maintains that proud tradition, and it is a responsible plan. The proof is right in the data. Budget 2023 ensures that Canada maintains the lowest deficit and the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the entire group of G7 nations. We are making sure that the very wealthy and our biggest corporations pay their fair share of taxes so we can look forward to keeping taxes low for middle-class families. We are reducing government spending by more than \$15 billion, while taking great care not to reduce the services and direct supports that Canadians rely on, such as health care.

[Translation]

Universal health care is at the heart of who we are as Canadians. Budget 2023 delivers the \$198-billion investment in public health care that the Prime Minister announced in February. From helping every Canadian find a family doctor to reducing wait times for surgery, we will ensure that every Canadian can count on a world-class public health care system.

[English]

Not only are we reinforcing the public health care system, but we are also expanding its reach. In fact, since December our investments have helped almost a quarter million Canadian children receive the dental care they need. However, children are not the only ones who need to go to the dentist. The budget also ensures the creation of the Canada dental care plan. It will provide coverage for uninsured Canadians with an annual family income of less than \$90,000.

The state of one's smile should not be a symbol of how much money one or one's family makes. I can recall kids in school whose teeth told that story. I was not only the chubby kid, but I also had bad teeth; therefore, people made some assumptions about my family. Quite frankly, that should not be the case for anyone in 2023, so we are going to end that and deliver healthy smiles across this country.

● (1220)

[Translation]

We will start implementing the new Canadian dental care plan this year. An effective health care system is vital to Canada's ability to prosper, and we will make it happen.

[English]

When it comes to shifts in the global economy, we have to make sure that Canada continues to build a green economy. It is more important now than ever before. In the coming months and years, Canadians are going to navigate two fundamental shifts in the global economy. Countries are investing heavily into building clean economies and the net-zero industries of tomorrow, and this is the most significant industrial transformation since the Industrial Revolution.

[Translation]

These changes in the global economy represent a unique opportunity for Canada and for Canadian workers. Last month in the House, U.S. President Joe Biden spoke of a future built on shared prosperity. He made it clear that the American economy needs Canada and Canadian workers. The United States, like so many of our partners around the world, needs the expertise our workers can offer. Our allies around the world need the ingenuity of Canadian companies. Canada also has a wealth of natural resources to draw on, and budget 2023 gives us the tools to seize this historic opportunity.

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[English]

It proposes a series of tax credits to make sure that we have sustainable investments in the long term. Whether it is in terms of electricity, hydrogen or clean manufacturing tax credits, we are going to make sure that Canada's economy is on the train to the 21st and 22nd centuries. We are improving the already critical tax credit for carbon capture and storage technologies to continue reducing the carbon footprint of our traditional sectors and engage all industries in getting our country to net zero.

[Translation]

We are expanding eligibility for the clean tech tax credit. The Canada Infrastructure Bank will focus on clean electricity projects. We want to build a clean electricity grid that connects Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

[English]

Such a network of electricity is going to protect our environment and make sure that we have sustainable low-cost electricity for Canadians and for Canadian businesses.

[Translation]

We are going to make Canada a destination of choice in the world for businesses that want to invest in a net-zero future.

[English]

Electricity capacity should never be a governor in terms of attracting foreign direct investment to our country. We are going to make sure that we have plentiful green electricity from coast to coast.

With budget 2023, we are going to make Canada a top destination in the world for businesses to invest in. I heard this, and I saw first-hand the difference these supports will make travelling to Saint John, New Brunswick, and to Kelowna, and speaking with entrepreneurs from Victoria. When I met with them over these last two weeks, I spoke with them and learned directly how it made sense to people that we support working Canadians and make sure that the unions that built the middle class can continue to thrive and deliver good wages and good benefits for Canadians. We are also going to make it easier for workers to learn the skills they need.

Our plan means well-paying jobs, good careers and a great country.

[Translation]

Budget 2023 is a direct response to the challenges and opportunities before us. We are proposing to help those who are most affected by inflation in Canada. We are investing in health care because that is important to all Canadians.

[English]

We are investing in Canadian workers to ensure they have the skills they need to grow the economy.

When I was at the Adonis grocery store in Gatineau, I met with families of all ages. I said, "Look, whether you're feeling the pinch of inflation or not, know that we're going to have a grocery rebate for you. We've got the dental care program in place. We've got the

Canada child benefit in place." They gave us their thanks for standing on the side of Canadians and helping working people. They also love shopping in that particular place. The produce is always fresh.

We are going to take the pinch out of inflation. We are going to work with Canadians to see inflation keep coming down. We are going to get on the other side of this inflationary cycle together. We are investing in a stronger economy, a green economy, because it is the right thing to do now and for future generations. We are investing in a stronger immigration system and bringing to our country of Canada a record number of skilled workers because our growing businesses need that support.

We have big things to do, and we are going to do just that.

● (1225)

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know the tourism minister loves Lake Simcoe. I think he even ice-fished there.

I wonder if he can square this circle for us. We have been waiting in York—Simcoe since 2017, when the Liberals cancelled the Lake Simcoe cleanup fund. We are still waiting. The government is all talk and no action on the environment. It has just approved an aerodrome, which is tantamount to a fill site, in the environmentally protected watershed of Lake Simcoe in my riding.

Can the minister square the circle for the residents of York—Simcoe on that?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, Liberal members of Parliament leaned in very hard on this budget. There is money in this budget for the Lake Simcoe watershed. There is a whole Great Lakes strategy that is part of this budget.

We take our healthy ecosystem and healthy water systems seriously, whether it is tourism, growing the economy, welcoming new businesses, or quite frankly, making sure that there are clean waterways for our residents to enjoy in Ontario, British Columbia or Atlantic Canada. Our clean water agency, the Canada water agency, is going to be set up coming out of this budget, and there is going to be money for Lake Simcoe.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a very simple question for my colleague about employment insurance reform.

The Budget

As we have already said and as we have often heard, the government first promised EI reform in 2015. It made that promise for the second time in 2019 and for the third time in 2021. Last summer, the government said that it was coming. Just before Christmas, the Liberals promised it was going to happen. What are we to tell workers who are dealing with the spring gap and who do not have access to EI because the rules have gone back to the way they were before? I am not looking for a statement about how there are 830,000 more jobs than there were before the pandemic. That is not what people who cannot get EI want to hear.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, we fully agree that EI modernization needs to happen. The minister continues to focus on that issue.

We are working in close collaboration with the workers of this country. It is important to modernize Canada's EI system. We are continuing this work, which is extremely important for workers. We will meet expectations. That is our duty as a government.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the government has been consulting on changes to the employment insurance system for seven and a half years. In the meantime, we have had a global pandemic where we know, knew and still know that the employment insurance system was inadequate to the task; it had to be completely reimagined and changed for the duration of the pandemic. The government has since cancelled those rules, saying that the pandemic is over and that we do not have a problem.

Then we experienced a period of very high inflation. Now the Bank of Canada, despite fanfare about having a different mandate in the fall of 2021, has actually not changed the mandate at all, as I said at the time. It is still an inflation-targeting mandate. That is what the leader of the Conservative Party wanted; it is what he got. Now we have Bank of Canada leadership who say the unemployment rate is too low and they need to raise it. They will actually continue raising interest rates until unemployment comes up. We have a government that continues to say it is consulting on employment insurance reform, when it has had over seven years and knows very well what needs to be done. When will it do it?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, there is work ahead of us on EI modernization. It is a complex and large file. It is a critical file for Canadians. That is why we stepped in during the pandemic with \$511 billion invested in the lives of Canadians, including the CERB, including the CEWS and including the things that we needed to get through the pandemic. Those investments made a difference: 830,000 more people employed since the beginning of the pandemic; 126% recovery since the beginning of the pandemic, compared to only 112% by our colleagues in the United States; and doubling the workers benefit.

We have invested now over this fiscal frame \$13 billion in the Canada dental plan. From 2015 to 2023, the investments we have made for middle-class Canadians are making a difference in affordability every day.

• (1230)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure and a privilege to rise in

this honourable House to lend my voice in support of budget 2023, appropriately titled for our times, “A Made-in-Canada Plan: Strong middle class, affordable economy, healthy future.”

Before I begin my commentary on the direct measures in the budget, I wish to provide my perspective of where we are in the world today. In my view, today we are at a seminal moment in history, both economically and geopolitically. This happens every few generations, and it is happening today.

As a result, we need responsible and bold leadership for the moment we are in, and measures that are up to the seminal moment as our citizens both deserve it and demand it.

Let me explain briefly. The post-World War II order of multilateral institutions and the leadership of the United States is being reshaped and, in many cases, challenged by China and its alliances with countries like Russia, but also by its investments throughout the globe, from Africa to South America. Layered on top of that we have also seen a rise in populist governments from the far right to the far left, challenging their individual countries' democracies and, again, the multilateral institutions that were built post-World War II.

Economic growth in advanced countries, absent the gyrations from exogenous shocks for decades over normal business cycles, has been slowing across all developed countries due to demographics or aging workforces, a decline in birth rates, slower productivity gains and, for many countries excluding Canada, high public debt levels.

Thus, the policy choices we make as legislators today have an even greater impact on the standard of living of every single one of our fellow Canadians for years to come.

Last week, I attended the World Bank and IMF Global Parliamentary Forum in Washington. I encourage all my fellow parliamentarians here at home to read the IMF's World Economic Outlook, entitled “A Rocky Recovery.” As it becomes abundantly clear that Canada, with its talented and entrepreneurial citizenry; bountiful natural resources; trade agreements, including CUSMA, CETA, CPTPP, that uniquely position our exporters; immigration system; and strong fiscal framework, including an AAA credit rating is positioned in an advantageous manner relative to our global peers in this seminal moment.

The Budget

Our government, through budget 2023, is building upon so much of what we have done in the last few years by making the targeted and fiscally responsible investments to create opportunities for Canadian workers in a challenging and changing global economy for today and tomorrow.

We will strengthen Canada's public health care system, because Canadians demand it, with a \$198-billion, 10-year investment including \$46.5 billion in new investments. This investment is particularly important after the stresses seen post COVID-19. We will continue to rise to the challenge of this seminal moment in the world's economic and political history.

On the economy front, I spent some time reviewing the IMF World Economic Outlook for April, and I wish to read a paragraph on the global prospects and policies:

The global economy is yet again at a highly uncertain moment, with the cumulative effects of the past three years of adverse shocks—most notably, the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine—manifesting in unforeseen ways. Spurred by pent-up demand, lingering supply disruptions, and commodity price spikes, inflation reach multidecade highs last year in many economies, leading central banks to tighten aggressively to bring it back toward their targets and keep inflation expectations anchored.

What does that mean for Canada and how does that interconnect with budget 2023? In chapter 1, to achieve strong, sustainable and inclusive growth will require policy-makers here at home to stay agile and pursue the following policies. First, ensure a durable fall in inflation, which is now occurring through the actions of the Bank of Canada. Second, safeguard financial flexibility and maintain a strong banking system. We can all be proud, as parliamentarians, that Canada's banking system is well capitalized, has strong liquidity and is very well regulated by our regulatory agencies. Normalizing fiscal policy postpandemic we can check off, as we have seen in budget 2023 that fiscal consolidation and ending pandemic-era programs was the appropriate thing to do. Supporting the vulnerable, due to inflation, particularly with the cost of everyday essentials including food, is also important.

• (1235)

The grocery rebate in budget 2023 will help 11 million Canadians, with a family of four potentially receiving up to \$467 and our seniors up to \$225. This measure follows after the \$500 rental rebate and the prior GST rebate. In addition, the changes to the Canada workers benefit, which will provide \$4 billion over the following six years, this year will provide up to \$1,428 for single workers and nearly \$2,500 for a family.

We know that dental care equals health care, but that seeing a dentist can be expensive. With that, we will roll out a national dental care plan to help one-third of the Canadian population that currently does not have dental insurance. In my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge alone, nearly 650 kids, the last time I checked, under the age of 12 have benefited from the temporary dental benefit.

I have always stood up and advocated for the hard-working seniors in my riding and across this country, and I am so glad to see that when they retire, if they lack dental coverage post-retirement, they will be covered. We know that seniors on fixed incomes paying for dental visits can mean delaying food shopping for a couple of days or even weeks.

We cannot forget the investments in our national early learning and child care plan, which is saving families across the country thousands of dollars and boosting the participation rate of women.

For the longer term, for which I am even more excited, the IMF and the World Bank identify two major things to ensure strong, long-term economic growth and maintaining Canada's high standard of living. The first one is speeding up the green transition and, second, is increasing the economy's capacity, which means we would increase supply to certain inputs. Budget 2023's strategic investments in our infrastructure and in speeding up the green transition, which we know is creating literally thousands of jobs for Canadians today, is what this bold and responsible leadership calls for, which I alluded to earlier.

We are seeing that within Canada's auto sector, with over \$20 billion of investment that has been attracted in creating and maintaining thousands of direct and indirect jobs across this country, much like the plant I visited in Alliston, Ontario, the Honda facility, last week with the right hon. Prime Minister. We know that Canada is now positioned as a leader in the electric vehicle battery supply chain and in the global transition to electric vehicles, which is seeing over \$500 billion in capital being put to use as we speak.

The measures in budget 2023 include what I feel is the most important, an investment in a tax credit for clean electricity to ensure that our electricity system can meet the demand for energy consumption in the decades to come. We know that Canada's electricity system, the last time I checked, is at 85% or 90% from clean energy sources. We know we need to get to 100% and lower greenhouse gas emissions, which we are doing. Nuclear, solar, wind, energy storage and hydro are all part of this transition. This investment into Canada's electrical grid is one of the most transformational investments we have seen in Canada's infrastructure in decades. I would even argue it is akin to the building of the railroad in Canada many decades ago.

The Budget

An investment in a tax credit for clean technology manufacturing, supporting Canadian companies in the manufacturing and processing of clean technologies and in the extraction of critical minerals, will create good middle-class jobs for Canadians today and tomorrow. With that, we are proposing a tax credit equal to 30% of the cost of investments in new machinery and equipment used to manufacture or process key clean technologies. We are seeing that across the country today, whether it is in Alberta, Quebec, Ontario or any other province. Countries are innovating and, if I can use the example of the electric vehicle battery ecosystem, taking advantage of those systems.

We know innovation and new energy sources will be crucial. During my time in the constituency, I visited the energy facility in York Region, the first of its kind in North America where hydrogen is being used in combination with natural gas to heat homes in York Region. That is groundbreaking. With that, our government knows that hydrogen is part of the future and that is why we will be putting in place an investment tax credit for hydrogen, which will be introduced to spur capital to invest in this critical future energy source.

The United States may have brought in the Inflation Reduction Act in response to what Canada has been doing for the last 20 years, but we have also responded to ensure that private capital remains in Canada and that jobs are created in Canada. We are seeing that on a daily basis by either domestic or foreign corporations investing their dollars here in Canada to create a strong economy and a bright future for Canadians, such as my three children. We will continue to do that in a fiscally responsible manner to ensure that we can pay for the benefits that Canadians deserve while we create good, middle-class jobs for Canadians and help those who wish to join the middle class.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, obviously, there are some worthwhile measures in this budget. We are not going to say no to a good thing. However, I wonder whether some steps are being skipped in implementing these procedures. I would like my colleague to tell us more about two aspects.

First, I see that \$31 million will be allocated to establish a national counter-foreign interference office. Obviously, we agree with the idea. However, does my colleague not think that the commission of inquiry we have been calling for for months should take place before the national office is established, since the commission would obviously have some useful findings to contribute?

Second, there is something in the budget that is dear to my heart, and that is the issue of planned obsolescence. The budget states that the government plans to work to implement the right to repair. How will it ensure that goods purchased in Quebec and Canada can be repaired when they break or require fixing?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question. It is very important.

[*English*]

First, before getting to the foreign interference question that he asked and the \$31 million, I would say I am completely for a for-

eign lobbyist registry. Whether it is modelled on the U.S. model, the Australian model or some other, we need that to happen. The world is quickly changing and has changed over the last number of decades. We need to ensure that the integrity of our electoral system is always maintained and that Canadians have full confidence in our election system. We need to move expeditiously, with consultation, on a foreign lobbyist registry.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, would the member be able to advise us on the debt service interest and how he sees it going forward? It would be nice to know the exact number based on the budget. How does he see things developing further in the future?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I would say that, within our fiscal framework, this budget moves us forward.

We would still maintain our AAA credit rating. We would be making strategic investments into our economy while continuing to grow our economy and create those good middle-class jobs that Canadians depend upon day in and day out. Also, it would ensure that our fiscal framework remains strong, and that is very important to someone like me.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have to speak to the missing part of the budget, which is any real investment in housing. In a release today, the National Housing Council is saying that the national housing strategy is not working.

We are seeing very little investment in housing in the budget. Could the member speak to why?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, the area I represent is home to the largest number of housing builders in the province of Ontario. I have met with several of them over the last two weeks, whether it was for coffee or lunch, to discuss the state of the housing market, whether it is mid-, low- or high-rises. The two unions representing those that build all this housing in Ontario both have their homes, headquarters and training centres in my riding, so I am very attuned to what is happening to the state of the Ontario housing market.

For that matter, I will say that, within the budget, we did launch the \$4-billion accelerator fund. I know municipalities are quite excited and are putting together their applications to ensure we can get housing built faster, so we can ensure Canadians have affordable places to call home. I know full well what the cost of housing is now in the area I represent, and we need to ensure we increase supply. That is critical to solving the affordability crisis in housing.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, respectfully, that answer is insufficient. The housing accelerator fund was announced last year. We are in a housing crisis. We need federal investments every single year.

The Budget

What is the member going to do to ensure the federal government steps up when it comes to the housing crisis?

• (1245)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, as I stated earlier, I am very attuned to what is going on in the housing market in Ontario. In the region I represent, there are literally dozens of projects going on. There are nearly 20,000 units currently under construction in the Vaughan metropolitan centre. In the other parts of the City of Vaughan, whether they are for mid-, low- or high-rise, there are applications that have been submitted.

Our target in the city of Vaughan, I believe, is 42,000 units. I think we have over 60,000 or 80,000 units with applications being considered. I take no lessons from any member, including the member over there, on the state of the housing market here in Ontario or the region I represent.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadians are struggling worse than anyone has in generations. With the Liberal government's 2023 budget, I cannot help but think it is missing some pages. I looked, and there must be pages missing. It has to be the case because there is no vision for the country. Where is the plan to make things more affordable? Where does it show that the Liberals are focusing on priorities that matter most to Canadians?

With this budget, it is clear that the ordinary people, who are in truth extraordinary people, but the everyday people who live in the small towns and suburban communities, just like those I represent in York—Simcoe from places such as Ansnorveldt, Bellhaven, Cedarbrae, Pepperlaw, Willow Beach and Bradford, are once again on the outside looking in.

At 5.2%, inflation is still the highest it has been in 30 years. Prices for everyday items, including groceries, electricity, fuel and other necessities, continue to skyrocket. It is no wonder 68% of Canadians are concerned they may not be able to afford gasoline and 60% are worried they will not have enough food to feed their families.

This might not mean much to the Liberal government members and their friends on Bay Street, who profited from the pandemic and who have been well insulated from the increases to the cost of living. They will say, "Is meat too expensive? Let them eat lentils." They will respond to higher gas prices by telling Canadians to just go buy an electric car. They do this in complete ignorance of the economic realities working families are facing in Canada.

There are Canadians who have resorted to feeding their children Kraft Dinner day after day, with no end in sight. The newest vehicle most people in my riding can afford is a 10-year-old car. It is not a shiny new EV right off the lot. All of this has become heartbreaking and depressing for Canadians who want so much more for themselves, their children and their grandchildren.

While the Prime Minister and his cabinet jetted across Canada trumpeting this budget and telling people to wrack up more debt on their credit cards, I was in my community of York—Simcoe doing what I normally do, which is speaking to the everyday residents who live there about what matters most to them. I spoke to a clerk in a hardware store in Sutton who told me she is retired now but

had to go back to work and is working two jobs just so she will not go hungry.

I spoke to a senior in Baldwin who worked hard her entire life as a personal support worker. She dedicated all of her years toward caring for the vulnerable. This senior has now become vulnerable herself, spending the final years of her life in a trailer park with almost no pension and barely getting by each and every month. She cannot afford to put food on the table or pay for hearing aids, glasses and other necessities. Desperately, in the face of these struggles, she asked me whether medically assisted dying was available to her, simply because the cost to live has become so expensive.

These stories are becoming all too common. How is it acceptable that Canadians, people such as the senior in my riding, would consider euthanasia as a better alternative to the poverty and hardship imposed on them by the Liberals' fiscal irresponsibility? Sadly, reports in the media over the past year have confirmed this desperation. Many Canadians have taken this option. What does that say about the Liberal government? What does it say about our country when it is easier to access assisted dying in Canada than it is to secure affordable housing or afford groceries and other essentials?

With the state of the economy, far too many Canadians are losing hope. They no longer see this country as a place where they can own a home, start or maintain a business, or raise a family. Instead of the Liberals' deflections and false narratives, Canadians from all walks of life in every industry and in every sector across Canada require real solutions to tackle skyrocketing inflation and the cost of living crisis.

When we look at the 2023 budget promises and the commitments by the Liberals to correct their many failures, those solutions are just not there. In fact, the 2023 budget will make matters worse. With this budget, the Liberals are continuing their war on work by increasing taxes and driving up the debt.

• (1250)

Under the Prime Minister, Canada's federal debt for 2023-24 is projected to reach \$1.22 trillion. That is nearly \$81,000 per household in Canada, \$10,000 more than the income of most families in York—Simcoe. The amount the government is spending on servicing the debt is almost as much as it is sending to the provinces as health care transfers. It is no wonder that, in my riding of York—Simcoe, we have few doctors, no hospital and no physical hospice. It is completely outrageous.

The Budget

This speaks to one of the problems with the budget and with the Liberals' approach to the economy in general. Instead of addressing the wider issues, the government will point to the narrowly applied measures they are funding and say that the job is done.

We can take the completely unattainable housing market, for instance. The Liberals' only plan is a flawed tax-free home savings account. How does this out-of-touch government expect new and young Canadians, already struggling with inflation, wage stagnation and the cost of living crisis, to dedicate \$8,000 of their income per year to this scheme?

With the minimum down payment in Canada exceeding \$122,000, the FHSA limit of \$40,000 is almost laughable, even if aspiring homeowners could afford to put away \$8,000 over five years. The Liberals may say that they have now solved the housing affordability crisis, but Canadians can see that this budget will not result in any additional houses being built or a family affording a home who otherwise could not.

Budget 2023 also fails our Canadian farmers, who provide our food security. Our country should be a global leader in agricultural production. I have always said that one can move a General Motors plant, but one cannot move a farm. Instead, the Liberals have stacked the deck against our farmers with fertilizer tariffs, carbon taxes and lack of energy infrastructure, such as natural gas or upgraded hydro infrastructure.

This has made it a struggle for Canadian farmers to compete in the global market while ensuring our own food security here at home. The meagre proposals in budget 2023 do little or nothing to mitigate these challenges and support the people who grow our food.

Finally, I note that budget 2023 contains a promise for some small funding for Lake Simcoe, which is shared between all the Great Lakes across Canada and most major freshwater lakes and rivers in Canada. This is the fourth promise of funding for the lake from the Liberals since they cancelled the Lake Simcoe clean-up fund in 2017.

Residents who live in the watershed or rely on the lake for drinking water are sick and tired of the broken promises. They know that the Liberals are all talk and no action when it comes to the environment. Band-aid solutions and microtargeted measures might sound good at the podium at the Empire Club or at the WEF, but they do not result in any meaningful relief for Canadians carrying the financial burden of the Liberals' economic failures.

The Prime Minister is spending more than \$120 billion in budget 2023. What do we have to show for this out-of-control spending? What is the result of the Liberal spending after eight years? Members can ask themselves that. Any Canadian who has had to sit in a hospital waiting room, try to buy children's medication, buy or rent a house, renew their passport, take a flight or pay their taxes will tell us that the result has not been much, sadly.

We have no domestic manufacturing capacity here, and across every sector, growth is in decline. Where is the productivity? Members can think about this: After ballooning the size of the federal government by 30%, there is a bigger and costlier government with more red tape, but there are worse outcomes for Canadians.

Fundamentally, the most important purpose of this budget was to restore the formula that worked in this country for the better part of 156 years, which is that, if one works hard, one should be able to provide for one's family, work toward one's dreams and give back to one's community.

• (1255)

The fact is that this budget is not actually missing pages, but it is missing meaningful action to fix that broken formula, and I will be voting no to this budget.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is no surprise: We knew the member was going to be voting no to the budget even before the budget was tabled. There are so many inaccuracies and misinformation within what the member is suggesting. The member says that the government is spending too much money and that we have too much debt. Then he goes on to say that we are not doing enough and that we should be spending more.

Let me use a specific example. The member talked about a senior who is living in a mobile home and he talked about the tragedy and said we are not doing anything for that senior. That particular senior is getting the grocery rebate, and that particular senior is getting the dental benefits, both of which this member is voting against. That senior is getting the 10% increase if he or she is over 75 and, if not, the GIC has been greatly enhanced, all of which Stephen Harper would never have done.

Why should anyone believe the Conservatives of today when they have absolutely nothing when it comes to a plan for Canadians?

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, I am not sure if that was a question, but I am happy to speak to my hon. colleague's comments. The member for Winnipeg North prides himself on getting out and speaking to his constituents, as I do. In my riding, residents are concerned about health care. Can members imagine York—Simcoe, northern GTA? People in my riding always feel like we are forgotten. We do not have a hospital. There is no hospital in York—Simcoe. Can members imagine that? We do not have a physical hospice in York—Simcoe. There are all these things. I represent agriculture in York—Simcoe, the soup and salad bowl of Canada, as I call it, and the carbon tax is killing our farmers.

The Budget

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am going to reserve my comments about some of the remarks made by my colleague on this side of the House. When it comes to medically assisted dying, if there is one person who has personal experience, who was at the bedside of a loved one who qualified for medically assisted dying for eight years, that person is me. There is a lot I could say about it.

My question for my colleague concerns seniors. I would like him to tell me his thoughts on the budget. Some of the people receiving the GIS would like to work. Sadly, the government is rejecting a win-win solution that has been suggested for years now, namely to relax tax rules so that these people can go back to work or pick up a few extra shifts.

Now, here we are today, listening to the government talk about dental care and grocery rebates.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the two classes of seniors.

[English]

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, it was heartbreaking to go out and visit these seniors. At the first trailer I went to, the gentleman told me he is eating Kraft Dinner to stretch his week. I went to the next area and, of all things, there were people actually lined up and there were three people looking at used shoes in tubs because they did not have any money. The senior I spoke about, who was working two jobs at Home Hardware, had to go back to work. The current government punishes hard work, and we have to stop punishing hard work and support our Canadian workers.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the real issues we are dealing with is the climate catastrophe that is looming, and we certainly see that the Conservatives do not even believe there is a climate crisis. The Liberals have been sitting and doing nothing. New Democrats have pushed them to action to invest in clean energy, as Biden is doing. We now have \$85 billion committed, and it is tied to ensuring that there are good union jobs and good wages. These are not McJobs; these are good jobs. This is the support that we have gotten from Alberta energy workers who called on this.

Will my colleague stand with us and keep pushing the current government to make sure that these jobs are there, in the clean-tech sector that is taking a revolutionary approach around the world?

- (1300)

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, I will always stand up for farmers.

Here is the funny thing. In my riding, in the soup and salad bowl of Canada, the Holland Marsh, half the riding is on propane. My farmers cannot even get natural gas infrastructure. There is a 35% tariff on fertilizer. Where is the money going? It is going overseas. They are sending money to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. People in my riding feel like they are on the outside looking in. They have had enough. They want to do the right thing. They want to cut their costs.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, once again, it is a privilege for me to rise in the House to speak for the people of Lévis—Lotbinière, whom I proudly represent. From the outset, I would like to say that back home, we do not have the same definition of the word “budget” as the Prime Minister, nor the same approach to budgeting.

On March 28, the Minister of Finance and this spendthrift Prime Minister proved to us for the eighth time in a row that the Liberals are incompetent and that their only talent is keeping us in the financial hole we have fallen into, in spite of ourselves, with debt interest payments we will never see the end of in our lifetime.

The Prime Minister is proud to wear the same rose-coloured glasses as the Minister of Finance, but even worse is that he is out of touch with reality in Canada. He sees us as a country to be envied within the G7.

I am going to show the House that we are getting poorer all the time, that we are living in poverty.

To talk about this budget, I will begin by saying that I am very annoyed by all the words that ring false coming from the Prime Minister, starting with the words “budget” and “economy”.

This brings me to an important question: Does the Prime Minister know what a piggy bank is? When the Prime Minister appeared on *Tout le monde en parle* on April 2, he talked about a large pot of money that certainly should not be saved for tough times or for a contingency. It is a big pot of money that could be used to balance the budget within five years, if only the Prime Minister knew how to count. I believe that he views it as a huge pile of cash or an unlimited jackpot for him to spend.

The only problem is that there is no more money. All these investments he is announcing are being made on credit. I cannot even fathom the amount of interest that will have to be repaid. I am picturing a big warehouse filled with pallets laden with bundles of money. It is really outrageous.

The exceptionally spendthrift Prime Minister is the perfect example of someone who never had to save up their hard-earned pennies in a piggy bank as a child.

For ordinary people, a dollar is still a dollar, because loonies are not made of gold. I say that as a reminder to the Prime Minister, who is about to shell out \$43 billion on a new spending spree with the unconditional support of our NDP friends. Theirs is a beautiful love story, but it is costing us very dearly.

Currently leading Canada is a Prime Minister who has never had to make tough choices, as thousands of families are doing right now. We are not talking about choosing between buying a huge TV on credit and subscribing to cable TV channels. We are talking about choosing between buying groceries and paying the electricity bill or making car payments to be able to get to work.

The Budget

With the Liberal-NDP coalition, we are not dealing with two teams that decided to pool resources in order to be able to offer Canadians more money. Instead, we have two political parties that have joined forces to find ways to spend even more of Canadians' money, because their own pockets are now empty or, even worse, because they are actually spending the future savings of generations yet to be born. Simply put, the big pot is broken and is now empty.

The Liberal-NDP coalition is undermining democracy in Canada and in our institutions. Canadians did not vote for this hypocrisy in the last election. However, this is not the first time in Canadian history that a party that will never have a chance to be in power has resorted to scheming with the Liberals to achieve its ends with no legitimacy.

I would like to talk about another word that I heard on April 2 that the Prime Minister does not seem to know the meaning of, and that is the word "austerity". When did being reasonable and fiscally responsible or using good judgment and common sense become synonymous with austerity in Canada?

● (1305)

Even more serious than austerity, in my opinion, is the fact that people can no longer make ends meet, even by tightening their belt or earning a higher salary. Inflation keeps driving up the price of housing, mortgages, groceries and all the basic necessities. Before this Liberal government came to power, it took only 39% of the average wage to make the monthly payment on an average home. Today, that number has increased to 62%.

Just last week, my heart broke once again when I had to help a family with three children in my riding who could no longer afford food and shelter. The pandemic, coupled with the cost of living, is putting the squeeze on millions of Canadians who have no savings and no available credit. They have nothing left. Many are skipping a meal every day, and people are increasingly using food banks on a weekly basis. Where and when will this end?

I am not knocking the green energy sources of the future, quite the contrary. They are what we are all hoping for. We, the Conservatives, were the first to offer energy efficiency tax credits. I predict that more and more people will turn to solar energy, but not for the right reasons or the same reasons. They will do it because they no longer have the ability or the opportunity to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table. Basically, they will be out on the street. That is so sad.

Canada has the lowest number of housing units per 1,000 residents of any G7 country. Because of strong population growth, the number of housing units per 1,000 Canadians has been dropping since 2016, a date that makes me think of the 2015 election. An additional 100,000 homes would have been required to keep the ratio of housing units to population stable since 2016, which still leaves us well below the G7 average and well under what the Liberal government promised. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Canada now needs 3.5 million more housing units than planned to restore affordability.

I see the Prime Minister cockily saying that we will bring in foreign workers to deal with the labour shortage, even though we already have trouble providing decent housing for homeless people,

Canadian families and seniors. Will the government tell us where these missing affordable housing units are going to come from, when we know that mortgages and rent have almost doubled since the Liberals took office?

Stress and anxiety have now become an inherent part of life for millions of Canadians. Parents, children and grandparents are worried because they know that opportunities are dwindling in Canada. Not so long ago, many people never would have thought they would end up in this precarious situation. They are living a nightmare, with no chance of waking up. In eight years, the Liberals have brought us to a nightmarish reality.

Legalizing marijuana did not help at all. Written briefs to the House and the work of committees can attest to that. Countries that legalized marijuana saw an increase in crime. Surprise, surprise, that is what we are seeing now too: a 32% increase in crime. They also reported an increase in mental health problems. We too are seeing an increase in the number of people who are facing mental health challenges. We are also seeing increased substance abuse and a rise in deaths related to drugs, the hard drugs that the Liberal Party wanted to legalize at all costs. That is the Liberal legacy, or should I say, the Liberal investment in our society. For shame.

Not so long ago, we could say that any problem could be solved through policy, but that was before the Liberal era. The best way to put an end to the Liberal government that is destroying our future has always been to show them the door. Since 2015, if the Prime Minister had been paying attention to his big pot of money, as he likes to call it when he talks about the economy, we would not be in this situation.

Everyone has heard the phrase "the sky is blue and hell is red". As a result of this NDP-Liberal coalition, everyone will be smiling as they think about what they like, but the real truth that is now on the lips of all Canadian workers is that they are paying far too much in taxes right now because the Liberal government is wasting far too much money.

The 2023 budget continues the Liberal practice of depending on tax increases and inflationary deficits. That is why I will be voting against the budget, to honour those who work hard for their money and know how to count.

● (1310)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when I look at the budget, I see a budget that very much reflects what Canadians want to see. We get a first-hand look at that. In the past week, we have had the Prime Minister touring the country and having town halls. In Winnipeg, he was relatively close to the north end. He met with tradespeople. The feedback we are receiving is very encouraging. We realize there is still more work to be done; we will continue to work to ensure the budget and legislative measures brought forward in the House reflect what Canadians' expectations are.

Can the member explain to Canadians why the Conservative Party committed to voting against the budget even before it knew what was in the budget?

The Budget

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, the answer is relatively simple. Canadians are all struggling to find a home to rent or buy. There is absolutely nothing in the budget to ensure a future for Canadians who need housing. It is going to be very expensive. Over the past eight years of Liberal rule, the cost of housing has doubled and almost tripled. The cost of home ownership has truly outstripped the incomes of most Canadians. It is truly shameful that this government is letting Canadians sleep in the streets.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, with all due respect for my colleague, it is important to be vigilant when talking about money. We often see bills in the House whose purpose is precisely to help the economy. Bill C-11, the online streaming act, and the bill on supply management come to mind.

I would like my colleague to explain why the Conservative government will agree with something here in the House, but then change their minds and drag things out at committee. This should help us respond to the current challenges.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear my colleague talk about “the Conservative government”. Perhaps she can see into the future and knows that Canada will be in a better position.

We will have a lot of cleaning up to do in a few months. I hope my colleague will help us do that, to give Canadians some hope.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, in the last federal election in 2021, I campaigned extensively on dental care. I for one am very proud that I am helping force the government to deliver. Last year it was for children under the age of 12. This year it is for children under the age of 18, persons with disabilities and seniors. It is fine if the Conservatives want to vote against those measures.

Once we move toward a full program that is implemented, can the Conservatives commit today to keeping that program in place, or are they going to dismantle it and force low-income families to fend for themselves as is the status quo right now?

• (1315)

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, that is a lovely thought; however, we believe that health care falls to the provinces. If the government, in its coalition with the NDP, had transferred more money to the provinces for health care, Canadians would probably have gotten more services.

This is an example of two different visions for Canada. The Liberals think they can centralize everything in Ottawa, whereas constitutionally, health care services fall to the provinces.

[English]

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Milton.

I am proud to rise in the House of Commons today to speak on budget 2023, our government's plan to build a stronger, more sustainable and more secure Canadian economy for everyone.

Budget 2023 is a made-in-Canada plan that builds a stronger middle class, an affordable economy and a healthy future from coast to coast to coast. Canadians have demonstrated their strength and resilience over the last few years as global economies have moved towards recovering from the COVID recession. In Canada, we have seen 830,000 more Canadians employed than before the pandemic, unemployment near a record low and a record 85.7% labour force participation rate for Canadian women, which has been supported by our Canada-wide system of affordable early learning and child care.

In budget 2023, our government is responding to global economic challenges by delivering new targeted inflation relief to the Canadians who need it most, strengthening our universal public health care system, rolling out a new Canadian dental care plan for millions of Canadians and making transformative investments to build Canada's clean economy and create good middle-class jobs across Canada.

We understand and recognize the importance of investing in affordable housing, which is why our government is committed to ensuring that every Canadian has a safe and affordable place to call home. I have met with my constituents in Surrey Centre, who expressed their concerns with the rising costs of housing and the barriers to being a first-time homeowner. To confront these barriers our government has announced significant investments and support for the reallocation of funding, which will amplify the construction of new affordable homes for the Canadians who need it most. To support our communities' most vulnerable and those experiencing homelessness, budget 2023 will deliver over \$500 million to achieve our goal of ending chronic homelessness through Reaching Home, Canada's homelessness strategy.

In budget 2022, our government committed to introducing a tax-free first home savings account; the implementation of this plan would provide prospective first-time home buyers the ability to save \$40,000 with the benefit of a tax deductible. Budget 2023 has delivered on this commitment, and we are happy to announce that as of April 1, financial institutions are now able to start offering the tax-free first home savings account to Canadians. In fact, I was in the elevator today, and I saw the first ads going up for this first-time home savings account for Canadians.

In addition to affordable housing, the rising costs at the grocery store have affected many Canadians. The increased prices on essential goods have caused many to go without. Budget 2023 is committed to providing new, targeted inflation relief to the Canadians experiencing food insecurity. Budget 2023 proposes to introduce a one-time grocery rebate, providing \$2.5 billion in targeted inflation relief for 11 million low- and modest-income Canadians and families. The grocery rebate will provide eligible couples with two children with up to an extra \$467, single Canadians without children with up to \$234 and seniors with up to \$225.

The Budget

COVID-19 created and exacerbated challenges for Canada's health care system. We recognize that many Canadians do not have a family doctor and that health care workers are still recovering from their tireless efforts during the pandemic. We recognize how crucial our universal health care system is for the well-being of Canadians and the importance of supporting provinces and territories in delivering better health care results, regardless of where people live.

Budget 2023 delivers the government's plan to provide an additional \$198.3 billion over 10 years, including \$46.2 billion in new funding for provinces and territories. We believe that all Canadians deserve access to health care services. However, we recognize that many rural and remote communities lack access to primary health care because of a shortage of health professionals. Our government addressed this shortage in budget 2022, announcing a 50% increase to the maximum amount of forgivable Canada student loans for doctors and nurses working in underserved rural or remote communities. This year, our government has proposed \$45.9 million over four years, with \$11.7 million ongoing to expand this program to more rural communities. Our government is committed to retaining doctors from coast to coast to coast so that every Canadian has access to primary health care.

• (1320)

In 2021, it was my personal promise to the people of Surrey Centre that I would advocate and push to have a Simon Fraser University primary care medical school for Surrey, for the purposes of primary care, rural medicine and indigenous care. I am proud to say that it is moving ahead, with the provincial government already committing \$6 million. It is expected to open and take in its first students in 2026, and in short order after that, have a full school thereafter.

An important component of our health is access to dental care. However, many children go without these critical services because of the cost. The Canada dental benefit is now providing eligible parents with direct, upfront, tax-free payments to cover the costs of dental care for their children under the age of 12. To date, our government has supported more than 240,000 children across Canada, who are now able to go to the dentist.

In budget 2023, we plan to expand this program to children 18 and under, seniors 65 and older and those suffering with disabilities. We plan to deliver a transformative investment of \$13 billion over five years and provide \$4.4 billion ongoing to implement the Canadian dental care plan. This plan would provide dental coverage for uninsured Canadians with an annual family income of less than \$90,000.

Immigration has historically reunited families and contributed to the Canadian economy, and it continues to do so. The global pandemic changed how we could process immigration requests. Canadians and newcomers were forced to experience unacceptable wait times. To address this, our government has adopted new technologies, streamlined processing and made significant new investments, including \$135 million in 2022-23 to address immigration application backlogs.

In doing so, 5.2 million applications for permanent residence, temporary residence and citizenship were processed in 2022. Our

government committed to implementing these new technologies to move more key services online, including confirmation of permanent residence status, introducing online citizenship testing and ceremonies.

Our government recognizes that the cost of living has affected all Canadians and that students pursuing an education need support. Budget 2023 proposes to enhance student financial assistance starting August 1, 2023. This proposal includes increasing Canada student grants by 40%, which could provide up to \$4,200 for full-time students; raising the interest-free Canada student loan limit; and waiving the requirement for mature students to undergo credit screening in order to qualify for federal student loans.

Budget 2023 would make life more affordable, provide improved health care services for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast, provide targeted funding for students and workers, and encourage investments in the green energy economy.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to draw to the hon. member's attention that there is again no commitment to increasing funding for the Canadian Armed Forces in this budget.

We saw in the last report from NATO that Canadian investment in our armed forces and our collective defence with our allies has fallen to 1.29% of the GDP rather than 2%, where it is supposed to be. That is down from 1.34%, where it was just a couple of years ago.

Under the Liberals, the government continues to allow spending to erode. From his recent trip to Taiwan, the member knows how important collective defence is and how, in these times of great power rivalries, we are dealing with the Communist regime in Beijing, the corrupt kleptocrats in the Kremlin and the war in Ukraine. Therefore, we need to be standing on guard.

Will the member ensure that his government makes the proper investments in the Canadian Armed Forces so that we have enough staff, which is currently down 10,000 members, and the equipment to do the tasks that our military is so often called upon to do?

• (1325)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, I witnessed first-hand the needs of the Canadian military and Canada's defence needs on our trip to Taiwan, noting that many countries rely on us and our support and our allies.

Canada's commitments to NORAD, NATO and the fight against Russia's war on Ukraine have demonstrated that we punch above our weight. We are committed. We have just ordered the F-35s, a new fleet of fighter jets. We will continue to make the necessary investments, just as we are doing in NORAD, with more radar stations.

The Budget

When it comes to human resources challenges, I think we are facing that across the board in Canada, not only in our military. It is across government and the private sector. For that, we are doing as much as we can to gain immigration, give more opportunities and fill that employment gap of almost one million that we have in Canada right now.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member will remember, of course, our colleague Jack Harris, who used to be the member of Parliament for St. John's East. In the previous Parliament, he introduced a non-binding motion asking the House to affirm support for dental care for low-income families. At that time, the Liberals voted against it, and I am glad the NDP has pressured them to see the light.

Maybe my hon. colleague can talk about his own personal journey, from being against dental care to now fully supporting it and realizing the important benefits it is going to provide to families, not only in my community but in his as well.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, it is a good question, but I think Canada's road to recovery was a big challenge after the Harper government. There were a lot of things that needed to be done in Canada. I think we had to make a commitment to the Canada child benefit, as I had seen, first-hand, cheques being given to millionaires' families and the taxing of those who were much in need. As well, we needed \$10-a-day child care to give women, particularly, a greater opportunity to participate in the labour force, from which we are now seeing results. We also needed to work on health care in general. I think the timing was right for a dental care plan, and I want to thank my colleagues from the NDP for supporting it. However, it is a joint initiative, and I am glad that, when Parliament works together, we can solve a lot of things and will continue to do so in the near future.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, the member for Surrey Centre spoke about the first home savings account. It is expected to cost at least \$1.4 billion a year, but it is disproportionately going to go to higher-income Canadians, families that, for example, have the means to gift their kids or grandkids a \$40,000 tax-deductible, tax-sheltered nest egg.

I wonder if the member could comment on his interest in potentially working to improve what is being proposed right now or to redirect those funds to what we do need: investments to build the non-market affordable housing that would help address the housing crisis we are in.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, we have a national housing strategy with \$86 billion over 10 years committed to it, which is not a small feat. These are additions to the strategy to expand it. We began by helping those who are homeless and those who need an extra hand. The residential construction financing initiative helps exactly those people in non-market housing to get more affordable housing. There has been \$26 billion, if not more, injected into that, with \$10 billion in the last fall economic statement. We are working in all facets of it.

The first home savings account is one tool, but not an exclusive one, in the tool chest. We will look at other ways to modernize it and perfect it so that it helps all families.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today to discuss budget 2023, which is, of course, a made-in-Canada plan to build a strong middle class, an affordable economy and a healthier future. In this budget, we are proposing many measures to make life more affordable from coast to coast to coast, to improve service delivery for Canadians, to achieve better tax fairness, to strengthen our health care system and to develop a cleaner economy and invest in clean electricity.

It is nice to be back in the House of Commons after just two weeks back home for Easter, for Vaisakhi, for Passover and for Ramadan. We also celebrated other events in my riding. We raised the flag for Sikh Heritage Month, as well as for World Autism Awareness Day and many other important causes.

I had the opportunity to visit quite a few businesses. I did three school visits, as well as two high school visits set up by two incredible co-op students, Abigail from Milton District High School and Arianna from St. Francis Xavier, and I had the chance to speak to over 400 students at those two visits alone.

I am going to reflect on some of the conversations I had with students in my riding because, as I always say whenever I go into a classroom, auditorium or gymnasium to talk to the young people in Canada, students might not have votes but they do have voices, and I like to be able to bring their voices to the House of Commons because they have the most invested in the future. I think that this really is a budget for the future and a budget designed for that generation.

More specifically, I would like to talk, for the first half of my speech at least, about what we are going through right now and what we are doing to develop a clean economy. In the last couple of weeks, I had the chance to visit two electric companies. These are companies that build components for decarbonization, for electric vehicles and for pretty much all of the things that we do not understand. I am not an electrical engineer by any stretch of the imagination, but the components that Phoenix Contact has been building for the last 80 years, many of them built in Milton, Ontario, really do fuel the electrification future we talk about. If someone were to open up an electric car charger and look inside, a lot of those components would have been made and assembled in Milton, Ontario.

The Budget

They were really grateful for this budget, primarily because it is clear that we are investing in decarbonization and the green economy of the future and building more good union jobs in places like Milton that are getting us closer and closer to that net-zero future that we know is so necessary in Canada, which is really leading the way in that regard. Canada has demonstrated to countries around the world not only that it is important to invest in a green future but also that one really does not have a plan for the economy of the future unless one has a plan for the environment too. That is true of budget 2023.

The other company I visited is called Eaton Canada, on Industrial Drive. I toured the shop floor with the minister of federal economic development for southern Ontario. We got to walk around and visit with a couple of the workers on the floor and see some of the really incredible innovations happening right there in Milton, building not just components for electric vehicles but also all sorts of components that go into things that run on electricity rather than on fossil fuels. It was really extraordinary. They also reflected on the value of this budget, in particular the investment tax credits for clean electricity, for green technology and for all of the innovations necessary to get us to net zero by 2050.

We also did a couple of visits to small businesses in my riding, reflecting on the measure in budget 2023 to reduce credit card fees. I know hardly anybody who brings cash with them anymore when they are buying something small, such as going in for a coffee and paying \$4.50. I always feel a little bit sheepish about pulling out my phone or my credit card and paying for something under five dollars, because I know that the small business has the burden of those credit card fees. I am thrilled that, in budget 2023, we are tackling those head-on. We are going to try to reduce them by 27%, and that will save small businesses across the country upward of \$10 billion over the next decade.

That is extraordinary. It improves productivity. It allows them to hire more employees. It increases their profits and allows them to keep prices low, which is an advantage for small businesses like Butcher Bar in Milton, where I went for an espresso with the minister. We sat down and had coffee and discussed some of these measures as people were coming in and out, buying their groceries. I also had the opportunity to discuss with them the rising cost of groceries and why they thought groceries were so expensive.

Constituents in my riding of Milton know that inflation is real. It is hitting them in the pocketbook, and it is hitting them in the shopping cart. They want a little bit of help. They were really grateful that the grocery rebate was also part of budget 2023.

● (1330)

The grocery rebate is going to invest upwards of \$467 back into the pockets of Canadian families that are just trying to pay the bills. They just want to be able to go to the grocery store, fill up their carts with good, nutritious food and bring it home to their families without experiencing the rising costs that are definitely the case around the world. Many of my constituents reflected on the fact that they recognize that inflation in Canada is lower than in other places. However, that is cold comfort to families just trying to make ends meet, so the \$467 is going to go a really long way to supporting the finances of families in Milton and right across this country.

There is another reflection I made at one of the school visits, at Milton District High School, I think. It was on the fact that, with budget 2023, Canada student loans will be interest-free forever. That includes Canada apprenticeship loans for those who are going to college or doing trade apprenticeships. My youngest constituents, in high school, were thrilled when they heard that. They will never actually know interest on student loans, and that is the best part. They are not going to have to experience that burden.

In fact, there were five or six teachers in the room when I brought this up, and a lot of the students were looking at me like they were going to save a couple of hundred or a couple of thousand dollars. It was the teachers in the room, who all have master's degrees in education, who let out big breaths and thought it was actually a huge thing for young people. The students will never actually know how much money they are saving, because the burden will never be placed on them in the first place. That will allow young people to get their first start when they finish school and go off and get their first job. They will be able to start saving sooner and perhaps invest more quickly into the tax-free first-time homebuyers bank account, which is another measure in this budget that is going to support the futures of young people in Milton.

A couple of questions I received after my speech at St. Francis Xavier were about housing affordability, and today we have heard a couple of reflections on housing affordability. I want to point out that the national housing plan that this government has put forth over the last couple of years still has quite a lot of money to invest across the country. We are still seeing the minister of housing make announcements across the country in various communities, particularly in places like Halton, where I grew up and which I am thrilled to be able to represent.

Halton is, without having to put too fine a point on it, quite wealthy. It is a very fortunate community. When I looked at the rankings of the socio-economic statuses of the various ridings in Canada, Milton was in the top 10, and I want to recognize that, in a lot of other ridings, many communities are not as fortunate as Milton, specifically. However, I grew up in community housing at the Chatauqua Co-op. I will always remember this, and I will never lose sight of the fact that non-market housing solutions are going to move us toward a more affordable housing ecosystem in Canada.

The Budget

I was reflecting on a couple of speeches from before we went on break, by members from various parties on what they thought of solutions to the housing and affordability crisis in Canada. I always come back to the fact that co-op housing, community housing and quality supportive housing are the direction in which we ought to be going, and I am glad to see \$1.5 billion in the previous year's budget. That has not all been spent, thankfully, so there is still lots of work to do. There is plenty of funding left in the housing accelerator fund, which is just coming online now for municipalities like Milton to find some really innovative solutions to housing more people more affordably in their communities.

One of the other visits I was able to do was to a dentist's office. I went by Mill Ridge Family Dental Care to see Dr. Sinan and discuss the government dental plan. Before I get a question from the NDP about this, it is great to see that the dental benefit is working for so many Canadians. It is an example of how Parliament can work together and achieve mutual goals and common objectives.

I spoke to one family with four kids. Both parents are independent contractors, so they are self-employed and do not have benefits. The dental care program is going to make it possible for their kids to see a dentist to get their teeth cleaned, to fill cavities and to make sure their smiles are healthy. It is important to note that, as Dr. Sinan pointed out, dentists do not just do work on teeth; it is also about oral care, oral health and full body health. There are a lot of things that can be diagnosed by looking into a young person's mouth. It was great to see Dr. Sinan. I know the parents are grateful for the dental benefit, and so am I.

I would be happy to take a couple of questions.

• (1335)

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, in his speech, my colleague referred to the grocery rebate, which we on this side of the House know is a GST rebate rebranded to be a grocery rebate. I have heard from many people in my riding about the affordability of groceries and about inflation. We have been studying that at the agriculture committee, and one of the reasons we are seeing an increase in prices is that some of the policies made by the Liberal government make it more unaffordable for farmers to produce food. Then, the prices and costs are passed down the line to consumers.

I am just wondering if my colleague cares to comment on how the government could actually look at policies to help farmers stay in business and keep their costs down so we can have food security in this country.

• (1340)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, I am happy to have an opportunity to talk about agriculture and farming, because my community of Milton, being one of the most diverse in the country, has quite a lot of farmers and food producers.

One of the issues that came up at my last agriculture and farming town hall was the cost of fertilizer. I am really glad that was identified as a problem and that solutions were provided in budget 2023 so we can ensure that Canadian farmers are able to produce food, regardless of the market challenges occurring right now due to Rus-

sia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and the pressures it is putting on various fertilizer markets around the world.

I am always there for farmers across Halton. When my family immigrated from Holland to a community not that far away from my colleague's riding, they farmed apples and tobacco. Every time I take a bite out of an apple, as I did from La Rose when I got a great Honeycrisp the other day, I thank a Canadian farmer.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the dental care issue is significant. I had a chance to tour St. Clair College, and I want to congratulate Patti France, the first woman president of the college, on her upcoming retirement as well as John Fairley for hosting us.

What became evident was not only the care of patients, but that dental hygienists often have to work two or three different jobs. Some of them do not even have their own coverage. I would like the member to comment on how this can also improve working conditions. They often have to cobble a couple of jobs together, buy hopefully with more patients, some will start their own collectives as businesses and so forth and be able to have longer, stable employment versus having to find work piecemeal, especially when there is a shortage right now.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, that was a great question from my colleague from Windsor. I am really grateful for the fact that it was National Dental Hygienists Week when we released the budget. I had the opportunity to sit down with a fairly large group of Canadian hygienists, and we discussed the budget, which was not out at the time, although they were looking forward to it. They were really glad for these investments in dental care, because a lot of things, like the cleanings, the preparation and the lessons young people get on how to floss and brush more effectively, come from dental hygienists.

I appreciate the opportunity to thank dental hygienists today for their extraordinary work and recognize that their working conditions always need to be improved, because they are really the front-line workers for dentists. The member for Windsor West has reminded me that that I am due for a cleaning, so I will make sure to call my dentist after this and book one.

The Budget

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I just want to correct something the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford mentioned. He said there was a motion put forward by Mr. Jack Harris, a former MP in this House for St. John's East, and that the Liberals voted against it. I want to correct the record. I actually voted in favour of that motion with Mr. Harris at that time.

I am delighted that my colleague, in the speech he just gave, talked about credit card fees going down, student loan fees going down and dental care for kids. However, we are also going to expand it to low-income seniors. Could the member talk about the significance of that for seniors going forward?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Avalon for bringing up an issue that is very near and dear to my heart. At my constituency office in Milton, which is a very busy place, a lot of seniors call to say the threshold for dental care from the province is far too low. Basically, seniors need to be extraordinarily poor before they can access insurance through the province, and that needs to change.

This year, our government, in budget 2023, is committed to broadening the dental care benefit to seniors as well as kids under 18. I think a lot of 17-year-olds would say they are not kids, so I will say people under 18 whose parents are not insured. A number of seniors who have called my office to say they need root canals or minor surgeries are relying on charitable dentists giving them a good deal. This government is stepping up and saying they do not have to rely on charity; they can rely on us.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government, we are facing some of the most difficult economic times our country has ever seen. In this budget, the Liberals have decided to continue increasing taxes and spending without limit. The budget contains \$63 billion in new spending. That is an extra \$4,200 of debt per household.

To add insult to injury, on April 1 the Prime Minister's carbon tax increased. The carbon tax now adds 14¢ per litre, which will cost the average Canadian family over \$800 this year alone, even after the rebates.

Budget 2023 was an opportunity to give Canadians hope, but instead the Liberals chose to keep their hands in the pockets of Canadians with more inflationary spending and more taxes. The Conservatives cannot support this budget and will be voting against it.

After hundreds of phone calls, in-person visits, contacts and emails with people from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, it is clear that the Liberal government is completely out of touch with Canadians. The Liberals have had no idea of the sacrifices Canadians have been making day to day since they came to power and cut their secret backroom deal with the NDP. Savings accounts are being depleted, credit cards are being used to purchase everyday items, home ownership is now a pipe dream for future generations and they will be on the hook for the Prime Minister's reckless vanity spending.

After listening to Canadians, the Conservatives had three key demands we wanted included in budget 2023 to restore hope to this

country. The first was allowing Canadians to bring home powerful paycheques with lower taxes and scrapping the carbon tax.

With yearly increases to the carbon tax now in play, Canadians who are already in a desperate place are being squeezed again with little left to give. Frances, from Chatham, reached out and shared his family's situation with me. Here are his words: "We eat less, go out less and are stressed."

A University of Saskatchewan study reports that one in five Canadians is skipping meals, and Second Harvest reports that in 2023 there will be a 60% increase in food bank usage. That is a sombre statistic. Mothers are adding water to their baby formula, and I have heard from people in my own riding, and this is sad, that some seniors are even resorting to eating cat food to survive.

How did Canada, a once prosperous nation, turn into a country where Canadians are going to bed with empty stomachs? This is what happens when we have a Prime Minister who does not pay attention to monetary policy.

The government proudly proclaims that the budget includes a one-time grocery rebate, but news flash, it is all smoke and mirrors. It is the GST rebate branded as a grocery rebate. What the Liberals fail to mention is the rebate disappears thanks to their carbon tax.

The Liberal government gives little and takes more in the same breath and expects people to be thankful for it. Canadians are seeing through this Liberal charade. The Conservatives know that real people deserve a real plan to deal with the cost of living crisis and that no serious plan will be coming until we form government.

Restaurants, bars, wineries, distilleries and breweries are being unduly punished by the Prime Minister's tax plan. The 2% increase to the excise tax this year on alcohol will negatively impact an already struggling industry. The temporary cap on the increase of the excise tax is only for one more year, and we can be certain the tax will increase again after that.

The Conservatives fought to scrap this tax in its entirety. Unfortunately, there is nothing the Liberals will not tax. Hard-working Canadians should be rewarded for their labour. Under a Conservative government, we will make sure this becomes a reality again.

The Conservatives also demanded a budget that would help bring home lower prices by ending the inflationary debt and deficits that drive up inflation and interest rates. Last year, when budget 2022 was tabled, the MP for University—Rosedale said that Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio was Canada's "fiscal anchor" and must decline for the country's finances to be sustainable.

The Budget

If budget 2023 passes, Canada will be without a fiscal anchor. Let that sink in. There will be no return to a balanced budget and no plan on reducing our debt load. According to a recent Angus Reid poll, nearly half of Canadians want the government to cut spending and present a plan to balance the budget.

The Conservatives agree. Under our leader, the Conservatives would bring in a dollar-for-dollar tax law that would require the government to find a dollar of savings for every dollar of new spending. That would curb spending significantly and bring accountability to government.

● (1345)

The Liberals are always looking for ways to spend more money at the expense of Canadians. They tax, they borrow and then they print more money. The Conservatives understand how hard Canadians work for their money. Budget 2023 continues to tax Canadians to cover for the Prime Minister's out-of-control spending. The taxation needs to stop. The Conservatives will not support this tax-and-spend budget.

The third thing that Canadians were looking for in budget 2023 was a plan to bring homes to Canadians that they can afford by removing government gatekeepers to free up land and speed up building permits. Home ownership has become a remote reality for Canadians wanting to enter the housing market. Nine out of 10 Canadians who do not own a home say they feel they likely never will. Under the Liberals, everything has doubled. Minimum down payments have doubled. Mortgage payments have doubled. Rents have doubled.

The Liberals have taken away what was once a proud milestone in the life of Canadians. Instead of parents visiting their kids' new homes, parents are moving their kids back home to their basement in the house where they grew up. This is what happens when we have a Prime Minister who does not do numbers, who thinks economic growth comes from using a credit card and who does not understand the real impacts of consumer debt. What is the Prime Minister's response? It is to keep drowning Canada. The dream of home ownership has been trampled thanks to the Liberals.

We also have a housing shortage in the country, and according to the CMHC, it is projected that Canada will need 3.5 million new homes to restore affordability. There is no plan in budget 2023 to address Canada's housing crisis. The Liberals have no plan to get homes built. Canada must bring homes people can afford by removing gatekeepers, freeing up land and speeding up building permits. A Conservative government would withhold federal funding from cities that refuse to remove gatekeepers. Affordable housing is not a priority for the Liberal government, and we cannot support a budget that does not address this.

On agriculture, a pillar of the Canadian economy, we see a Liberal government unwavering in its attempt to break the backs of farmers and compromise Canada's food security at home and abroad. The budget does nothing to address the rising cost of fuel, feed, fertilizer, transportation and the energy necessary to grow and produce food.

● (1350)

The sector has also been hit hard with the carbon tax, making food production more expensive and the cost of food even more unaffordable for Canadians. When the carbon tax triples by 2030, it will compromise a farmer's ability to make a profit, leading to bankruptcies and the exit of farmers from the industry. That is already happening. The budget confirms that the Liberals' plan to reduce fertilizer use, which will decrease food production, will jeopardize our food security.

According to a recent report from RBC and the University of Guelph, the industry is set to lose 40% of farm operators to retirement in the next 10 years. With all the farmers retiring and no one entering the business because they cannot afford to, we have a serious problem looming in Canada. Here is an equation I hope the Prime Minister will understand: No farms equals no food. More and more family farms are closing due to the excessive cost of running them.

Reducing fertilizer will surely boost the number of Canadians visiting food banks as their grocery prices continue to jump due to a shortage of food supply. According to a study by MNP, the proposed Liberal reduction in fertilizer targets will cost the Canadian economy \$48 billion by 2030. This is what a Canada run by NDP ideology will look like: weak, gutted and hopeless.

I am sure everyone in the House has heard the phrase "actions speak louder than words". The budget is full of words. How can Canadians trust a government with a long record of waste? We have the \$15-billion arrive scam app, the \$6,000-a-night hotel room for the Prime Minister, a cabinet minister giving her friend a government contract and \$100 million to McKinsey. It does not stop. With government revenue expected to decrease, Canadians can expect a flood of new taxes for years to come under the Liberals.

A constituent reached out to me with her views on what her country has become under the Liberals. Delaney wrote, "We cannot afford our life. I don't spend any money beyond our needs, but it is to a point where I wonder how I will continue to heat my house for my family and provide healthy nutritious meals for my kids. There is something seriously wrong with this country and currently I am not proud to be a Canadian. It is an embarrassment."

Statements by Members

Empty stomachs, unaffordable housing and high taxes are what eight years of the Liberal government have done to Canada, and budget 2023 does little to address the real issues Canadians are facing. I will not support this budget, and I am proudly joining my Conservative colleagues in voting against it.

• (1355)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, at the beginning of her speech, the member said that Canada was “a once prosperous nation”. Is this to suggest that Canada is no longer a prosperous country? If that is what the member is suggesting, to whom is she comparing us? Would she say we are more or less prosperous than the United States, for example?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to the hon. member, I see that there are conversations happening and I can hear the conversations from down here. Therefore, I would ask members, if they want to have those conversations, to take them out into the lobby to allow for the debate to be heard here in the House.

The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, after eight years, Canadians cannot afford to live. It is a tax-and-spend government.

William, a senior in my riding, wrote to me: “The cost of no name chips is \$1.33 per bag if you buy 3 at No Frills. Walk into a Shoppers Drug Mart the same bag in the same package is twice the price or more. Walk into a Zehrs that same bag is 1&3/4 more. At Sobey's or Metro, a small plastic cup the size of a small coffee with 8-10 grapes in it you'll spend \$7.00. The cost of 6 muffins is now \$7.99, a year ago they were 4.99. I'm a pensioner living on \$1750 a month. If I didn't own my home, I'd be screwed.”

He is not alone. I am hearing this from people all over this country, from all the people reaching out to my office and from the Canadians I talk to in the places I go. We are billions of dollars in debt, or trillions actually, and future generations are worried about their future because we are not prosperous. The Liberals have driven up inflation. They have driven up the cost of living. Canadians are feeling hopeless, and Conservatives are going to bring back hope for Canadians.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's great speech. In her speech, she was talking about average Canadians who are struggling. Could the member comment on the debt level of the average Canadian and where that is going?

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, we hear from families that they are less than \$200 a month away from bankruptcy. I constantly, on a daily basis, hear from people in my riding, which is a rural riding, and they talk about the carbon tax and how it is affecting their everyday lives. They share that they feel this is unnecessary and it punishes rural Canadians, especially where we live, in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, where we do not have public transportation available. In fact, one of my constituents, Marilyn, wrote to me with an excellent summary of the carbon tax: “I have noticed on my bills for natural gas home heating that they are charging HST on the federal carbon tax. To me, that seems like usury and I

believe that it is also illegal. Adding a tax upon a tax is getting out of hand.”

I fully agree. The Liberals continue to tax Canadians when they hurt the most. The carbon tax unfairly punishes rural Canadians and does nothing. The current government has done nothing and it has not met a single one of its environmental targets with this tax.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I know my colleague has a keen interest in agricultural issues. I have a technical question for her.

We are currently working on Bill C-282 in committee. This is a bill that was overwhelmingly supported by the Conservatives. Now we are witnessing a filibuster. I would like her opinion on that.

Does she think it is okay to filibuster? If the Conservatives are now against the bill, should they not just vote against it and own that position rather than blocking House proceedings?

[*English*]

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, what I am hearing from my constituents is that they are hurting and the cost of groceries has gone through the roof. The Liberals are promising a grocery rebate in this budget, but really it is just a GST rebate rebranded as a grocery rebate, and that would not do anything to help Canadians who are struggling right now.

We need to offer Canadians some hope, and I have been championing a grocery code of conduct to help Canadians' grocery prices go down by holding our big grocers accountable for their actions and how they nickel-and-dime farmers, which, in turn, passes on extra costs to consumers. We will continue to support Bill C-234, which would remove the carbon tax for on-farm use and the restrictions on fertilizer, because we need fertilizer to grow food. We will not support restrictions on fertilizer. We need to make a real difference.

The NDP-Liberals want to leave people hungry. They like big socialist governments where that has happened before. If we are not careful, we are going to see serious problems in our agriculture industry in the near future.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*English*]

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. FOUNDATION

Mr. Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on April 8, I had the honour of attending S.U.C.C.E.S.S.'s 50th golden anniversary celebration. It was my privilege to celebrate this important milestone with local community supporters and leaders, who generously donated over \$500,000 during the gala's festivities.

Founded in 1973, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is one of the largest diverse, inclusive and multi-service non-profit charitable organizations in Canada. Over the past 50 years, this organization has provided vital assistance to help immigrants settle and integrate into Canada's diverse society.

Through its service across Canada, I am proud to know that many of my constituents in Richmond Centre have greatly benefited from its services and programs. As we celebrate this significant anniversary, let us reflect on its important work of bringing people together, and let us continue our commitment to support newcomers and Canadians.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, six million Canadians do not have a family doctor, and countless others are forced to wait month after month, sometimes years, because of staffing shortages. We do not have enough doctors. We do not have enough nurses. It does not have to be this way.

Recently, I met Bill at an event I held. Bill is an immigrant from Europe and a brand new Canadian. In Europe, he was a surgeon, but not so here in Canada. There are 20,000 immigrants in Canada who are doctors but are not practising, and 30,000 nurses. Bill could not make it through because of the maze of regulations and the gatekeepers. I met some who are Uber drivers. What a disappointment for them. What a loss for Canada.

This has to change. The human anatomy is the same across the world. A Conservative government will deal with the gatekeepers and will make a way for immigrant doctors and nurses to practise.

* * *

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I visited the dental clinic at The Gathering Place, a street-level community centre in St. John's East. This visit held particular significance, as I have spent many years there as a volunteer, board member, fundraiser and executive director. I saw first-hand the connection between oral health and mental and physical well-being: vulnerable older persons, malnourished because oral disease prevented them from a diet other than soft liquids; young people with advanced tooth decay, too embarrassed to smile or enter the workforce; and deaths from self-medicated overdose to relieve oral pain.

The dental program at The Gathering Place was realized through a team of dedicated dentists and hygienists, who donate their time and expertise to ensure that the most vulnerable have access to oral health care. Now, the Canadian dental care plan in budget 2023 will ensure that all Canadians who need to access dental care can.

* * *

[Translation]

BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, we commemorated the 106th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, which was waged in 1917 during the First World War. No less than seven different Quebec-based regiments were active in

Statements by Members

Vimy, in northern France. Among them, was the legendary 22nd Battalion, the only French-speaking unit in the entire British army.

Under the orders of their brave and brilliant commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas-Louis Tremblay, the soldiers of the 22nd Battalion were tasked with eliminating pockets of resistance and clearing the enemy trenches after the initial assault waves. The 22nd Battalion took more than 500 prisoners during that successful operation. Vimy was a hard-fought victory because the soldiers from Quebec and Canada who served there suffered more than 10,600 casualties, 3,600 of which were fatal.

Let us never forget the price we had to pay, and have to pay, to overcome tyranny.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

JOSEPH BOYLE

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, born in the year that Canada became a nation, Joe Boyle is Yukon's version of Indiana Jones, with a touch of James Bond.

Joseph Boyle came north from Ontario in 1897, found gold and struck it rich. A gold-rush millionaire, "Klondike Joe" went on to launch industrial-scale gold mining in the Yukon. In 1905, he sponsored the legendary Dawson City Nuggets hockey team in their journey by dog sled, bicycle, ship and train to challenge the Ottawa Silver Sevens for the Stanley Cup.

When war broke out in 1914, Boyle recruited a 50-man machine gun battery of Yukon gold miners to fight for the Canadian Expeditionary Force. In the years to follow, Boyle reorganized allied Russia's military supply system, ran a network of spies for the British secret service, rescued Romanian royals from newly Bolshevik Russia and helped rebuild Romania after the war. In later years, he became an intimate friend, perhaps a lover, of Queen Marie of Romania.

His early death 100 years ago makes us wonder what more he might have done. Joe Boyle, the man with the heart of a Viking, dreamed and lived big: another Yukoner who made his mark on the world.

*Statements by Members***NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK**

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week we celebrate National Volunteer Week, and I want to acknowledge and thank all the incredible volunteers across West Nova's communities for their many contributions. It is without a doubt that our volunteers are an important part of the backbones of our communities. They offer so generously of their time to help others. Our volunteers have the backs of our citizens no matter what, and they continuously step up for the betterment of our communities.

[Translation]

Without the extraordinary contributions that volunteers make in our communities, our sports, cultural, community and recreational events would not be possible or nearly as successful. Thanks to their dedication, generosity and ability to adapt to all kinds of situations, our volunteers are an inspiration to everyone, and I am very proud of them.

[English]

I would like to take the opportunity to thank my volunteers, each and every one of them, for their generosity, their time and their cheerfulness, which greatly contribute to the well-being of our community. Our volunteers make our communities and country a better place, and they deserve our utmost gratitude and respect.

I wish a happy National Volunteer Week to all.

* * *

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past Friday the Sikh community celebrated Vaisakhi. Vaisakhi is the holiest day in the Sikh faith and marks the birth of the Khalsa. During this time of year, Sikh communities across Canada celebrate at their local gurdwaras and local community centres.

April is also a time for us to celebrate Sikh Heritage Month, when we recognize and celebrate the contributions Sikh Canadians have made to Canada. The first Sikhs arrived in Canada in 1897, and since then the Sikh community in Canada has played a pivotal role in science, business, social services and so much more. In Peel Region, organizations such as the Seva Food Bank, Sewa Meals for Humanity and SOCH Mental Health contribute to our community by keeping the values of Sikhism at their core. These values are equality, selfless service and generosity, to name a few.

Canada is the first country in the world to recognize Sikh Heritage Month, and I encourage everyone to take a moment to learn more about the vibrant history of the Sikh community in Canada. Please join me in wishing everyone celebrating a very happy Vaisakhi and Sikh Heritage Month.

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GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this budget reflects in a very real way what Canadians expect their government to do. We can talk about the grocery rebate to support well over 10 million Canadians, or we can talk about the expansion of the dental care program to cover yet more Canadians.

I want to highlight the strong support in this year's federal budget for skilled trades workers. We are actually doubling the tradesperson's tool deduction. That is a significant commitment to people in the trades.

Further to that, the Prime Minister has been conducting town halls throughout Canada. Just last week, in the city of Winnipeg, at the Manitoba Building Trades Institute site on McPhillips Street, we had an open town hall to talk about the budget and ensure that ongoing future budgets reflect what Canadians expect.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the government's soft-on-crime policies, Canadians do not feel safe to walk on the streets or use public transit.

An Edmonton police officer wrote to me, saying, "The most startling pattern development I have noticed recently is an increase in random, unprovoked assaults on innocent citizens. The constant struggle of the 'catch and release' of criminals for my profession cannot be overstated."

As reported by the National Post, police officers are being shot and killed on duty at unprecedented rates, and record numbers of Canadians are being randomly attacked by people they have never met. The government is doing nothing to stop it. In fact, it is making things worse by releasing violent criminals back onto the streets, sometimes in the same hour they were arrested.

A Conservative government would bring back mandatory jail time for violent crimes. We would crack down on easy access to bail, and we would keep violent offenders where they belong, which is behind bars.

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● (1410)

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April is Sikh Heritage Month, which recognizes the immense contributions that Sikh Canadians have made to Canadian society. We also celebrated Vaisakhi, which marks the creation of the Khalsa and the Sikh articles of faith. Vaisakhi, also known as Baisakhi, is an important festival for many Hindus, too.

This month I had the honour to host two Ugadi events on Parliament Hill. Ugadi, which was on March 22, is the new year for the Kannada- and Telugu-speaking Hindu communities. On April 14, Tamil Hindu Canadians celebrated their new year, Puthandu.

Statements by Members

I wish all of these communities a very happy and prosperous new year. It is a privilege to live in this wonderful country where we can celebrate and share our faiths and our festivals.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister's chief of staff emphasized that there was nothing he had not read or was not briefed on. However, as expected, no explanation was provided for his absence of action.

For example, over the last six years, NSICOP reported on the influence of foreign interference and made recommendations to the Prime Minister. Global Affairs identified Beijing campaigns aimed at discouraging Chinese Canadians from voting Conservative. The Prime Minister and ministers were briefed on Beijing's interference network, which involved at least 11 candidates. The director of CSIS was repeatedly asking the Prime Minister for legislative changes. What did he do in response? He did absolutely nothing.

It is clear that upholding Beijing's objective to defeat Conservatives was more important for the Liberals than prioritizing the security of our democratic institutions, which only intensifies the demand for an independent inquiry to openly investigate foreign interference in our country.

* * *

SOCIAL MEDIA

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, based on Bill C-11 and Bill C-18, we know that the government is committed to censoring what people can see, hear and post online. However, what has just come to light is that it is so committed to this that it has actually gotten a head start. It has been trying to censor social media platforms for quite some time.

Thanks to the question put forward by the member for Niagara West, we now have documents, which have been tabled in the House of Commons, and they show that the government pressured social media platforms 214 times in a 24-month period to get them to take down content. Sometimes this was valid due to impersonations or copyright violations, but many times it was simply because the government found the content to be embarrassing.

If adopted, Bill C-11 would take this type of pressuring tactic and make it legal, which means the social media companies would not be able to push back. They would simply have to comply.

Canadians deserve to have their freedom of speech protected. The government needs to back off from censoring speech. We will be calling for an emergency debate.

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[*Translation*]

QUEBEC MAJOR JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE SERIES

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is playoff time in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League. After sweeping the Blainville Armada, the Sherbrooke Phoenix will now face the Drummondville Voltigeurs. The famous "route 55" rivalry is back.

Having finished in third place after a record year, the Phoenix team is ready to give the Voltigeurs a lesson in how to play hockey. It is off to a good start.

I am so confident that the Phoenix will be victorious that I am taking up the challenge issued by the member for Richmond—Arthabaska to the member for Drummond. If the MP for Drummond accepts this challenge, he will come and eat poutine at the Louis Luncheonette in Sherbrooke while proudly wearing the Sherbrooke Phoenix jersey. If by some miracle the Voltigeurs win, I will go to Drummondville to admit defeat. That said, I agree with the member for Richmond—Arthabaska: Poutine comes from Victoriaville.

May the best team win. Go Phoenix, go!

* * *

● (1415)

[*English*]

HOUSING

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of North Island—Powell River, every community I serve is in desperate need of housing. The top three reasons for housing insecurity are a lack of affordable rents or mortgages, low wages and housing in major need of repair with no resources to fix it. Indigenous people are four times as likely to be unhoused.

People with core housing needs in my riding are single-income families; those who live on a fixed income, such as seniors and persons living with disabilities; lone-parent households; and indigenous households. This issue requires a real partner in the federal government, and our region is simply not seeing that.

My constituents have ideas, such as redesigning the reaching home program's rural and remote funding stream. My communities have sent meaningful and thoughtful feedback. I urge the government to listen to it; prioritize rural, remote and indigenous communities; define affordability based on local realities, not market values; invest in non-market housing; and make capital investments into the upkeep of aging properties to keep people housed.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***SUPPLY MANAGEMENT**

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I remember last February 8 when all the parties voted in favour of including supply management protection in international agreements. All the parties voted for Bill C-282. I know that some people remember that. Maybe it is time that the political parties remembered too. At this time, in committee, the Conservatives are filibustering to block Bill C-282. They keep stalling, slowing down procedures and generally wasting time. They are doing everything they possibly can to undermine a bill they actually voted for.

It is such a sad spectacle, when the very future of Quebec agriculture hangs in the balance.

I am calling on all Quebec members from every party. All of the parties promised to protect supply management and voted in favour of this vital bill. My Quebec colleagues, Conservatives and Liberals alike, all gave farmers their word. I can assure them that our farmers remember. Today, the time has come for them to honour their word.

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*[English]***CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION**

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are some simple facts that should not be controversial: water is wet; Saskatchewan is cold in the winter; and the CBC is funded by the government. None of that should freak anybody out, but in Liberal Ottawa, pearls are being clutched and outrage is being manufactured, all because, for greater transparency, Twitter applied the “Government-funded Media” tag to the CBC's account.

Liberal MPs are calling it nonsense, an unwarranted attack, even a threat to democracy. What do they not understand? The CBC was created by government. It gets over a billion dollars a year from government, and the government appoints the board that controls it.

It is no wonder the Liberals are reacting this way. They love the CBC because they get so much benefit from it. The CBC sued the Conservative Party in the middle of an election. Its CEO openly attacked the Conservative leader, and it eagerly carries Liberal messages all of the time, but I have good news for all of those who are upset and having fits about Twitter's decision. That government-funded label will not be around for long. After the next election, the Conservative leader will make sure it does not get any tax dollars at all.

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YOM HASHOAH

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tonight, Jewish communities around the world will mark from sunset to sunset Yom HaShoah, Holocaust memorial day. On this day, we remember the six million members of the Jewish community who remain in our hearts so their lives, their stories and their legacies will not have been lost in vain and so their murders at the hands of the Nazi regime will not be forgotten with the passing of time.

We mark it on this day, on the eve of the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, the largest Jewish revolt against the Nazis during the war. Even in this darkest moment of history, Jews fought to live. They fought against the evils of hate and anti-Semitism. Tomorrow, communities will commemorate Yom HaShoah by holding ceremonies that remind us not only of the importance of remembering what happened during the Holocaust, but also to be their collective voices, to be the eyes and the hearts that bear witness to the profound loss in the moment of evil that overtook humanity.

To direct our focus on educating future generations of what it means when we say never again, we stand together here in Canada and with Jewish communities around the world because it is our duty, our obligation, to honour the victims of the Holocaust and to learn from this tragic moment in humanity's history, as a reminder that we can never be complacent in the face of evil and that we must be tireless in our commitment to fight back against the darkness of hate in all of its forms.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

*[Translation]***DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we already knew that, according to intelligence services, Beijing's Communist government contributed \$140,000 to the Trudeau Foundation specifically to influence the Liberal leader who is now the Prime Minister of Canada. Now we have learned that it was his brother who signed the agreement to obtain this money.

Would the Prime Minister agree to invite his brother to appear before a parliamentary committee to answer questions?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has said several times, he has not been involved in any way with this non-partisan foundation for approximately a decade.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was definitely a family business for the Prime Minister, whether it was the WE Charity paying his brother and mother and the Prime Minister claiming to know nothing about it as he handed a half-billion dollars over to that organization or the Trudeau Foundation, which got \$140,000 from the dictatorship in Beijing for the specific purpose of influencing his decisions in politics. Now we know that his own brother was the one who negotiated and signed the deal to receive the money.

Will the Prime Minister accept to call his brother to a parliamentary committee to answer questions about this?

Oral Questions

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows well that the Prime Minister has not been involved with that foundation for approximately a decade. The member for Carleton's fixation on the Prime Minister's family is well known for its partisan interests, and he wishes to pursue those partisan interests. However, the Prime Minister and the government are not engaged with that foundation.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister had nothing to hide and no relationship whatsoever with the foundation, he would have no problem inviting his brother to testify before a parliamentary committee under oath about the money the foundation received for the specific purpose of influencing the Prime Minister.

I will move on to another Liberal falsehood. They told us the carbon tax would make emissions go down. A new report shows that for the most recent years emissions went up. The tax goes up, the emissions go up and now Canadians are expected to pay a net \$1,500. Given that everything the Liberals have said about the tax is false, will they axe the tax?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives just do not seem to get it. The climate rebate puts more money in people's pockets. Eight out of 10 families will be better off. The member can look at page 5 of the original PBO report. What will not leave families better off is investing in cryptocurrency. That was reckless advice by the Leader of the Opposition. I have invited him to stand in this House and apologize.

Now, for the fourth time, will he stand up now and apologize to Canadians?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is another falsehood. I will read directly from the report written by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who was appointed by the Prime Minister. On page 3, he says that, for example, an Ontario family will pay on average \$1,820 more in carbon tax costs than they get back in these phony rebate cheques. In Prince Edward Island it will be \$1,500. In Newfoundland and Labrador it will be \$1,300. I could go on. In every single province, the majority of people pay far more in taxes than they get back in benefits from this scam.

Given that it has been false, will they not axe the tax?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have good news. On April 14, climate rebate cheques started to arrive in people's mailboxes. A family of four in my home province of Manitoba will receive \$1,000. That is \$250 quarterly. That is going to help with cash flow. That is going to help with affordability. The Conservatives do not seem to be interested in either.

[Translation]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to a poll, 74% of Quebecers say they are struggling to pay everyday expenses such as groceries, gas and basic necessities. This is because of inflationary taxes and deficits, which are increasing the cost of living for all Quebecers. Furthermore, the government threw another \$60 billion of fuel on the fire of inflation in its budget.

Will the government cancel its inflationary taxes and deficits, which are creating a burden for Quebecers?

• (1425)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that the Leader of the Opposition should listen more closely to Canadians.

He may have missed it, but in the latest budget, we introduced three key measures to address three things affecting Quebecers and Canadians across the country. The first was the cost of groceries. That is why this government proposed a grocery rebate. It will help families in need. The second thing that Canadians told us to take action on was health care. Having a family doctor is a priority. The third thing that Canadians asked us to do was to build the economy of tomorrow with the jobs of tomorrow.

That is exactly what we are doing to help Canadians, and I think that he should listen to Canadians a bit more often.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the House voted for an independent commission of public inquiry on Chinese interference, and that is what Canadians want too.

Rather than heeding the consensus, the Prime Minister is hiding behind his special rapporteur and good friend, David Johnston. However, Mr. Johnston is a former member of the Trudeau Foundation, which is itself in the midst of a Chinese interference scandal. That means that a former member of the Trudeau Foundation, which allegedly received money from China, is going to tell the government how to avoid Chinese influence. We cannot make this stuff up.

Does the Prime Minister realize that this undertaking has absolutely zero credibility?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague opposite certainly has a way with words. However, we do not like when he claims that our government has not taken any action from the get-go to counter potential foreign interference.

As we have often said, we put in place a series of measures that we have adapted based on evolving threats. The work of the Right Hon. David Johnston is part of that exercise, and we look forward to implementing his recommendations.

Oral Questions

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford, did not tell us much during her testimony on Friday. It took two hours for the committee to hear that she would not say anything.

She did tell us that whatever she knows, the Prime Minister knows as well, and she said that the Prime Minister pays very close attention to CSIS reports. Therefore, the Prime Minister has known about the allegations of Chinese election interference all along.

If he refuses to launch an inquiry, does he realize that he is sending a very clear message that he has something to hide?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the chief of staff said exactly what the Prime Minister and other ministers have been saying all along. Security agencies repeatedly informed the government of the threat of foreign interference. That is precisely why we took action, unlike the previous government.

We have also said that the Right Hon. David Johnston is in a better position to look at the big picture and advise the government on any additional steps to be taken, and we look forward to following his advice.

* * *

[English]

LABOUR

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the pandemic, public sector workers stepped up and provided the much needed help to give Canadians a lending hand in a difficult time. Now these workers are being impacted by inflation. They do not want to go to strike, they want to work, so the government has a responsibility to negotiate fairly.

Will the government get serious and negotiate a fair contract that respects the public service workers?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, public servants from the PSAC provide important services to Canadians, and the government values their work. The government is committed to reaching agreements at the bargaining table that are fair for the employees and reasonable for taxpayers. We have a good offer on the table and there is enough ground to reach a deal. Canadians expect both parties to bargain in good faith and find compromise, and that is what we are doing today.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the difficult times brought on by the pandemic, public servants delivered assistance to Canadians. Now they deserve respect. For them, like many other workers, inflation is a major concern.

Is the government going to take the negotiations seriously and reach an agreement that respects these public service employees?

• (1430)

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, public servants from the PSAC provide important services to Canadians, and the government values their work.

The government is committed to reaching agreements at the bargaining table that are fair for the employees and reasonable for taxpayers. We have a good offer on the table. There is enough ground to reach a deal. Canadians expect us to work together, which is what we are doing today.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberals misled Canadians for eight years about their carbon tax scam. They claimed that it would put more into the pockets of Canadians than what they paid into it, but the Liberal environment minister admitted that they misled Canadians and the PBO backed that up in its current report on the carbon tax scam.

Our hard-working truck drivers are going to get slammed with an extra \$150 in costs every single time they fuel up because of this scam. This carbon tax scam is going to cost Canadians more so Liberals can continue to virtue-signal and fill up their own coffers.

Why does the Prime Minister not stop virtue-signalling, stop punishing Canadians for eating, heating and living, and scrap the scam?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, good news is coming to Atlantic Canadians. On July 1, the climate action rebate will be coming to all of the Atlantic provinces. That will mean \$1,000 or more to a family of four. Even the premier of New Brunswick likes it. At least one Conservative likes it. He said, "We need to make a choice that is in the best interest of New Brunswickers, and what this does now is provide relief from inflation." We agree with the premier of New Brunswick. I wish the Conservatives did too.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals should slap a "not as advertised" label on it every single time the Liberals and the NDP talk about their carbon tax scam. They know for a fact, and it is backed up by the PBO, that, on average, Canadians will pay an extra \$1,500. The PBO also proved them wrong and emissions have gone up.

Oral Questions

The Liberals claimed they would fix the environment; that was false. They said that Canadians would be better off; that was false. The Liberal minister admitted that they misled Canadians for eight years. One in five Canadians are skipping meals and 1.5 million Canadians are using a food bank in a single month. Let us get real; this is a tax plan. Let us scrap the scam and give Canadians a break.

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to correct the record. The hon. member knows that Canadians will receive more than they actually pay as a result of the increased prices. The only thing that the Conservatives' argument hedges upon is the belief that the alternative is to take no action—

The Speaker: Order. I am having a hard time hearing the hon. minister. I am sure everyone wants to hear the answer.

The hon. Minister of Immigration, please continue.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' argument rests upon the premise that the alternative to putting a price on pollution is to do nothing to fight climate change. Every measure that they have put forward would have a greater cost than putting a price on pollution. Look to the court decisions, including those from western Canada, that said putting a price on pollution is the most effective way to combat climate change. We found a way to make it more affordable for families at the same time.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals still claim that families would get more back than they paid in the carbon tax. We know that is not true. The Minister of Environment finally admitted the truth. It turns out that they do not get more. They also claimed that the carbon tax works, but we know otherwise. New data says that emissions have increased 12 million times in the last reporting year, and they still plan to triple the tax.

How many more increases will it take before they realize the carbon tax does not work, it does not reduce emissions, it lowers our economic output and it hurts hard-working Canadians who cannot pay their bills?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to hear the Conservatives talk about families because at every opportunity they have voted against hard-working Canadian families in this House, like regarding the Canada child benefit, the Canada workers benefit, the Canada housing benefit or dental that has helped over 250,000 children go to the dentist already. We also have the Canada child care agreements that have lowered fees by 50% right across the country. If Conservatives cared about Canadian families, they would do more to support them.

● (1435)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand why the member opposite does not want to talk about the carbon tax. The proof is in the numbers; the carbon tax does not work. It does not leave Canadian families better off. The average family will pay \$710 this year thanks to their new increases. Emissions went up and economic output is down because of it. At a time where every Canadian could use a break, the only ones better off are the Liberals who get more Canadian tax dollars with no actual results. This is not an environmental plan.

When will the minister admit to this House what he already told Canadians on TV?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are so focused on a price on pollution, despite the fact that it's the best market mechanism we have to get to a net-zero economy. Every time we have come to this House to reduce taxes on Canadians, how have the Conservatives voted? They voted against it. When it came to lowering taxes on the middle class three times, how did they vote? Against it. When it came to lowering taxes on working Canadians, how did they vote? Against it. When it came to lowering taxes on seniors and dental benefits, how are they going to vote? We know the answer: against it.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, we learned that, according to a survey, 74% of Quebecers are struggling to pay for basic necessities. What is more, 45% of Quebecers reported that they are \$200 or less away from being unable to meet their financial obligations.

What is the Prime Minister's solution? Here is what he said recently at a public meeting: "If you're using your credit card to go back to school, or if you go into debt to build an expansion on your house, then you're going to be able to sell your house for more".

My question for the members of the Liberal caucus is this: Are they beginning to feel embarrassed by their leader?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems as though my colleagues opposite have not looked at the budget we presented. What we did is listen to Canadians, and I would advise them to do the same if they want to be on this side of the House one day.

Canadians asked us to help them with groceries and the cost of living. The first measure set out in the budget is the grocery rebate. The second measure has to do with health care. Canadians want a family doctor. The third measure involves investing in the economy. This morning, Ericsson announced an investment of \$470 million—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether the minister really understood my question.

This morning, we learned that 74% of Quebecers say that they are having trouble making ends meet and that nearly half of them do not even have \$200 left over at the end of the month to pay their bills.

On that note, at that same townhall, the Prime Minister added, “If you're making investments that are going to return, that is how you grow a strong economy because quite frankly, confident economies invest in themselves”.

I do not really understand what he means, but he is basically telling people to use their credit cards.

Does the Prime Minister understand that what he has done with the government, which is to keep us in debt for decades to come, is the same thing he is telling Canadians to do, which is to use very high-interest credit cards? Does the Prime Minister agree with that?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat a little bit of what my excellent colleague said earlier, because he answered the question from my colleague on the opposite side of the House.

We are listening to Canadians. We know that they are struggling to make ends meet right now. That is why our budget takes those challenges into consideration and provides assistance to Canadians across the country to help pay for groceries, make health care accessible and make dental care accessible for families.

All the Conservatives have to do is vote for our budget, and everything will get better for Canadians.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Union des producteurs agricoles, or UPA, is sounding the alarm. Rising costs are jeopardizing the next generation of farmers. If the government does not do anything about this, one in 10 businesses is set to close within the year. That is one in 10 farms gone within 12 months.

The federal government could create an emergency agriculture account, similar to the one put in place during COVID. It could also extend the deadline for paying back money received under the existing program and postpone the 2023 repayment deadline by two years.

What is the federal government doing today to prevent one in 10 farms from dying within the year—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague, I saw the results of the poll and the various studies.

It is very concerning to see that we might lose so many of our agricultural producers. That is why we are working in collaboration with the Government of Quebec on various options.

We have just signed the \$3.5-billion sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership. That is an increase of \$500 million. We are also looking at emergency programs. In fact, when the Prime Minister met with the UPA, he said that we would work together on bringing in a targeted measure to help those who may be having a tough time getting through the year.

• (1440)

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we must act quickly. What good is it to give speeches about the importance of local food resiliency if we let our local farms disappear?

We talk about inflation and interest rates every day, but we never talk about the farmers who are affected by this issue. According to UPA data, 50% of agricultural businesses expect their financial situation to further deteriorate this year.

Does the federal government think it is okay for our farmers to go into debt to feed us? Is that going to convince young people to take over our farms?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we must recognize all the work that our farmers do. They work extremely hard and know that they bear the pressure for feeding us in these challenging times.

We want to help them in different ways. In the recent budget, we increased the interest-free portion of the advance payments program. They can receive up to \$350,000 interest-free. We also clarified the intergenerational business transfer framework.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I appeal to the government members' humanity and compassion. I am asking them to set aside all partisanship and to give royal recommendation to Bill C-215 on EI sickness benefits.

As we speak, there are men and women who are sick and who need these extended benefits. The House voted unanimously to extend the benefits. The majority of MPs voted in favour of the bill. All we are waiting for now is royal recommendation. Will the government members give royal recommendation to the bill?

[English]

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that EI benefits need to be fairer, more responsive and more adaptable to the needs of Canada's evolving workforce.

That is why we continue to be committed to comprehensively modernizing the system. We have already extended EI sickness benefits from 15 to 26 weeks. With budget 2023, we propose extending support for seasonal workers until October 2024.

We have always said we need to get EI reform right. It is a priority, and we are on it.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week a 17-year-old boy was stabbed to death on a bus in Surrey, British Columbia. This was the third stabbing on public transit in B.C. over the last month, happening only two weeks after a 16-year-old boy was stabbed to death at a Toronto subway station. Edmonton is reporting a 53% spike in attacks happening on public transit.

The violent crime surge in this country has reached into every corner. When will the Liberal-NDP coalition finally wake up and end the dangerous catch-and-release policies that are making our streets so unsafe?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to remind my colleague that the Minister of Justice and I met with our provincial and territorial counterparts, and we will be moving expeditiously to revisit our bail system.

More than that, our government has invested close to \$1 billion to support law enforcement. What did the Conservatives do on each of those occasions? They voted against it. We put \$450 million in to stop the illegal flow of guns into this country by reinforcing the CBSA. What did the Conservatives do? They voted against it.

If they want to take crime seriously, they should support the policies and the investments of the Liberal government.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I highlight two recent times that catch-and-release has failed victims of intimate partner violence.

In one instance, an alleged abuser allegedly beat and repeatedly breached restraining orders against a partner. The result: multiple bail hearings, and likely, a terrified partner.

In another case, a woman was threatened; firearms were involved. The result: a bail hearing and a terrified partner.

When will the Liberal government end catch-and-release so that vulnerable women will no longer become terrified partners?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to feel safe, and as a government, we are taking action so that they will.

Bill C-75 already reduced the burden of proof in intimate partner violence cases when it came to bail. We are going beyond that. We have met with our provincial and territorial counterparts to bring reform to the bail system.

We recognize that this is something we have to work on with the provinces. Obviously we will take action in areas of our jurisdiction. We will move, and we will find a solution together.

Oral Questions

• (1445)

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since this Prime Minister took office eight years ago, our streets have become more and more unsafe. Under the Liberals, violent crime has increased by 32%. In contrast, when the Conservatives were in office, violent crime dropped by 23%.

Criminals are out on the streets instead of in prison because of this Prime Minister's soft-on-crime policies. Is it too much to ask that this Prime Minister take care of victims rather than criminals?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to feel safe and be safe. We are working with the provinces and territories to reform the bail system. We will work to inject resources into the system to tackle violent crime in our society. Former Supreme Court Justice Michael Moldaver urged us to do more to address the issue of serious crime.

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[English]

HOUSING

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just got back from a two-week cross-country tour, hearing from Canadians who are struggling to find a home that they can afford in the city where they can work and raise a family. From Victoria to Toronto to Hamilton to Halifax, renters and people who want to own their own home are having to compete with corporate landlords, who buy up affordable housing stock and drive up the cost of housing. Successive Liberals and Conservatives have failed to crack down on these corporate landlords, who are fuelling the housing crisis; families are paying the price.

When are the Liberals going to stop the profiteering off housing so that families can find a home they can afford?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think my time for the answer is actually enough to articulate all of the things we have done. We have done so much to enable families to access homes: introducing the Canada housing benefit; putting together a 1% tax on vacant homes owned by non-Canadian and non-resident owners; putting together a ban on foreign owners of Canadian residential real estate; investing billions of dollars to build more affordable housing, including deeply affordable housing through the rapid housing initiative; and so on and so forth. We will not relent until each and every Canadian has access to a safe and affordable place to call home.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Muslim and Jewish people across Canada are increasingly worried about the rise in hate crimes against their communities. Last week, we saw an outrageous act of hate committed against a Markham mosque that could have turned deadly.

Synagogues have also been a target of hateful acts, and the police report that hate crimes have increased a shocking 67%.

Will the Liberals commit to protecting all Canadians by supporting the NDP's call for an emergency debate on recent Islamophobic and anti-Semitic attacks?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this comment from the member opposite because it is really important to outline what is taking place in our society right now. Notwithstanding that this is the holy month of Ramadan, notwithstanding that people are thinking about inclusiveness and diversity in our society, we are still seeing grotesque acts of violence and hatred directed toward Muslims in this country. This kind of intolerance has to stop.

What we are doing as a government, and what we are doing, hopefully, as all parliamentarians, is challenging those acts when they occur, speaking out against them and working toward legislation and policies that will invest in the security of places of worship and ensuring that people are able to celebrate who they are in this country and have freedom of worship.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, my colleagues and I had the privilege of welcoming a charter flight of 353 Afghans who arrived in Toronto. These are Afghans who supported Canada's mission in Afghanistan, family members of former interpreters and privately sponsored refugees. Although some may have found refuge in Canada, many continue to face risks in leaving Afghanistan or simply making their journey under the Taliban.

Can the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship update us on our work to get them to safety?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague not just for her question but for being on hand to welcome that charter flight, which marks the arrival of the 30,000th Afghan refugee in this country.

To put this into perspective, I live in a town with less than 10,000 people. Repeat it three times over: that many people have been given a new lease on life. However, we know that there are thousands of people who remain trapped in Afghanistan, who are being persecuted today at the hands of the Taliban. We are going to continue to do everything we can to get them to safety and we will not waver until we successfully meet our goal of resettling at least 40,000 Afghan refugees by the end of this year.

* * *

• (1450)

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's chief of staff told committee that the Prime Minister reads everything. We know that the Prime Minister received a February 2020 memo that, according to Global News, alerted him of an election interference network by Beijing involving at least 11 candidates and the clandestine transfer of funds. The Prime Minister has repeatedly claimed he knows nothing about this. However, given that he reads everything, we now know that this is not true.

Why is the Prime Minister misleading Canadians? What does he have to hide?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to my great regret, I am afraid it is my colleague who is misleading this chamber and Canadians. It is the Prime Minister and the government that have continually said that we take foreign interference seriously. This is why we have put in place the people, the resources, the authorities, and in addition to that, the transparency to shine a light on the way in which we are protecting our institutions, our economies, and most importantly, Canadians.

I encourage my colleague to support the budget, which will also include more resources for the RCMP and other law enforcement agencies to protect Canadians from foreign interference. I look forward to that day when he supports the budget on this side of the House.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Trudeau Foundation accepted a gift of \$200,000 from an agent for Beijing's dictatorship, and senior PMO officials were made aware of the gift and where it came from. The Prime Minister's chief of staff told committee that the Prime Minister is briefed on everything and nothing is withheld from him.

On what date did the Prime Minister become aware that the Trudeau Foundation accepted a \$200,000 gift from the Communist dictatorship in Beijing?

Oral Questions

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already made it clear in this House that the Prime Minister, over the last 10 years, has not had any involvement with that foundation.

The member opposite is asserting, and let us go with the heart of what he is asserting, that this government would welcome the interference of a foreign country. That is absolutely absurd. The fact that it would be clapped for is disgusting. Every single member of this House is dedicated to ensuring Canadian democracy. The member opposite, myself and every member has firmed themselves to protect and defend Canadian democracy, and every member of this House will continue to do so.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us just be clear. The Trudeau Foundation is government-funded, and Liberal governments have in the past, and the Liberal government still has the ability to, appointed members to the foundation. It must be a coincidence that after Beijing's gift to the Trudeau Foundation, the Prime Minister met with the front men who signed the cheque on behalf of the Communist dictatorship and gave them a meeting where they had direct access to influence the Prime Minister.

Why are shady deals and influence opportunities for dictators the priority for the Liberal Prime Minister?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that the priority of the party opposite is to attack not-for-profits, independent organizations, the CBC, the media—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am just waiting for everyone to calm down. Order.

The hon. government House leader has another 25 seconds.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, on the floor of the House of Commons, members are protected by privilege. They have the opportunity to say anything they wish. However, when they are swinging their bats aimlessly for partisan advantage, they are attacking not-for-profit or non-partisan foundations, they are attacking organizations like the CBC and they are attacking free and independent media. They seem to have no care whatsoever over what or who they attack for their partisan ends. It is not becoming of this place.

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts.

The Communist regime in Beijing feels that it can influence the Prime Minister by using its money and front men. Clearly, it is a master at it. Two directors at the Trudeau Foundation are appointed by a minister in the Prime Minister's cabinet. The Prime Minister himself is still a member of the foundation, according to its most recent annual report. By accepting a contribution from a front man, the foundation directly contravened the Income Tax Regulations.

Will the Minister of National Revenue open an investigation into the use of front men at the Trudeau Foundation?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only interest the other side has is a partisan interest. It is also clear that the goal is to keep playing politics, which certainly does nothing to help our economy or our democracy.

Obviously, each and every one of us here, including myself and those on the other side, are loyal to Canada. Obviously, this is our primary responsibility as members of Parliament. That is why I am here and that is why the members opposite are here.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the ice storm ruined Easter for many Quebeckers, either because they had no power or they were working around the clock to restore it. The Bloc Québécois stands in solidarity with all those who have suffered loss and damage.

The Prime Minister has offered federal assistance and we thank him for that. However, we must point out that Ottawa made the same commitments during the ice storm 25 years ago, but the money was never paid out. Ottawa still owes us \$484 million.

Will the Prime Minister start by paying what Ottawa already owes us?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the disaster financial assistance arrangement, which is organized and managed by the federal government, works very closely with all of the provinces. We worked with the Province of Quebec, in particular, on a number of the disasters that have impacted that community. We have always been there for it. When those receipts are submitted to the government for reimbursement, we have been able to act expeditiously in every case.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec and its towns are still adding up the cost and compiling a list of the damage caused by the ice storm. There is no need to wait, because Ottawa already owes \$484 million from the last crisis.

At the time, Ottawa refused to compensate Hydro-Québec, claiming that Crown corporations were not eligible for disaster relief. That has become an embarrassing excuse, since the federal government invested billions of dollars in Muskrat Falls in Newfoundland and Labrador. Quebec is only asking for its fair share to repair the damage from the ice storm.

When will the federal government pay the \$484 million it owes us?

Oral Questions

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we obviously share the sentiments of our colleague when it comes to the gratitude we have for the men and women who worked so hard in Quebec and in other provinces to restore power after the ice storm. We are obviously concerned about those who have suffered losses. There is an agreement between Canada and all the provinces to help recoup money and reimburse costs eligible under the agreements that have been in place for decades.

We are working with the Government of Quebec. We understand the urgent need to take action. That is precisely what we will do in partnership with the Government of Quebec.

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[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, based on Bill C-11 and Bill C-18, we know the government is abundantly committed to censoring what people can see, post or hear online. However, what we just learned is that the Prime Minister actually got a head start. According to government documents that were tabled in the House of Commons, the Liberals actually pressured social media companies a total of 214 times over the period of 24 months. Talk about heavy-handed. Why is the government so committed to censoring speech?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we cannot spell conspiracy without “CPC”. It is another day, another conspiracy theory.

Once again, the Conservatives choose to abandon our creators. They stand up for big tech companies and turn their backs on our culture, but we choose to stand up for it. We believe foreign tech giants should do more for our creators. Canadians have the best stories to tell, and this is supporting hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs. We will always stand up for creators and artists on this side of the House.

• (1500)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we know for certain is that the government will do all it can to dodge or deflect questions that it does not want to answer. There is nothing conspiratorial about a document that was tabled right here in the House of Commons that shows the government pressured social media platforms 214 times within 24 months to remove content the government simply found embarrassing or did not want the public to be aware of.

I will ask again: Why is the government so hell-bent on censoring freedom of speech in the country of Canada?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the suggestion that the hon. member is making is absolutely preposterous. The Conservatives want to protect the status quo. They do not think foreign tech giants should stand up for our culture and pay into Canadian culture, but we disagree. We believe tech giants should do more for artists, more for creators, more for our local media and more to protect our children online. We are open to criticism and we are open

to changes, but we are not open to doing nothing, which is what the Conservative Party of Canada suggests.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a result of a written question tabled by the member for Niagara West, we learned from documents tabled here in the House that, over the course of two years, the government asked web giants on 214 occasions to take down content posted by Canadians. That is direct action by the government to censor Canadians.

My question for the government is very simple: Why were Canadians censored 214 times online?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is completely irresponsible to suggest that the government censors Canadians' questions and comments. What is true is that we will be there to defend families, protect children online and ensure that web giants pay their fair share into the Canada Media Fund. We are there for creators and Canadians, but not for this so-called Conservative mantra of freedom of speech, which is unacceptable.

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FINANCE

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like other people around the world, Canadians are feeling the pinch from the global rise in inflation. Although Canada's inflation rate has continued to fall in the past eight months, it is still too high.

Can the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance tell the House how budget 2023 is going to help Canadian families make ends meet?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Halifax West for her question and for all her hard work on behalf of Canadian families.

The new grocery rebate is going to help 11 million Canadians cover the rise in costs by putting hundreds of dollars in their pockets. It will help make sure they have a little extra money to meet their family's needs.

As disappointing as it is to see that the Conservatives will be voting against the budget and this important support, we will keep on fighting for Canadians.

*Oral Questions**[English]***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “Years of restraint, cost cutting, downsizing and deferred investments, have meant that Canada’s defence capabilities have atrophied.” That is a direct quote from a letter from over 50 of Canada’s former cabinet ministers, defence experts and military leaders. They are calling on the government to live up to our responsibility of “protecting Canadians against all threats—foreign and domestic”. However, due to the government’s lack of investment and demoralizing policies, we are short 10,000 troops today and over 4,200 military procurement staff.

Enough is enough. Why are the Liberals not supporting our military heroes?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, who let defence spending dip below 1%, our government will continue to make investments in our military and in defence spending. For example, we increased defence spending by 70% beginning in 2017. We also invested over \$8 billion in defence spending in budget 2022 and almost \$40 billion in continental defence and NORAD modernization.

We will always be there for the Canadian Armed Forces and the security of Canada.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is dodge, dither and delay. That is the Liberal way.

This is a call for action from former Liberal and Conservative politicians, as well as non-partisan defence experts. They say, “Russia’s brutal war...in Ukraine...as well as the continuing expansion of the military arsenals of authoritarian regimes...should have prompted a re-assessment of our defence posture.” Sadly, well-connected consultants, big bankers and wealthy bondholders get more from the government than our troops do.

When will the Prime Minister take our defence and national security seriously and safeguard our peace, prosperity and way of life?

• (1505)

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if my hon. colleague heard the billions of dollars I just mentioned, including almost \$40 billion in NORAD modernization and defence spending. However, let me assure this House that our government is undertaking a defence policy update. We are consulting broadly with stakeholders, and we will be back with additional plans to ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces and the defence of Canada are undertaken with the utmost integrity and stability.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, elver poachers are still fishing on the rivers in Nova Scotia, even though the minister shut the fishery down on the weekend. DFO enforcement, for two years, has been told not to arrest, just to observe. Shockingly, the government was surprised that thousands of poachers showed up instead. It is beyond ridiculous that the min-

ister shut down the fishery because the poachers caught the quota, not the licence-holders, while DFO stood by and did not enforce the law.

Why are the Liberals supporting criminals continuing to fish elvers while stopping legal harvesters?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member has his facts backwards. In fact, this year we more than doubled enforcement capacity. We worked collaboratively with the RCMP to ensure that it was even stronger enforcement.

My primary responsibility is the safety of people and conservation of the species, and that is why I shut the fisheries down.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians are having a tough time with the cost of living, and that is why it was so important to see measures in this year’s budget to support families. I have heard from constituents about the high cost of food and the strain it is putting on family household finances.

Could the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development please update this House on what is being done to make life more affordable for these families?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Mississauga East—Cooksville for the important question.

All members in the House are aware, because we have heard from constituents right across this country, how challenging these times are. That is why our government has acted yet again in budget 2023. In addition to several measures that have been in place this year, as well as previously, we brought forward the grocery rebate, which could provide up to \$460 for a family of four or \$220 for seniors or single individuals. We know that for the 11 million Canadians who are going to receive the grocery rebate, it will go a long way.

We are continuing to be there to support Canadians through these tough economic times. We understand that the high cost of food is having an impact, and we will continue to be there for them.

*Government Orders***INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there was a devastating fire in Webequie First Nation last week, and now eight people are homeless. Like in the tragic fire and death last month in Peawanuck, the community had no fire truck, no fire hall and no equipment.

Now, Webequie just happens to be in the heart of the Ring of Fire, and Doug Ford has promised to personally drive a bulldozer across their lands to dig up their wealth for investors. Meanwhile, people in Webequie have no safe drinking water, they live in sub-standard homes and they have no fire protection to keep their children safe.

Will the minister commit today to a proper fire hall, life-saving equipment and proper homes for people in Webequie First Nation?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his constant advocacy for equity for first nations people.

The member is absolutely right: We all have to do better to make sure that every single person across this country has a fair chance at success. That is why my department and the Government of Canada are investing historic amounts into first nations housing, child welfare, education and all the infrastructure that is significantly lacking, like it is in Webequie.

Yes, I will commit to the member to work with Webequie to make sure that it can better protect its citizens.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, I asked the Prime Minister whether he approved of the expenses incurred by the Governor General during her four-day trip to Germany, which cost more than \$700,000, and another to the Middle East where she spent, believe it or not, more than \$2,600 on in-flight meals for each of the 30 people in her delegation. The response from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister was disconcerting. His justification was that these expenses were similar to those of past governors general.

I repeat my question to the Prime Minister. Is he okay with this outrageous spending, yes or no?

• (1510)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and my colleagues have been very clear. We believe that Rideau Hall, like all federal government institutions, should manage taxpayers' money properly. We know that Rideau Hall has reviewed this type of spending with its partners, whether it be with the armed forces or Global Affairs Canada. We will continue to ensure that all these expenses are reasonable and necessary.

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: That is all the time we have today for Oral Questions.

[*English*]

I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the Right Honourable Alison Johnstone, presiding officer of the Scottish Parliament.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

**NATIONAL SECURITY REVIEW OF INVESTMENTS
MODERNIZATION ACT**

The House resumed from March 31 consideration of the motion that Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-34.

• (1525)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 293*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arva	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Block
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Bragdon	Brassard
Brière	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Caputo
Casey	Chabot

Government Orders

Chagger	Chahal	McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Chambers	Champagne	McLean	McLeod
Champoux	Chatel	McPherson	Mendès
Chen	Chiang	Mendicino	Miao
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Michaud	Miller
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper	Moore	Morantz
Cormier	Coteau	Morrice	Morrison
Dabrusin	Dalton	Morrissey	Motz
Damoff	Dancho	Murray	Muys
Davidson	DeBellefeuille	Naqvi	Nater
Deltell	d'Entremont	Ng	Noormohamed
Desbiens	Desilets	Normandin	O'Connell
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Oliphant	O'Toole
Dhillon	Diab	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Doherty	Dong	Paupé	Perkins
Dowdall	Dreeschen	Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Drouin	Dubourg	Poilievre	Powlowski
Duclos	Duguid	Qualtrough	Raves
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Dzerowicz	Redekopp	Reid
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Rempel Garner	Richards
Ellis	Epp	Roberts	Robillard
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Rodriguez	Rogers
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Romanado	Rood
Fergus	Ferreri	Ruff	Sahota
Fillmore	Findlay	Sajjan	Saks
Fisher	Fonseca	Samson	Sarai
Fortier	Fortin	Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Scheer	Schiefke
Freeland	Fry	Seeback	Serré
Gaheer	Gallant	Sgro	Shanahan
Garon	Garrison	Sheehan	Shields
Gaudreau	Gazan	Shiple	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Généreux	Genuis	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Gerretsen	Gladu	Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Godin	Goodridge	Small	Sorbara
Gould	Gourde	Soroka	Sousa
Gray	Green	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Hajdu	Hallan	Stewart	St-Onge
Hanley	Hardie	Strahl	Stubbs
Hepfner	Hoback	Sudds	Tassi
Holland	Housefather	Taylor Roy	Thériault
Hughes	Hussen	Therrien	Thomas
Hutchings	Iacono	Thompson	Tochor
Idlout	Ien	Tolmie	Trudeau
Jaczek	Jeneroux	Turnbull	Uppal
Johns	Jowhari	Valdez	Van Bynen
Julian	Kayabaga	van Koevorden	Van Popta
Kelloway	Kelly	Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Khalid	Khera	Vidal	Vien
Kitchen	Kmiec	Viersen	Vignola
Koutrakis	Kram	Villemure	Virani
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek	Vis	Vuong
Kusie	Kusmierczyk	Wagantall	Warkentin
Kwan	Lake	Waugh	Webber
Lalonde	Lametti	Weiler	Wilkinson
Lamoureux	Lantsman	Williams	Williamson
Lapointe	Larouche	Yip	Zahid
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Zarrillo	Zimmer
Lawrence	LeBlanc	Zuberi — 315	
Lebouthillier	Lehoux		
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)		
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert		
Lightbound	Lloyd		
Lobb	Long		
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)		
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)	Nil	
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)		
Maguire	Maloney		
Martel	Martinez Ferrada		
Masse	Mathysen		
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)	Gill	Joly
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty	Melillo	O'Regan

NAYS

PAIRED

Members

Privilege

Schmale

Vandal—8

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 12 minutes.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Following question period on March 31, the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake rose on a point of order and accused me of making statements about her. I want to unequivocally again deny that any such remarks were made by me, but in reaction to that assertion, I used unparliamentary language. While I hope everyone can understand why my reaction was so strong, I have the utmost respect for this House, for the rules that govern it and for all hon. colleagues. That is why I rise to withdraw, and apologize for, the inappropriate use of the word “lie”.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for her apology. She is rising on a question of privilege, as well.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED DEFAMATION RESULTING IN OBSTRUCTION OF A MEMBER'S
FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to raise a question of privilege in relation to the incidents that occurred on March 31 between me and the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

During question period, the member and I had an exchange. Subsequent to question period, the member rose on a point of order and made accusations that I believe constitute a prima facie case of privilege. Under *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, members are not to make statements that are to intentionally mislead the House. I submit that there is a prima facie case to find that the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake intentionally misled the House, and as a result my privilege was violated.

I refer you to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, edited by Marc Bosc and André Gagnon, specifically under the section “Misuse of Freedom of Speech”. It reads:

The privilege of freedom of speech is an extremely powerful immunity and on occasion Speakers have had to caution Members about its misuse. Ruling on a question of privilege in 1987, Speaker Fraser spoke at length about the importance of freedom of speech and the need for care in what Members say:...

“Such a privilege confers grave responsibilities on those who are protected by it. By that I mean specifically the Hon. Members of this place. The consequences of its abuse can be terrible. Innocent people could be slandered with no redress available to them. Reputations could be destroyed on the basis of false rumour. All Hon. Members are conscious of the care they must exercise in availing themselves of their absolute privilege of freedom of speech. That is why there are long-standing practices and traditions observed in this House to counter the potential for abuse.”

I would also like to draw your attention to the section under the heading “Freedom from Obstruction, Interference, Intimidation and Molestation. It is this section that outlines the grounds for a prima facie case of privilege by the member for Fort McMurray—Cold

Lake when she made intentional and misleading statements about me. In this section, it reads as follows:

It is impossible to codify all incidents which might be interpreted as matters of obstruction, interference, molestation or intimidation and, as such, constitute prima facie cases of privilege. However, some matters found to be prima facie include the damaging of a Member's reputation, the usurpation of the title of Member of Parliament, the intimidation of Members and their staff and of witnesses before committees, and the provision of misleading information.

The unjust damaging of a Member's good name might be seen as constituting an obstruction if the Member is prevented from performing his or her parliamentary functions. In 1987, Speaker Fraser stated:

“The privileges of a Member are violated by any action which might impede him or her in the fulfilment of his or her duties and functions. It is obvious that the unjust damaging of a reputation could constitute such an impediment. The normal course of a Member who felt himself or herself to be defamed would be the same as that available to any other citizen, recourse to the courts under the laws of defamation with the possibility of damages to substitute for the harm that might be done. However, should the alleged defamation take place on the floor of the House, this recourse is not available.”

There are several examples and rulings regarding matters of privilege being raised by members that constitute prima facie cases of privilege. I would like to quote one of these examples, as I believe it relates to the question of privilege here today. In the section under “Debates”, on October 6, 2005, pages 8,473 to 8,474, in particular on page 8,474, the matter was referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. In this report to the House, the committee stated, “Members of Parliament are public figures, and their reputations and integrity are among their most valuable assets. We are all cognizant of the public cynicism that exists regarding our political system.”

• (1530)

In the rulings determining whether or not a prima facie case of privilege has been demonstrated, the statements or actions in question had to be done so in an intentional manner to mislead, and therefore causing the intimidation or interference of a member to perform their duties.

I would like to outline why I feel the actions of the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake were intentional and, in fact, manufactured. Let me first acknowledge that if members are shouting across the aisle and statements are misheard, and then repeated incorrectly, I do not believe this constitutes an intentional misleading of the House. For the most part, I think hon. members accept when they have perhaps said things they should not have or if they have misheard, and they rise and clarify.

This was not the case on March 31 between the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake and me. Several members who were sitting around me throughout Question Period rose and confirmed that the statement, nor a statement even remotely like the one alleged by the member, was not heard to be said by me. Further to this, I immediately responded to the allegations made, and unequivocally informed the House that I never made such statements or statements even remotely similar to the one alleged.

In the House, we consider each and every one of us to be honourable. As such, I would have expected that after I clarified what had actually been said, the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake would have accepted that as truth and retracted her statement.

As a result of these allegations made against me, my office received several phone calls, emails and social media reactions that were threatening and aggressive. The incident has left not only me but also my staff vulnerable to threats. This is why the drafters of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* correctly acknowledge that acts of intimidation or any impediment to a member being able to perform their duties can come in many forms, including through the act of intentionally making misleading statements in an effort to damage a member's reputation. This intimidation serves to make a member think twice before using their voice to call out the actions of others, out of fear that if they are seen to be challenging, then they might be subject to accusations that put them or their staff in danger of threats and harassment.

I have spent my career advocating for more women to enter politics. I did not grow up thinking this is a place for someone like me. I hope future generations see a different version of political service, one that is more representative of the diversity of this country. Women in this place are constantly reminded that this place was not actually built for them. We are reminded of this fact when we walk these very halls.

I have spoken out on many occasions against misogyny in this place, including calling out the Leader of the Opposition's use of embedded hashtags that target anti-women groups and spread messages of violence against women.

I believe that these misleading statements against me could have been an act of retribution, an attempt to damage my reputation in order to intimidate and silence me. This place is to hold vigorous debates, challenge opinions and represent our communities. What we should never accept is the manufacturing of statements for the sole purpose of maligning another member's reputation for pure political gain.

This is why I raise the question of privilege today. This conduct is an offence to this House, to all members in it, as misleading accusations could be made about any one of us, without recourse. I believe a prima facie case of violation of privilege occurred here.

In hopes to resolve this matter and get on with the work on behalf of Canadians, I would find the matter satisfied should the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake retract her statements and apologize to this House.

I appreciate the Speaker's attention in hearing this question of privilege. I will conclude by saying that despite the efforts by some, I will not be intimidated and I will not be silenced, because that would only serve to reward the bad-faith actions and does nothing to encourage more women and overall more diversity in this place, which I firmly believe would make this place better and benefit all Canadians.

• (1535)

The Speaker: I will take the matter under consideration and come back to the House, should I see fit.

Routine Proceedings

The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle is rising on the same point.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to signal to you we would like to reserve the right to come back on this point after having time to analyze what the member just raised.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP as well reserves the right to intervene later in this case.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I have the honour to table a notice of ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, and other measures.

Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 10 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the Arctic Parliamentarian Summit — Nordic and North American Collaboration, from September 11 to September 13, 2022.

Routine Proceedings

● (1540)

PETITIONS

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place to present a petition from a number of my constituents concerned about the establishment of the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act. Many veterans have suffered significant injuries over service and are not adequately compensated.

The petitioners call upon the Minister of Veterans Affairs to remove any statutory limits on back pay eligibility on the disability allowances they are entitled to and work with individual veterans to ensure just and due compensation for disability allowance, and in a timely manner.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1256, 1259, 1261, 1263, 1265, 1267, 1270 and 1271.

[Text]

Question No. 1256—**Ms. Rachel Blaney:**

With regard to disability benefit payments provided by Veterans Affairs Canada, and broken down by province or territory and by fiscal year since 2019-20: (a) how many individuals receiving disability benefit payments have had their payments clawed back because they received compensation under the Merlo Davidson class action lawsuit; (b) how many notifications of the claw back were sent, including by (i) letter, (ii) email, (iii) phone call; (c) what is the total amount of disability benefit payments that have been clawed back, including the (i) total dollar value, (ii) percentage of benefits distributed to individuals in (a); (d) how many appeals have been made to restore or reverse claw backs by individuals in (a); (e) for each appeal in (d), how many appeals (i) were successful, (ii) were denied, (iii) are still under consideration; and (f) what is the total amount of costs incurred by Veterans Affairs Canada to (i) issue notices of claw backs to veterans, (ii) perform audits of benefits received by individuals in the Merlo Davidson class action lawsuit, (iii) challenge appeals made by individuals having their compensation clawed back?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to be fully transparent and to ensure that Veterans Affairs Canada has exercised its legislative requirements properly, the following initiatives have been implemented.

During the week of March 27, 2023, Veterans Affairs Canada sent a letter to current or former Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RCMP, members who have had their disability pension offset due to having received a payment under the court-ordered Merlo Davidson class action settlement agreement, to invite them to provide further information about the settlement compensation. In addition to sending the letter, a Veterans Affairs Canada representative has been, or will be, in contact with these individuals to provide support and answer questions. Those veterans affected will also have the option of contacting the Office of the Veterans Ombud on the matter.

Veterans Affairs Canada will update information on its external website to clearly articulate how offsets to disability benefits are implemented. Veterans Affairs Canada implements offsets in accor-

dance with its legislation and the legal requirements of court-ordered settlement agreements.

With regard to part (a), Veterans Affairs Canada conducted a manual review of its files to identify individuals who had reported to Veterans Affairs Canada that they had received compensation under the court-ordered Merlo Davidson settlement agreement. Fewer than 10 files were identified. For those that have been processed, Veterans Affairs Canada is deducting amounts from the monthly pension due to the compensation received, in accordance with the court-ordered Merlo Davidson settlement agreement and Veterans Affairs Canada's legislative obligations.

With regard to part (b), when Veterans Affairs Canada completes a decision, an official notification is sent to the applicant explaining the decision and the impact relating to their file. The current or former RCMP members associated with the files where Veterans Affairs Canada has offset amounts from their monthly pension have received a letter explaining the decision.

With regard to part (c), disability pensions are reduced by court settlement compensation on a case-by-case basis. Each claimant receives a different level of compensation as set out in the court-ordered settlement agreement. Veterans Affairs Canada cannot comment on individual files due to privacy.

With regard to parts (d), (e) and (f), as of February 14, 2023, Veterans Affairs Canada has not been made aware of any appeals associated with the files where offsets were made. The Veterans Review and Appeal Board is unable to provide this information as the cases in their file system are not differentiated by reason of appeal.

Question No. 1259—**Mr. Tom Kmiec:**

With regard to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), since June 18, 2019: (a) how many Canadian businesses are investing in projects in the AIIB, broken down by year; (b) how much Canadian money is spent on projects in the AIIB, broken down by year; and (c) of the projects listed in (a), how many of these businesses are operating through, either directly or indirectly, the Canadian government?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the Department of Finance is unaware of any Canadian businesses directly investing in AIIB-financed projects.

The Department of Finance has been informed that seven Canadian businesses have been awarded one or more contracts related to AIIB operations since Canada officially joined in March 2018. Such contracts were either in AIIB-financed projects or under AIIB's own corporate procurement. Broken down by year, there were two contracts in 2022, three contracts in 2020, four contracts in 2019 and two contracts in 2018.

Routine Proceedings

The Department of Finance also understands that Canadian banks are engaged with core functions of the AIIB. For example, the Bank of Montreal, the Bank of Nova Scotia and the Royal Bank of Canada are frequently engaged by the AIIB in their capacity as underwriters in bond issuances and as derivative trading counterparties.

With regard to part (b), Canada became a member of the AIIB on March 19, 2018, pursuant to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank Agreement Act. Canada's investment, like that of all other shareholders in the AIIB, is in the form of 20% paid-in capital and 80% callable capital. As of February 14, 2023, Canada has subscribed to 9,954 shares at the AIIB. The total value of these shares is \$995.4 million U.S., of which \$199.1 million U.S. is to be paid-in and the remaining portion is callable. To date, Canada has made four equal annual payments of \$39.8 million U.S.

With regard to part (c), Canadian businesses that are awarded contracts, either in AIIB-financed projects or under AIIB's own corporate procurement, do so on their own and do not operate through the Government of Canada.

Question No. 1261—Mr. Richard Bragdon:

With regard to inquiries and reports received by the RCMP in a language other than English or French, broken down by year for each of the last five years: (a) how many oral inquiries or reports did the RCMP receive, broken down by language; (b) how many written inquiries and reports, including emailed or online, did the RCMP receive, broken down by language; and (c) of the items in (b), how many were translated?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or RCMP, undertook an extensive preliminary search in order to determine the amount of information that would fall within the scope of the question and the amount of time that would be required to prepare a comprehensive response. The RCMP does not consistently or centrally track the number of inquiries or reports received in languages other than English or French, nor does it have a standard mechanism for recording the provision of services, on an ad-hoc basis, in other languages. The RCMP concluded that producing and validating a comprehensive response to this question would require a manual collection of information that is not possible in the time allotted, and this could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

Question No. 1263—Mr. Adam Chambers:

With regard to the statement by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) Commissioner, Bob Hamilton, at the House of Commons Standing Committee of Public Accounts on January 26, 2023, that it "wouldn't be worth the effort" to fully review \$15.5 billion in potentially ineligible Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) payments: (a) did the Minister of National Revenue sign off or agree with this decision and, if not, why did the minister not intervene; (b) did the CRA perform a cost-benefit analysis prior to making the decision not to review these payments and, if so, (i) who conducted the analysis, (ii) what were the results; (c) how many recipients and what total dollar amount is represented by the potentially ineligible CEWS payments that the CRA considers to be (i) worth the effort, (ii) not worth the effort, to review; (d) what dollar amounts are represented by the amounts in (c) (i) and (ii); and (e) what is the estimated cost to the CRA of fully reviewing the \$15.5 billion of payments?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the above-noted question, what follows is the response from the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, as of February 14, 2023, the date of the question.

With regard to part (a), given the nature of the mandate of the CRA in administering Canada's tax system, the Minister of National Revenue does not intervene in the operations of the CRA or in specific taxpayer files or audit processes. The CRA's approach to audits is based on its assessment of compliance or non-compliance with existing legislation and regulations. Furthermore, as stated in the January 26 follow-up document tabled with PACP on page 12, the CRA has conducted audits of some of the CEWS recipients identified as being at risk by the Auditor General and to date has found that 97% of the amounts claimed of the examined files complied with program rules.

With regard to parts (b)(i) and (ii), the CRA employs a risk-based approach, in alignment with international best practices and with existing audit programs, that incorporates many elements, including cost-benefit considerations. The reason for this is that a risk-based approach ensures that the highest risk cases are addressed with appropriate compliance actions and optimizes recoveries while adhering to principles of sound stewardship of public funds. This approach ensures the CRA's efforts are focused on claims that are of highest risk of being ineligible or overstated and allows the CRA to focus on risk without creating undue hardship for Canadian business owners as they continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CRA's risk-based approach uses business intelligence tools and algorithms to assist in identifying claims that are considered high-risk and warrant a further review. These algorithms take into consideration a variety of data elements, including GST/HST, payroll and income tax filing information, claim-by-claim comparisons, compliance history and accounting methodologies, among others.

With regard to parts (c), (d), and (e), the CRA is interpreting these questions as relating to the \$15.5 billion in CEWS payments identified in the Auditor General's "Report 10—Specific COVID-19 Benefits".

The CRA considered the "Report 10—Specific COVID-19 Benefits" observations and can confirm that all CEWS claimants, including the 51,049 employers, representing \$9.87 billion in CEWS payments identified by the Office of the Auditor General, were risk-assessed by the CRA using business intelligence tools. In addition, the CRA can confirm that a segment of the 51,049 claimants, 92% of which are small and medium businesses, has also been identified by the CRA for audit. Of the audits that have been completed so far, 97% of the amounts claimed have been approved without changes.

Routine Proceedings

“Report 10—Specific COVID-19 Benefits” did not identify any businesses associated with the additional \$5.6 billion in estimated payments. The CEWS audits completed to date demonstrate high levels of compliance and suggest that the number of ineligible claims may be significantly lower than estimated in “Report 10—Specific COVID-19 Benefits”.

As of January 3, 2023, the CRA has reviewed \$33 billion through prepayment work and is auditing \$14.7 billion, which is currently in progress or completed. The CRA is planning to continue this work until 2025 using a risk-based approach to target the claims with the most risk to ensure the integrity of the tax and benefits system.

The CRA is also carrying out additional postpayment validation reviews of approximately 70,000 businesses across all business subsidies. A specific breakdown for each subsidy is not available, as this information is not captured in this manner. Where intentional non-compliance has been identified, the CRA is pursuing these cases to the fullest extent.

The CRA conducts its compliance activities and allocates its resources commensurate with the risk, complexity and population segment of the business. As it relates to CEWS postpayment audit programs, resources were allocated following a risk-based model, in alignment with international best practices and other existing audit programs, that incorporates many elements, including cost-benefit considerations. Overall, results of CEWS compliance audits are demonstrating a high level of compliance. As noted above, cost-benefit considerations are incorporated into the risk-based approach model as factors for consideration.

Question No. 1265—Ms. Louise Chabot:

With regard to processing delays for applications for employment insurance benefits, as of February 10, 2023, broken down for Canada and Quebec (as a number, not a percentage): (a) how many unprocessed employment insurance applications had a processing time of over (i) 28 days, (ii) 60 days, (iii) 90 days; and (b) how many unprocessed employment insurance applications were attributable to fraud or attempted fraud?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's employment insurance, or EI, program plays an important role in providing support to workers during periods of temporary unemployment and in helping to stabilize the economy during periods of economic hardship.

Service Canada continues to put in place measures to provide effective and efficient service that meets the needs of clients and ensures that Canadians continue to have timely access to the EI benefits to which they are entitled when they need them most. Service Canada understands that delays in the payment of EI benefits can cause hardship to clients and is committed to ensuring that Canadians receive the benefits they are entitled to in a timely manner.

Between April 1, 2022, and January 31, 2023, Service Canada processed 78.1% of EI claims within 28 days. It sometimes takes longer than 28 days to process an EI claim, especially during peak periods or for the most complex cases. The most common reasons why it takes longer are, one, waiting for information or documentation from the claimant or employer; two, additional fact-finding is required; and three, certain files have been referred to integrity operations for review or investigation.

Once Service Canada has received all necessary information and/or documentation from the applicant or employer, a claim may be fully automated the same day, and payment will be received through direct deposit within two to three days. If a cheque needs to be issued, it could take five to 10 business days for the client to receive the payment. If an officer needs to render a decision about entitlement to benefits, these timelines would be extended depending on the complexity of the issue to be decided.

Between April 1, 2022, and January 31, 2023, the average number of days it took for a client to receive their first EI benefit payment was 23 days in Canada and 25 days in the Quebec region.

The EI workload initial and renewal, or I and R, claim inventory based on the breakdown of available weekly results is as follows. As of February 11, 2023, there were 175,894 I and R claims pending in the inventory. Of these, 74,578, or 42.4%, were 29 days or older, 31,729 were four to six weeks old, 19,344 were six to eight weeks old, 14,283 were eight to 12 weeks old and 9,222 were 12 weeks or older. Our data is reflective of the date of February 11 and not February 10. Data for employment insurance is pulled as of the week ending Saturday, as an EI week goes from Sunday to Saturday. We are unable to pull this breakdown on a Friday, which February 10 was, as it would not portray the true reflection of the pending results for the week.

Of the 175,894 I and R claims pending, there were 63,147 claims from the Quebec region. Of these, 36,648, or 58%, were 29 days or older, 12,881 were four to six weeks old, 9,213 were six to eight weeks old, 7,998 were eight to 12 weeks old and 6,556 were 12 weeks or older.

On November 3, 2022, the fall economic statement announced approximately \$1 billion in funding for Service Canada to process EI claims faster, while reducing EI claim inventory and reducing contact centre wait times.

With regard to fraud in the EI workload, as of February 11, 2023, there were 4,104 claims in the I and R inventory with a stop payment because they were suspected of being fraudulent, and 3,435 were from the Quebec region. These have been referred to integrity operations for review or investigation. Of these, 2,797, or 68.2%, are 29 days or older and 2,371 are from the Quebec region.

Service Canada officers make every effort to finalize the processing of EI claims. In addition, officers provide claimants with information and options outside the EI program to support them while their claim is being processed.

Routine Proceedings

Claimants must ensure that they have submitted all the information and documentation required to ensure timely processing, and have received their access code to complete their biweekly reports to reduce delays in receiving their benefits. Claimants should also consult the EI benefits web page, at <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/ei/statistics.html#s1>, for any additional information.

Question No. 1267—Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:

With regard to the government's response to the Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review on the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, prepared by the Honourable Louise Arbour in May 2022: (a) what is the total number of working groups and internal committees formed to respond to the recommendations; (b) what are the details of all working groups and committees formed, including the (i) title or name, (ii) recommendations being examined, (iii) number of anticipated or scheduled meetings, (iv) date of the first meeting, (v) number of members, (vi) names and titles of all individuals participating; and (c) for each committee or working group in (b), is the Minister of National Defence a member and, if so, what is the expected role of the minister?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to parts (a), (b) and (c), culture evolution is National Defence's top priority, which is why we have mainstreamed efforts, that is, incorporated organizational changes directly within the National Defence structure, to build an inclusive and diverse defence team free from harassment, discrimination, racism, sexual misconduct and violence. These organizations are also directly charged with leading the implementation of external review recommendations in a holistic manner.

For example, the chief professional conduct and culture, or CPCC, was established in April 2021 to continue the defence team's efforts to eliminate inappropriate sexual behaviour and other harmful conduct and to effect a culture change where all feel respected and included. The CPCC is composed of 378 personnel, including from the public service, the regular force and the reserve force. The CPCC is supporting the review of all external recommendations and the integration of the declaration of victims rights into the code of service discipline within the National Defence Act.

In October 2021, National Defence established the External Comprehensive Reviews Implementation Committee, or ECRIC. The committee is co-chaired by the vice-chief of the defence staff and judge advocate general. The committee is responsible for developing and overseeing a plan to implement the recommendations from former Justice Fish, former Justice Deschamps and other external reviews, including most recently the independent external comprehensive review, or IECR. All organizations within National Defence, both military and civilian, are invited to participate in the committee. The committee is supported by the Director General External Reviews Implementation Secretariat, which is composed of eight personnel, both military and civilian.

National Defence's efforts to advance culture evolution are also discussed regularly by senior management at governance committees. In October 2022, the Minister of National Defence appointed Madame Jocelyne Therrien as external monitor to monitor the defence team's efforts to implement the remaining recommendations.

Finally, while no new working groups were directly established to respond to the IECR recommendations, the pre-existing duty to report working group reconvened to examine recommendation 11 of the IECR. The group met biweekly from September to Novem-

ber 2022, led by the CPCC. Membership was not centrally tracked; however, it was composed of approximately 36 members at the working level, with substitutions being permitted, from the following organizations within National Defence: chief professional conduct and culture, the judge advocate general, military personnel command, the vice-chief of the defence staff, the Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre; and the assistant deputy minister of finance. The Minister of National Defence was not a member of the working group.

Question No. 1270—Mr. Adam Chambers:

With regard to the government's early learning and child care plan: (a) what is the breakdown in the number of affordable (i) spaces, (ii) daycares or similar facilities, that have been created or signed into the program, broken down by each federal riding; and (b) if a breakdown of (a) by federal riding is not available, what is the breakdown by municipality or metropolitan region?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in budget 2021, the Government of Canada committed to providing provinces and territories with over \$27 billion over five years to build a Canada-wide early learning and child care, or ELCC, system. In their Canada-wide ELCC agreements, provinces and territories have agreed to develop action plans that detail how they will achieve the commitments outlined in their respective agreements, which are intended to increase access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive child care for families in Canada. The agreements and associated action plans are publicly available at the following link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories.html>.

Commitments outlined under the Canada-wide ELCC agreements are at the provincial and territorial levels and are tracked on the basis of fees and spaces created. For example, Manitoba has committed to creating 23,000 spaces across the province by March 2026. As such, the provinces or territories are not required to report data by riding or municipality.

Question No. 1271—Mr. Scot Davidson:

With regard to government expenditures on home Internet services for public service employees: (a) what is the government's policy on which employees are eligible to have their home Internet service paid for; (b) as of January 1, 2023, how many employees have had their home Internet service paid for by the government, broken down by department, agency, or other government entity; and (c) what was the total in expenditures by the government related to home Internet services for employees during the (i) 2022 calendar year, (ii) 2021-22 fiscal year?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the information requested is not centrally tracked by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, or TBS, as per the directive on telework, which is at <https://www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=32636>, employees who wish to participate in a formal telework arrangement, or who are already doing so, are responsible for assuming all utility costs related to maintaining their telework location.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1254, 1255, 1257, 1258, 1260, 1262, 1264, 1266, 1268, 1269, 1272-1280, 1283 and 1284 could made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1254—Mr. Todd Doherty:

With regard to the government's commitment in budget 2017 to provide \$5 billion over 10 years to support mental health initiatives: (a) how much of the money has been spent to date; and (b) what is the breakdown of how the money in (a) was spent, including which initiatives have been funded and how much has been spent on each initiative?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1255—Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:

With regard to the funding of operational stress injury clinics and satellite services by Veterans Affairs Canada, broken down by province or territory: (a) what are the details of each clinic or satellite service, including (i) the name of the clinic, (ii) the number of veterans, Canadian Armed Forces members, or active RCMP members served, (iii) the services available, (iv) whether the clinic is for-profit, (v) the regulatory oversight body; (b) what are the details of the funding arrangement with each clinic or satellite service in (a), including the (i) duration of the existing arrangement, (ii) amount received, (iii) services to be provided with public funding; and (c) for each clinic in (a), what is the process for complaint escalation for common issues, such as quality of service received, client satisfaction, or wait times?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1257—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's announcement of the return-to-office plan for federal public servants, broken down by office building or workspace in the National Capital Region: (a) were the buildings assessed by heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) professionals to improve ventilation; (b) were new HVAC systems installed or improved to reduce the transmission of airborne viruses; (c) was ventilation improved in the buildings or workspaces; (d) were new workspaces provided or created with the intention of creating physical distance between public servants; (e) was proper ventilation in the workspaces or buildings considered in the decision to have employees return to the office; and (f) is personal protective equipment available at no cost to employees in these buildings or workplaces?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1258—Mr. Tom Kmiec:

With regard to citizenship ceremonies completed in 2022, broken down by month: (a) how many citizenship ceremonies took place (i) in person, (ii) virtually, (iii) in a hybrid way; (b) how many individuals (i) were scheduled to become Canadian citizens, (ii) became Canadian citizens at the ceremonies, (iii) were considered no-shows, broken down by each type of ceremony in (a); (c) how many individuals scheduled to become citizens requested to attend a ceremony (i) in person, (ii) virtually; and (d) of the requests in (c), how many were granted?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1260—Mr. Warren Steinley:

With regard to the statement made by the Minister of Labour on February 9, 2023, in the Senate that "I need more workers in the oil and gas industry, not less. We need more.": (a) has the Minister of Labour taken any action aimed at increasing the number of workers in the oil and gas sector and, if so, what action has been taken; (b) has the Minister of Labour taken any action aimed at ensuring that oil and gas companies are able to retain workers currently employed in the oil and gas sec-

tor; (c) how many oil and gas workers have received training through the government's Just Transition Initiative to date, in total and broken down by program; (d) how many workers does Natural Resources Canada estimate are no longer working in the oil and gas sector as a result of the government's Just Transition strategy; and (e) what action, if any, is the Minister of Natural Resources taking to get more workers in the oil and gas industry?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1262—Mr. Eric Duncan:

With regard to Health Canada's funding for PrescribeIT and e-Prescribing: (a) how much funding has the government provided to Prescribe IT (i) directly, (ii) indirectly, through the Canada Health Infoway, broken down by year since November 4, 2015; (b) what are Health Canada's estimates based on the reports it has received as to how many (i) doctors, (ii) pharmacists, used PrescribeIT, broken down by each of the last five years; (c) what is the breakdown of (b) by province or territory; and (d) what metrics is the government using to measure the success or failure of Prescribe IT and how has the project measured up to the metrics?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1264—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to information services (IS) employees (Treasury Board code 305) within the civil service, broken down by department, agency, or other government entity: (a) how many IS workers are currently employed by the government, in total; and (b) how many executives or workers, at the EX level or higher, do the IS workers report to, in total?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1266—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency and post-payment assessment for compliance of Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) recipients: (a) what risk parameters are used in assessing whether CEWS payments need post-payment verification; (b) how is each risk parameter used in assessing whether CEWS payments need post-payment verification and are all CEWS payments assessed for post-payment verification using the same formula; (c) what data was provided to the Office of the Auditor General in conjunction with their 2022 audit of the CEWS outlined in 2022 Report 10 published by the Office of the Auditor General; (d) considering the statement made by Bob Hamilton in his testimony at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on January 26, 2023, what specific factors are great indicators of whether someone is eligible for the CEWS or not; (e) what data sources are considered to identify risk and build audit plans; (f) how is each data source used in the identification of risk and construction of an audit plan; (g) until January 31, 2021 inclusive, how many companies who received the CEWS were audited for suspected non-compliance, and how many of those audits (i) have been completed, (ii) were undertaken only after the company's final CEWS payment period, (iii) resulted in a finding of non-compliance; and (h) how many companies at a high risk of non-compliance were not audited due to a low potential for recovery?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1268—Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:

With regard to the Government of Canada's discussions with the United States of America on the Safe Third Country Agreement, since January 1, 2022: (a) how many meetings, virtual, in-person or by phone, have there been where Roxham Road was discussed; (b) for each meeting in (a), which public office holders participated in those discussions, including their full name and title; (c) what briefing documents, internal memos or emails were written in preparation for or as a result of those meetings; (d) which departments were involved in preparing for those discussions?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1269—Ms. Lori Idlout:**

With regard to applications for registration under the Indian Act, broken down by province or territory and fiscal year since January 2016: (a) what is the total number of applications (i) received, (ii) processed; (b) what is the total number of applications that were (i) approved, (ii) denied; (c) how many applications for registration were processed within (i) less than six months, (ii) six to eight months, (iii) 12 to 18 months, (iv) 18 to 24 months, (v) longer than 24 months; (d) what is the total number of applications in (a) from individuals affected by known sex-based inequities in the Indian Act; and (e) as of February 9, 2023, what is the current backlog of applications for registration that remain unprocessed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1272—Mr. Warren Steinley:

With regard to section 31 of the Conflict of Interest Act: what are the details of all administrative costs which were incurred by and reimbursed to public office holders, since November 4, 2015, including, for each cost, the (i) title of the public office holder who incurred the cost, (ii) amount, (iii) date, (iv) description of items reimbursed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1273—Mrs. Laila Goodridge:

With regard to pharmaceutical drugs, treatments and therapies authorized by Health Canada since January 1, 2022: (a) how many treatments or therapies for rare diseases, known as orphan drugs, were granted authorization; and (b) what are the details of each drug in (a), including the (i) name of the drug, (ii) date of the approval, (iii) purpose of the drug, including the disease or condition treated by the drug?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1274—Mr. Richard Bragdon:

With regard to the First-Time Home Buyer Incentive (FTHBI) announced by the government in 2019, from September 1, 2019, to date: (a) how many applicants have applied for mortgages through the FTHBI program, broken down by province and municipality; (b) of the applicants in (a), how many have been approved and have accepted mortgages through the FTHBI program, broken down by province and municipality; (c) of the applicants listed in (b), how many approved applicants have been issued the incentive in the form of a shared equity mortgage; (d) what is the total value of incentives, shared equity mortgages, under the program that have been issued, in dollars; (e) for applicants who have obtained mortgages through the FTHBI, what is the (i) value of each mortgage granted, (ii) average mortgage value of the mortgages granted; and (f) what is the total aggregate amount of money lent to homebuyers through the FTHBI?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1275—Mr. Philip Lawrence:

With regard to section 19 of the Conflict of Interest Act: (a) what is the government's understanding of Parliament's requirement that "Compliance with this Act is a condition of a person's appointment or employment as a public office holder"; (b) does the understanding described in (a) vary with respect to (i) the Prime Minister, (ii) ministers and ministers of state, (iii) parliamentary secretaries, (iv) ministerial exempt staff, (v) other public office holders; and (c) what impact has the Prime Minister's multiple breaches of the act had on the government's ability to require ministers and parliamentary secretaries to abide by the act?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1276—Mr. Philip Lawrence:

With regard to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's February 14, 2023, recommendation "that the government consider mandating all ministers and parliamentary secretaries to receive training from the [Commissioner's] Office": (a) does the government accept the commissioner's recommendation and, if so, when will training (i) begin, (ii) be completed by; (b) on what date is the Prime Minister scheduled to receive the additional training; (c) if the answer to (a) is negative, why; and (d) what training have ministers, including the Prime Minister and parliamentary secretaries, received from the Commissioner's Office since November 4, 2015, broken down by (i) minister or parliamentary secretary, (ii) date of the training, (iii) subject-matter, topics or rules covered during the training?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1277—Mr. Marty Morantz:

With regard to compliance measures taken by the Canada Revenue Agency, broken down by income bracket and for each of the last five tax years: (a) what was the total number of filers in each income bracket; (b) what was the number of requests for additional documentation; (c) what was the number of audits conducted; (d) what was the number of criminal investigations instigated; (e) what is the rate per thousand tax filers represented by each action from (b) to (d); and (f) how much additional taxes were due as a result of each action from (b) to (d)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1278—Mrs. Tracy Gray:

With regard to the government's National Housing Strategy, since November 4, 2015: (a) has any funding been provided through the strategy to (i) Encasa Financial Inc., (ii) Mainstreet Equity Corp., (iii) Pan Pacific Mercantile Group, (v) Atira Women's Resource Society, (vi) Southwest Properties limited, (vii) Saskatchewan First Nations Water Association Inc.; and (b) what are the details for each payment in (a), including the (i) recipient, (ii) date, (iii) amount, (iv) funding stream under which the money was allocated, (v) project description or purpose of the funding?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1279—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to federal contracts given to Deloitte Canada for the purpose of creating a nation-wide system to track the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccinations: (a) what is the value of all contracts, including, for each, the (i) date of the contract, (ii) value of the contract, (iii) products to be delivered, (iv) timeline for delivery; (b) on what date was the nation-wide computer system rolled out; (c) with which provincial and territorial vaccination systems was the national system connected to; (d) what enhancements, improvements, and added functionality did the national system, created by Deloitte Canada, make; (e) what are the details of all national system outages, including, for each, the (i) duration of the outage, (ii) functionality and services impacted, (iii) costs incurred by the federal government to restore functionality, (iv) number of users impacted; and (f) does the government own the intellectual property for any products created under the terms of these contracts?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1280—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

With regard to the Department of National Defence, and in reference to vaccine doses sorted by brand listed on the government's response to Order Paper question Q-1069: (a) what was the number of each type of injection, including anti-COVID-19 injections, administered to each member of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF); (b) what was number of myocarditis cases that were reported after receiving the anti-COVID-19 injections; (c) what are the details, including the numbers, of all non-serious and serious adverse events after receiving anti-COVID-19 injections; and (d) for each non-serious and serious event listed in (c), what is the breakdown by age of the CAF members?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1283—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to federal contracts awarded since fiscal year 2015-16, broken down by fiscal year: what is the total value of contracts awarded to (i) McKinsey & Company, (ii) Deloitte, (iii) PricewaterhouseCoopers, (iv) Accenture, (v) KPMG, (vi) Ernst and Young?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1284—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to services provided to Export Development Canada (EDC) by Accenture related to the administration of the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) program: (a) what are the details of all contracts given to Accenture, including the (i) date of the contract, (ii) value of the contract, (iii) products to be delivered, (iv) timeline for delivery; (b) what is the total cost of external services procured for the administration of CEBA; (c) what is the total amount of internal resources at EDC committed to the administration of CEBA; and (d) what is the total amount of external services procured through Accenture for the (i) repayment of loans, (ii) collection of loans deemed ineligible after delivery, (iii) collection of fraudulently obtained loans?

(Return tabled)

S. O. 52

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, finally, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand at this time, please.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

RISE IN HATE CRIMES

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I wish to inform the House that the Chair has received notice of a request for an emergency debate. I invite the hon. member for Burnaby South to make a short statement.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to request an emergency debate concerning the very serious rise in hate crimes particularly targeting the Muslim and Jewish community. With the rise of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism on the heels of record-high levels of violence against these communities, we need the debate in this chamber to discuss how serious this is and debate solutions to the problems.

I want to cite specifically recent and brazen attacks at the Islamic Society of Markham, the Bagg Street Shul in Montreal and other communities across this country, where people are being targeted because of their faith and are receiving violent threats and violence against them directly.

Given that, I think all parliamentarians would agree the role of government is to ensure people are safe in their communities and are safe to practise their faith. Given that, again I urge this House to accept my request for an emergency debate to discuss the seriousness of the rise of hate and to discuss solutions that can make sure people are safe in our communities.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I would like to signal the support of the Green Party of Canada for an emergency debate on the rise in hate crimes.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We do not allow that. We will not have a debate on this.

I thank the hon. member for Burnaby South for his intervention. After discussion with the Speaker, he is not satisfied that this request meets the requirements of the Standing Orders at this time.

[Translation]

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The Chair has received notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Lethbridge.

I invite the hon. member for Lethbridge to make a short statement.

[English]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House in order to make a request with regard to an emergency debate concerning revelations that the government has pressured social media platforms to edit or remove content that it considered embarrassing. These attempts at what can fairly be described as government censorship of the news, and the Internet more generally, came to public attention through a response that my colleague, the member for Niagara West, put forward in an OPQ.

The response, which has been tabled in the House of Commons, reveals that the government pressured social media platforms a total of 214 times over a 24-month time period and that this pressure was applied simply because the government did not want this information made public or it felt embarrassed by this information.

We know that there were many times when the platforms were able to successfully push back. However, we also know that Bill C-11 is currently in the Senate; if it should pass, it will actually legislate the government's ability to engage in this type of censorship going forward. One can imagine just how scary this is for many Canadians who count on the fact that we have a charter in this country that protects their freedom of speech, and therefore, freedom to access information that they wish to listen to or watch or access online. Therefore, given that we have now seen it come to light that the government applied pressure 214 times, we would ask that the House be able to engage in a debate with regard to this important matter.

I acknowledge that the Chair normally affords a wide latitude for contributions during the budget debate, which is the current debate taking place here today. I recognize that this type of request might not normally be granted under the emergency debate opportunity. However, I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to recognize that these issues touch upon one of our fundamental freedoms, which is freedom of speech, and further, that censorship of the news and Internet is decidedly not an economic question, as the budget is. Therefore, it could not necessarily be addressed through financial initiatives.

To suggest that this issue can simply be raised within the context of the current debate seems perhaps reckless, and so I would respectfully allow my question to stand: Could we be granted an emergency debate with regard to the government's decision to apply pressure 214 times to social media platforms across this country?

● (1545)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Lethbridge for her intervention. However, I am not satisfied that the request meets the requirements of the Standing Orders at this time.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, I would stand on a point of order. During the debate, there was an accusation thrown against me that I was spreading a conspiracy theory in bringing up the fact that the government has applied pressure to social media companies 214 times. I would like to retable the documents already tabled, which show that I am in fact telling the truth, and therefore, my emergency debate request is substantiated.

The Budget

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a true honour for me to speak to federal budget 2023 in the House on behalf of the residents of Davenport. It was really wonderful for me to be back in the riding over the last two weeks, to get a chance to go out and talk to the various Davenport residents, organizations and businesses about the different measures that we have in the budget.

Before I go on, I want to say a huge thanks to all those who made submissions in budget 2023. Over 700 Canadian stakeholders and organizations made submissions. It was a huge effort. It was a lot of work, a lot of outstanding ideas, a lot of great creative thoughts and so I wanted to say a huge thanks to them.

Budget 2023 is the most targeted budget that has been introduced by our government in the seven and a half years that I have had the privilege to serve the residents of Davenport in this venerable House. However, what I think is really important to note is that it builds on the work and investments that have already been announced and made in previous budgets. That said, there are three key sections that I would like to speak about, depending on how much time I have.

I want to talk about the major investments we are making in health care, including dental care; the huge investments in accelerating the clean economy in Canada; and the targeted investments in affordability, which will support our most vulnerable Canadians, who continue to have such a difficult time with the high cost of living.

Maybe that is where I will begin: affordability. We had to be very targeted with our spending in budget 2023 and very much focused on delivering support to those who need it the most.

Why is it that we had to be very targeted? It is because inflation continues to be high. As a national government, we cannot make it worse with big spending programs.

Canadians want us to be responsible in our spending, and this means we had to make some choices. Here are some of the affordability measures that we have introduced in our latest budget.

We have introduced a one-time grocery rebate, providing \$2.5 billion in targeted inflation relief for 11 million low- and modest-income Canadians and families. The grocery rebate will provide eligible couples with two children with up to an extra \$467, single

Canadians without children with an extra \$234 and seniors with an extra \$225, on average.

As another measure, the federal government is taking additional steps to ensure that more low-income Canadians can easily file their tax returns to receive the benefits that they are entitled to.

Budget 2023 announces that the federal government will increase the number of eligible Canadians who can do automatic tax filing to two million people by 2025, which is almost triple the current number. This is something that, for a very long time, poverty advocates have been asking for. Far too many Canadians do not know what benefits they are entitled to, and therefore, they leave that money on the table. These tend to be the people who need the benefits the most.

The third measure I want to mention, although there are many others, relates to some additional measures we have for our students. We need to continue to do all we can to help them as they go to school, study and try to start their careers in life.

Our federal government previously announced that the interest for Canada student loans and Canada apprentice loans had been permanently eliminated for all students. In budget 2023, we provide more financial assistance for students by increasing the Canada student grants by 40% annually, which will provide an additional \$4,200 a year, and also by raising the interest-free Canada student loan limit from \$210 per week to \$300 per week of study.

Part of the reason I was so happy to be back in Davenport is that I got a chance to actually go visit various different places across the riding, just to hear what people were thinking about in terms of the different measures that we have introduced.

At Nossa Talho, a really wonderful Portuguese grocery store in my riding, I talked to Sylvia. Sylvia said to me that she loves the grocery rebate. She said that every penny that is put into her bank account is a dollar that she will spend on her family. That is going to help her meet all the higher costs she is seeing in terms of groceries.

I also talked to Diana and Monica, who were at the grocery cash register. They had a lot of positive things to say. They did not know about the grocery tax rebate, and I know that they are going to tell many other people.

● (1550)

I also had a wonderful chance to visit the seniors at Joseph J. Piccininni Community Centre. I stopped in while they were playing pickleball and talked to them about some of the measures we had. They were also very happy. I also managed to talk to the seniors at The Stop Community Food Centre, the LA Centre for Active Living Seniors and the Abrigo Centre. They were all extraordinarily happy about the automatic tax filing; the dental care program, which I will talk about in a couple of minutes; and the grocery rebate. There were a lot of thumbs up across the riding of Davenport.

The Budget

I want to mention a few measures that mean a lot to small businesses in my riding. The lowering of the credit card transaction fees for small business was huge. I do not know what is happening in other members' ridings, but in my riding, our small businesses are really struggling. They have said that anything that would help keep some money within their businesses so they could reinvest in their business, cover some of the higher costs or pay more in wages would be helpful for them. Our federal government has secured commitments from Visa and MasterCard to lower fees for small businesses while also protecting reward points for Canadian consumers offered by Canada's largest banks.

More than 90% of credit card-accepting businesses will see their interchange fees reduced by up to 27% from the existing weighted average rate. These reductions are expected to save eligible small businesses in Canada approximately \$1 billion over five years. That is a lot of money, and they are very happy about this. A lot of businesses did not want to pay this extra interchange fee, so many were not accepting credit cards. This will now allow them to accept credit cards. It makes it more affordable for them, which means they will have more customers who are willing to spend more money.

The other item that is big for many of the craft brewers, which are small businesses in my riding, is the freezing of the excise tax on beer, wine and alcohol at 2% for one year. That is huge for them. It is something the industry has been asking for. I am very blessed in my riding of Davenport to have a lot of really wonderful craft brewers. When I told them about the freezing of the excise tax, they were extraordinarily happy. I want to give a huge shout-out to the people at Henderson Brewing and thank them for welcoming me, talking to me and advocating for this. I know that all the other craft brewers in my riding are very happy about it as well.

I also want to thank all the West Queen West businesses that I managed to pop by, such as the Dog & Bear pub, Hello 123 and Nunu Ethiopian Fusion Restaurant. They were all extremely delighted to hear about the lowering of the credit card transaction fees.

I am now going to move on to health care. We have all heard about the long lineups with respect to surgery backlogs, as well as emergency rooms being too full and taking a long time to serve Canadians. We have heard about Canadians not having access to doctors and the lack of funding for mental health, among many other issues. I had a chance to visit thousands of doors in my riding of Davenport in the months of January and February, and this was one of their top-of-mind issues. They all said that it would be really great if the federal government could step up and better support the provinces with health care, and step up we did. In budget 2023, we made major investments, adding an additional \$195.8 billion over 10 years.

These are the key items to highlight: We have increased the Canada health transfer by about 5% a year. We have added an immediate \$2 billion top-up to address the urgent pressures I mentioned regarding emergency rooms, operating rooms and pediatric hospitals. We have added \$25 billion for bilateral agreements to address the need for more dollars for mental health and ensure that more Canadians have access to family doctors, among many other things. We have included far more money to support the hourly wage increases for personal support workers and strengthen the re-

irement savings of personal support workers who do not have workplace retirement security coverage, as well as more money to expand the reach of Canada's student loan forgiveness programs for doctors and nurses who work in underserved rural or remote communities, including all communities with populations of 30,000 or fewer.

I see the Speaker has given me the one-minute mark, yet I do not seem to have covered very much.

I want to say that this is a really excellent budget for the residents of Davenport. It is very targeted. I encourage all members of this House to support it when it comes time to vote.

• (1555)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, our hon. colleague from Davenport, in her comments on budgetary policy, spoke about mental health. As many of my colleagues know, I have dedicated the last seven and a half years, my political tenure, to championing mental health within our country.

National mental health transfers were something that the government, the Liberals, ran on in 2021. They promised a \$4.5-billion mental health transfer so we could finally have mental health in parity with physical health, yet they walked back on that. They lied to Canadians.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, they misled Canadians.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, we are just following a lengthy question of privilege on the use of that word in the House. The member should apologize for using it.

• (1600)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member did correct himself. An apology would be nice, too.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, they misled Canadians on such a vital promise during the 2021 election. I would like to ask our hon. colleague what she has to say about that.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his amazing leadership in advocating for more mental health support. I do not think there is anybody in the House who does not agree that we need to have far more investment in mental health services. At all levels, we have not provided enough in the past.

The Budget

I will say there is an enormous top-up and an enormous investment in federal budget 2023. In Ontario, they have signed a bilateral agreement. The organizations that advocate for mental health supports in my riding are very happy, and they are looking forward to additional dollars flowing in this area.

I thank the member opposite for his enormous leadership. We do need to do more. We will do more.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. She slipped in a brief comment about the grocery rebate. She talked about an extra \$225 on average, but an extra \$225 on what, exactly?

This is a one-time cheque to help with groceries. Obviously, seniors cannot be against this measure, but will a one-time rebate of \$225 really address the unanimous request from seniors' groups?

They are calling for measures to improve their financial situation in the long term, which means recurring assistance, not just one-time cheques that will only help them at a specific time.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, we have a very targeted budget with very targeted supports for our most vulnerable, but these should be taken in concert with all the other measures we have introduced. Seniors who are aged 75 and older in my riding were very happy to have an increase of 10% for their OAS. They were very happy for past GST rebates. That has been very helpful to them.

I will talk of families in my riding. They love the grocery rebate because it is on top of the Canada child benefit, which they have already been receiving, and which was introduced by our government. As well, with the national child care plan that we introduced, they have seen 50% of their costs on a monthly basis reduced, so these are never to be taken in isolation.

We have introduced so many measures that help low and middle-income Canadians, better supporting them with the high cost of living today.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wanted to raise the issue of dental care, which is encouraging to see in this budget. It will make such a huge difference for people who are struggling with the pain of not being able to fix their teeth. We know that for kids, one of the most common surgeries in pediatric hospitals is dental surgery. However, people with disabilities, seniors and kids under 18 are having to wait until the end of the year, I would like to see people able to fix their teeth now.

In June of 2021, the member voted against dental care when the NDP put this forward as a private member's bill. The Liberals voted against dental care in February of 2020 when we used our opposition day to put forward a motion. I am curious, given the fact that these delays are because—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mend s): I have to give the hon. member for Davenport time to answer.

The hon. member for Davenport.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I would say to the hon. member that actions speak louder than words.

We are very proud of the fact that we have worked with the NDP on the supply and confidence agreement. The supply and confidence agreement is about what we can work on together that we both agree on. More money for health care was a key part of that, so I am very proud that we are introducing a dental care plan by the end of this year.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, never in the history of our country has a prime minister spent so much to achieve so little. He has added more money to our national debt than all previous prime ministers combined, and he is not done. With this spending, our national debt is projected to rise to \$1.3 trillion, meaning Canada now spends more money servicing our debt than we spend on our military, child care or social programs. Budget 2023 sets out spending for this year at another \$456 billion.

With all of this spending, one would think that Canadians would be better off, but the reality is that more and more Canadians are struggling. We are facing higher taxes, smaller paycheques, a rise in the cost of living, higher rates of inflation, higher rates of crime and higher rates of homelessness. Inflationary spending is negatively impacting the mental health of Canadians. As I said earlier, Canadians are struggling.

In the last election of 2021, this Liberal government promised to start spending more money on mental health and to actually view mental health in parity with physical health. As I mentioned earlier in a question to our colleague from Davenport, I have spent the last seven and a half years championing the mental health situation of our nation. I think we can do more. The member for Davenport says that we all must do more.

Government members like to stand up to say that they have really got Canadians' backs. Well, they are on Canadians' backs. They are piling more and more debt on the backs of Canadians. Coming out of COVID, they promised Canadians that they were finally going to invest in them to look after them. Canadians were feeling the pressures from the COVID pandemic and three years being locked up, not being around their loved ones. However, as soon as they formed government, they forgot about that \$4.5-billion mental health act transfer.

Our friend from Davenport said that the mental health associations and organizations within her riding are happy. Well, I can tell members that I spend almost every day, hours and hours, speaking with representatives from mental health associations. Whether they are our national organizations or grassroots organizations, they are worried.

The Budget

As a matter of fact, Margaret Eaton, the CEO of the Canadian Mental Health Association, in response to budget 2023, said, “The budget is out of touch with the reality of Canadians’ well-being and their ability to afford mental health services. I believe that the government has missed the mark, and that there will be deep human and economic costs to pay.”

We are already seeing the real human costs of the government’s inflationary spending. Recent research indicates that Canadians’ mental health is worsening due to the rising cost of living. Canadians affected by inflation are experiencing higher rates of self-rated anxiety and depression, higher rates of a recent diagnosis of a mood disorder since the pandemic, and higher rates of suicidal ideation. Not only that, inflation is forcing people to cut back on health-related expenses. Does one pay for a prescription or for food on the table?

This budget does nothing for Canadians living in rural and remote communities. It is making life even more expensive for rural Canadians, especially in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George, where we have to drive long distances to get services. Everything we consume, whether it is fuel for our vehicles, the food we need to put on our tables to feed our families or the oil to heat our homes, has gone up. We do not have the luxury of taking the LRT to get services. We have to drive long distances. We have to fuel our vehicles.

Currently, gas prices are \$1.66 a litre and maybe even higher in Prince George. It was \$1.65 in Williams Lake last week and \$1.74 in Vanderhoof, and that has actually come down from the \$2.00 per litre it was just weeks before. Sadly, on April 1, Canadians woke up to higher prices, higher taxes and a smaller paycheque. By 2030, two carbon taxes could add 50¢ per litre to the price of gasoline, according to the PBO.

• (1605)

This budget says nothing about the promise that the public safety minister made to my community of Vanderhoof about a new police station, which it has been waiting years for, especially after the shooting in November 2021. Someone shot up our police station. An individual targeted the RCMP, and because they work in such an antiquated facility, people were hiding behind plywood and aluminum siding to get away from the bullets. The minister, just last year, promised action on that facility. However, it is not mentioned anywhere in budget 2023.

The budget promises relief for families. However, the Liberals’ inflationary spending has caused the cost of food and groceries to skyrocket. One in five Canadians are skipping meals. People are going to food banks. People are asking for help to end their lives and access MAID, not because they are sick, but because they cannot afford the rising cost of living in this country. As a matter of fact, in Toronto, food banks have seen numbers quadruple. It has gone from 60,000 people per month to over 270,000 individuals accessing its food banks. Those are real people. They are not just statistics. Those are the people we have all been elected to serve in the House.

The money the government spends is not its money. It is Canadians’ money. I think Canadians are not getting the bang for their buck they deserve from the government and the Prime Minister.

The Liberals want to talk about the grocery rebate of \$234. I have no doubt that is going to help individuals, but that is one time. What are Canadians doing for the rest of the year? That is one week. That is only a few bags of groceries.

Everything in rural and remote communities has a higher cost. Milk has a higher cost. Loaves of bread have a higher cost. Butter has a higher cost. Every point of contact raises the cost because of the Liberals’ tax policies.

Let me talk about the opioid crisis. What would budget 2023 do for the growing opioid crisis? It is a national crisis. In my province alone, we are seeing numbers go through the roof. Just last month, we went from 2,000 overdose calls per month to over 3,000 calls per month. As a matter of fact, on March 22, just a few weeks ago, paramedics attended over 205 overdose events in just one day. That is staggering. Our communities are gripped with such a huge mental health and drug crisis, yet there is nothing in budget 2023 addressing these issues.

We seem powerless in this country to stop those drugs from flowing in through our borders and into our communities, and our police, RCMP or security services seem powerless to stop those drugs from getting into the hands of friends and family. I know what I am speaking of. I have a brother who is on the streets and is gripped by his addiction to drugs. We are powerless to get him off the streets, and so many families are experiencing this. Whether they are experiencing the growing rates of suicide, or the loss of loved ones who have died by suicide or overdose, the families who are gripped in the mental health crisis our country is saddled with are being offered nothing in this budget.

• (1610)

As I said earlier on, the government is out of touch. What do we expect from a Prime Minister who tells Canadians to just pay for their debts with their credit cards? It is not surprising. What he has been doing for seven and a half years is using Canadians’ money to fuel his out-of-control spending. He is out of touch and Canadians deserve better.

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed working with the member opposite for some time on the fisheries and oceans committee.

He mentioned in his speech that people are finding it hard to access health care or other services, but the government has allocated \$196 billion for health care for the provinces and territories over 10 years. That is \$19.6 billion a year. Does the member think that is a worthwhile investment in our country, for the people who need various services in health care, or will he vote against the budget and not allow this money to go to the provinces as directed?

The Budget

• (1615)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, Conservatives put forth three items we were looking for in this budget, and, sadly, this budget fails to capture any of them. The provincial governments and mental health organizations are all saying that what the government has promised is not enough. It promised \$4.5 billion for the mental health act transfer and walked it back. It cannot be trusted. The provinces are waking up to this and so are the mental health associations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech, and I commend him.

We have a very serious situation right now, and that is the housing crisis. It is indisputable. The entire country is being impacted. Where I live, in the Lower St. Lawrence, in the riding of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, the vacancy rate in the city of Rimouski is 0.4%. This is a serious situation. There is not enough housing for people of all ages and all financial levels. In the key sector of health care, we are unable to bring in workers to take care of people, and this government's latest budget completely ignores the housing issue.

There are investments for indigenous housing, but there is nothing, zero dollars, to create new housing for people who really need it.

I would like to hear exactly what my colleague thinks about that.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, we are short millions upon millions of homes for Canadians. The goal of home ownership has gotten farther and farther away. As a matter of fact, the average down payment was \$20,000 when the Liberal government was first elected, and it is now over \$45,000. Canadians cannot afford that. Rent has gone up from \$1,500 to almost \$3,300 under the Liberal government.

More needs to be done, and the Liberal government is not doing it. It needs to get out of the way and let Conservatives fix the problem.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House to speak about murdered and missing indigenous women and girls in this country. This budget has put forward \$20 million over four years to support safer communities, almost \$100 million of ongoing help for indigenous families to access information and \$20 million a year after that, \$2.5 million over two years to support the National Family and Survivors Circle and more.

This budget is important to indigenous families. We know there is not enough, but there are good things in this budget to move forward on reconciliation. Do the Conservatives think this is not enough to support this budget?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, my riding of Cariboo—Prince George is right along the route of the Highway of Tears. I have sat with so many families that have lost loved ones: murdered and missing indigenous women and young girls, and young men as

well, as a matter of fact. It is absolutely heartbreaking. We need to do more.

My worry is that the government has pledged it, but will it follow through with it? We have seen the government continue to build up hope, then always fall short of actually delivering. That is my worry when I speak with my communities, first nations communities and small rural and remote communities, that the government makes big promises and boasts a lot, but does not follow through on what it promises.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is really a privilege to rise in yet another budget debate where we are taking time to analyze the budget. What also happens in these debates is that they reveal our visions, our values and our priorities.

I want to begin by commending the Minister of Finance for her excellent effort in having listened to Canadians and having tested the waters with experts and individuals in communities across this country in an attempt to craft a budget. This is an art that takes into account both the moment in life we are living and also how we are able to move into the future. It was not an easy task.

Obviously, our country is coming out of a period, with COVID, when we had extremely high expenses and kept the economy going and kept people going. We are now in a period of global recession with higher-than-normal inflation even while we have a period of very low unemployment. It is a risky time in the Canadian economy, and I believe that the Minister of Finance has crafted the fine art of targeting support for the most vulnerable, who are at the highest risk of problems during this recession, while also moving our economy into the future.

Budget 2023, “A Made-in-Canada Plan: Strong Middle Class, Affordable Economy, Healthy Future”, is that kind of artistic endeavour of a budget that attempts to target supports to the most vulnerable while creating a cleaner and greener economy. It would deliver on tax fairness, strengthen our health care system, develop a clean economy, and help us to invest in clean electricity. In particular, I would like to focus on a couple of things in this part of the debate, and those are our proposed support for low- and modest-income families and individuals and our plan to build a stronger and cleaner economy for everyone.

We have all just come back from two weeks in our constituencies. For me this was a time when I could meet with a number of people during the three Abrahamic festivals of Ramadan, Easter and Passover, when families gathered and there was much conversation and rich engagement. It gave me an opportunity to look at both the problems Canadians are facing in my riding and also the opportunities this budget would afford them.

The Budget

This is a post-COVID-driven, recession budget. Canada's economy is showing signs of recovery from the pandemic, and we are in a much better position than other countries around the world. In fact, we had the strongest growth rate among G7 nations in 2022. However, as with many economic recoveries, not everyone sees these improvements equally in their day-to-day lives. Inflation has been decreasing, and we have noticed that steadily over the past eight months.

However, people earning low to modest incomes still need help with higher grocery prices, especially for fresh produce. Canadians are facing that. I face that. I go to the grocery store, just like everybody else, and notice the high cost of groceries. That is why we have been attempting to find ways, both directly, to deal with the high cost of groceries, and also indirectly, through a series of sustained long-term supports that are changing the world in which we live, at least in my riding.

I want to tell members that, when I started in politics in 2008 and I represented an area in Toronto called Thorncliffe Park, I regularly saw kids going to school without parkas, mittens or a full stomach from breakfast. That has changed dramatically in the past 15 years. With the onset and the advancement of the Canada child benefit, with other supports and with the increased Canada workers benefit, I see the children going to school in Thorncliffe Park, and elsewhere in Toronto and in my riding, with full stomachs, the right clothes on and opportunity for advancement in the world, where they will be able to make a difference.

I have often thought that the cure for cancer could be locked in the brain of a child who does not get advancement in the world. Through our targeted early childhood benefits, through the early childhood care benefit, through the Canada child benefit and through other targeted supports, that cure for cancer may be found in our lifetime, because it is no longer going to be locked in the brain of a child who does not get a chance to succeed.

This is not just about the grocery rebate. We can talk about that, but it is also part of a targeted response that would make sure that at least 11 million Canadians with low and modest incomes would be able to benefit from a targeted benefit.

• (1620)

Budget 2023 would also see, as we have said repeatedly in the House, the creation of the Canada dental care plan. I do want to acknowledge the work of the New Democratic Party on that important policy. It is one of the things the Liberal Party has wanted to do for some time and, with that encouragement, we have continued to develop it. In 2022, the plan was brought in. It will be improved in 2023 and it will continue to help Canadians have a fresh face and a fresh start as they continue in life. One in five Canadians delays seeing a dentist right now because of the cost. That will end, and that is the way Parliament should work. It is the way we should engage together as colleagues in this place.

Since federal dental coverage for children under 12 was announced in 2022, applications for 970 children in Don Valley West have already been received and processed. That is almost 1,000 children, and almost as many families have received a benefit that is making a difference in their lives. Everyone in the House should

take credit for that, especially those who will support this budget in the coming days.

The economy and our lives coming out of COVID are profoundly affected by the COVID pandemic response but also by climate change, which continues to plague our planet. The world's leading economies are moving at an unprecedented pace to address climate change. We have to reshape our economies. We have to build net-zero industries for tomorrow. It is a goal of the government. Therefore, while we are doing targeted responses with respect to helping Canadians in a time of recession, we are also, at the same time, building for a greener future that will create better-paying jobs and will continue to help our economy evolve and change and keep pace with the world. We will create better jobs and we will get to net zero; those two things go hand in hand. It is the economic and social imperative of our time.

Budget 2023 showcases Canada's potential to become a clean-electricity superpower with a more sustainable, secure and affordable electricity grid with better and cleaner electricity for all. Everyone would benefit. Resource industry workers who extract essential minerals would benefit. Engineers who design next-generation batteries would benefit. Auto workers, particularly but not exclusively in my home province of Ontario, would benefit. Secondary industries, including auto parts and all of the industries related to that, would also benefit. This is building an economy for the future, for Canadians of the future.

• (1625)

The investments made by the government since 2015 have built on Canada's existing competitive advantages, which have made our country a destination of choice for investment in the global clean economy. However, we recognize that we cannot sit on our accomplishments so far. As a country, we need to keep pace and we need to never fall behind. Our government has a plan, and the plan is to make Canada a leader in clean and affordable energy. Budget 2023 makes a series of major investments to ensure that Canada's clean economy can bring prosperity, middle-class jobs and more vibrant communities across the country. We will continue to do that.

The Budget

Some members know that I was a member of Parliament, that I left and then came back. During my time out, I worked with the Asthma Society of Canada. What I wanted to do was push the problem of respiratory illness upstream. The reality is that asthma is related to climate change. If we do not invest in these technologies today, we will simply have more people demanding more health care, and more people dying. Every day in Canada someone will die of asthma. It is an environmentally driven illness, so we need to be invested in it in this place and across the country, ensuring that Canadians have a budget that will allow for the advancement of their dreams as individuals, with targeted responses, but also for an economy of the future. We will continue to do this, building measures that are widespread.

We have heard in this debate many members who have offered different windows into the budget. I will attempt to answer members' questions on these or other issues, and I thank them. This is an opportunity for us to engage in an important debate and an important subject.

• (1630)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague across the way for his excellent speech. I do enjoy working with him on the foreign affairs committee. I know a great organization that is potentially going to benefit from his talents during his next time out.

I have a question I want to ask. I had the opportunity to consult with my riding over the last two weeks. I had 13 meetings, and I heard much about the cost of inflation and how it was affecting families. In particular, I want to relate two comments I heard from the villages of Wheatley and Erieau. They have harbours, and they understand the concept of an anchor.

A year ago, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance made a commitment that Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio was anchored to a solid fiscal anchor and would not rise. The folks in Wheatley and Erieau understand that anchors are not supposed to float, so my question to my hon. colleague is this. Next year, what will be the anchor in this year's budget?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington for his interventions and also for a good, collegial approach to our work.

Canada is obviously part of a world economy. We see inflation as a worldwide phenomenon. We also see Canada's response to inflation being targeted and careful. I would describe this as a business-friendly budget, one that makes sure those who may be at risk of being left behind are not. Businesses will also have an environment in which they can flourish.

We are not an island. Canada is part of a world economy, and we will always continue to be among the best G7 and G20 leaders in debt-to-GDP ratio. We will continue to build, knowing that we need at times to invest, at times to save. Right now, we do not want to leave anybody behind as we grow our economy in a greener future.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, we heard my colleague on the other side of the House talk about a clean, green economy. Why then is

there not so much as a hint of any transition plan to end fossil fuel subsidies?

When I talk about ending subsidies, I do not mean tomorrow morning. People who work in the sector are not going to lose their jobs. They are not going to end up on EI tomorrow morning. However, having a plan means that, in a specific number of years, not a single penny more will be spent on this sector, and the jobs will shift to another sector.

Why is it not starting now?

[English]

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, indeed, I actually believe we have already started on that practice. We have been engaged in it for the last seven and a half years. We have found a way to encourage investment in greener energies while continuing to support those who make their living in fossil fuels. That has been part of our goal.

The Liberal government is a government for all of Canada. This is a government for every part of the country where the economy is still dependent on fossil fuels. I am still, as a person who drives a hybrid vehicle, dependent on fossil fuels. We will continue to transition away from fossil fuels as we move to cleaner sources of energy, but doing it making sure we do not leave people behind. That is what we will do.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the people we do not want to leave behind are our own children and grandchildren, and at this point, we are running over them as we continue to support fossil fuels.

This budget expands subsidies for fossil fuels by accepting the notion that we can use fossils to create hydrogen. We do that with so-called abated sources. Those are basically weasel words for saying we are going to use fossil fuels to create hydrogen. At the same time, we are expanding access to carbon capture and storage as public subsidies to private sector interests to expand and continue fossil fuels.

Could the parliamentary secretary explain how the Liberals can talk out of both sides of their mouth on climate?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, I actually think we are very consistent.

The Budget

I want to thank the member for her earnest and always important contributions on climate change and on a greener economy. However, I would like to take the opportunity to get to a paragraph of my speech that I was not able to put in due to time. That is our proposal in the 2023 budget to introduce a 15% refundable tax credit for eligible investment in clean electricity projects. This significant investment is being extremely well received in the business community. It includes zero-emission electricity generation systems, emission-reduced natural gas-fired electricity generation, stationary electricity storage systems that do not use fossil fuels, and inter-provincial and territorial electricity transmission equipment.

We will continue to build the economy of the future while we help it in transition, leaving no one behind.

• (1635)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government has touted this budget as a budget that will tackle the high cost of living. Observers could be excused for thinking this meant the government would actually take substantive steps to address the underlying factors that have caused the historic rise in the price of food, heating, gas and other everyday essentials. Unfortunately, Canadians did not receive such a budget, and as a result, their confidence in the competence of the government's economic management continues to dither.

Instead of taking care of the issues of the day, the government has burdened future generations of Canadians with billions upon billions of dollars of unnecessary debt. It should not be up to Canada's sons and daughters to foot the bill for a government looking for a quick vote today.

Canadian families are suffering. That is the bottom line. This we know; we hear it every day. I can recite countless examples locally of small business owners or farmers who have had to make extremely difficult decisions in order to stretch their dollars further. However, there is one group of Canadians often overlooked in these discussions, a group of Canadians that has been treated as an afterthought by governments and looked at as an easy source of money when it needs to be found: our armed forces and its members.

Over the past couple of weeks, my office has been inundated by an alarming number of CAF members expressing grave concerns over numerous issues, most recently the replacement approved by Treasury Board of the post living differential to the Canadian Forces housing differential. The push-back on this new policy has been astounding.

One person, who granted me permission to use their quote, wrote, "Many are losing money. The sliding scale it operates on has newly joined members making more money than those that have been in for 12-15 years. This means as you work hard, strive to lead and progress you will actually lose money. In what world does it make sense that as you promote into higher positions you take a pay cut? You have members who will lose money because once they move up in ranks and strive for more, they no longer qualify for the CFHD benefit and the raise does not match what they were receiving from CFHD. I'm talking about a decrease in pay anywhere from a couple dollars to 500 dollars a month. The CFHD benefit goes away for people who live in the same area for 7 years

or more. Sure, many members get posted. But the Navy folks on ship are only stationed on each coast. Things don't change for those folks after 7 years for cost of living. Well it does. It gets more expensive but let's take away an allowance."

I want to personally thank this person for being courageous enough to reach out to my office to share their concerns. If politicians never actually talk to our soldiers, sailors and airmen, regardless of rank, how will we ever know the issues they are facing and how can we begin to start working on them to solve the problems?

While I am sure the objective of this government was to increase the draw of new recruits into the forces, it has done this at the expense of keeping the ones we already have. The 7,700 troops who currently receive the post living differential will not qualify for the Canadian Forces housing differential. For them, it is just another benefit axed. For members living together who do qualify, that benefit is halved, and at a savings of \$30 million. I can promise everyone in this House and everyone watching that the long-term effects in talent and investment we will lose as a result of this will far exceed that amount. That is only what we can realistically monetize in training costs. The amount of damage done to morale cannot have a dollar value attached to it.

It also unfairly targets the navy, as the new differential expires after seven years in the same address, and the navy is notoriously non-transitional in postings. The government needs to commit to communicating with our troops and ensuring that they will not be unfairly nickel-and-dimed to pay for over-budget programs like the Canadian Coast Guard Arctic and offshore patrol ships, AOPS, which just had its program cost quietly and unceremoniously increased by half a billion dollars, especially at a time when we are in a recruitment and retention crisis. The only solution for the reconstitution crisis is to take the stopgap that exists at the recruitment phase and put it into the retention phase so that there are more soldiers in and fewer soldiers out. The CFHD fails in that objective.

The Budget

• (1640)

What we need is better equipment. We need to start replacing our Victoria-class subs and our aging Auroras, expand our over-the-horizon radar capabilities and commit to spending 2% of our GDP on national defence. Our troops need better incentives, better pay, better housing, a fair and timely recruitment process and a quick and compassionate transitioning process. We also need to remember that the government's solemn responsibility to our soldiers, sailors and airmen is not nullified as soon as they leave the CAF.

At this point, I want to thank my two colleagues, the members from Banff-Airdrie and Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, for their excellent work in advancing veterans issues and being staunch advocates for our former CAF members.

Canadians, regardless of job, have been struggling. This budget was an opportunity to provide relief to those who have been dealing with these costs since well before the last election. Instead, we have a government that chooses to run up billions in new debt while simultaneously turning a blind eye to the harsh realities facing everyday families the country over, including those in uniform.

The country is facing crises on many levels. The government came out with a pay raise for our forces members and almost immediately negated that net increase by completely revamping their housing differential in the middle of a cost of living crisis, a recruitment crisis and a retention crisis. They expect our normally stoic forces members to be happy about this newest slap in the face. Struggling Canadians both in and out of uniform deserve better than a complacent government content with the status quo.

When he retired, Jim Flaherty was, as many opined, a “steady hand at the tiller”. During the last economic crisis, the prudent and conservative approach he took showed Canada to be an island of stability in a global sea of uncertainty. It is crucial that the government of the day, regardless of its stripe, ensures economic stability and does not fall prey to the siren calls of political gamesmanship. It is for these reasons that I will be voting against the budget.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I recognize that the member has spoken at great length about our armed forces and the supports they need, and I appreciate the intervention today, but I would like to ask her a question that relates more to her riding specifically.

This budget has a lot in it for electrifying the grid throughout Canada and is about preparing for the future of electric vehicles. No riding in this country, at least currently, stands to gain more from that than her riding of Hastings—Lennox and Addington. In fact, she was there in the summer when Umicore announced that it was going to be building the largest battery manufacturing plant in North America in her riding.

This budget has a lot in it to advance Canada and push us in the direction of that evolution. I am curious if she can at least comment on whether she thinks moving in the direction of electrification and supporting industries linked to the \$1.5-billion manufacturing plant in her riding are a good idea.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, there is no question that Umicore, the battery materials plant, is the first of its

kind in North America, and I applaud the member opposite for raising it. I was there and I welcome that. It is expected to launch in the fall of 2025. I will certainly celebrate the small wins from the government and recognize that locally in Hastings—Lennox and Addington we celebrate when things go right.

I would like to acknowledge that it is a good win, and members on either side of the House need to recognize and applaud when things go right, not just knock heads. They should respect each other.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her enjoyable speech. We see that she is very passionate about the Canadian Armed Forces and their importance. I share her desire to support our veterans, especially the members of the armed forces who protect and serve us every day.

There were some things missing from the last budget. The omissions were rather striking. We are currently experiencing a housing crisis. There is a crisis going on across Canada and Quebec, affecting a number of regions, including my own, the Lower St. Lawrence. It is undeniable. There is also another crisis, the labour shortage. My colleague briefly touched on it when she was talking about the need for the Canadian Armed Forces to attract and retain service members. There is nothing in the budget, no key measures. The Bloc Québécois has proposed several, including tax incentives to allow experienced workers to work a few hours or days a week. There are other measures that could give some breathing room to people who want to join the workforce to help our business owners.

I would like my colleague to share her point of view on the complete absence of measures to deal with—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, it is definitely no secret that Canadians are stretched in every possible regard, whether it is with housing or labour issues. The bottom line is that the budget that was presented is not responsible. It is a budget funded by Canadians suffering from inflation. Rather than providing real solutions, this NDP-Liberal government has unleashed an avalanche of uncontrolled spending.

From my perspective, Canadians cannot afford business as usual. No democracy is perfect, but all are perfectible.

The Budget

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned at one point in her speech that this budget is “turning a blind eye to the harsh realities” of ordinary Canadians. One of the harsh realities that ordinary Canadians face is the fact that millions of them cannot afford to get their teeth fixed. This is something that my constituents speak to me about on a regular basis. I wonder if the same is true for her constituents. If so, how does she explain to those constituents who cannot afford to visit a dentist, or those who cannot afford to take their kids to the dentist, or the seniors who cannot chew their food that she will be voting against expanding our health care system to include dental coverage?

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, after two weeks of meeting with people, businesses and families in my constituency, I can say that the consistent message is that Canadians need a break. Canadians need a responsible government to step up.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Calgary Centre, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, The Environment; the hon. member for North Island—Powell River, Women and Gender Equality.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise and speak to budget 2023, which is yet another high-spend budget that will likely make life more expensive for Canadians.

I have spent time over the last couple of weeks talking to people across my amazing riding of Fort McMurray—Cold Lake to hear their opinions on this budget. I have heard from families, individuals, businesses and organizations alike that are struggling to make ends meet due to record-breaking inflation, and they are really having a hard time right now. Their paycheques do not stretch as far as they used to, between the increased cost of heating, the skyrocketing grocery prices, and the overall cost of living, which seems to be ever-increasing. These hard-working people I have chatted with just want to see lower taxes. Specifically, the thing I hear resoundingly throughout Fort McMurray—Cold Lake is that they want to see the carbon tax axed because it is a tax plan, not an environmental plan. It is inevitably going to raise the price of everything, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer has shown it has already done and will continue to do as we go forward.

One thing I hear loud and clear from people across Fort McMurray—Cold Lake is their concerns about the ever-increasing crime. For far too many years, families and individuals across rural Alberta have been complaining about the revolving door of criminals being caught and released back into their communities without so much as a slap on the wrist. The catch-and-release policies of the Liberal government mean that more Canadians do not feel safe in their homes, their communities, their streets and their country. Recently, we have been seeing an ever-increasing rate of high-profile violent crimes in the news. These are now happening in cities and are random. There are random stabbings happening on transit and in the streets. This is not gang-related violence that is terrorizing everyday Canadians, but just random crime.

One thing that is so terrifying and that I have heard so many people say they are concerned about is the fact that many of these crimes were committed by people who were released on bail or out on parole. After eight years of the current Prime Minister and his soft-on-crime policies, our communities just feel less safe, and the Liberal government is doing nothing to stop it. Sadly, it is making it worse. Violent offenders are thrown back into the streets, sometimes within hours of their arrest.

Conservatives believe in jail, not bail for violent repeat offenders, and I think it is really important to stop this revolving door of catch-and-release criminals. In the eight years since the Prime Minister has taken office, violent crime has increased by 32%, and gang-related murders have doubled. Canadians deserve to feel safe in their communities. Conservatives will restore their trust in the legal system and ensure that violent repeat offenders stay behind bars, where they belong.

The people I talked to were also really concerned about government censorship. Specifically, their concerns were with respect to Bill C-11. They made it clear to me that they do not want the current government, or any government for that matter, making a decision as to what they can see or say online. We now have proof that the current Liberal government has unashamedly asked tech giants to make news articles that it does not like simply disappear. We have proof that this has been happening under the current government. Bill C-11 would make that much easier, and the government would be able to control more of what we can see and say online.

I am proud to say that a Conservative government will repeal Bill C-11 and protect the individual rights and freedoms of Canadians. It is a shame that the Liberals are more concerned with catchy talking points than addressing the real issues facing Canadians. They are more concerned with keeping their partners in the costly coalition happy than helping everyday Canadians.

Conservatives made three requests of the federal government in order to gain our support for the budget: one, lower taxes; two, end inflationary deficits that would increase the cost of goods; and three, remove the gatekeepers that would prevent more homes from being built, allowing home prices to drop. However, none of those conditions were met, not a single one of them. As such, it is pretty clear that Conservatives simply cannot support this big-spend budget.

The Budget

• (1650)

It is truly time to speak out against the injustices we face under this current administration. With budget 2023, the Liberals are continuing their war on work and imposing higher taxes that are punishing hard-working individuals, rather than listening to the needs of real Canadians. It has never been so good to be a Liberal insider, and it has never been so bad to be an average Canadian. That is wrong, and it should not be the case in 2023.

The price of food and groceries has skyrocketed. I am not sure if the Liberal members hear the same thing I do when I am back home, but just about every person I talk to talks about how expensive gas is and how expensive groceries are. I constantly see posts on social media from friends of mine who have kids about how their grocery bill has gone up by another \$100 this week.

Living in an isolated, rural community, I see even more expensive groceries than what many of my city counterparts would see, just by the nature of the fact that the groceries need an extra five hours to get to where I am, which is an end-of-line community.

The carbon tax actually adds a unique perspective. Not only are the farmers taxed to make the food, and then the people who produce the food are taxed on all the energy it takes to manufacture it, but the hard-working truck drivers who bring the food from distribution centres and farms to my community are also taxed. The grocery stores have additional carbon tax. That little bit of carbon tax, which is just a tax plan, is multiplied so many times over, and the farther Canadians are from a distribution hub, the more that has an impact on them.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has made it very clear that Canadians will, in fact, pay more than they receive back in this carbon tax scheme. In fact, for the average Alberta family, the net cost of the fuel charge is \$2,773. It is \$1,723 to the average family in Saskatchewan, another \$1,490 to the average family in Manitoba, an extra \$1,820 to a family in Ontario, an extra \$1,513 to a family in Nova Scotia, an extra \$1,521 to a family in Prince Edward Island, and an extra \$1,316 to a family in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I repeat those costs because it shows that families are not better off, if the average family in that many provinces is going to be paying that much more. Most of the families I have talked to over the last two weeks do not have an extra \$2,700 lying around to pay for the extra cost of the carbon tax. They do not have it. They are already struggling. They are already making the hard choice of whether they are going to pay their heating bill, pay for gas so they can get to work, or put groceries on their table.

We have a record number of people skipping meals in this country: one in five Canadians is skipping meals. We have a record-breaking number of people visiting food banks right across this country every single month so that kids get nutritious food. We are in a crisis right now with affordability, yet the government seems to think that this is not really a huge problem. It did put forward a small win with a grocery rebate, but with the additional costs I cited, that will evaporate before a couple of months is up.

While it is definitely going to help in the short term, in the long term families will still be worse off than they were before. That is

not even taking into account that because of all the extra spending in this budget, the average family is going to have an extra 4,200 dollars' worth of costs to pay for all the spending in this budget. Most of these families do not have that kind of money.

This is the part where I think there is a huge disconnect between the talking points and the reality. Canadians are struggling today and the solutions are not here. I will be voting against this budget.

• (1655)

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wanted to highlight one particular issue. The member said that it is time to get rid of the gatekeepers and build more houses in our country, from one province to another. Before coming to this place, I was involved in municipal politics. I was the mayor of my hometown, the second-largest municipality in the province of Newfoundland.

Is she implying that we should take over the responsibility of issuing permits and regulations when somebody comes in to apply to build a home? I do not think that is where the federal government should go. It does not have the people on the ground to do it, and the municipalities in every province would not be happy with the government taking over that responsibility.

• (1700)

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, prior to being elected to this place, I served as a provincial member in my home province of Alberta. Municipalities are the creation of provinces, and as such I am not suggesting that we take over the individual permitting. What the leader of the official opposition has suggested, and it is very smart, is to tie federal infrastructure money to having high development permits in certain areas, allowing us to have more homes being built in some of these communities where perhaps they are selling out and having a bit of a NIMBY perspective on it.

This is not about the individual municipalities. The reality is that, since the government took office eight years ago, home prices have doubled in this country. Canada has tons of land, yet land costs have gone through the roof. We really need to do more to make houses more affordable so people can afford to live in this country.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

The Budget

Clearly, we are not going to agree on certain things, such as Bill C-11 and all the disinformation around it. No, Bill C-11 will not infringe on freedom of expression. However, we do agree on the issue of security, and I am very interested in hearing her talk about that. For example, it is deplorable that there is still no independent inquiry on Chinese interference, which is quite serious. We might have expected an announcement about some action being taken on this issue. Concerning arms trafficking, there are no measures to strengthen the control of gun smuggling across the border. That is very worrisome.

I would like my colleague to talk about that.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I think she mentioned several issues that are top of mind for Canadians across the country and that were not addressed in the budget. One thing that struck me is that there are a lot of expenditures in this budget but no money to tackle Beijing's interference. There is also no money to reduce crime rates across the country. That is an area where more work needs to be done in order to ensure that Canadians have everything they need.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her speech. However, there is a difference between an expenditure and an investment, especially when it comes to investments in people, particularly in our seniors, our elders, who deserve respect.

We in the NDP successfully forced the Liberal government to implement an actual dental program that will cover the bills for seniors who are living in poverty and need dental care. Is the member telling us that she is going to go back to her riding and tell seniors in precarious situations and those living in poverty that she does not want them to get their teeth fixed?

[*English*]

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, that is absolutely hyperbolic from the NDP. Frankly, the Canadian Constitution is extremely clear that the delivery of health care is the sole jurisdiction of provincial governments. Provinces and territories all across the country have dental programs. Had the federal government wanted to have a well-costed program, it could have worked with provinces and territories to establish a program. Instead, the Liberals are saying what everyone in my constituency is always terrified of, which is, "I am here from Ottawa, and I am here to help."

Frankly, I do not trust a government that has not been able to figure out how to pay its own employees over the last six years, having not been able to figure out the Phoenix pay centre and paying its own employees, will somehow administer a program this large and be successful. Therefore, no, I am—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington is rising on a point of order.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent concerning a vote held earlier today on Bill C-34. I would like to mark my vote as affirmative.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is so registered.

● (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, today I will be sharing my time with the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

[*English*]

It is an honour to rise today to speak to this budget bill, which is a very important budget. I have been sitting here for quite some time listening to Conservatives routinely talk about the government spending too much money, but then the same speakers in the same speeches talk about all the places where we should be spending more money. I am getting mixed statements coming from the other side of the House on what we should be doing. Nonetheless, I would like to address some of the points I have heard today.

First, I am going to start with the issue of the debt and deficit we have in Canada. There is no doubt that we are still coming down off of the debt and deficits that were taken on during the pandemic to support Canadians. It is a public policy that we decided on in this country, as most OECD countries did, if not all to at least some degree, to take care of Canadians, our constituents and residents, during the pandemic. That is exactly what we did. We ensured they had the supports they needed.

We are obviously coming down off of that. The deficits are getting smaller as we move away from and put the pandemic behind us, but it should be said that, in comparison to other countries, when we compare the inflationary impacts of Canada to the United States, for example, the United States is seeing much steeper inflation, especially as it relates to items such as groceries, which the Conservatives always want to bring up.

I am not saying all of this because I am trying to say we should not be worried about inflation. We should, and it something that we do need to tackle. What I am saying is that inflation has been happening globally. It is something that the world is experiencing. Yes, there is a lot of credit to the argument that it had to do with the supports that went out. It is not due exclusively to that, but, globally speaking, when we look at that, we can draw a correlation to it. However, we should not suggest that inflation in Canada is happening in isolation from the rest of the world or, more importantly, that we would have had the ability to control inflation in isolation from the rest of the world, especially when we consider how globalized our economy is.

The Budget

We have more trade agreements with other countries than any other country in the world. What does that mean? That means that, when we build things, things are flying across the border. I will give a perfect example. I do not know if members know this, but 80% of the nylon that goes into airbags comes from the Invista plant in my riding of Kingston and the Islands. It makes the nylon, and that nylon will probably travel somewhere to the United States where it is made into the fabric. It then maybe goes somewhere in Mexico through the NAFTA agreement to be fabricated into the airbag, then it probably passes to another country to create the airbag that goes into the steering wheel, and from there the process continues.

My point is that we are a globalized country that has significant trade with many different countries. The unfortunate reality of that is that inflationary impacts are not something we can control in isolation from the rest of the world. If we tried to take an inverted approach and only focused within Canada, saying we will do things without the rest of the world, we would be left behind. As a matter of fact, if we look at the United States and Donald Trump's approach when he was president, we see that he took that approach, and he was unsuccessful in doing it because of that globalization, and it still saw more inflation than Canada did.

I respect the argument because it is a great talking point. It points the blame at somebody, but the reality is that, when Conservatives point the finger at this government to say it has caused all of the inflation in this country, it is ludicrous. It just does not make sense, and it is unfair.

Having said all of that, it is also worth pointing out that, despite the challenging times that the world is seeing right now, Canada continues to have the lowest deficit in the G7. We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. Why is that important?

• (1710)

It means that, as our economy is growing, and as we are seeing new industries and we are expanding, we are able to keep that deficit in check, relatively speaking, against other countries. Also, very important is the fact that Canada continues to maintain a AAA credit rating.

We should all be concerned about the inflation we are seeing throughout the world. We should certainly be concerned about how it is impacting Canadians here in Canada, but to suggest, for a second, that it is something that we could control while also, at the same time, engaging in the globalization and the global trade that we do, is just wrong. It does not make sense, and any economist would tell us that. It is extremely disingenuous when we hear from the opposition that that is the case.

I also find it absolutely remarkable, and I have said this a number of times, that if people believe that the Prime Minister of Canada, whom the official opposition is very critical of on a daily basis, is responsible for inflation in our country, then they would somehow have to also accept the fact that he is responsible for inflation throughout the world.

To my Conservative colleagues, I would say that, for somebody they do not have a lot of faith in to do anything, to suddenly be giving that individual credit for affecting global inflation is truly a re-

markable feat. They cannot have it both ways, despite the fact that Conservatives would like to do that.

The other falsehood or talking point we continually hear from Conservatives, and I would like to take the opportunity to try to once again set the record straight, as I am broken record, and I have been saying this for five or six years, respects the carbon tax, or what we, and I, like to call a price on pollution. I will explain why that is in a second. If the term of the day is "carbon tax", I am happy to entertain the discussion.

What Conservatives always leave out when they are talking about that, every single time, is the fact that there is a rebate. Although the price on pollution might triple by 2030, and not a couple of days ago, as the Conservative rhetoric would like people to believe, although that may be increasing, and it does increase every year, so too does the rebate. The rebate is reflective of how much people are paying and what they are paying on that price on pollution, or that carbon tax.

That is important because of my reason why I prefer to call it a price on pollution as opposed to a carbon tax. A tax is something that is intended to be collected into general revenues and then used for supports, income redistribution to support those in particular hardships who need it at various times, and that is not what this levy does. It takes the money and then returns that money to Canadians. It is the exact same amount. Whether one made \$1 million dollars last year or \$10,000, we all got the same amount based on the number of people in our family, in our households.

Now, a very valid question would be why we would even bother doing that if we are giving the money back. I think it is actually a good question, and a lot of people ask that. There is a very simple explanation for it. Economists throughout the world resoundingly agree that, when a price is put on something, it changes the behaviour in the marketplace. It incentivizes people to make different choices.

If people are making very environmentally friendly choices and they are paying just a little into that price on pollution, they stand to gain more back than they put in. That is an incentive to incentivize people to make different decisions as it relates to the choices they are making when they are making purchases.

Those are two very important things that I wanted to bring up in this debate, because I think they are germane based on the discussion I have heard thus far. I will certainly be supporting this budget. This is a budget that respects the circumstances we are in and that we have just come out of, and it is a budget that looks towards the future to invest in people and in businesses throughout our country.

• (1715)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a very short question: What set of circumstances would the member envision where the ratio of debt to GDP would drop? If the Deputy Prime Minister stated last year that it was always going to drop but this year it did not, circumstances changed, what set of circumstances would allow for some responsibility here?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question, and I am so glad that I was asked it.

The Budget

The reality is that if our economy continues to grow, and grow at a faster pace, which it is through immigration, through investing in people and businesses, then we are taking on debt and our net benefit, our net bottom line, is actually ahead. That is why Conservatives have done it. That is why Liberals have done it. That is why, out of the last 16 budgets introduced by Stephen Harper and Brian Mulroney, only two ran surpluses. Every other run ran a deficit, because they all understood the economics would be the exact same. I guarantee the member that if the Conservatives end up on this side of the House, they will continue to do the exact same thing.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, since my colleague mentioned the environment a few times in his speech, I want to engage him on that issue.

Much like the Bloc Québécois, many groups recognize that the budget contains some positive measures for the environment. However, everyone sees eye to eye on criticizing the investments in carbon capture and storage, as this only offers a vague hope of a transition to a cleaner economy.

Why, on the one hand, are we investing in greener technologies while, on the other hand, we keep funding a technology that is not well developed and that itself generates greenhouse gases?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, that is another great question.

I appreciate it, but I do not think the future is in carbon capture. However, I do know that we have a limited runway in front of us to protect our environment for my children, the member's children and all members' children and grandchildren. We have to throw everything at the problem that we possibly can at this point in my opinion.

So, if investing in carbon capture is not the best solution, I would agree, is it a solution that we can use at least in the interim? Possibly, and I want to see if that will materialize. I want to see if it is a possibility. At the end of the day, of course, I do not want to be capturing carbon forever. I do not want that to be the solution. I want to move away from the problem of even having to capture the carbon in the first place.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned the carbon tax.

That is something that the NDP agrees with. However, his government continues to give subsidies to oil and gas companies. On one hand, the government wants to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but on the other hand, it is using taxpayers' money to continue supporting fossil fuels that produce huge amounts of greenhouse gases.

Does he not think that is a contradictory position?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, this is an interesting point that NDP members always bring up. They say we are investing in fossil fuel subsidies. However, no, the subsidies have actual-

ly been going down. What we have been investing in, which makes it look like they have been going up, is dealing with things like orphan wells.

We should not be in a position where previous companies that have gone out of business left wells behind for society to deal with, but the reality is that those wells are there and we have to deal with them. When the NDP talks about our increase in subsidies, they are adding into that calculation money used for dealing with orphan wells, and I would submit that it is not a subsidy. This is something that we need to do as a society because, as a society, we allowed companies to not deal with them effectively themselves when they should have.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to the budget. To begin, I want to talk about something that is not necessarily in the budget but is an area where I sincerely hope the Liberal government left itself some wiggle room. I am talking about the negotiations with the federal public service.

Time is running out. The federal government has been given an ultimatum. It has until Tuesday at 9 p.m. to come to a negotiated agreement for the 155,000 men and women who work for us, for Quebecers and Canadians, and who need a new collective agreement. Theirs expired two years ago. I think that these men and particularly these women deserve respect. They do not deserve to grow poorer with an insufficient offer at a time when the cost of living is going through the roof. This is evident when we look at the cost of groceries, housing and many other things.

I simply want to reiterate that federal public servants can count on the NDP's support. I really encourage the President of the Treasury Board to give a bargaining mandate that will make it possible to come to a negotiated settlement and show respect for these workers who were there for us and continue to be there for us and who serve all Canadians.

● (1720)

When we talk about investments, when we talk about expenditures, when we talk about investing in our federal public service, for example, but also in other things, such as our social programs, many people will say that this is a difficult situation, that we may not have the means to do that and that we should not make those investments because they are so costly. They will say that there are deficits, that we need to be prudent and responsible. The NDP agrees.

However, it is also essential to have the political courage to put in place measures to ensure tax fairness and, consequently and ultimately, social justice. That is why, as a left-wing party and as progressives, we are concerned about being able to find the money, wherever it is, to invest in people, in our communities, in our cities and towns and in our workers.

The Budget

Where can this money be? It is interesting because the Canada Revenue Agency recently released a study it conducted itself on what is called the tax gap. The tax gap is an estimate of the difference between the amount of tax that should have been collected from individuals and companies, including major corporations, and what was actually collected. As we know, there are loopholes, tax avoidance and tax evasion. The federal government is still having a hard time taking drastic action on these issues. I was recently in Montreal with a group, a collective called *Échec aux paradis fiscaux*, that gathered in front of the Canada Revenue Agency to remind it of its own study.

The Canada Revenue Agency assessed the years from 2014 to 2018. This was the first time this type of self-assessment was done on the tax gap. What we learned is that each and every year we lose between \$18 billion and \$23 billion in revenue that we failed to collect but is owed to us. That is huge. Imagine what we could do with that \$18 billion to \$23 billion a year that we miss out on. That could pay for dental care for everyone and provide universal public pharmacare to everyone. It would be extremely beneficial for us as society to have better health care and to be able to meet people's basic needs.

Who are the big tax gap villains who slip through the cracks in the system? Those would be the large corporations, which are responsible for 70% of the tax gap even though they represent only 1% of all registered companies. It is not small businesses, the corner stores or the mom-and-pop shops that are finding ways to avoid paying taxes. Large and very large corporations are responsible for 70% of it.

A collective called *Échec aux paradis fiscaux* has reiterated that there are no concrete measures. There have been no announcements or new measures put in place to recover this shortfall. Once the facts have been established, not by a group of external individuals, but by the Canada Revenue Agency itself, which reports on the money missing every year, I hope the government will listen, acknowledge the problem and take real, meaningful action.

We could also talk about the CEOs, the big bosses of these companies who are seriously lining their pockets, while people are struggling to make ends meet. I have some pretty clear examples. Last year, Loblaw's pocketed \$1.9 billion in profits, an increase of more than 20%. That is a lot of money. People who go to the grocery store and have to do without things like meat, vegetables and really essential goods for their families are seeing Loblaw's pocketing a lot of money and substantially increasing its profits.

The CEO of Loblaw's, Galen Weston, recently got a raise and saw his salary go from \$8 million to \$11.8 million a year. We are talking about \$11.8 million a year for someone who is making record profits while people are struggling to pay for groceries. If that is not the definition of indecency, then I do not know what is. It is nothing short of insulting, because while the ultra-rich continue to line their pockets ordinary citizens are struggling and actually paying the price.

• (1725)

Mr. Weston earns 431 times the average salary of his own employees. Our esteemed Mr. Weston earns \$5,679 an hour, and he is not the only one in this country, or even the only one in his compa-

ny, to make that kind of money. Richard Dufresne, a senior executive at Loblaw's, got a raise in 2021-22, and his salary went from \$1.8 million a year to \$5.4 million a year. He started earning about \$4 million more in one year. We are still talking about the same company.

Let us keep to the major grocery chains. The annual salary of the CEO of Sobeys is \$13 million, while that of the CEO of Scotiabank is \$12 million. On average, the CEOs of major Canadian companies earn 191 times the salary of Canadian workers.

The NDP thinks that significant tax measures must be implemented to put an end to this abuse and to stop the select few in the ruling class from lining their pockets while full-time workers are being paid minimum wage, can barely afford to pay their rent and have to use food banks. I share their anger and frustration at seeing the ultra-rich always wanting more, even though they really do not need it.

Getting back to the budget, there are some good things that will improve peoples' lives. I am proud to talk about them because many originated with the NDP. The agreement that we negotiated forces the Liberal government to take the kind of action that it never wanted to take in the past. It is rather amusing to see the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance boast about the new dental benefit, because the NDP proposed the same thing just two years ago and, at that time, the Liberals thought it was a very bad idea. We had to convince them. It took some time. However, this year, children under 18 and seniors aged 65 and over will have their dental care covered. We know how important that is to people's quality of life.

I also want to talk about the GST rebate, which is known as the grocery rebate. That is the new name the Liberals have given it. That was another NDP demand. Next July, people who really need it will receive several hundred dollars.

Those are concrete measures, and we owe it all to the work of the NDP caucus. With the balance of power, with our bargaining position, we have been able to get help for people, and we are going to continue doing that, particularly on issues that affect pretty much everyone, like social housing, affordable housing and home ownership. We want a more just and equitable society for everyone.

I think my time is up. I will be happy to take questions from my colleagues.

The Budget

• (1730)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wanted to pick up on the issue of housing because back in the nineties, there was a big push from all political parties inside the chamber that the federal government not play a role in national housing. I was an MLA at the time, and I believed that that was wrong. We would have to go back generations to see a federal government like the one we have today, playing such a strong leadership role on housing, including the first-ever national strategy on housing.

The federal government needs to play a strong role, but we also need to see the municipalities in particular, as well as the provinces and other stakeholders, step up and play a very important role so that Canadians can get that affordable housing. Could my colleague provide his thoughts about this?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague. All levels of government have a responsibility when it comes to housing. That is true. However, the federal government has fallen behind. It is appalling. Nothing has been done for years, and now we have a lot of catching up to do.

As far as Quebec is concerned, it is a shame that it took three years of negotiations between Ottawa and Quebec to finally get the money out the door and see projects get off the ground. We are very behind.

In Montreal alone, there are 24,000 people on a waiting list for social housing. Social housing is the best way to lift people out of poverty and give them a real hand up. The federal government is still not doing enough.

While it is true that a housing strategy has been put in place, it has not been improved and it is not meeting the real needs of people in the community. We want to see the federal government investing more heavily in social housing.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the federal and provincial areas of jurisdiction. There is a Québec Solidaire motion before the Quebec National Assembly that states that health care falls under Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction. Quebec is asking for unconditional financial compensation for dental care, and it wants that amount transferred so it can improve coverage for a program it already has.

I would like to know what the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie thinks of that request for unconditional financial compensation.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I will quickly respond with “a promise is a promise”. We campaigned on that. We promised Quebeckers and Canadians that if they elected us to the House, we would work to make dental care accessible for the most vulnerable members of society and the middle class. That is exactly what we are doing, without interfering in Quebec's health care system. We will not tell hospitals what to do. We will not even open dental clinics. We will take the bill and pay it. That will make a sig-

nificant difference in the lives of people in need, those without private insurance who cannot afford to see a dentist.

I am very eager to go see Quebeckers and tell them that, thanks to the NDP, they can now have nice teeth, a beautiful smile, and pay their dental bill.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my brilliant colleague for his remarks. He spoke a bit about the excess profits in the grocery sector. This is something I have heard about from constituents. They go to the grocery store and are astounded by how few groceries they can buy with the same money that just months ago, if not years ago, bought much more food to put on the table. Then they turn on their television and see that the CEO of a big grocery corporation is getting a raise in the millions of dollars. I think for many people, this is simply unacceptable. What approach would my colleague have liked to see in this budget to properly tackle the issue of grocery prices?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, it appears that a millionaire's appetite for spending millions of dollars of ordinary people's money has no bounds, even though people are going hungry and would like to eat real food. One thing that was not in this budget but that the NDP is proposing is a wealth tax. This would ensure that wealthy families with substantial means would pay for some of the investments needed to truly make it possible for people to help those most in need and to lift people out of poverty. That is the minimum for social justice.

• (1735)

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague and political mentor, the member for Repentigny.

We are here to talk about budget 2023. As an economist, I have to say that it is rare to have so many questions after looking at the numbers. If the Liberal government is looking for a title for this year's budget, then I would humbly suggest, “Transparency? What is that?”

When I came out of the lock-up, I was both disappointed and worried. First, I was disappointed to see that certain necessary measures had been left out of the budget. I am talking mainly about the EI reform the government has been promising for years now. The government is once again failing unemployed workers. It is taking their money but excluding a huge portion of the people who fund the system and completely abandoning them. Now, the government is refusing to reform the system, despite the many promises it made in that regard. What is more, we are on the verge of a recession. A recession means job losses, making it all the more important to have a good EI system, but that does not exist.

The government also forgot about seniors. There are no measures to improve their situation, even though we know that they are being hit particularly hard by inflation.

The Budget

Obviously, I was disappointed with the budget. However, something bigger was exposed in this budget, and that is a blatant lack of transparency. Unfortunately, that is a Liberal hallmark nowadays. That is borne out by everything going on these days, be it cases of Chinese interference within the government itself or donations received by organizations with close ties to the Prime Minister. It is still the same so-called logic that is based on contempt for taxpayers, contempt for the public. The government is telling taxpayers that it will do as it pleases and that they cannot ask any questions because no answers will be provided. That is really problematic because transparency is a pillar of democracy. Without transparency, there is no democracy.

The budget provides several examples of this lack of transparency. The first is that, now, there are fewer and fewer grants and more and more tax credits. Tax credits, as my colleagues know, are not obvious to the average citizen. A company submits an application, it is processed by the Canada Revenue Agency, and the average citizen cannot see who is receiving that tax credit.

At the same time, the budget announces that more and more funds will be granted to and managed by Crown corporations. Once again, Crown corporations are not exactly models of transparency. Let us begin with the example of Crown corporations. They are not subject to the same disclosure regulations as government departments, for example.

As members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, we look at departmental spending line by line. Anyone can find out how much a department has given in grants, not tax credits, to an organization. Unfortunately, the same cannot be done with Crown corporations, because they are only required to disclose information to the same standard as the private sector. That is problematic. If the federal government is increasingly using its Crown corporations as a vehicle for funding its activities, they need to be subject to the same level of transparency and disclosure standards as the rest of government. Again, this is a cornerstone of democracy. It is foundational.

Consider, for example, Export Development Canada, or EDC. It is one of the tools the government uses to invest in energy production projects. This Crown corporation has been in the news recently because it supported the oil and gas industry in various ways to the tune of \$8.1 billion for the year 2020. This was reported in the media.

We know, too, that the Liberal government committed to increasing investments through Crown corporations. Here are two examples. Once again, EDC is going from \$12 billion in expenditures to \$15 billion, while the Business Development Bank of Canada is going from \$18 billion to \$20 billion. With this budget, the government is announcing that it intends to keep giving even more money to these entities, which are not very accountable to Canadians, if at all. It is impossible to determine which companies the Crown corporations are investing in, which makes accountability impossible.

● (1740)

Let us take another example from this budget. In a recent announcement, the Department of Finance created the magnificently named Canada growth fund. This budget announces that instead of being managed by its officials, the fund will be managed by a

Crown corporation. The problem is twofold. Let me be clear, I am not saying that the Public Sector Pension Investment Board, or PSP Investments, is incapable of managing funds. It is capable, and it does it quite well.

However, managing new public funds is not part of its mandate. It should simply be responsible for managing pensions, as that is its job. That means there are two problems. An investment mandate is again being given to a Crown corporation rather than a department. That is a problem because it leads us to believe that the federal government simply does not trust its officials to do the job. That is a problem. It also does not trust the secret service or artists, let alone separatists. In short, the Liberal government trusts no one, except the totalitarian Chinese dictatorship.

Second, institutions such as PSP Investments are not required to report their expenses the way the departments are. Someday soon, when an informed citizen wants to know what the magnificent Canada growth fund has done, all that person will be able to see will unfortunately be total investments broken down by sector. This will not mean much of anything, considering the word “energy” encompasses both renewable energy and sources such as natural gas and oil. This gives us absolutely no information.

Crown corporations are excellent when the government needs an opaque funding vehicle. That is what they are.

Let us look at another example. Throughout this budget, there are tax credits. Nearly half the new spending in budget 2023 comes in the form of tax credits for businesses, instead of subsidies. If the government had any real intention of transitioning to a green economy, then why is it hiding new spending? Why does it want to provide tax credits instead of direct subsidies, which would allow for real accountability?

In total, nearly \$19 million more will be granted in tax credits. Here are a few examples. The enhancement of the carbon capture tax credit was openly condemned by the scientific community. Some 400 scientists and scholars announced that they were opposed to this new tax credit, which would not help Canada achieve its targets. The investment tax credit for so-called clean hydrogen is another example. It subsidizes hydrogen produced from natural gas, which is a pollutant. It is not a tax credit solely for green hydrogen. The investment tax credit for clean electricity does not benefit Quebec, which already produces low-cost clean electricity. Once again, Quebecers' taxes will go to fund environmental initiatives in the rest of Canada.

Ultimately, these tax credits clearly demonstrate that the government is not addressing the source of greenhouse gas emissions, like scientists are asking it to do. Instead, it is focusing on methods that scientists have already condemned as being ineffective, such as carbon capture.

The Budget

Scientists have drawn a clear conclusion. These technologies are ineffective and economically non-viable. It is just an excuse to increase fossil fuel production.

In closing, if the government were truly proposing deficits or subsidies to get ready for the extraordinary climate crisis waiting on the horizon, the Bloc Québécois would certainly support it. That is clearly not the case here.

I have spoken about several new measures, but at the end of the day, they all stem from the same pattern, if I can put it that way: this government's uncontrollable need to hide information, operate in the shadows and rebuff any outside advice. Being mired in its current scandals, the Liberal government could have taken this opportunity to teach China a lesson about democracy. Instead, it chose to hide. If I have to make transparency my life's mission, so be it. I am 34. I will keep getting in the government's way for a while yet.

● (1745)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if I were closing my eyes and just listening to the member, I would think she is a Conservative member of Parliament. At the end of the day, the member says there is no accountability or transparency, but let me give an example of where she is critical. The Bloc party does not support tax credits. That is what she is arguing.

There is a tax credit for tradespeople to acquire the tools that are necessary. In a local hardware store in Montreal or a Home Depot in Winnipeg, tools are very expensive. For carpenters or people who are part of the trades, being able to write them off in the form of a tax credit is of great benefit. Am I now to believe that the Bloc party does not support tradespeople being able to write off, as part of a tax credit, the purchasing of their tools?

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I do not think that my colleague listened to my speech, or else he simply did not understand it. Throughout my speech, I gave examples of tax credits that are supposed to fight climate change and help the environment but that will not actually work. I did not say anything about the tax credit to help construction workers, which unfortunately represents only a very small portion of the budget. The government is not giving those people very much help in this budget. If they lose their job, they may not even be covered by employment insurance.

There are reforms that are not included in this budget, which is very problematic. What makes us different from the Conservatives is that we want real change for the environment and a real energy transition. This budget obviously does not address that.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge that one my colleague's biggest fans may have been in the building while she was speaking.

Thinking about the topic of her remarks, particularly her remarks about the climate crisis, and thinking about her children and my children, the fact is that despite all of the good words from across

the aisle, emissions in this country last year went up. We are giving money to fossil fuel companies at a time when emissions are heading in the wrong direction. How does that feel for her knowing the future we are about to hand our children?

[Translation]

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

I certainly am very concerned. I even began my speech by saying how troubling it is to see that the budget does not address the real problems. In the end, all this government did was make some nice promises. We are seeing that in many areas.

Unfortunately, we are not seeing anything specific to protect the environment. We are seeing that the government is doing everything it can to maintain the petro-state in Canada. I am very concerned about that, particularly when it comes to the environment. I would like to leave a healthy, livable planet to my son, who members have heard many times. Unfortunately, that will not be the case.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague to clarify what I think I understood. Tax credits are harder to track than direct subsidies to oil companies, because there may not be an audit for five or 10 years. The information is being somewhat hidden. At the end of 2023, the government could say that it got rid of fossil fuel subsidies, when in fact they have simply been converted to tax credits.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, my colleague completely understood the point of my speech and I thank her. That is precisely it.

Now, instead of paying fossil fuel subsidies directly, the Liberals are going to do it in a roundabout way by giving tax credits. It will be very hard for the average citizen to know where this public money is going. It will even be hard for parliamentarians, yet it is their job to know where our money is going.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, as you listen to my speech, you will understand why my colleague from Terrebonne and I, and all our Bloc Québécois colleagues, are working together to denounce the tricks hidden in the budget.

Chapter 3 of the federal budget presented on March 28 includes a number of elements that I would have liked to address in my speech today. The measures for affordable energy, good jobs and a growing clean economy are indeed encouraging. There are investments, which unfortunately are in the form of tax credits, for clean electricity, retrofits, energy efficiency and geothermal energy. These are positive steps. There is good news in the budget at first glance.

The Budget

I do, however, have concerns. Upon closer inspection, one might notice a deliberately and skilfully designed but reprehensible architecture, where, through the use of a single word, a very specific adjective, the entire industrial ecosystem of the hydrocarbon sector becomes part of the smorgasbord of public funds. That magic word in the budget is “clean”, which appears roughly 170 times in this chapter alone.

I will not go into the funds, the programs, how they are managed, what the funding is for, and the other specifics because there would be too much to say. I want to be clear that there is some good in the budget. Unfortunately, the problem is that these positive measures to help the environment and uphold our international commitments are overshadowed by the fact that the fossil fuel sector has undue access to public money. The government committed to eliminating fossil fuel subsidies by 2023. Once again, that will have to wait because, clearly, it will not keep its word. Subsidies will become tax credits so they can be hidden. The budget is mapped out until the 2027-28 fiscal year. Clearly, this will not happen by 2023.

I want to talk about hydrogen production, which my colleague also mentioned. There is the investment tax credit for clean energy. It sounds good, and it seems to me that it is not a bad idea. However, the truth is, Canada claims that hydrogen production from fossil sources, and from natural gas in particular, is clean. I am not making that up. There is, however, no credible international organization, scientist, or expert who would say that this is clean hydrogen.

I am not questioning the need to develop the hydrogen energy sector. We should develop it, but it must be done right. The lion's share of the money should be spent on creating a hydrogen production complex with a net-zero or very low greenhouse gas emissions life cycle. We are talking about the production of hydrogen through electrolysis. The government has announced that this tax credit is available for production projects that use electrolysis, but also for those that use natural gas. The funding is also conditional upon the associated emissions being reduced through carbon capture, utilization and storage technologies, known as CCUS.

The budget provides \$5.5 billion over five years to fund this investment tax credit for what the government calls clean hydrogen. The first tax credit opens the door to another gift, another hidden subsidy for the oil and gas sector, the one for investments in carbon capture and storage, which, let us not forget, has been discredited by a host of experts around the world. My colleague talked about 400 signatories. The majority of these people have expertise in science and technology. They asked the Minister of Finance not to agree to funding this false solution, which is extremely expensive, energy intensive, ineffective and impossible to carry out in the short term when we are facing a climate emergency.

They even ignored a very clear report on the subject released by the International Institute for Sustainable Development earlier this year, so very recently. Should this industry, which is rolling in profits, unparalleled record profits, not be funding the rollout of this project itself? Many observers argue that it is high time that the federal government introduced the regulations that will require the sector to fund its own emissions reductions. That, however, is just wishful thinking, as they say.

• (1750)

Who made money in 2022? Canada's six largest oil companies made close to \$38 billion in profits. According to media specializing in the energy sector, those companies intend to take a measly half percent, 0.5% of that amount, and invest it in clean technology. Some will say that \$516 million over five years is the amount of the tax credits. That is not a lot. It is very little. The lobbyists will say the same thing. Pathways Alliance, where all or almost all of the companies are grouped together, is taking strong action so that governments are paying for as much of their capture projects as possible.

In reality, these producers are getting far more than this half a billion, because the investment tax credit and the clean hydrogen tax credit are interconnected. If these companies actually believe in their vaunted carbon capture and storage projects and their potential, then why do they not invest more in them themselves for the prosperity of their shareholders and their image as good corporate neighbours?

The budget implementation conditions merit our attention. I will summarize two important elements. The budget says, and I quote, “At this time, only dedicated geological storage and storage in concrete are proposed to be eligible uses.” We are therefore talking about carbon storage. The other features of the tax credit show that companies will be able to access these tax benefits even if the activities are not eligible.

By the time an audit is done to ensure that the tax credits actually involve eligible expenses, companies will have used this accounting scenario for five to 10 years to save money, as if they do not already have enough.

Add to this the following unacceptable exemption: “Corporations with projects that expect to have less than \$20 million of eligible expenses over the life of the project would be exempt from [producing a climate risk disclosure report].” Simply divide that among projects under \$20 million and there will be no more environmental risks.

The cost of solar power has dropped by 85% since 2010. The cost of onshore wind has dropped by 68%. Even the price of net-zero hydrogen has dropped slightly below that of hydrogen produced from natural gas. This was found in early 2022, a consequence of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

For the past 20 years or so, the CO2 capture, utilization, and storage, or CCUS, program has yielded largely inconclusive results. The industry claims that potential emissions reductions from the oil and gas sector only amount to 10%. We are talking about investing billions of dollars for only 10%.

Suncor estimates the capital and operating costs of its Cold Lake project at \$14 billion. As for Cenovus, its project will cost \$2.5 billion per year until 2050. Can my colleagues grasp what this means? If only we had other places where to put those billions.

The Budget

This budget does not in any way signal that the government is preparing to end fossil fuel subsidies. It has disguised them. This budget does not give us the tools to meet the target we urgently need to reach.

Spending precious public funds on accelerating investments in energy efficiency, electrification and support for renewable energy is how the government should be using taxpayers' money.

A parliamentary committee studied nuclear waste governance in Canada and tabled its report in the House. We produced a supplementary report. Therefore, I cannot ignore the worrisome position taken by the federal government on the nuclear industry. Some say that the nuclear industry does not emit greenhouse gases. Others say that it is part of the solution. Who is looking into radioactive waste? Is nuclear energy clean? No one knows what to do with dangerous waste materials. Small modular reactors have not yet achieved technological readiness.

I will close by asking what Canada plans on doing with spent fuel. Does the government intend to sell it? I know, perhaps these are projects that will be carried out in the Arctic given that the moratorium will expire at the end of 2023.

• (1755)

Is there going to be oil exploration in the Arctic? I am asking the question. The criticism is not over.

• (1800)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her speech. She is truly a champion for the environment. I am concerned about the use of herbicides in Canada and I would like to hear her thoughts on this.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, that is a whole other topic, but we do know that herbicides and pesticides are bad for human health, so that is what we need to focus on. That is true for all pollution. It affects people's health. This has been proven and calculated. Its economic impact has even been measured. We need to do something about it. There are many avenues ahead of us, but we need to take them all at the same time because it is urgent.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Repentigny for her very interesting speech on the lack of tax credits, as well as on carbon capture and hydrogen made from natural gas.

However, I would like to point out a few things that the NDP insisted on and that we are quite happy to see in this budget. For instance, regarding the infamous growth fund for the energy transition, we made sure that the unions will be at the table, because there are no solutions without the workers. I see that as a win.

In addition, doubling the GST tax credit to help the most disadvantaged was another one of the conditions we set. This means that more than two million Quebeckers will receive up to \$460 next summer. I think it is important to emphasize this good news.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, absolutely, getting everyone around the table and being able to talk about innovation funds and so on is important.

However, I just came from a committee where we talked about what happened with Imperial Oil in Alberta. When company repre-

sentatives are sitting around a table, it becomes clear that there are people who listen, people who do not listen at all and people who do not consult at all. We have to keep that in mind when considering what my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie is putting forward.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about fossil fuel profits and the fact that big business pocketed more than \$38 billion this year alone.

I find it very mysterious, however, that the costs associated with the Trans Mountain pipeline, which have ballooned to more than \$30 billion, are nowhere to be found in the budget. There is absolutely no mention of the Trans Mountain pipeline issues in the budget.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that. Why has the government not cancelled this awful project already?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, at a Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development meeting I attended before the two-week break, I asked the Minister of Environment and Climate Change why it was impossible to get out of this bottomless financial hole. He replied that I should ask the Minister of Finance.

I said I was asking the Minister of Environment because he is the one who knows what is going on, who reads the summary reports and who is responsible for ensuring that Canada meets its international commitments.

That is the response I got from the Minister of Environment.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her eloquent presentation. The parts about carbon capture caught my attention. It seems to me that it has practically become a new religion. It is all we hear about. It is portrayed as a miracle solution. It will be universal, and it will bring happiness to the entire planet.

My colleague explained that the science seems to indicate the opposite, so why is the government still going ahead with this?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I agree that we need to ask ourselves why the government is continuing to move forward with this. I just want to remind the House that 100 of the 149 global carbon capture and storage projects were cancelled and that, in the United States, despite significant industry and government investment in the technology, 80% of the proposed projects failed to become operational because of high costs, low technological readiness, the lack of a credible financial return, and dependence on government incentives.

Public money should go to known solutions. It should not go into the pockets of the oil and gas industry for futile projects they try to sell us on.

The Budget

• (1805)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what a pleasure it is to be able to rise and speak on yet another budget. At the end of the day, when we look at the last seven and a half years and the types of things the government has been able to accomplish, I think Canadians would feel confident that the government is on the right track.

We have consistently argued, over the years, how important it is that we have an economy that works for all Canadians. We have consistently argued about the importance of recognizing the role that the middle class plays in society and those aspiring to be a part of the middle class. We have looked at ways we can enhance and grow the middle class.

Even during the pandemic, Canadians knew that they could rely on the Government of Canada to be there in a direct way. We had the backs of Canadians, something that is so critically important. What we have seen over the years is an official opposition that has been more focused on personal attacks. While it has been focused on that, the government has been focused on delivering for Canadians.

In terms of what we want to accomplish, we have a desire to build a stronger and healthier economy and society. That is what this budget reflects. It reflects the essence of what Canadians from coast to coast to coast expect their government to do, not only during good times but also challenging times. It has been challenging over the last few years. I am happy to reinforce that the government, in a very tangible way, has been there to support Canadians.

In listening to the debate, we often hear from opposition members about the issues of accountability and transparency. In fact, the last question I asked was in regard to a Bloc member who stood up and said they did not necessarily believe that tax credits are a way to provide accountability and transparency. I used the example of a very important announcement within this budget.

We recognize the fine work and need for us to look at ways we can support our trades from coast to coast to coast, and the important role they play. We talk about inflation. We talk about the needs of the worker. Within this budget, we have a tax credit enhancement, virtually doubling it from \$500 to \$1,000. That is there to ensure that those who are working in the trades are in a better position to be able to afford the cost of the important tools they require in order to apply their trade.

Yes, the government has, in this budget and in previous budgets, used tax credits to assist Canadians directly. We have seen how the Government of Canada has been able to use taxes and tax rebates as a way to directly support Canadians. We have been very effective at doing that.

A major part of this budget is the grocery rebate. We recognize the issue of inflation and the impact it is having in every region of this country. We understand it. Whether during break weeks or in the month of January, Liberal members of Parliament throughout the country are talking with stakeholders and their constituents so we understand the impact that inflation is having. This budget is re-

flective of many of those discussions that we have had with our constituents. That is why we have the grocery rebate.

• (1810)

Imagine approximately 11 million Canadians benefiting from the grocery rebate during a time when we have concerns with inflation. Some might argue that we need to recognize that the inflation we are seeing today is not unique to Canada; it is taking place around the world. Canada is doing quite well compared to many of the European countries or our neighbour to the south, the United States. Our inflation rate has been less, and we are on the right track. We see our inflation rate going down, and we hope to see it continue to go down.

Having said that, I want to highlight the two initiatives in the budget that put money in the pockets of Canadians.

One that I made a quick reference to is the grocery rebate. Many of my colleagues had the opportunity to visit some grocery stores. The Minister of Justice was in Winnipeg, and we wanted to check out a grocery store. We met with the owner and talked about the impact that worldwide inflation is having on her ability to sell products. I believe she welcomed the fact that we are providing a grocery rebate, because she, like others, understands that this grocery rebate will make a difference. It also demonstrates that we have a government that genuinely cares and wants to help, even though, as I said, our inflation rate is far better than in many peer countries around the world. However, this does not mean that we ignore the issue. We can still work to do better, which is why we have the grocery rebate.

In this budget, members will see the expansion of the dental program. I have listened to a number of members stand up and be somewhat critical of the government, saying that we are not doing enough for seniors, that there is nothing in the budget for seniors. That is balderdash. There are a lot of things in this budget for seniors. This budget is a reflection of many of the discussions we have had with seniors and their advocates. One of the most powerful stakeholder groups is our seniors caucus, where Liberal members continually meet and deal with senior-related issues. Hundreds, if not thousands, of stakeholders and individuals have provided direct input in making sure there would be things in the budget for seniors.

This brings me to the second point. Seniors get the grocery rebate, and they also benefit from the expansion of the dental program. We have seen how successful it was in the first year when we were able to pass the legislation. It took us a while, because the Conservatives opposed that legislation. They do not support having a dental program for children under the age of 12; they made that very clear last year by opposing the legislation. We are now expanding it to include seniors. That, too, is going to be of great benefit for seniors, which is something I would think members would recognize. Not that long ago, it was an election platform issue for the Liberal Party to actually increase, by 10%, the OAS for seniors 75 and over.

The Budget

• (1815)

We recognized that there is a significant difference between the needs and disposable income of a senior who is 75 and a senior who has just retired at 65. I am thinking of such issues as medical requirements and the potential for supplementary income. That is a significant increase.

In fact, we have been there virtually from day one to support our seniors. I can talk about the guaranteed income supplement, which we dramatically increased in the first 18 months, lifting tens of thousands of seniors out of poverty. This is not to mention going through the pandemic, where we invested literally millions into non-profit groups that were supporting seniors. We doubled the youth employment program during the pandemic period and leading up to the pandemic; many of these youth worked for seniors organizations and more. The government has done all sorts of things, not only in this budget but also over the last seven and a half years to support our seniors.

On the same theme, it is interesting that Conservatives will criticize us because we are spending money. Yes, I will give them that. We are spending \$198 billion on health care over the next 10 years. If we check with Canadians, as I have, they see health care as part of our core identity and want a national government that is prepared to invest in health care. That is exactly what we are doing with a 10-year commitment, because we saw what the previous government did under Stephen Harper. One would have to be blind or an idiot to believe that investment in health care will not be helping our seniors.

At the end of the day, if we look at the benefits—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman is rising on a point of order.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I want to remind the member for Winnipeg North that to imply that members in this place, or Canadians for that matter, are idiots for believing there are not investments happening in mental health or seniors' health is disrespectful. He should withdraw that comment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members to be careful with respect to the words they use in the House. I know the hon. member did not pinpoint anybody in particular. Again, I know there are words that are mentioned from time to time on both sides of the House, but I want to make sure that individuals are very careful regarding the language they use in the House.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the point is about investing in health care and not believing that this is going to help seniors. I cannot imagine anyone truly believing that that would be the case when we are investing \$198 billion over 10 years in health care.

I used to be the health care critic in the province of Manitoba at the Manitoba legislature. I can assure the member across the way who just stood up on the point of order that a good portion of our health care services are there to support our seniors. Obviously they support everyone, but I can tell members that our seniors truly val-

ue and appreciate the health care system we have in Canada and would appreciate and value a federal government that makes, as we have, a 10-year commitment of \$198 billion over the next 10 years.

We have a government that has recognized, in many ways, the benefits that can support Canadians in other areas. We hear a lot about housing. Going back to the days when I was an MLA, at one time every political party inside the House, all of them, including the New Democrats, opposed the federal government playing a role in housing. That was in the early nineties.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Not us.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Yes, everyone, Madam Speaker.

I can tell members that for the first time, we have a Prime Minister with a government that not only talks about the importance of housing in Canada, but is invested in housing like no government in the history of the country. We have the first-ever housing strategy. We are investing literally hundreds of millions of dollars in housing every year. We are supporting tens of thousands of non-profit housing units throughout the country so that there is housing for seniors, people with disabilities and people of low incomes.

We have supported organizations like Habitat for Humanity to ensure there are opportunities for people who could never own a home to own a home. We are supporting the expansion of housing co-operatives. We are putting limits on foreign investments. We believe that houses are there to be lived in, that they should not be used as an investment tool by foreigners. There is also the rapid housing initiative.

Time and time again, the Minister of Housing is up during question period reminding members the degree to which we are investing in housing. If we take a look at it, not only have we demonstrated that we have a role to play in housing, but we have put the challenge out to other stakeholders and levels of government to jump on board and take the types of actions that ensure housing is more affordable.

Within this budget, we created the first-time homeowner accounts. We want municipalities in particular to be there, because they really do play an important role in this. We want provinces and other stakeholders to come to the table and address the needs of housing.

The federal government is there, but the federal government cannot do it alone, and we have recognized that. We have done more than any other government. We would have to go back generations on the housing file. We will continue to be there.

We talk about the issue of accountability. It is interesting that the Conservatives, as I mentioned at the beginning, like to focus on personal attacks. This budget is a true reflection of what Canadian expectations are of the government.

The Budget

• (1820)

Just last week, I had the Prime Minister of Canada on McPhillips Street, at the Manitoba Building Trades Institute, where he had a town hall. There were union members and others who showed up, unscripted, to ask questions of the Prime Minister to deal with issues surrounding the budget and other issues, and what the Prime Minister did in Winnipeg, he has done in other jurisdictions.

We have a Minister of Finance who consistently is reaching out and listening to stakeholders. We have members of Parliament in the caucus who are consistently reaching out to their constituents and reflecting what they are hearing, whether it is on this budget or legislative measures we are taking. This is a budget for all Canadians, and it is a reflection, in terms of what we are hearing. I believe it has Canada on the right track, and the stats will clearly demonstrate that, whether it is with jobs, social services or having the backs of Canadians.

• (1825)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to ask a question of my colleague from Winnipeg North.

He just made the comment that this is a budget for all Canadians, and it certainly is. Every Canadian is going to have to repay the extreme debt the Liberals have put this country in. It is the biggest debt ever. He talked about accountability. The current government said it spent \$500 billion for COVID, and the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer of Canada indicated that 40% of that had nothing to do with COVID. That has contributed to inflation. It will continue to, and even at the rates we have, it is the worst in decades. He can compare it to wherever he likes, but comparing it to ourselves, it is still the worst ever.

Can he give us an accounting of why we are still 3.5 million houses short, if the Liberals' housing program is working so well?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we are spending \$198 billion on health care. We are spending billions of dollars on a child care program. By the way, in February it was shown that we have the highest ever percentage of women in the workforce, because we wanted to ensure that child care is affordable.

We have ultimately gone through a pandemic where we have spent billions of dollars to support small businesses and billions of dollars in order to be able to provide direct financial support for Canadians, i.e., the CERB wage loss program. We literally saved thousands of businesses from going bankrupt by doing so and literally put food and other necessities on the table for Canadians during the pandemic.

Yes, we have spent money, and I suspect now, even though the Conservatives supported a lot of those measures, they want to oppose them for political convenience, so that they can say that we are spending too much money. The bottom line is that this is a government that has had the backs of Canadians, and it will continue to do so.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 6:27, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the subamendment now before the House.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the amendment to the amendment.

Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to the amendment to House*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the amendment to the amendment be carried or carried on division, or wishes to request a recorded division, I invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1915)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 294*)

YEAS

Members

Beaulieu	Bergeron
Bérubé	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Brunelle-Duceppe
Chabot	Champoux
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Fortin
Garon	Gaudreau
Larouche	Lemire
Michaud	Normandin
Paupé	Perron
Plamondon	Rayes
Savard-Tremblay	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Ste-Marie
Thériault	Therrien
Trudel	Vignola
Villemure	Vuong — 32

NAYS

Members

Aboultatif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Berthold	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney	Block
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Bragdon	Brassard

Adjournment Proceedings

Brière
Calkins
Caputo
Chagger
Chambers
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cooper
Coteau
Dalton
Dancho
Davies
d'Entremont
Dhaliwal
Diab
Dong
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ehsassi
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Ferreri
Findlay
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garrison
Généreux
Gerretsen
Godin
Gould
Gray
Hallan
Hardie
Hoback
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Jeneroux
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Kelly
Khera
Kmicc
Kram
Kurek
Kusmierczyk
Lake
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lapointe
Lauzon
LeBlanc
Lehoux
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lightbound
Lobb
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maguire
Martel
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod

Brock
Cannings
Casey
Chahal
Champagne
Chen
Chong
Collins (Victoria)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Damoff
Davidson
Deltell
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Doherty
Dowdall
Drouin
Duguid
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
El-Khoury
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Fergus
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fry
Gallant
Gazan
Genius
Gladu
Goodridge
Gourde
Hajdu
Hanley
Hepfner
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Johns
Julian
Kelloway
Khalid
Kitchen
Koutrakis
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Kwan
Lalonde
Lametti
Lantsman
Lattanzio
Lawrence
Lebouthillier
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lloyd
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
Mazier
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLean
McPherson

Mendicino
Miller
Morantz
Morrison
Motz
Muys
Nater
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Patzner
Perkins
Poilievre
Qualtrough
Reid
Richards
Robillard
Rogers
Rood
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scheer
Seebach
Sgro
Sheehan
Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Small
Soroka
Steinley
St-Onge
Stubbs
Tassi
Thomas
Tochor
Trudeau
Uppal
Van Bynen
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Williamson
Zahid
Zimmer

Miao
Moore
Morrice
Morrisey
Murray
Naqvi
Ng
O'Connell
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Petipas Taylor
Powlowski
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Rodriguez
Romanado
Ruff
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Sorbara
Sousa
Stewart
Strahl
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Thompson
Tolmie
Turnbull
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Vien
Virani
Wagantall
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Williams
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PAIRED

Members

Barsalou-Duval
Gill
Melillo
Schmale

Battiste
Joly
O'Regan
Vandal— 8

The Speaker: I declare the subamendment defeated.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today, as always.

Several weeks ago, back in December actually, I asked the Minister of Finance a question in the House of Commons about why European nations were withdrawing any taxes on their fuels in Europe to the tune of about 8,000 euros per family while this government was considering moving ahead with a 30% increase in carbon taxes. I did not get that good of a response, but in the interim, two weeks ago as a matter of fact, Canada's independent officer of Parliament, the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer, came out with a new report on the whole matter. I brought it with me here to make sure that any of the talking heads on the other side who do not like what it says can hear from it directly.

In 2023-24, the federal fuel surcharge was set at \$65 per tonne. We estimate the government will collect \$11.8 billion in fuel charges from the seven provinces where the charge applies. This will be in addition, a tax on tax here because there is GST on top of that tax that amounts to \$429 million in GST on top of that.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer's report makes a pretty clear case that one of the problems with this is that it takes away an income tax base, particularly from the provinces. It talks about the economic impact, and it effectively goes through what this impact will be. The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that in 2030-31, once the full \$170 is actually implemented, the province it affects the most is Alberta, with an average of \$2,773 per household. Now, this is something. The lowest province affected, Newfoundland and Labrador, will only be affected by \$1,316 per household. I know that there will be much gnashing of teeth on the other side about this because those members have been claiming for a year now that this tax is actually a net positive for Canadians. Well, clearly it is not.

However, no sooner had this report come out than my colleague on the other side of the House, the member of Parliament for Guelph, stood up and said that we need to make sure that the costs associated with the environment are considered in here. Well, let me say that the Parliamentary Budget Officer did a report, which considered exactly that; surprisingly, it came out on November 8, 2022.

The problem with these speculative reports going forward is that they are just that: speculative. They are based on a scenario, but one of the things that came out quite clearly in it is that compared to every other factor the world is going to face, including economic downturns, recessions and conflicts, climate change will be less of a factor in the analysis going forward. Nevertheless, if we take a look at what the numbers are when we analyze it, by 2100 we will have changed the economy, by the PBO's numbers, by less than three one-thousandths of a percentage point per year. That is a lot if we are spending tens of billions of dollars.

Energy costs are by nature inflationary, and there is a reason the Bank of Canada wants energy cost increases excluded when it calculates inflation. It's the trimmed median, whatever it wants to talk about; it is about excluding the number one cause of inflation from the carbon tax because that is what they want consumers to believe at the end of the day. Even the Europeans do not buy into that, as they reduced it by 8,000 euros per family over this past year because of what they are facing in Europe. Now, I will say again that in my strong opinion, European countries are very poor financial

Adjournment Proceedings

and economic managers, but they did give this rebate back to all the citizens across Europe at a point in time.

Therefore, I will repeat the question I asked at the time: Why is the Minister of Finance pushing Canada, punishing Canadians, with a 30% increase to an already inflation-causing tax?

● (1920)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I believe we can all agree that climate change is a very serious issue for Canada. Something has to be done about it, and inaction is no longer an option, at least not for the present government.

The truth is that climate change is already having serious effects in Canada. It is affecting our homes, cost of living, infrastructure, health and safety, and economic activity in communities across our country. While addressing climate change is an environmental imperative for this country, it is also an economic opportunity for all Canadians, and we cannot afford to be left behind. For example, the United States is moving forward with the Inflation Reduction Act, and it is important for Canada to keep pace.

[*Translation*]

We simply cannot miss this opportunity to participate in the transition to the clean economy. That is why we are proposing, in budget 2023, to make key investments in the clean economy. This will enable us to not only fight climate change but also create jobs for Canadians across the country, including in my colleague's home province, Alberta.

[*English*]

Our made-in-Canada plan, presented in budget 2023, is underpinned by a new federal tool kit for investing in the clean economy. We are proposing a set of clear and predictable investment tax credits, low-cost strategic financing and targeted investments and programming where necessary to respond to the unique needs of sectors or projects of national economic significance. Budget 2023 would ensure that a clean Canadian economy can deliver prosperity, middle-class jobs and more vibrant communities across Canada.

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

When it comes to our pollution pricing system itself, I would like to remind my colleague from Calgary Centre that it is putting money back in the pockets of Canadian households.

[*English*]

In 2023, through CAI payments, a family of four will have received \$745 in Ontario, \$832 in Manitoba, \$1,101 in Saskatchewan and \$1,079 in Alberta. In addition, those living in rural and small communities are eligible to receive an extra 10%. Households in these provinces started to receive their latest quarterly payment last week. Is my colleague against these payments to Canadian families?

Adjournment Proceedings

[Translation]

Our government understands that many Canadians are still struggling to make ends meet in this period of high inflation. Canadians see it when they go to the grocery store, fill up their tanks and pay their rent. However, I would like to remind my colleagues that inflation is dropping. The inflation rate in Canada was 8.1% in June, and it is now 5.2%.

[English]

We do understand, however, that many Canadian families still need some support. That is why we are supporting those who need it the most, when they need it the most, with targeted measures. For example, we proposed in budget 2023 the new one-time grocery rebate. This targeted inflation relief has been designed to help support the Canadians hardest hit by rising food prices. The grocery rebate would help approximately 11 million low- and modest-income Canadians and families across the country. This would mean a one-time payment of up to an extra \$467 for eligible couples with two children, up to an extra \$234 for single Canadians without children, and an extra \$225 for seniors, on average.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I do not know how much I have to beseech the members on the other side to actually read the report they are referring to here, because they will find the numbers somewhat instructive. However, let us go “*déjà vu*, all over again” because we can look at the 1980s for massive government deficits at the time that led to high inflation, just like today.

The U.S. fought this with what is called the strong dollar policy, which means higher interest rates on its bonds all the way through the economy. This penalized the developing world because most of the developing world has to pay its debt in U.S. dollars and with U.S. interest rates. This led to a decade of economic stagnation in the developing world, and some economies actually went negative over the decade of the 1980s to the 1990s. Therefore, this was predominantly thrust upon the world's poor to address inflation. However, one issue that addressed inflation was the fact that there was cheap energy, because oil became less than \$10 a barrel at the time.

Let me ask the question again. These are costs. Will the minister take a lesson and acknowledge that she is on the wrong path?

[Translation]

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Madam Speaker, as demonstrated by the recent federal budget, Canadians can continue to count on this government to implement measures that will protect the environment and create jobs at the same time. We have a plan to ensure that Canada is part of the clean economy, and we can all be proud of that.

[English]

Of course, we understand that some Canadians still need targeted inflation relief support, and that is why we are moving forward with our grocery rebate.

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am here today because I asked a question in March and I feel the question was not answered. I want members of my riding of North Island—Powell River to know that today I am

standing up for the over 2,300 RCMP women who, between 1974 and 2019, faced terrible sexual assault, abuse and harassment in the RCMP. These brave women came forward and told their stories. The Merlo Davidson suit came into play, and we now have a decision that allows these women to be compensated for the terrible, violent abuse they survived.

What is sad about this is that Veterans Affairs has seen fit to claw back some of their disability pensions. I am reminded of some time I spent at the veterans committee today, where we are studying, for the first time ever in this place, women veterans. One of the women who testified today talked about having a survivor focus, which is moving forward in a way that focuses on the survivors' realities and making sure that everything is built around supporting them so they can do better. I thought that was such an important value, which we need to look at, not only in the military and the RCMP, but also in all of Canada. When a victim comes forward, they need to be supported.

In this ruling, through the Merlo Davidson suit, we see six levels of compensation. I really encourage Canadians to look at the six levels because they show just how vile the abuse was. Every time one reads a different section, they can read just what these women lived through. They have this terrible situation. Some of them from 1974 did not feel they would be listened to and did not come forward until much later. They can finally be acknowledged, and what they see happening is their disability pensions being withdrawn from them again. This is abuse.

We know that it was incredibly brave for these women to come forward to share their experiences. Doing so will hopefully make the pathway safer for women RCMP in the future. The justice who gave the report described the women as having to endure shocking levels of violence. These women experienced extreme brutality while protecting our country, and now we are seeing that same government deny them what they are rightfully owed. VAC is literally making these women who served this country suffer all over again. The minister needs to make it right.

I have heard commitments that a letter would be sent and the clawbacks would stop. I am going to come back to what I said in the beginning. If this were survivor focused, this would not have happened in the first place. If we had that culture in these organizations, including this one, this would not have happened. These women would have been supported and given what they needed, and we would not have seen VAC abuse them again.

Today, I want to know when the government will return the clawed-back dollars? We cannot just stop the claw back. We also need to get the monies that were taken wrongfully from them and return them as appropriate. Women in this country served our country through the RCMP and suffered while they were serving, and that has nothing to do with their disability claims.

Will the government make it right?

• (1930)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, signing up to serve with the Canadian flag on one's shoulder comes with risks, but being at risk of sexual misconduct should not be one of them. There is simply no excuse or justification for that, either in the armed forces, in the RCMP or in any workplace. Our government is fully committed to eliminating the workplace violence, harassment and discrimination in any form. We recognize the enormous courage it takes for someone to disclose this kind of abuse and fight for justice and accountability.

We are aware of the letter published by the Office of the Veterans Ombud on February 23 asking that Veterans Affairs review the Merlo Davidson case to determine if pension reductions had been properly applied, and if not, to issue a corrective payment. For privacy reasons, we cannot comment on individual files.

What I can say is that the department has contacted all of the impacted veterans by telephone and via letter to offer them an opportunity to submit additional information regarding their payment so that the payments can be recalculated and corrected as appropriate. We want to be as generous as possible under the legislation.

We are also aware of the recommendations made by the OVO. Each impacted veteran has been provided with contact information at VAC and the OVO for support in providing the information needed. We are committed to continuing to work closely with the ombud on this file and any other file.

• (1935)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I am fairly disappointed with that response, because we know that these women have suffered. We know they have had their pensions clawed back. Now, what we are saying to them is that, after all the indignity they experienced just by serving their country, they have to do all the work on the other side to get back what was theirs in the first place. I still do not hear anything that says the government is actually going to pay back the money it has, in my opinion, been stealing from these women.

Hopefully the member can say something that actually addresses that serious concern.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, as I said before, the women who came forward and disclosed their experiences in Merlo-Davidson did so with incredible courage. Our government is committed to ensuring all veterans and members get access to the benefits they are entitled to. In the case of the Merlo-Davidson settlement, the minister has told staff to review the OVO's recommendation to ensure that all pension adjustments have been properly applied and that we are being as generous as possible under the legislation. Veterans who had their disability pensions reduced in the

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Merlo-Davidson settlement have been contacted and given the opportunity to submit additional information.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am rising again in the House, as I have on multiple occasions, to warn the government of the risks posed by unregulated ship-breaking.

This originates from a question in November 2022. On November 24, an oil spill was discovered on the shoreline of a shipbreaking facility that has been operating since 2020 in the community of Union Bay in my riding. This facility is operating despite legal challenges and warnings of environmental hazards from residents, local government and first nations. Now, a spill has happened, and the lack of federal regulations and guidelines to protect the ecosystem is glaring. The spill has led to serious concerns for Baynes Sound, which is home to over 50% of British Columbia's shellfish production and is critical to the local economy and many jobs. In addition, of course, there is the importance of the ecosystem.

I have spoken in the House about the lack of federal regulation of shipbreaking, as I cited, and have called on the government to take action to prevent such an incident.

I want to take members back to 2016, when I, Chief Councillor Recalma from the Qualicum Nation, our former MLA Scott Wilson, local shellfish owners and workers, tourism operators and locally elected officials had to go out on boats and take media to shine a light on the lack of response from government when it came to abandoned and derelict vessels.

There were two boats that had been sitting there, and the previous Conservative government had promised for a decade to remove them. The boats were threatening jobs. They were the *Silver King* and the *Laurier II*, and it took all of our pressure to finally get the government to respond and remove those vessels. What we do not want is a repeat of a long delay. We do not want the Liberals to go the way of the Conservatives and delay in responding to really important issues at hand.

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Again, we applied pressure last time, and the government responded. We are hoping it will respond now, but we need to shift from a reactionary to a precautionary approach to prevent incidents like these. Instead of waiting for another spill, the government should urgently ratify the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, adopt regulations comparable to the EU's ship recycling regulations and provide financial support to qualified shipbreaking facilities to help them meet new standards and regulations. We know the government is in a consultation phase with the provinces, but it needs to fast-track that.

I want to highlight that the government's lack of response has really put the local economy and the environment at risk, but also right now we are learning that Transport Canada has no monitoring or enforcement of hazardous materials on board international vessels being shipped across Canada's border. There is only a voluntary certificate, which is done through Environment and Climate Change Canada, and it is effectively a self-reporting honour system. This is just unbelievable. There is the risk this puts on coastal communities, and it is also putting all the risk on provinces, first nations and indigenous communities and on local governments, which is totally irresponsible.

We need to look at what the EU has done when it comes to shipbreaking and recycling, as well as at the Hong Kong act.

I am really hopeful the government will take action and take a precautionary approach, and I am hoping today it is going to give us some sort of path to how it is going to remedy the situation before an environmental disaster takes place, even further to what is happening now.

• (1940)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government takes any threat to our marine environment seriously. We are aware of and continue to monitor the ship recycling activities taking place in Union Bay, British Columbia.

Regarding the oil spill that was reported at Deep Water Recovery on November 22, the Canadian Coast Guard responded immediately. The Coast Guard confirmed that the source of the spill was land-based, from a vessel that is currently being removed from the marine environment by Deep Water Recovery as part of the deconstruction process. While a boom was deployed to minimize pollution, the spill amount was small and not recoverable.

No amount of oil spilled in our marine environment is acceptable. To this end, the Canadian Coast Guard has reminded the deconstruction company of its responsibilities under the Canada Shipping Act, 2001, to prevent any release of oil or other pollutants from reaching the marine environment. As it is a land-based spill, the Coast Guard will assist Emergency Management British Columbia, which is the lead agency, if requested.

Canada's marine safety system ensures that we are ready and able to respond quickly to spills in Canadian waters, which include our three coastlines, the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway. We have a robust regime in place to respond to spills through our environmental response regulations and ship-source oil spill re-

sponse organizations on each coast. Through the oceans protection plan, we are establishing 24-7 emergency response and incident management, increasing on-scene environmental response capacity, improving oil spill response plans, acquiring new environmental response equipment for the Canadian Coast Guard, sharing near real-time information on marine traffic with indigenous and coastal communities, and modernizing Canada's marine safety regulation and enforcement regime.

As announced in November, under the oceans protection plan, the Government of Canada will also develop, in consultation with other levels of government, indigenous groups and industry, a system to ensure an appropriate level of preparedness for marine pollution incidents. This system will also provide a framework to ensure an effective and consistent response to marine pollution incidents across the country and for post-incident recovery. Polluter accountability will be strengthened, and a formal role for indigenous communities, sustainable funding and appropriate legal protections will be put in place.

In addition, the Government of Canada also recognizes the importance of safe and environmentally sound practices for the recycling of ships. Ship recycling is recognized as the most environmentally sound method to dispose of ships at end of life. Currently, there is a robust federal and provincial legislative framework governing this activity. Many provisions affecting ship recycling facilities are governed by the provinces and territories, such as environmental and waste management and workplace occupational health and safety. Federal rules prohibit the release of pollutants into the marine environment.

The government knows that we can do more. Together, with provincial and territorial governments, Transport Canada is exploring whether there may be ways to enhance Canada's ship recycling rules.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that, but we need an urgent response. I am really concerned, and so are the people at Union Bay, that the government has opened this up to becoming a dumping ground for international vessels that contain hazardous materials. Right now, we are learning that the only thing ECCO offers to ensure it protects us is a voluntary certificate when it comes to hazardous materials, which is totally unacceptable, and a self-reporting honour system.

What happens when one of these companies decides to abandon its operation after raking in millions of dollars probably by getting paid to dispose of ships properly, only to leave a big mess? We saw the *Kathryn Spirit*. It was \$11 million to clean up that abandoned vessel. Our former NDP colleague, Anne Minh-Thu Quach, fought very hard to get *Kathryn Spirit* cleaned up.

We want to know when they are considering putting a ready-to-recycle certificate in place for international vessels.

• (1945)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada takes any incident that threatens our marine environment with the utmost seriousness. The Canadian Coast Guard responded immediately to this incident. Moreover, building on our marine pollution preparedness response and recovery system, under the oceans protection plan renewal, we are exploring a single-window response for oil spills to ensure even better preparedness and greater accountability for polluters.

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In terms of ship recycling, while Canada has some of the strongest rules globally, we are looking for ways to improve. As stated before, many of the legislative provisions that govern safe and environmentally responsible ship recycling fall under provincial jurisdiction. We are committed to working with provinces and territories to ensure that we have the safest recycling facilities in the world. This includes examining requirements under the European Union ship recycling regulation and the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships to determine what elements can be adopted in a Canadian context to address any gaps in federal legislation.

[*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 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:46 p.m.)

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