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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, September 26, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, presented on Friday, February 17, be concurred in.

I am grateful for this opportunity to address the House today on an urgent question of foreign policy.

After people have enjoyed more than three decades of political independence with their own self-governing democratic institutions, another power has just invaded their territory. It has the clearly stated intention of ending self-government for these people and incorporating the territory in question by force.

The aggressor has framed this attack as being a military operation instead of an invasion and has described the independently constituted defence forces of this area as being a terrorist entity. This doublespeak barely covers the naked desire of this invading force to reassert 19th-century norms of aggression and to replace diplomacy and the international rule of law with violence and the rule of power.

I could be, but in this case I am not, describing the Putin regime's illegal invasion of Ukraine. At least in the case of Ukraine, the fundamental right to self-determination of peoples and the essential illegitimacy of efforts to change the status quo by force were widely accepted. Russia's brutal invasion rightly provoked a significant international response, and the invasion was widely understood as a fundamental attack on freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

However, today I am not speaking about Ukraine. Rather, I am speaking about the brutal assault of Azerbaijan's forces on the self-governing territory of Artsakh, also known as Nagorno-Karabakh. The sad reality is that, while the aggression of the Azerbaijani state

bears many features in common with Russian aggression, many Canadians are probably completely unaware of this conflict. This needs to change.

While Neville Chamberlain could refer to the question of Czechoslovakia as “A quarrel in a faraway country, between people of whom we know nothing”, his ignorance did not make Czechoslovakia any less important.

There are differences between Azerbaijani aggression and Russian aggression; however, there are also similarities. My hope in moving this concurrence motion today is that our discussion will confront the relative lack of consideration of this important issue. I raise the issue most from concern for the people directly affected. I also raise it because the principle of peaceful resolution of conflict and respect for fundamental human rights needs to be established in every case, not just in cases that happen to be the most high-profile. After members have heard this story of these 120,000 people, I hope they will be able to consider more action in response as well.

As such, here is the background: Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, Armenia and Azerbaijan went to war over a disputed area. It had previously, according to Soviet-era internal borders, been within Azerbaijan, but its population was nonetheless overwhelmingly ethnically Armenian and Christian and enjoyed official autonomy during the Soviet period. Following the first Nagorno-Karabakh war, this territory became de facto independent and set up its own institutions. However, it maintained close relations with Armenia, it was still claimed by Azerbaijan and it was still seen by much of the international community as technically constituting Azeri territory.

In effect, the Armenian side won that war. In addition to establishing de facto independence for Artsakh, it established a buffer zone that provided secure linkage between Artsakh and Armenian territory. This buffer zone prevented the possibility of Artsakh being blockaded; it also led to many ethnic Azeris becoming victims of displacement, a situation that required resolution.

It is important to note the large amount of displacement on both sides during the first Nagorno-Karabakh war, which was much larger on the Azeri side. In addition, there were various atrocities committed, for which there can be no excuse.

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The conflict over Artsakh, or Nagorno-Karabakh, was the subject of sporadic conflict and much debate and negotiation between the end of the first Nagorno-Karabakh war in 1994 and the start of the second in 2020. The dispute over the core territory of Nagorno-Karabakh hinges on a certain tension between two established principles of international law: territorial integrity and the right of self-determination.

Territorial integrity, the principle asserted by the Azerbaijani side, is the idea that a state's existing territory should not be interfered with and that states have a right to defend their existing territory. This principle is important for preventing conflict, because it establishes that a state cannot militarily intervene in the territory of another state outside of very narrow and specific circumstances. This principle is recognized in the UN charter.

Of course, an extreme interpretation of the principle of territorial integrity, read in isolation from other principles of international law, could say that borders should never change and that historical borders established with no regard for the preferences of the people within them should nonetheless be maintained, regardless of anything else. Such an extreme application of this principle would, in effect, justify the continuation of all forms of colonialism and domination that had managed to survive until the point at which that principle was promulgated.

• (1005)

Fortunately, in real-world international law, we do not apply this one principle of territorial integrity in isolation from other important concepts, such as the genocide convention, which establishes a responsibility to act and protect people at risk of genocide, and the principle of the right of self-determination of peoples in general. I will come back to the issue of genocide, but I want to speak first on this issue of the right of self-determination.

Self-determination is the fundamental idea that all human beings, bearers of inherent and immutable human dignity, have a right to play a role in directing the political community that they are a part of. A people should not be compelled against their will to be part of a political community; rather, their membership in a political community should be the result of collective choice. In this particular instance, those who defend Artsakh assert the simple idea that this area's population should be able to collectively determine their own future and decide on whether they wish to be part of Azerbaijan. They should be able to make that decision through their elected representatives, free from violence, intimidation or coercion.

The notion of a right to self-determination does not entail the presumption that a particular community would or should pursue independence or association with another state purely on the basis of ethnic or religious commonality. It is quite reasonable that a people might choose to be part of a multi-ethnic, multilingual state or, on the other hand, choose to pursue independence from another state with whom they nonetheless share the same language, religion or ethnic characteristics. The point of self-determination is not that people should draw state boundaries in a certain way or on the basis of certain factors. It is simply that the people affected should be the ones making choices about their own future. In the case of Artsakh, this means that this region's future should be decided by the people

who live there and not by the leaders of Azerbaijan or Russia, or even by the leaders of Armenia or those elsewhere.

Over the last three decades, the ethnically Armenian people of Artsakh, or Nagorno-Karabakh, have asserted their right to self-determination against Azerbaijan's claim that Artsakh ought to be incorporated into Azerbaijan on the basis of the territorial integrity of these Soviet-era borders. This basic tension between territorial integrity and self-determination underlies the overall question, although the question is complicated in a few other ways that reinforce the need for negotiation and dialogue.

Undoubtedly, Azerbaijanis who were displaced during the first Nagorno-Karabakh war have a right to self-determination as well, although this issue is now somewhat moot, given how borders have changed since 2020. In addition, Artsakh has had self-governing independent institutions operating for three decades, so a legitimate question is this: At what point can an unrecognized territory start making an argument for territorial integrity in its own right?

Artsakh has been a self-governing entity for about as long as many states in eastern Europe have. However, moving forward, 2020 brought the second Nagorno-Karabakh war; this time, the war was won decisively by Azerbaijan. In a ceasefire agreement that ended the war, the buffer territory taken in the first Nagorno-Karabakh was ceded back to Azerbaijan, leaving Artsakh more isolated and strategically vulnerable, but still standing.

As I think my description illustrates, there are many aspects of this conflict that are legitimately complicated; however, there are also aspects of it that are not. Azerbaijan was rightly criticized for starting the second Nagorno-Karabakh war. Although the conflict was an ongoing irritant, there was a legitimate hope that a negotiated settlement would lead to an agreement securing the position of all affected peoples. Instead of pursuing that path, Azerbaijan has launched wars of choice. From at least 2020 onward, it has been clear that Azerbaijan's authorities are willing to use violence to upend the status quo and pursue their own objectives.

At this point, the question is no longer primarily one of self-determination versus territorial integrity; rather, it is about whether violence should be the means for settling disputes in interstate relations. I think we should all clearly say "no" to that. We should assert that, regardless of the legitimate complexity here, violence should not be the path pursued or the means of seeking resolution.

Because of a decision that the Liberal government made to resume arms exports to Turkey, Canadian-made weapons played a significant role in Azerbaijan's victory in the second Nagorno-Karabakh war and potentially played a role in its calculation to use force in the first place. It should grieve Canadians deeply that the government's decision to sell arms to Turkey played a negative role in international peace and security, and I will return to that point later if time allows.

Routine Proceedings

The territorial settlement that ended the second Nagorno-Karabakh war left only one narrow road, the Lachin corridor, linking Artsakh to Armenia. Russian peacekeepers were supposed to guarantee peace on it and the access of essential goods to Artsakh via this road.

• (1010)

Notwithstanding the circumstances that led to the second Nagorno-Karabakh war, there should have been the basis at this point for efforts to pursue a long-term settlement that allowed the return of Azeris to their recently transferred territory and that recognized the right of self-determination of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh in their remaining territory. However, the advances made during the second Nagorno-Karabakh war were sadly not good enough for the Azerbaijani government, which has continued to insist on its right to incorporate by force any people, no matter how unwilling, who fall within the parameters required to make an argument based on territorial integrity.

Further to this point, I think a good way to understand the initial question of self-determination versus territorial integrity is by analogy to the relationship of a married couple. Generally speaking, in most cases, we might hope to see the preservation of the integrity of an existing marriage. It is nice when a couple can stay together. Different individuals would likely identify different thresholds at which they believe other factors might outweigh the importance of marital integrity, but all other things being equal, it is nice to keep the family together. On the other hand, a general belief in the general desirability of couples staying together is not the same as a belief that people should be forced to stay together even if they are victims of violence and abuse. The fact that two people have a lot of history together clearly does not mean that one partner should be able to force the other to remain against their will.

In geopolitics, when I hear arguments that assert the right of one region or people to dominate another, purely on the basis of historical borders or relationships, this rings to me like the ravings of an abuser demanding continuing access to their victims. Centuries of Russian domination of Ukraine do not create some right for Russia to continue to dominate Ukraine in the present. Ukraine may choose her own path. The same principle ought to apply to Artsakh. Past domination does not justify future domination when the relationship is clearly not voluntary or consensual. When it comes to prospective independence or separatist movements, while, generally speaking, breaking up existing states is not a desirable thing, states should preserve themselves and their integrity through persuasion and through the consensual building of common endeavour, not through violence directed at those who prefer and argue for a different path.

Following the second Nagorno-Karabakh war, rather than accept the ceasefire agreement, the regime in Baku engineered a blockade of the Lachin corridor, which disrupted the flow of essential goods into Artsakh and caused great hardship for people living there. The objectives of this blockade have since become very clear. Following the start of this blockade last December, the Canadian foreign affairs committee chose to hold emergency hearings on the situation. Here at length is what we heard from Robert Avetisyan, Artsakh's representative in Washington. He said:

On December 12 of last year, a group of Azerbaijanis blocked the only road connecting Artsakh with Armenia and the world...the lives of an estimated 120,000 people have been severely worsening. Children and adult medical patients remain in critical condition and are suffering in hospitals from a lack of supplies and treatment outside the republic. People have died as a result.

Grocery shops and markets are almost empty. The Red Cross and the peacekeepers supply a fraction of the required products and medicines. A shortage of food has led to the closure of schools and other educational institutions across the area. To elevate the suffering, the Aliyev regime has cut the supply of natural gas and sabotaged and blocked the repair of high-voltage power lines, which provide much of our electricity.

This is a humanitarian crisis caused not by an economic downturn, a global pandemic or a natural disaster. This is, rather, a political disaster. Aliyev wants to decide who can live and who must have death. It is a political disaster if, in the 21st century, we witness medieval cruelty by a repressive regime toward people whose only crime is the desire to live in freedom, democracy and dignity.

We heard other harrowing testimony, way back in January, that nonetheless did not impel stronger action by the international community, or even by the Canadian government. However, in response to this testimony, the committee did agree unanimously to adopt the following motion:

That the committee report to the House that it calls on the Azerbaijani authorities, in accordance with its obligations as a party to the trilateral declaration of November 9, 2020, and following the appeal made by the Government of Canada on December 14, 2022, to reopen the Lachin Corridor and guarantee freedom of movement in order to avoid any deterioration in the humanitarian situation.

The committee adopted this motion because we understood that what was happening was a grave and unjustified violation of the fundamental human rights of the people of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and of the agreement that Azerbaijan had itself signed. Regardless of the conclusions that one comes to about any of the history of the conflict, this blockade was a clear violation of international law and of the ceasefire agreement. Azeri authorities showed no interest in taking their commitments seriously, and Russia showed either an unwillingness or an inability to fulfill its peacekeeping obligations under the agreement.

• (1015)

Again, regardless of one's views on the nature and exercise of self-determination, the blockade was a clear violation of fundamental human rights. In terms of how we classify that violation, it is important to review the genocide convention to which Canada is a party. The convention underlines the responsibility of state parties to act to prevent and punish genocide. The convention defines "genocide" as "any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group", and of the possible acts, the convention includes "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part".

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The blockade of the Lachin corridor created conditions which made the continuation of normal life impossible in Artsakh, bringing about an increasing exodus from the area. The fact that this relates strongly to the genocide convention criteria explains why various experts have raised the flag about genocide in this context. States, regardless of their claims, never have a right to use genocide as a tool to advance their objectives, and other states have a moral and legal responsibility to respond when they do. The House should know that Armenians have been victims of genocide before, a genocide that, to this day, continues to be denied by the Turkish government. The world's relative ignorance was, in fact, used by Hitler to justify his own preparations for the Holocaust.

By launching this blockade, Azerbaijani authorities sought to and did squeeze the people of Artsakh, with their plans culminating in a full-scale invasion of Nagorno-Karabakh last week, about nine months after the blockade began. Last week, Azerbaijan declared that it would no longer tolerate the existence of Artsakh's independent institutions on its territory and launched coordinated attacks on security and civilian installations. Essentially, this was to be the final invasion. Without any international support, Artsakh was quickly forced to surrender and begin the process of negotiating its so-called reintegration into Azerbaijan.

It looks as if now it is all over for Artsakh, and now the ethnic Armenians who have long inhabited this territory will no longer be able to choose their own leaders. They will be at the mercy of their invaders unless the international community finally steps up. Meanwhile, we continue to hear reports of grievous human rights violations that will likely spawn the further exodus of these Armenians from their homeland.

Where has the international community been in response to these events? Where has it been in response to this assault on the idea that people ought to be able to choose how they are governed, that political conflict should be solved peacefully and that starvation and ethnic cleansing are never acceptable tools for forcing a civilian population into submission? Where has the Liberal government been? It initially condemned the blockade but has been largely absent since, and its statement last week on the invasion was certainly substantially weaker than those of our allies. This invasion took place during the operation of the UN General Assembly. Where was the world?

While keeping the focus on human rights, it is important to underline also the strategic implications of what has happened. Armenia has historically been an ally and partner of Russia, reflecting the fundamental reality of how challenging Armenia's neighbourhood is, landlocked and surrounded by, among others, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Iran. However, Armenia has recently been making a series of welcome moves to align instead with the global community of free nations. This is natural, from a values perspective. Unlike its neighbours, Armenia is a free democracy. Armenia has given humanitarian aid to Ukraine. The first lady of Armenia has recently visited Ukraine, and Armenia made the point that it is not Russia's ally in the war with Ukraine. Ominously, Russia said it took note of Armenia's stand in this regard. Just before the final invasion of Artsakh, the U.S. and Armenia held joint military exercises.

What is happening here? Armenia appears to be moving more into the western camp of nations. In response, Russia appears to have

greenlit or allowed Azerbaijan's aggressive action against Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. However, in spite of the fact that this invasion may have been impacted by Armenia's outreach to the western camp, we in the west have entirely failed to show ourselves to be a good reciprocal partner, and this sends a terrible message to any would-be allies: that even if they would like to execute a strategic pivot away from the Russian sphere of influence to the community of free nations, we may not have their backs. This is the wrong message and a dangerous message.

Adopting this concurrence motion at this time is, in certain respects, late to the game because the motion, of course, does focus on the blockade. The invasion has now overtaken these issues, but it is critical for the House to speak to this. So much hangs in the balance: the fundamental rights of the people of this area, the importance of preventing another Armenian genocide and the need to show all nations that we will do what we can to support free people seeking to exercise self-determination and disentangle themselves from Russian influence.

I hope this motion will have the support of the House and then that we will do more to stand for freedom and justice against violence and aggression, and for a peaceful international rules-based order.

● (1020)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, talk about being completely out of touch with what is happening in Canada today. The Conservatives have now moved a motion on a one-paragraph report from February, while Canadians today are enduring all sorts of hardship. They are dealing with issues such as inflation, housing-related issues, so many other economic issues and the issue of health care, and the Conservatives want to regurgitate a one-paragraph report. The member made reference to Russia and Ukraine, trying to draw a comparison to what is happening in the environment locally. Does he really believe that the Conservative Party today is in touch with what Canadians are concerned about?

Mr. Garnett Genus: Madam Speaker, I would be happy to, and we regularly do, address the affordability issues, the crisis in Canada that has been created by the policies of the Liberal government. However, I do think there is a place for the people's House to address critical foreign policy crises, including issues of peace, security and aggression around the world. It is disappointing to hear the member dismiss those important questions, recognizing that the vast majority of time we spend in the House is dealing with domestic issues, affordability issues and economic issues. To completely dismiss the lives and security of the people in the Nagorno-Karabakh region in the casual way the member did is deeply disturbing, and frankly, I suspect he will hear from folks who also find it disturbing.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, before asking my question, I would like to make a comment. It is strange to see the Conservatives putting off debates about the cost of living that are on the agenda. That does not mean the issue they are raising is not important; we will deal with it appropriately. However, I think my comment is still relevant.

My colleague talked a lot about the conflict and the blockade of the Lachin corridor. As I understand it, Canadian arms sales to Turkey have changed the course of the conflict. I am hoping he can elaborate on that. Were any figures provided during the committee study, and did the committee examine any tangible evidence of this? How could this be prevented from happening again?

Also, my colleague called for stronger action by the Canadian government in the face of the humanitarian crisis unfolding there because of the blockade. People have no access to food or medicine. When my colleague talks about stronger action, what does he suggest?

• (1025)

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, in the last Parliament, at the time following the first Nagorno-Karabakh war, studied the issue of arms exports, because in a very curious fashion, the Liberal government lifted the prohibition on arms exports to Turkey. There were the exports of some critical technology that was used as part of drones that many people saw as being decisive in the outcome of the first Nagorno-Karabakh war.

These drones and technology that came from Canada, these sensors, were a very important part of the outcome of that war, and they were supplied to Azerbaijan via Turkey during the curious window in which these arms exports were allowed. I think it still remains largely unexplained why the government created that window and what it was trying to achieve. I know there was a meeting in that process where, in the talking points of the minister, there was some appreciation shown that maybe Turkey was going to support Bill Morneau's candidacy for some international position.

Frankly, there is still a lot unexplained about why the government allowed those exports. One of the ministers at the time dismissed it as, "We're just talking about some cameras here." Actually, we are talking about weapons technology that played a decisive role in the outcome. There is a lot more that could be said about this, and more questions need to be answered by the government on this.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I do not think anybody would deny that top of mind here in Canada is the issue of cost of living, but I find it pretty rich to hear the Liberals' comments that issues of foreign affairs are not important when we are on day five of being plunged into the international media because the Speaker, a Liberal member, recognized an SS Nazi in the House. I think it is important to talk about what is happening around the world, including, and perhaps especially right now, the mass evacuations from the Artsakh region.

I am wondering if the member could speak a bit more to the ban on drone technology that Canada is considering lifting, a ban that is fully supported, of course, by the Armenian community and by many others, including members of the Greek community.

I am wondering if he could let us know if he believes that Canada should not lift the ban on this drone technology, which has been used in the drones that were used against the Armenian people in the conflict waged by Azerbaijan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, going back to the last Parliament, we had very effective co-operation on the foreign affairs committee among Conservatives, the Bloc and New Democrats in trying to get to the bottom of why there was the export of this technology to Turkey that ended up going to Azerbaijan. That transfer could likely have been predicted.

The effect of this was that this technology was used and deployed in a really devastating way as part of that war, a war of choice and a war launched as a result of a decision by Azerbaijan to take this aggressive action, which is similar to the latest round. That opening up of arms exports was never fully explained by the government, and these outstanding questions remain.

I would underline that the idea that the government might consider opening up arms exports again, specifically in the context wherein two countries have been involved in this kind of aggression, is very concerning.

What the government should be doing is supporting the principle of self-determination, clearly condemning acts of aggression, and at a minimum, not being complicit in it. Canada, by allowing the export of that technology, was actually complicit in the last round of aggression. That is a really shameful thing.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am grateful that my hon. friend from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has raised this. There has been an increase in conflicts in a region of the world where we have seen ethnic cleansing or, at least, accusations of ethnic cleansing from the Armenian population. We have deep concerns for the fate of Nagorno-Karabakh.

We always find it unfortunate in opposition benches, and I suppose also in government benches, when suddenly our day has been moved from an intended agenda by a concurrence motion, but in this case, I want to thank the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan because he is right. Do we only respond to egregious violations of the international order when they make headlines somewhere else? That is a poor standard.

My understanding is that the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders will be meeting in Spain on October 5. The leaders of France, Germany and the European Council will be there. What role does he think Canada could play?

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● (1030)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I think members who follow this know that there is a lot of debate within Armenia about the approach that the Armenian government has taken. We hope for peace. We hope for negotiation. We hope for understanding, but that discussion needs to also include the people in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, and it needs to include a human rights lens.

Regardless of the political discussions that take place, are the fundamental human rights of the people in Artsakh or Nagorno-Karabakh being protected or not? That is the fundamental question we need to be asking now.

I think, realistically, it is not difficult to predict the direction in which a final political settlement will go, but the international community needs to be clear in saying that acts of aggression will not be ignored, there will be consequences for acts of aggression and we will do everything we can to ensure the protection of the fundamental human rights of the people affected.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, usually I would indicate that it is a pleasure to be able to rise to address a particular issue in the chamber. I would like to break my speech into a couple of parts related to the issue at hand.

First, I would like to provide a bit of background as to why we are debating this issue before us. Suffice it to say that all issues are ultimately important, particularly in the minds of many different people. When we have a finite amount of time to debate issues on the floor of the House of Commons, we have to try to place them, whether they are opposition agenda items or government agenda items, in some sense of an order of priority. War and things taking place internationally have always played an important role in debates of the chamber.

Members will recall last Monday, for example, we had the very serious issue of foreign interference being debated. I would have thought it to be universally accepted by most members of this chamber, but it was not by the Conservatives because I believe they had one person come in to speak once and that was it. Then they were absolutely quite. They did not get engaged, yet that was on the issue of foreign interference.

I can assure members across the way that the level of interest on that issue is actually quite high, yet the Conservative Party, with the exception of its very first speaker, was absolutely silent. I suspect it was because its members wanted to have their fingers in the air to figure out what they could or should be saying. That was an important international issue.

When we think of foreign affairs, we often have take-note debates and emergency debates. These are opportunities not only for opposition members but also for government members to stand and express concerns by reflecting on what their constituents are saying about that particular issue, and they can raise it in great detail. That is one of the advantages of the rules we have to accommodate issues of this nature.

I think people need to be aware of the background of these reports. For example, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, who did not participate in the international interfer-

ence debate last Monday, and who often likes to talk about his concerns about what is happening around the world, has brought forward a concurrence motion. I want us to put this into the proper perspective of when the report was actually tabled, which was back on February 17 of this year. Allow me to read the entire report. I can assure members it will not take long, but so I do not misquote, I will put on my glasses.

The report, which was tabled on February 17, states:

That the committee report to the House that it calls on the Azerbaijani authorities, in accordance with its obligations as a party to the trilateral declaration of November 9, 2020, and following the appeal made by the Government of Canada on December 14, 2022, to reopen the Lachin Corridor and guarantee freedom of movement in order to avoid any deterioration in the humanitarian situation, and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Government table a comprehensive response to the report.

It is one paragraph that was brought into the chamber on February 17. Do members know there was actually a response to that report? An official response was given. Did the member refer to, cite or quote the response? I am not convinced the member is aware that there was a response given to the report on June 14 of this year. If so, he could have read first-hand how the government responded to that report.

● (1035)

Did the standing committee meet to discuss the response to the report and give an indication as to whether it wanted to have further debate on the issue? I do not know. I am not on the foreign affairs committee, nor have I asked any of its members. However, if I were to speculate, given the track record of the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, I would suggest that it likely did not.

Why do we have it today? I was supposed to be the first one to speak today. Do members know what the topic was? It was to be on Bill C-56, which is a wake-up call for the Conservative Party of Canada. People are hurting. Interest rates, inflation, what the grocery store giants are doing, and housing are the important issues that Canadians are facing today. This is not to take away from the importance of the issue described in that one-paragraph report from the standing committee months ago. After all, the government gave a formal response to it.

All issues are important. The reason for this motion is not to say we want to have a debate on this issue here on the floor of the House of Commons, but that this is being used as a tool to prevent the debate that was supposed to be taking place to deal with the Canadian economy and how Canadians are hurting. The members of the Conservative Party want to play games and filibuster. Shame on them for that sort of behaviour as an official opposition.

There are mechanisms from which the Conservatives can choose, such as opposition days, where they have a number of days every year to choose to debate important issues. For instance, they can add additional substance to the one paragraph that was provided by the standing committee. They could express other concerns. They could draw in the comparison, as the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan did, with what is happening in Ukraine today.

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As one of my colleagues said, the Conservatives are putting politics above people. That is shameful. If the member or the Conservative Party, because I think this is its agenda, did not want to use one of their opposition days and were keen to have this debate in a forum that would allow people to really get engaged on the issue, why would they not approach the government and ask for a take-note debate? To the very best of my knowledge, and I sit on the House leadership team, that was not done.

There is no member who brings forward more petitions than the member across the way. How many petitions has he tabled with respect to this connection for humanitarian aid, the Lachin corridor? I will get more into that shortly. To what degree has that taken place? Better yet, I am having a difficult time trying to recall when the member rose with a request for an emergency debate on this issue. The reason we cannot remember a date is that he did not request one.

• (1040)

The only reason this concurrence motion has been brought forward for us today is because the Conservative Party has, once again, fallen into two principles. The first is character assassination. Every opportunity the Conservative members get, they try to make the Prime Minister of Canada look bad, even if it spreads false information. They are very good at this. The other thing they want to do is frustrate the House and what is taking place on the floor. Today is a very good example of that.

The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan in particular, and all Conservative members, needs to realize that the people they are hurting—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Though broad, there still are parameters of relevance. I am sure there are members who want to speak—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member has made reference to the issue, and the parameters are broad.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, if the member were actually listening, he would have heard the comments I made about the motion and the reason why it was before us.

I have read the motion. After reading the motion, it will not take people too much to get a better sense of it and understand it. Instead of reading the speech that was delivered by the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, all people need to do is go to Google and type in the words “Lachin corridor”. Let us remember that is what the motion is about. It states:

That the committee report to the House that it calls on the Azerbaijani authorities, in accordance with its obligations as a party to the trilateral declaration of November 9, 2020, and following the appeal made by the Government of Canada on December 14, 2022, to reopen the Lachin Corridor...

It is important because it is about issues such as freedom and humanitarian aid.

If people who are following debate feel that is the issue they want to look more into, Wikipedia has a nice graphic picture on it. I looked at it while the member was speaking. Albeit not overly comprehensive and may not necessarily give justice to the issue, there is

something there. The Lachin corridor is a mountain road that links Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh. Being the only road between these two countries, it is considered a humanitarian corridor or a lifeline. Being a lifeline, it plays an absolutely critical role for what is taking place on the ground.

Canadians have consistently said that humanitarian aid is important. Actions by the Government of Canada are always expected. When I think of foreign aid, it is critically important that we differentiate between the perpetrators, or the people who are causing the problems, and the people who are having to live with the result of what other people are doing to them, and under some horrific circumstances, including starvation and all forms of abuse.

We see conflicts taking place around the world, and Canada is a very diverse nation. Often when something is happening on the other side of the world, Canada has an interest. We often find that Canada has members of that community living in Canada and calling it home. However, part of the Canadian identity means that they do not come to Canada and forget their homeland. They can still be a hard-working, proud Canadians but maintain those strong, often emotional ties to their homeland. When people share those lived experiences with workers or the environment in which they live in Canada, it overflows into the main population.

When we see the number of conflicts that are taking place around the world, we begin to understand why Canadians are very much in tune with the importance of humanitarian aid, whether it is to individuals or organizations. For a country the size of Canada of just under 40 million people, we contribute a lot toward humanitarian aid. We contribute a lot to the issues of freedom and rule of law, because those are important Canadian values. We see that on an ongoing basis

• (1045)

I made reference to the fact that the report the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has brought forward was tabled in February. I questioned whether he understood there was a response to that report, because he did not cite the response. I have a letter of response that was provided, and I would like to go through it so the member in particular, and the Conservative Party, understands the response.

Members should keep in mind that this response was given back in June, so I did a Hansard search. Did the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, who I know will get an opportunity to ask a question of me, follow up on that report? Did he write to the minister and provide his opinions on it? Did he provide any feedback with respect to the report that was tabled? I do not know. I will wait for the member to stand, when it comes time for questions and comments, and possibly answer that question. What was his official response? Did he ignore it? I anxiously await.

Since I only have two minutes, and in case the member does not have a copy of it, if I could have unanimous consent, I would be happy to table the response of June 14.

• (1050)

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

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Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is important. Since this is the only copy I have, I will give it to the member opposite and maybe he could make a few copies for himself and give the copy back to me. I am interested in knowing how he responded to it.

He said that it was a tabled document already, that they had it already, so that means he is aware of it being there.

As I said at the very beginning, at the end of the day, with all the opportunities the Conservative Party have had to raise an issue of this nature, they intentionally have chosen to stay away from the issues that Canadians are facing today. The Conservatives knew full well that we were supposed to be debating this morning the issues of housing, inflation, grocery chains and price stabilization.

Those are the types of issues that are causing so much pain in our society today, and the Conservatives have chosen to avoid that debate. We will find out whether the member has read the letter and if he has anything to say about it.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an absurd spectacle we have just seen, of a government member asking the permission of the House to table a document that has already been tabled in a desperate effort to fill 20 minutes on a subject he clearly knows absolutely nothing about. Of course, I read the government's response and, unfortunately, it suggested a weakening of the tone compared to the tone the minister had taken previously on the same issue. This underlined for me the importance of having this concurrence debate.

The parliamentary secretary needs to understand that this is actually a really important issue for—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will interrupt the hon. member because he has been distracted. I would ask the hon. member to go back a few seconds in his question.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I was not really expecting much in response, but it is good for him to hear and we will give this a shot.

This is an extremely important issue. We are talking about the lives and security of people in a different part of the world, but a commitment to universal human solidarity and the international rules-based order should motivate us to be concerned about them.

We have had extensive debates in this House on a broad range of issues, but this is absolutely a legitimate and important topic for the House to be discussing, and a concurrence motion is the tool we have for raising it. Why is the member dismissing that instead of engaging?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I pointed out at the beginning of my comments the many mechanisms there for us to ensure we can have healthy debates, including opposition days, emergency debates and take-note debates.

However, this is a day we are supposed to be debating the important issues I pointed out, such as inflation, housing, the cost of gro-

ceries and the need for stabilization. These are the things Canadians want us to be talking about. Nothing is to take away from other opportunities to debate this issue. After all, it has been here for almost nine—

• (1055)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Jonquière.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, this may be a first: I am about to agree with the member for Winnipeg North. That rarely happens. The fact is that I do not understand it either. For months, we have listened to the Conservatives talk to us at every opportunity about the cost of living and the cost of housing. We could be debating these issues in the House this morning. We had speakers ready and waiting to do so.

Then, using a parliamentary procedure, they changed the debate to discuss a report of no particular urgency at all. Even if the situation in question was urgent, I do not think we will be solving that problem today. This move was a distraction. I get a sense that what the Conservatives really want today is simply to waste time.

This has something to do with the completely irrational claims I have been hearing lately. Quebeckers are being told that they are paying a non-existent carbon tax. Some people are trying to convince them that my party is in cahoots with the government to raise the price of gas, when we know full well that it is the big oil companies that are driving prices based on refinery rates. We will never hear a Conservative criticize that.

I would like my colleague from Winnipeg North to give us his take on the Conservative Party's motives today.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I sense frustration from the Bloc member. I too join him in the frustration, because I too recognize these issues that are having such an impact on Canadians. No matter where one lives in Canada, the issues we were supposed to be debating today are having an impact. There is legislation to address this. We need to pass that legislation, Bill C-56, which is there to support Canadians from coast to coast to coast. That is what we were supposed to be debating.

For people who maybe do not necessarily follow all the details of the proceedings of the House, this motion brought forward by the Conservative Party has very little to do with the issue within the motion and has everything to do with trying to frustrate the debate on these very important issues. This legislation is important. We should be passing Bill C-56. There are other opportunities for the Conservatives to debate this issue. It is an important issue.

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Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will take this one step further. Whenever there is a concurrence motion put on the floor in order to disrupt the agenda of the day, it is almost always done by the Conservative member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. It is almost as though Conservatives have laid out how this process unfolds every time, and they call on him to come into the House to put forward a motion of concurrence, which basically just disrupts the agenda for the day, so we cannot discuss those very important issues Canadians are relying on us to discuss.

Does the parliamentary secretary feel the same way I do and can he expand on why he thinks it might be the case that this particular member routinely does this?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan never complains about doing it. Is it a coincidence that concurrence motions on reports are never moved during Conservative opposition days, but always when dealing with government legislation?

When the Conservatives use this tactic, and they have done it many times before, it is always meant to prevent debate on the government agenda, because there are other opportunities to debate these types of important issues. If the Conservatives were very serious about the issue of the concurrence motion that they are moving, there are other ways of doing it. They know that, but they like to use the concurrence motion in order to frustrate government legislation.

Bill C-56 is too important for Canadians. We will get it through, no matter what kinds of games they play, because it is important to Canadians.

• (1100)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to sit on the foreign affairs and international development committee. I did listen to the testimony about the blockade of the Lachin corridor, and I am following the developments with the invasion now by Azerbaijan into Nagorno-Karabakh. So, to hear members across the way equate the suffering of Canadians, which no doubt they have inflicted, as a dismissive tool, where they have no respect for the institutions of the House, is very concerning.

I am going to ask the member, as he dismissed my colleague's motion and as he spoke: Was it his intent to equate the suffering that Canadians are having right now on the basis of this government's policies with those fleeing for their lives from Nagorno-Karabakh?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on international issues of that nature, or what we have seen take place in terms of Russia's aggression, we have opportunities to have healthy debates where we can build consensus. The Conservative Party has chosen to try to divide even the House of Commons, parliamentarians, on those critically important issues.

It is not to say that the issue of this motion is not important to Canadians; it is, but timing is everything. This motion has been sitting now since February. The Conservatives intentionally brought it up at government business in order to prevent us from talking about

the issues of inflation, interest rates and housing. That, too, is important.

The Conservative Party is not listening to what Canadians have to say. They are bringing forward this motion—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): One last question from the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, given my earlier intervention to the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, I also agree with much of what the parliamentary secretary to the House leader just said. I do not doubt for one minute that the motivation of the Conservative back rooms is to hijack debate this morning. That does not take anything away from my earlier comment that this is an important matter that the House should occupy its time with, but I share the frustration of the hon. member that we see these kinds of shenanigans. I wish everyone could rise above them so that we could actually work together more.

I have no reason to defend Conservatives. They have blocked my right to speak on routine matters, such as paying tribute to the late Monique Bégin, our former and courageous—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. parliamentary secretary a few seconds to comment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the leader of the Green Party brings up some valid points in regards to issues of international affairs and where they can be best done, like take-note debates, emergency debates and opposition day debates. When parties work together to—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Montarville.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I cannot say how surprised I am, to say the least, that we are addressing this issue today—not that I do not consider it important, on the contrary. My office and the office of my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan held discussions prior to the first meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development so that we could again bring up the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, given the events of recent days and weeks. There was then an agreement.

Yesterday, during the very first meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, I did say that we wanted to revisit this issue, since we have an open study, so to speak, on the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and recent events require us to look at this issue again. We therefore had discussions with our Conservative colleagues about this.

Suddenly, this morning, without warning, the Conservatives moved this motion to adopt the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Not that I do not think this report should be adopted or that this is an important issue. It is a matter of the utmost urgency, and I will come back to this in a moment.

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There was, however, a distinct lack of co-operation on the part of our Conservative colleagues, a lack of consultation and communication, even though our offices had been in contact for several weeks about the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. As a result, I can only conclude that this is a delaying tactic that has nothing to do with the substance of the issue. This is a parliamentary guerrilla tactic to prevent the government from passing its inflation bill.

At the same, I must say that I disagree with the Liberal Party's Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader when he says that the inflation issue is more important in the calculations or in the ranking of important matters. I know that our constituents are living with the daily consequences of inflation and the housing shortage and that it is vitally important that we address this issue. Moreover, we were scheduled to discuss this, as part of the study of Bill C-56.

However, right now, there are people losing their lives in Nagorno-Karabakh and the international community is showing little or no concern. There are only a few countries, including France, in particular, that really seem to care about what is happening in that region.

Azerbaijan claims that Nagorno-Karabakh is part of its territory. International law seems to confirm the Azerbaijani claim. However, if it is true that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh are part of Azerbaijan, how can we tolerate, under the principle of the duty and responsibility to protect—a concept that was adopted by the United Nations at Canada's instigation—a government literally starving and attacking a population in its territory? That, however, is what is happening.

For several months, after the 2020 conflict, the government claimed that it wanted to adopt a balanced position, stating that it did not know what was really happening on the ground. It said that it did not really know who the attacker was and who was in the wrong.

• (1105)

However, since then, the facts keep pointing at Azerbaijan.

There was a reluctant statement from Global Affairs Canada, which we actually reiterated in the report, that simply called on Azerbaijan to live up to its commitment under the peace agreement that it reached with Armenia after the 2020 conflict under Russian auspices. This statement called on Azerbaijan to live up to its commitment to keep the Lachin Corridor open and call on it to respect the terms of the ceasefire.

Aside from this half-hearted statement, not much has been done by the Canadian government. Of course, a special rapporteur was sent, and none other than Stéphane Dion, Canada's ambassador plenipotentiary, who is the right fit for all purposes and missions. He was sent to Armenia to support Armenian democracy. Some recommendations were taken from his report, including the recommendation to open an embassy in Yerevan, a commitment made by the Prime Minister several years ago that is finally being implemented. How can we accept that Azerbaijan has, on several occasions, not only violated the ceasefire agreement reached with Armenia in 2020, but also blatantly crossed into Armenia's sovereign territory?

In the House, since February 2022, we have stood in solidarity in our determination to denounce Russia's illegal and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine. Several countries around the world look at Canada and its claims to defend international law, human rights and the rule of law, and then wonder about how we seem to apply things differently based on the situation. Palestine has been living under occupation since 1967 to near total indifference. Armenia has been subjected to military attacks by Azerbaijan to near total indifference. The Canadian government is determined, and we completely support it, to defend Ukraine against Russian aggression. Why then the double standard? Why not be just as firm about Azerbaijan's aggression against Armenia as we have been and still are about Russia's aggression against Ukraine?

Azerbaijan violated the peace agreements once again by launching a military offensive in the Nagorno-Karabakh region on September 19. People are fleeing by the hundreds, fearing repression. Indeed, there have been disturbing reports about how the Azeri troops are treating the civilian population. There are reports of summary executions and discrimination against Armenian populations. For months now, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh have been suffering the effects of the blockade, which Azerbaijan initially tried to deny so as not to be accused of violating the terms of the ceasefire agreement signed with Armenia in 2020.

• (1110)

Azerbaijan is a rather authoritarian state that rarely tolerates protests. However, it did tolerate a months-long protest by so-called environmentalists who blocked the Lachin corridor under the pretext of wanting to prevent mining developments in Nagorno-Karabakh. The fact of the matter is that Azerbaijan's main fear was that mining resources would flow from Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia. Under the pretext of preventing mining development for supposedly environmental reasons, these activists were therefore tolerated in the Lachin corridor for months.

In January of this year, I brought this serious situation before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. In the wake of the blockade of the Lachin corridor, we conducted a study on this specific situation at the request of the Bloc Québécois. That study eventually led to this report, which is quite brief. As I was saying, it essentially repeats the wording of the Canadian declaration. I felt that the Liberals wanted to soft-pedal, that they were not too eager to adopt a report. I told them that it was the Global Affairs Canada statement repeated verbatim and that they could not be against that.

One thing led to another and they ended up accepting. However, I get the impression that as a result of Azerbaijan lobbying certain Liberal MPs, they were reluctant to take a position, much like the government. The report says:

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That the committee report to the House that it calls on the Azerbaijani authorities, in accordance with its obligations as a party to the trilateral declaration of November 9, 2020, and following the appeal made by the Government of Canada on December 14, 2022, to reopen the Lachin Corridor and guarantee freedom of movement in order to avoid any deterioration in the humanitarian situation, and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Government table a comprehensive response to the report.

The response came. On June 14, the Minister of Foreign Affairs sent us a two-page response that was interesting but contained many of the same soothing statements that the government has been offering up for months concerning the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. It said that the government was following developments closely, that it was monitoring the situation every day, that it was urging Azerbaijan to open the corridor, and so on. Meanwhile, in violation of the terms of the ceasefire agreement, Azerbaijan repeatedly resumed hostilities, including against Armenia. This development met with, as I have said, near total indifference.

Azerbaijan eventually realized that the truth about the corridor supposedly being blockaded by eco-activists was coming out. Public protests are not permitted in Azerbaijan, except in the Lachin corridor, curiously enough. The Azerbaijan government realized that no one was buying its story, so it decided to just set up a military roadblock, right under the noses of the so-called Russian peacekeepers. The ceasefire agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia in 2020 was brokered by Russia, which was supposed to guarantee that the ceasefire stayed in place by having troops on the ground. Who knows why Russia's attention seems to be elsewhere, but the Russian peacekeepers barely fulfilled their role. I would go so far as to say they did not fulfill it at all.

• (1115)

In fact, they were even used by Azerbaijan to carry out attacks not only against Nagorno-Karabakh, but also against Armenia itself. The same aggressor that we are denouncing in the war in Ukraine is abetting Azerbaijan in attacking another independent nation, the only democracy in the Caucasus region, where we have committed to defending democracy, yet we are doing nothing. We are letting it happen.

Canada makes soothing comments that it is monitoring the situation very closely, that it is paying attention to what is going on, that it is urging Azerbaijan to reopen the corridor, but this is no longer about reopening the Lachin corridor. The territory of Nagorno-Karabakh has been occupied by the Azerbaijani military. Its population, which has been starving and deprived of all basic medical supplies for months, is now under military occupation by Azerbaijan, which is committing atrocities against the civilian population. Again, this news has been met with near total indifference.

Words cannot express how disappointed I am with the Liberal government's attitude toward this conflict. For months, it suggested that we could not be sure which nation was the aggressor was in this case. What will it take for the Liberal government to understand that Azerbaijan is the aggressor, that the fact that Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan under international law cannot justify military aggression against innocent civilians and cannot justify a nation literally starving its population? In another context, that would be called genocide. This is a very serious issue.

I certainly do not want to downplay the importance of the debate we are having on the adoption of the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. However, I cannot help but wonder once again if this is the time to discuss it. I know our Conservative colleagues are genuinely and deeply concerned about the situation because, as I stated earlier, we have had discussions. Our offices have had discussions about the fact that we wanted to raise this issue again in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Since our offices have been in contact, why are we being surprised this morning by this motion to adopt the report? Why were we not consulted? Why were we not even informed?

This morning, I was coming out of another committee when I was told I had to speak. Why proceed this way on such an important issue that should see us all working together?

What we are seeing, unfortunately, is a political move by our Conservative friends to derail and delay debate on the inflation bill. I come back to the comments by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader. I am not saying that the issue is more important than what is happening in Nagorno-Karabakh, because people are dying right now in Nagorno-Karabakh, but our fellow Canadians in every riding are dealing with the problem of inflation. Our fellow Canadians in every riding are dealing with the problem of a housing shortage.

Our Conservative colleagues rise every day in the House and say that the current inflation is unacceptable, but they come here today with this delaying tactic. Someone would have called them whited sepulchres.

We saw yesterday how hypocritical our colleagues can be, and I use that word carefully. When it was proposed that the passages in which the veteran of the Waffen-SS was in our gallery, and even the related video excerpts, be removed from the record of the debates, they refused. My Conservative colleagues need to show some honesty. If they are as interested in the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh as they claim, they should not proceed as they did this morning.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague. I know him as someone who deeply cares about the Armenian people and the conflict in the region. He has brought this forward at the foreign affairs committee many times.

Like him, I am disappointed in how this concurrence debate has come forward. I find it very interesting, because we had a debate just last week on interference and the Indian government's interference in our democracy, the potential of the Indian government to perhaps have murdered a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil, and yet the Conservatives did not show up at all. In fact, the member who brought this concurrence motion forward sat in the House of Commons and said not one word during that entire four-hour debate.

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Could the member talk about why, when it comes to actual, meaningful action on things that we should be doing with regard to our foreign policies, the Conservatives politicize it, every time?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Before I allow the hon. member to answer the question, I would like to remind members that we do not refer to absences or presences in the House.

The hon. member for Montarville.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, I keep saying that if there is one committee that has been one of the least partisan in the House, and that should stay that way, it is the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. There are at least two very good reasons for that.

First, with the possible exception of the brief episode of the Harper government, all of the governments that have led Canada since the end of the Second World War, whether Liberal or Conservative, have essentially upheld very similar values on the international stage. On international issues, the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and, in a way, even the Conservatives are quite similar to the Liberals in terms of the values they uphold internationally. That should make this committee one of the least partisan committees.

Second, I think that it is always better for us to present a united front internationally, even though we may have our differences, than to show that we are divided. However, what we have seen over the last few months is the Conservatives trying to politicize foreign affairs issues, which is extremely harmful. I also do not understand why the Conservatives did not intervene in last Tuesday's debate on Indian interference, which is probably one of the most shocking issues we have faced in recent years. Maybe it is because Stephen Harper once called Prime Minister Modi a significant international leader, and the former prime minister's description has painted the Conservatives into a corner.

• (1125)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I did get an opportunity to express my frustration in terms of why we are debating this today, but that does not take away, as the member pointed out, from the importance of the issue.

I want to reference a comment that came from Bob Rae, who is Canada's ambassador to the United Nations, as I am sure my friend is aware. He said that Azerbaijan might be undertaking "ethnic cleansing". For me, whenever we talk about international issues, there are some values that Canadians hold so high, in terms of the level of importance. The people we represent are simply abhorred by the thought of things like ethnic cleansing and those types of allegations.

Could the member provide any thoughts, given his role in Parliament, sitting on the foreign affairs committee?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, in my previous response, I already mentioned how I think the political parties ought

to approach foreign affairs. If the ambassador, Canada's representative to the United Nations, has finally admitted that what is happening in Nagorno-Karabakh may be ethnic cleansing, so much the better. It was about time. Unfortunately, I am afraid it is too little, too late at this stage.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech. He explained the situation in a very clear, straightforward and informative way. I agree with him.

I cannot get over the fact that we are discussing this motion this morning. We have been hearing the Conservatives complain about inflation since Parliament resumed. The situation is very serious. We were supposed to talk about housing this morning. I cannot get over the fact that this motion is currently before the House and that we have wasted three hours of debate.

We have not really wasted three hours, of course, because this is an important motion, as members have mentioned. However, the housing situation in Canada is a very serious issue, so why are we not discussing it right now? That should be our priority, as should inflation.

To come back to the motion, my colleague said that he was disappointed with the Liberal government's response. What could the government do to counter the Azerbaijan government's attack on the Armenian populations in Nagorno-Karabakh?

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development is in the process of studying Canada's sanctions regime. That regime has its faults. In many cases, we are unable to monitor the sanctions that were imposed. We do not know if they are effective. We do not know their extent or what type of goods are being seized.

One witness told us yesterday that this is an effective measure for putting pressure on foreign governments. Why is the government not sanctioning Azerbaijan for its unacceptable behaviour, which has been going on for months, not only against Armenia, but also against its civilian population in Nagorno-Karabakh? When is it going to loudly and clearly denounce Azerbaijan's actions in Nagorno-Karabakh?

From the beginning, the government has always made half-hearted insinuations. Now we are hearing about a statement by Bob Rae that this may possibly be "ethnic cleansing". It was about time, but the government needs to go further. It must not just say what is happening, it must denounce it and take action to condemn Azerbaijan, especially since Azerbaijan is probably helping Russia slip Russian oil into Europe right now.

• (1130)

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a very important debate that we are undertaking here today. A very serious situation is unfolding in the region. I am happy to speak in this debate today, but I want to start by taking a moment to say that, as many have said before me in this place, this is not how we should be engaging with this topic.

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I was informed about an hour ago that this debate was going to be happening. That does not give members of Parliament the time to prepare to present on something as important and as vital as this issue. This issue is so important that I and the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie wrote a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs last week asking for more action to be taken on this.

I want to make it extraordinarily clear that the humanitarian crisis that is unfolding, the risk to Armenians, the tens of thousands of Armenians who are fleeing for their lives and their safety right now, demands attention from Canada and a response from the government, but a debate like this, which was brought forward by the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, is the wrong way to do this.

I will say as well that this is the same member from whom we have heard nothing with regard to foreign interference by India. On the potential of a Canadian citizen being murdered on Canadian soil, we have heard nothing from the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. This is the same member who, during his speech, spoke about Canada selling arms to Turkey, but at no point has he ever mentioned the fact that Canada continues to sell arms to Saudi Arabia. At no point has he said that we are not adhering to the Arms Trade Treaty. This picking and choosing when he brings things forward is disingenuous. To politicize something as serious as what has happened in the Nagorno-Karabakh is almost criminal, to be honest.

We are very worried about what is happening. In fact, the NDP asked for the government to put sanctions in place against the Azerbaijanis who are responsible for this humanitarian crisis. We have asked the government to sanction those individuals who have started this offensive increase in terror in the region, and the reason for that is that we saw last week that over 200 civilians were murdered. We have now seen tens of thousands of people fleeing the region, after months and months of conflict within the Lachin corridor. The challenges in this region are extraordinary, and the need for Canada to step up and step into that place is also extraordinary.

We know that in Brussels today, peace talks are under way. Canada has a role to play there as well. We do not occupy a large source of influence in that region. It is important for us to recognize that. However, I would say that we do have the ability to have a voice. We do have the ability to work with our allies. One of the things we can do is impose sanctions on those who are responsible for this violence.

I have stood in this place many times and criticized the government on our sanctions regime. I do not think our regime is as strong as it could be. We are good at putting people on the sanctions list, but we are not necessarily good at following through and enforcing those sanctions. I do think this is one of those opportunities where Canada could step up. This is one of those opportunities where we could improve our sanctions regime and the way we deal with bad actors.

Canada has a long history of speaking out for human rights on the world stage, for speaking up for justice, for speaking up for the rights of others, and while that role has diminished over the last decade, the last 10 to 15 years, we can take that role again. We can take that on. We have a new ambassador in Armenia. I know this

will be a very difficult job for him. He has testified at the foreign affairs committee, so I know that he is well informed and able to contribute to this important work.

• (1135)

At this moment, when there is ethnic cleansing happening, when the Armenian people are suffering, when people are being forced from their homes because of their fears for their own safety, it is an opportunity for Canada to step forward and do what we can.

The NDP has asked for sanctions and development assistance. We should be committing to helping those Armenians who are fleeing from their homes.

We should be committing to increasing our official development assistance, ODA. This is a government that cut ODA by 15% in the last budget. That is not playing the role on the world stage that we need to see from this current administration.

Of course, we would like to see Canada play a bigger role in the world. I have said that many times. I have said many times that in this multipolar world, in this vastly changing world, having that voice, being present, is so important. This government's fixation on trade to the exclusion of diplomacy, peacekeeping and development has put our foreign policy in a very dangerous place.

We have heard, many times, from the government that we have a feminist foreign policy and yet I do not see that in the actions that this government takes.

A feminist foreign policy would require us to invest in development and to look at where we sell arms and how we engage with other countries. It would require us to recognize the impacts of things like the humanitarian crisis happening right now in the Lachin corridor in Nagorno—Karabakh. It would require us to recognize that the people who bear the burden of these horrific events are women and girls. They are the ones who will suffer the most in these situations.

As a member of Parliament in a country that purports to have a feminist foreign policy, obviously one no one has ever seen but that is what we have been told, this is something that needs to be raised. We need to be looking at how that feminist foreign policy informs what we do and how we engage with Azerbaijanis who are committing ethnic cleansing against the Armenian people.

For me, there are steps we can take. There are more things that Canada can do. I think it is vital that we actually take those steps.

Knowing that the diplomatic talks are happening in Brussels today, I would also urge the government to reach out to all channels that we have to encourage the Azerbaijanis to come in good faith, and to encourage other countries within the EU, the United States and our allies to come to those talks with meaningful, concrete steps that can stop the violence against civilians.

Dialogue is the only way out of this very complex issue. It is the only solution. Any violence against civilians will never result in a peaceful outcome for the people of Azerbaijan or the people of Armenia. There has to be dialogue. There has to be engagement with the international community.

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Frankly, there has to be recognition that what the Azerbaijani government is doing right now is wrong. What it is doing right now is ethnic cleansing. It is against the law. It is against international law. It is morally incorrect, morally wrong, and it should be called out for that right now. That should be raised by our foreign minister and our government.

I will finish today by once again reiterating that Canada needs to do more. We need to step up and have a bigger voice on the international stage. As I mentioned, cuts to our official development assistance, cuts to support for international development organizations that are working around the world and changes to our legislation, which make it much more difficult for Canadian organizations to provide life-saving humanitarian and development aid around the world, are heading us in the wrong direction. It is taking our foreign policy in the wrong direction. We should be investing in people. We should be investing in those experts in our community that do development assistance. We should be committing to doing everything we can in this context and in contexts around the world.

I am deeply worried about the people of Armenia and about the tens of thousands of people who are fleeing violence right now. I ask, as strongly as I possible can, the Government of Canada to do more to alleviate their suffering.

• (1140)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I share with hon. colleague a heart for many matters around Canada's place in the world and international development assistance.

In light of the humanitarian crisis right now, and the people from Nagorno-Karabakh fleeing, what specifically could Canada do today to apply international pressure? The member referenced the meetings going on in Brussels. What specifically could Canada do?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague as well. We do work very well together on the foreign affairs committee, and I know he recognizes the vital importance of international development and Canada's role in that.

As I mentioned earlier in my speech, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs last week when this humanitarian crisis began to unfold further. Obviously, the blockades of the Lachin corridor have been happening for months, but with this recent expansion of aggression, we wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. One of the things we asked for was that targeted sanctions, Magnitsky-style sanctions, be applied to the Azerbaijani officials who are responsible for the violence.

I also mentioned I think our sanctions regime is not as strong as it could be, but that will show that Canada is watching and is not happy with the direction the Azerbaijani government is taking, and it is going to be urging the international community to act upon that. It sends a really clear message that needs to be sent.

All of us standing in this place and showing solidarity with the Armenian people who are fleeing, the civilians who are fleeing for their safety, also sends a very important message. That piece that we have asked for, myself and the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really liked the part of my colleague's speech about studying the sanctions regime from a feminist perspective. Often, in acts of aggression like this one, which must be condemned, women are direct or collateral victims. We should look at sanctions.

I would appreciate it if my colleague could tell us more about the sanctions that Canada could impose in this conflict, because it is a conflict.

In addition, given that the housing and cost of living crisis is a national crisis, I would like to know whether my colleague thought it was appropriate to table this motion this morning, as it is preventing us from debating issues that are critical for Quebeckers and Canadians.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, all the decisions we make regarding foreign policy need to be seen through that feminist lens. It is very important because we know the best thing we can do to alleviate the climate crisis is to educate women and girls. The best thing we can do to ensure a healthy environment and healthy community is to make sure that women and girls have what they need. All of our foreign affairs decisions need to be put through that lens.

With regard to the timing of this debate, I agree with the member wholeheartedly. The foreign affairs committee is looking at this issue right now. In fact, one of the members of her party raised this in our foreign affairs meeting just yesterday. There is a need for us to continue to look at this issue, but now is not the time. The surprise debates and tricks the Conservatives play so they can defer doing work on the things that we planned on discussing in the House is wrong.

One last thing I would point out is that we have other committees that are meeting and talking about very important work. I was supposed to be at the international human rights subcommittee today where we could have been pushing for a study on this exact topic in that subcommittee, yet that is not where I am today.

Right now, instead of working at the international human rights subcommittee, which is an important piece of work for this Parliament, I am engaging in a debate that was sprung on us by the Conservatives.

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• (1145)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for calling out the Azerbaijani government on the outrageous humanitarian crisis happening right now. The Armenian National Committee of Canada has written to members of Parliament raising its concerns. Everyone is watching the situation very carefully. I am pleased that the member and my other colleague have written to the minister and brought this issue to the government's attention. To that end, given the urgency of the situation, has the minister or any of the government members responded to that letter?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, we have not yet heard back from the government. I would be very interested in hearing from the minister or the government as to whether they will be supporting the NDP's calls for sanctions on the Azerbaijani officials who are responsible for this recent aggression.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, in the comments from the member of the NDP, she has called what we are doing today criminal and what is happening in this chamber wrong. We are acting as an opposition party in the House of Commons. The NDP, on the other hand, is completely supporting this Liberal agenda and pretending to criticize it. I would ask her this. When is she finally going to take a true NDP position and be in opposition to this out-of-control government?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, that question is absurd. I would follow it up with this. How many people in the member's riding are getting dental care?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on the work that is done by our standing committees, in particular, the foreign affairs committee, which brought forward this report back in February of this year, to which there was a response in June.

I understand the member said the committee is once again looking at the issue with the intention of bringing forward another report. I made reference to our United Nations ambassador, Bob Rae, regarding some of the concerns he has expressed. Is that also something that is being talked about at the committee? Maybe she could expand on why foreign affairs is one of the important areas we should try to keep partisan politics out of as much as possible.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I agree wholeheartedly with the member that foreign affairs is one of the committees we should try to work well with together. One thing that I think is important to mention is that the committee has brought up the conflict we are seeing between Azerbaijan and Armenia several times. We will continue to look at this issue at the foreign affairs committee. We put a proposal forward to travel to the region to be able to see for ourselves what is happening on the ground, and the Conservative Party stopped that trip from going forward. If the Conservatives meaningfully cared about the conflict and the Armenians who are suffering right now, I do not understand how they can justify that decision.

To clarify, the foreign affairs committee will continue to look at this issue because, frankly, that is what that standing committee is

for. It is a vital committee of this Parliament, and that is the important work that we will continue to do.

• (1150)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

I just want to begin my comments by speaking to the many Armenian Canadians who live in my riding of Vancouver Granville and expressing my own grave concern about what has been happening over the course of the last few days in Nagorno-Karabakh and in terms of the potential humanitarian catastrophe that may unfold. I want them to know that Canada, that I and that all of us in this chamber will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that a negotiated settlement, peace and security are brought to them. It is important for us to make sure that all Canadians and members of Parliament in this House speak with a united voice in ensuring that the Azerbaijani government refrain from activities and actions that pose risk to life, safety and the welfare of the civilian population. It is essential to show the human value of kindness, particularly humanitarian compassion, by allowing access, including via the Lachin corridor. This should be something that happens right away.

We are living in a world right now where military action and violence is becoming the way in which we seek to solve problems. That is unacceptable. Canada has always spoken for and must always speak for negotiated political solutions, and this is no exception. We have to make sure that we act in the best interest of civilians first. In this case, it is absolutely critical that the Azerbaijani government understand the importance of allowing humanitarian access to occur, of ensuring that humanitarian work is not prevented, as well as that civilians are protected and that this exodus that has been forced upon Armenians is stopped so that they can live in peace and security.

Military escalation is good for no one. It serves no purpose and adds no value at all. All it does is seek to cause further unrest in the world, which is already dealing with tremendous amounts of unrest. This is yet another deeply troubling global situation that we need to address.

Just yesterday, Canada took the step of announcing a new ambassador to Armenia. This is a strong commitment being shown to the region, to people on the ground and, in particular, to the Armenian community here. It says that we intend to stand firm in working toward peace in the region and that we are following developments occurring on the ground in the Lachin corridor not only from here but also with a team there that is going to be doing its part in ensuring that a diplomatic solution is preserved.

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We have voiced as a country, in public statements, social media and everywhere we possibly can, how important it is to have activities that underline confidence in the peace process and that allow Armenia and Azerbaijan to work toward a peaceful and comprehensive solution. We cannot live in a world where peaceful settlements are replaced by violence or where a government can enact aggression on civilian populations unchecked. It is unacceptable and the potential for genocide, violence and mass harm to civilians is something that cannot be understated or ignored. It is so important for us to take a strong position in favour of peace and make sure that Armenian Canadians hear and understand this unequivocally: Not only are we concerned about what is happening, but we also know we must be tireless in the efforts to find a negotiated political solution to what is happening in Nagorno-Karabakh. We need to make sure that the Lachin corridor remains open, that there is no threat of closure again, that humanitarian work can continue and that civilians can continue or at least begin again to live with some measure of peace.

• (1155)

These types of challenges that happen, although they may seem a world away for many of us, have a profound impact on diaspora communities and on the Armenian community here. It is really important for us to realize how important it is to remain in constant dialogue with that community here. They need to hear that this chamber and members of all parties understand the severity of the consequences of what is happening on the ground, the impact on their families and the potential impact on their community here. These dialogues must be met not only with profound compassion and understanding but also with a willingness and a desire to keep on the path of being an active player in the region and to keep being active in our engagement.

The thing we are hearing today and the magic, sometimes, of issues such as this is that it allows us all to come together to say that we must, as a country, keep on this course. I have been really gratified to see our minister and our ambassador speaking out to say how important it is for that engagement to occur and continue in a thoughtful way, so we can keep pushing the cause of negotiated settlements, of finding peace and of long-term permanent solutions.

The idea that every few months or years, a flare-up such as this one can cause profound humanitarian anxiety, civilian unrest and hardship to civilians is unacceptable. Global conflicts, small or large, require us to put our time, effort and energy into finding peace.

The 2020 ceasefire agreement calls on Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia to fulfill their obligations under the terms of that settlement. These obligations should not be taken lightly by anyone. They should not be taken as recommendations. These are requirements.

Our opportunity, as Canada, particularly now that there is a new ambassador who is going to be on the ground in place, is to remind people of the importance of this and to be actively engaged, as we are.

The idea of dialogue, of making sure we support the EU's work that is under way right now, is important. It is important for this House to send a unified message that, in fact, all Canadians believe

that the right answer is a negotiated settlement and that we are willing to support those who are doing the hard work of building peace.

The idea of humanitarian work, humanitarian aid and a humanitarian approach is critically important in our dealings with other governments and in how other governments need to think about the way in which they behave.

I have said this multiple times in this House and outside: There is no good that comes from governments attacking civilian populations. I think we would all agree on that. This is a case where, periodically and episodically, we see an ethnic population being attacked unnecessarily, with no reason and sometimes with the purported idea that they are fighting against terrorism or there is a desire to cleanse or to remove criminal elements. That is not on.

We know the reality of what is happening on the ground. We all see it, and we all understand it. We hear it from the Armenian community, as well as from the Azerbaijani community in Canada. They are deeply concerned about escalation in their country and their region, and they have the desire to be able to live in peace and security.

I heard from Armenians who live in my riding and Azerbaijanis who live in my community, who say unequivocally that they have a desire to see peace. They have a desire to see their region be peaceful, and they continue to have friendly relations here in Canada. They say how important it is for this to be communicated to that part of the world, how important it is for people on the ground in Armenia and Azerbaijan to see that these communities should and must be able to live in peace as neighbours.

There is much to be gained from Azerbaijan acting in a way that brings peace and from finding peace for the entire region and for the peoples who live there. These peoples seek one thing, which is to be able to live with peace, security and the capacity and the ability to be able to plan for the futures of their families.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague said that he was on the committee, and the Canadian government claims it wants to support Armenian democracy. However, the current situation is very worrying, as the current Armenian government has also lost all credit with the public. It lost in 2020 and has done virtually nothing since then. I would like my colleague to explain this unpleasant situation as far as Armenia is concerned.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that Canada has been working and continues to work for the country in the region. Yesterday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced the appointment of a new ambassador to continue this work on Canada's behalf. We will remain a partner for the country in the region.

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Clearly, the situation there today is very dangerous for the people in the region. It is very important for Canada to be a partner to the country and to continue the work it has already begun to achieve peace in the region.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question based on a very serious concern that has been shared with me by members of the Armenian community regarding Canada's openness to a review of the ban of drone technology. This technology was used in drones that Turkey provided to Azerbaijan, which targeted Armenians in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It is very concerning to Armenians, as well as members of the Greek community, my community, that Canada is reviewing this ban.

Does the member support keeping the ban in place on this technology, which we know was used for deadly drone activity, yes or no?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important that any time Canada is involved in anything related to the sale of arms, to arms agreements, etc., that they not be used outside the purpose for which they were intended or used to harm civilians.

I think we have to really think very carefully and act in a way that gives us confidence that what we are sharing, particularly with NATO partners, is not misused. We have an obligation to do everything we can to preserve civilian life.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member did not answer the last question that was asked.

The fact is, during the second Nagorno-Karabakh war, drone technology was vital to enabling the Azerbaijani aggression. That drone technology came from Canada. At the time, concerns were dismissed by the then foreign affairs minister, who said, "we're [just] talking about a few cameras". He said they were just a few old Polaroids. No, this was vital drone technology that was used.

I ask the member to answer the question: Does he agree with the former minister of foreign affairs that they are just a few cameras and no big deal, or does he think that it was a grave mistake for Canada to allow the export of this drone technology?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows very well that we have a strong policy related to our arms control. He also knows our position on Turkey vis-à-vis this issue. He knows the actions that we have taken in the past, and he knows that we have been unequivocal in that.

• (1205)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues for raising this important issue, which is deeply impacting the security of the Caucasus and Armenians in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

We have heard from the Armenian community, which has members all across the country and certainly also in my own riding of Ahuntsic-Cartierville. My heart and my thoughts are with them.

[*Translation*]

Of course, my heart and my thoughts are with members of the Armenian community in Ahuntsic-Cartierville and across the country, as the situation in Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and the Caucasus is extremely difficult.

[*English*]

We have been following this very closely, and we continue to call on Azerbaijan to stop the hostilities. The Lachin corridor must be reopened. There must be freedom of movement for humanitarian supplies and aid, and civilians must be protected.

We call on all parties involved in the 2020 ceasefire to fulfill their obligations. I raised this issue just this morning at the meeting of the OSCE and last week in the context of the UN General Assembly. I also raised the issue with the chair of the OSCE, North Macedonia, when I was in North Macedonia. I raised it with the president of the EU council, Charles Michel, when I was in Slovenia three weeks ago at the Bled convention, and I also raised it with Secretary Blinken last week.

This is an issue that is close to my heart and that is very important to the government. I have engaged with the government of Azerbaijan and with the government of Armenia, and later today I will be talking to my Armenian counterpart. Canada stands ready to continue supporting measures to stabilize the current situation as well as negotiations for a comprehensive peace treaty through the promotion of confidence-building measures around the principles of the non-use of force, territorial integrity and self-determination.

We firmly support a comprehensive negotiated political solution. The European Union is playing an important role to foster peace, and Canada is proud to support its work. We will be deploying Canadian experts to join the EU mission to support peace and security in the region, and we are also increasing our presence in the region, as we announced last summer. This is in line with the recommendations made by Stéphane Dion, the special envoy to the Prime Minister on this issue. Just yesterday, we announced the appointment of a new ambassador to Armenia, Andrew Turner. Mr. Turner is a seasoned diplomat who has spent his career developing a deep understanding of the region and of the realities of the Armenian people. I look forward to working with him as we support Armenian democracy and the Armenian people.

*Routine Proceedings**[Translation]*

In 2021 and 2022, Stéphane Dion, the Prime Minister's special envoy to the European Union and Europe, led a mission to explore options for Canada to better support Armenian democracy. His report, which was published in April 2022, contained 11 recommendations, including a recommendation that Canada continue to support Armenia's parliament and civil society. Since then, Canada has committed to establishing an embassy in Yerevan, which is now scheduled to open no later than the end of this year. Yesterday, we announced the name of our first ambassador to Armenia, Andrew Turner.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development for the diligence and commitment undertaken in their work. I will also mention the report that was tabled in the spring regarding the situation in the Lachin corridor. I would also like to refer to the response to the committee's report that my team and I issued in June.

I will be pleased to answer all questions from my colleagues in the House, since the issue of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh is one that I am following very closely.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has asserted the importance of the principle of non-aggression. Of course, we have seen significant aggression from the Azerbaijani government. I wonder what the minister thinks the appropriate response to that aggression is from the international community. Of course, we need to talk about human rights protection and humanitarian issues, but in terms of how we respond to aggression in order to deter future instances of aggression like this, what is the appropriate response in this case?

• (1210)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, of course, our colleague heard my speech, and we are calling for Azerbaijan to end its hostilities. At the same time, of course, we need to put pressure on the country to ensure the 2020 ceasefire agreement, which was based on three fundamental principles. The first one is the non-use of force, the second is territorial integrity and the third is making sure the principle of self-determination is respected. We call on the Azerbaijani government to respect the ceasefire. We will be working with the EU to make sure that we can implement the ceasefire and make sure that, on the ground, it is respected. That is why, for the first time in our history, Canada will be participating with the EU's monitoring mission on the ground.

As I have mentioned in the past, the issue is that Canada did not have any diplomatic presence in the region. Armenia was served out of our diplomatic mission in Moscow, and Azerbaijan out of our diplomatic mission in Turkey. We want to change that situation, because we need to make sure Canadian diplomats are able to assess what is going on on the ground, that they have ears and eyes in the region. That is why we are opening a new embassy in Armenia. We will continue to work with the EU, but we will also work with the U.S. and other like-minded partners on this issue.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her speech and her remarks. Her last answer suggests that Canada is going to enforce compliance with the ceasefire, reinstate the humanitarian corridor and so on. Based on the minister's last response, I gather that Canadian involvement on the ground may even be possible.

That is fine, but are any discussions in progress about imposing economic sanctions on Azerbaijan? Are any bilateral discussions under way with our European Union partners, among others? Can we expect such discussions to happen quickly?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, this is an important question. Concerning sanctions, we always try to act in co-operation with a number of other countries. Putting pressure on the country concerned is important. Everything is on the table, and sanctions are always a tool that can be highly effective.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I and the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie wrote to the minister last week when the escalation by the Azerbaijani government began. We asked her to sanction Azerbaijani officials who were responsible for tens of thousands of Armenians' fleeing their homes, fleeing for their safety, and who were responsible for the deaths of over 200 Armenian civilians and the escalation in violence.

We have not heard back from the minister about that letter, and I would like to hear directly from her whether or not she will be supporting the request by the NDP to put sanctions on those Azerbaijani officials responsible.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, of course, I value the opinion of my colleague, and of course I will be answering her letter, which I will read in the coming hours.

That being said, on the question of sanctions, which is the same question our colleague from the Bloc Québécois just asked, as I mentioned, everything is on the table.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Lethbridge.

What is going on in the Caucasus today is of grave and deep concern. Just over a century after a horrific genocide, the Armenian genocide of 1915-16, the world still has not learned from the lessons of the past. Just over a century later, we are witnessing a major humanitarian crisis unfold in Nagorno-Karabakh, in the western part of Azerbaijan. Tens of thousands, if not over 120,000, civilians are being slowly starved to death in that corridor because of the blockage of that corridor.

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The former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo, wrote a report recently in which he said, “There is an ongoing Genocide against 120,000 Armenians living in Nagorno- Karabakh”. That should raise alarm bells for all of us here in Canada, with Canada being a signatory to the 1948 genocide convention. Many people think of a genocide as an active, physical slaughter of innocent civilians, but the 1948 genocide convention contains many other reasons for an event's constituting a genocide. It can mean taking away children from a particular group. It can mean destroying the means of life for a particular group, either in part or in whole. It does not necessarily require mass killing.

By blocking the Lachin corridor, the Government of Azerbaijan is putting at risk the lives of some 120,000 civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh. They are putting at risk those lives through starvation, a silent killer. Starvation, in many respects, as Mr. Ocampo has written, “is the invisible Genocide weapon. Without immediate dramatic change, this group of Armenians will be destroyed in a few weeks.” This was written several weeks ago and should be of great concern to us.

The International Court of Justice has ordered Azerbaijan to remove the blockade. Instead, Azerbaijan has established a checkpoint on the road and has begun blockading even humanitarian aid being delivered by the International Committee of the Red Cross. The BBC has reported that people have been fainting in the bread lines. Other witness accounts have shown that people are slowly starving to death. However, because of world events, this humanitarian crisis in the Caucasus has gotten little attention.

The reason for today's concurrence debate in the House is to draw to the attention of the world the fact that this humanitarian crisis is unfolding and needs to stop. We call on the Government of Azerbaijan to immediately reopen the corridor, not just to humanitarian aid but also to passenger traffic and commercial traffic. We call on both sides in this conflict, the representatives of the Government of Baku and representatives of the community in Stepanakert, to immediately meet to sort out an agreement on transportation that would allow the corridor and alternative supply routes to reopen to ensure that food, medicine and other goods could flow into the region to ensure that 120,000 people are not slowly starved to death.

● (1215)

I want to finish my speech by delivering a message to both communities involved in this long-standing conflict. Canada was once a country where sectarian violence ruled the politics of the day. It was not that long ago, in the 19th century, that various sectarian elements in our society put forward their sectarian interests and used violence to advance their political causes.

It was not that long ago, in the mid-19th century, that Protestants and Catholics would be at each other's throats in a violent way, never co-operating on anything and, instead, using violence to advance their means, using discrimination and other forms of non-democratic tools to get their way and achieve their political ends. Thankfully, through a lot of hard work, dialogue, constitutional change and discussions that took place over many decades, we were able to leave that terrible time behind.

So too with the linguistic divide that once existed in this country between anglophones and francophones, we ultimately resolved our

differences through constitutional change and legislative changes that endure to this day. It has not always been perfect, as we see with the continued debates on language that take place here and at the provincial level.

Nevertheless, we have achieved a remarkable degree of social peace and cohesion in this country by moving beyond these sectarian and linguistic divides toward a Canada where people can achieve the good life and a resolution to their differences through democratic dialogue and not through the end of a sword. Such, I hope, will be the ultimate result for the peoples living in the South Caucasus in that part of the world. Such, I hope, will be the end result for Armenians living in Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis living throughout the region.

We call on the Government of Canada to be more categorical and clear with the international community on the need for Azerbaijan to lift the blockade to allow the free movement of goods, of people and of humanitarian aid. We call on the government to be more clear in calling on both parties, those in Stepanakert and those in Baku, to come together to iron out an agreement to allow the free movement of goods, people and humanitarian aid. We do that with a sense of urgency, because while this conflict has been going on for some time, it has become especially more urgent since Azerbaijan concluded its hostilities against Armenia a couple of years ago. I hope that in this time of conflict in Ukraine and other parts of the world, the world will not turn a blind eye a mere 107 years after another genocide took place in that part of the world.

For all those reasons, I call on the Government of Canada to use its diplomatic resources, to use its influence here and abroad, to deliver a clear message to the Government of Azerbaijan that this blockade of the Lachin corridor is completely unacceptable and that it is leading, in effect, to an ethnic cleansing through the means of a silent killer: starvation.

● (1220)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the member is aware, members have commented on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and the valuable role it plays in dealing with international issues, such as what we are debating today. In fact, this debate originated from a motion for concurrence on a report from a standing committee.

The question I have for the member is with respect to the committee itself and the makeup of the committee. I am interested in knowing his personal perspective. To what degree does he feel this particular standing committee continued to depoliticize some of these international issues to better reflect the values that Canadians hold when it comes to international affairs?

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• (1225)

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, the committee has been seized with the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh for some time, but the crisis has accelerated in intensity in the last several weeks as a result of an ever-tighter blockade of the Lachin corridor. This is a mountainous region of the world where there are not a lot of supply routes from the outside world into the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. One of the few supply routes into the region is the Lachin corridor, which has been blockaded by Baku authorities for some time. Russia, which is supposed to be the peacekeeper in this long-standing conflict, has not paid sufficient attention to what is going on and has failed to uphold its commitment to both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

As a result, the humanitarian crisis has accelerated. There are reports that up to a third of the 120,000 people living in Nagorno-Karabakh are malnourished and at risk of starvation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for his speech. I just want to say that, in all his interventions, he is generally a very moderate person, even though, from an international relations perspective, he has experienced his share of unpleasant situations, like threats from China, for example. I want to emphasize very strongly that he is a person I consider to be moderate and discerning.

Earlier, in his speech, the member for Montarville said that he could not understand why we were debating this urgent situation this morning. The offices of the member for Montarville and the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan were in discussions about bringing this issue up in committee again, so we are struggling to understand why it was so urgent to raise it this morning. That was not a great example of collaboration, and some of our colleagues were caught off guard.

I wonder if my very wise colleague could explain this situation to us.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I think what is happening right now in Nagorno-Karabakh is extremely serious. The matter is urgent, and I think we do have to discuss it in the House of Commons.

[*English*]

I think it is a grave enough issue to bring to the attention of the world through the floor of the House of Commons, which is why I support moving concurrence in this report. The crisis that has unfolded began late last year, with the Government of Azerbaijan blockading the Lachin corridor, but it has accelerated in recent weeks as the blockade has gotten ever tighter and as the reports of malnourishment have begun to leak out.

I will finish by saying this. When a former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Mr. Ocampo, says in a report, “There is an ongoing genocide against 120,000 Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh”, we need to listen and we need to act.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we heard, in the earlier comments from the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, conversations around procurement and drones in particular, talking about the destruction that they wrought

in the region. I think that procurement of military weapons is a very important question, and yet, when New Democrats brought a motion to the foreign affairs committee to finally fix the munitions act, section 11, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan voted against our amendment to the munitions act.

I am wondering if the hon. member would now like to reflect on the use of procurement and the collateral damage that is wrought by cluster munitions that could potentially be wrought in the region.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I will just briefly say that Canada has to balance our approach with upholding our commitments to the NATO alliance, particularly in joint operations that involve NATO allies that may not be a signatory to that particular treaty.

• (1230)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sobriety that I stand in the House today to discuss the issue with regard to the ongoing conflict that is taking place with the Azeris going after the Armenians who reside within the Nagorno-Karabakh region. We are receiving news day by day of grave atrocities that are being committed at the hands of the Azeris. There are people who are starving. There are people who have lost their lives. There are people who desperately need medicine and are not being granted that. There are individuals who are separated from other loved ones because of this conflict.

This conflict, of course, has gone on for quite some time, but most recently its intensity has heightened to a significant extent. Therefore, it is with that heightened crisis that my colleagues and I stand in the House today and advocate on behalf of the people of Armenia for peace to be restored to the region. It is our belief that Canada, as a peacekeeper, does have an important role to play in a diplomatic regard, and so it is to that end that we stand today in this place and advocate.

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in this region of Nagorno-Karabakh has a long history. Two major wars have been fought just within the last three decades, so it is not without its complications or many different angles to be considered. However, at the end of the day, the thing that must be accounted for is the fact that there are innocent people residing within this region who are being put in harm's way and being prevented from being able to access the necessities of life, and that must weigh heavily on the conscience of every single member of Parliament.

I had the opportunity to travel to Armenia in 2017 and to see first-hand some of the conflict that has taken place in the past and that is taking place now. Of course, in 2017, things were very different than they are now. I would never dream of going into this particular region at this point in time, but when I went in 2017, there was certainly a military presence, both from the Armenian side and from the Azerbaijan side, and I had the opportunity to actually walk that military line and see the separation, the topography and geography, and how this is all situated.

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More important, I not only had the opportunity to see that, but I had the opportunity to visit with the people of the region and to hear their stories of wanting to preserve their language, their way of life and their culture, and wanting to be respected for that. I heard the stories of people who have gone through one atrocity after another and who have been proponents of peace. Unfortunately, the other side, Azerbaijan, does not want to grant that to them, so those folks who live within the specific region of Nagorno-Karabakh are forever living in this place of unsettledness, unrest and fear.

During my time there, I had the opportunity to go into several homes. These were not homes where people were living; they were actually homes that had been vacated. The reason they had been vacated was that they were on the line where war had taken place. I can remember explicitly walking into one home and there were actually pictures hanging on the wall. There were two photographs that caught my attention, and there were actually a couple of drawings done by children; they were coloured in. It was evident that a family had lived here. There were beds with old mattresses and there were still a few plates and different necessities within the kitchen. Other than that, it was largely vacated. As I wandered through the home, I entered into one room where there was actually a bloodstain on the floor and blood spatter on the wall, which was stained there. I asked my guide what had taken place and he went on to tell me that there was in fact a family that had lived in this home and this family was actually attacked. They were an innocent civilian family, but unfortunately resided in a region that Azerbaijan wanted to control.

● (1235)

As a result of that, life was lost. As a result of that, a house was turned into wreckage. As a result of that, the remaining individuals within this family who survived the attack, though there was loss of life, were displaced and moved into another region of Armenia where they would be safer.

For these folks to live in this type of upheaval, to live in this type of fear and to exist in such a state, is not okay. For Canada to stand idle and remain quiet on this matter is also not okay. We cannot find ourselves silent. If we do, I fear that we are then perhaps siding with the enemy.

It is important for us to speak out on behalf of those individuals who are innocent and on behalf of those individuals who simply want to live a good life, preserve their language, culture and way of being, and be respected and honoured within their historic homeland. That right is currently being robbed from them.

There was a peace agreement that came about. In fact, there was a peace agreement, but then it was called off, and then there was another peace agreement, but that was called off. This is the history of the region. What is so grave about what is taking place right now is the fact that Azerbaijan is going into this region and attacking innocent civilians. Azerbaijan has blocked access to necessities such as food, medicine and the movement of people.

The reason this matters is because these individuals are not there taking up weapons of war. Rather, they are simply trying to exist and live a peaceful life. They want their children to go to school. They want to own businesses and to be able to pay their bills. They want to be able to sow seed into the ground and reap a harvest.

These are normal individuals who are looking to live life, but due to the disruptions within the region and the attacks coming from Azerbaijan, these folks are being put in peril's way.

Again, I would plead with the House that, sure, Canada could just sit on its hands, allow for this to transpire, allow for the loss of life to take place and allow for these folks to no longer be able to enjoy life, or the House could make a statement to advocate for these individuals and advocate that their freedom be restored and their homelands be honoured.

Of course, I am advocating that we do this in a very diplomatic way, but nevertheless, diplomacy and inaction are not the same thing. They are not synonymous. I would argue that right now, Canada is simply existing in a realm of inaction, but we have an opportunity to change course. My fear is that, if we do not do something, we will have a repeat of what happened 107 years ago when the Armenian people found themselves at the hands of a genocide.

We are already being warned by experts that this is where this is going. This is headed in the direction of annihilating a people group, which is genocide. Based on that evidence, based on those experts who are taking intel from the ground and feeding it to us at the House of Commons, I would plead with those in this place that now is the time to act. We should not allow for loss of life to ensue so much so that we are finally compelled to act, but rather out of a place of deep love, respect and honour, out of a desire for peace, and out of honour for our legacy as a country that is known for peacekeeping and peacemaking.

I would plead with those in the House that we agree to take action and that we agree to engaging in diplomatic conversations about what it takes to establish peace. I would ask that the House go so far as to consider sanctions because action must be taken. Innocent lives are at risk, and Canada does not stand for that.

● (1240)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member will recall that, not that long ago, perhaps about an hour or so, the Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke. I think it is fairly clear what the government is prepared to do. My question is in regard to the process. The previous question I asked was in regard to the value of the foreign affairs committee.

Does the member recognize that the foreign affairs committee has done a great deal of work on this issue? It seems to me the committee had no sense this was going to be coming up for debate today.

Would she not agree that, as a common courtesy, the foreign affairs membership should have been at least told about what was going to happen today because they have been so deeply engaged on the issue?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the member is coming after me based on a procedural matter when there are lives at stake. There are civilians who are at risk of losing their lives and others who have already lost their lives. I am curious if the hon. member would like to comment on the action his government might take concerning this crisis.

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[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, no one is disputing the fact that Canada should be more vocal in denouncing what is happening right now in Nagorno-Karabakh, but I keep coming back to the same question. I have to wonder about the relevance of proposing this debate today, when we were supposed to be discussing housing and inflation.

My colleague was just talking about the deaths in Nagorno-Karabakh. I am sorry, but 10,000 homeless people have been identified across Quebec in the past year. Winter is coming, which means there will be deaths in Quebec too. I know there are people experiencing homelessness in Toronto, Vancouver and across Canada. People will die if we do not take firm action to deal with this crisis.

Does my colleague really think that today is the best time to talk about this issue?

[English]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, I will return the question. If today is not a good time to talk about the potential of a genocide, when is a good time to talk about it? Would there be a more convenient time for the member?

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as was highlighted earlier, given the escalation of events that have taken place in the past week, and the seriousness of this issue, my colleague talked about the need for action. She highlighted, at the very end of her speech, taking action with respect to applying sanctions against Azerbaijani officials. Does she support the NDP's call to apply sanctions against Azerbaijani officials and to take action with respect to what was reflected in her speech? Will the Conservatives support our call for action?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, our focus would be to ask the government to take action regarding the diplomatic relationship we have with Armenia. We would engage in dialogue with Azerbaijan on Armenia's behalf. We would advocate for humanitarian aid to make its way into the region of Nagorno-Karabakh and that the corridor be opened, so people could flow freely and goods can come in so that people could eat and folks could access necessary medicines. Those are the things we would be advocating for.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the procedural aspects of this debate are way at the bottom of the list, but I want to briefly mention them in the context of a comment. It is my understanding that other parties in this case were informed of our intention to move this concurrence debate. Respectfully, there have been instances in the past where other parties have been informed that there was a problem with the information getting to the members who work on the file, but we can hardly be held accountable for those challenges.

We put forward this concurrence motion at one of the earliest possible opportunities following the government's response. We believed it was an important issue to discuss as soon as possible, and we moved to bring it forward at one of the earliest possible opportunities because of the urgency of the situation.

• (1245)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, I will allow my hon. colleague to leave his comments there.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

I will be speaking to this motion for concurrence on the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. Some people tuning in right now or who have been following this debate may want to know where this place is. It is north of Iran. It is an area north of Iran, south of Russia, and in between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. I do not know if that helps, but it is a landlocked region populated by ethnic Armenians who have lived in this region for many hundreds of years. It is a semi-autonomous enclave within Azerbaijan, which is next to Armenia. A lot of that was formed politically during the time of the USSR, or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. There is a long history not only of people living there, but also of tensions, and hopefully solutions.

As of late, there have been thousands of ethnic Armenians fleeing Nagorno-Karabakh for Armenia because of hostilities and the pressures they have been facing in this region from the Azerbaijani military. There have been some bombardments. There has been a degradation of the United Nations peacekeeping forces there. This has caused some real instability.

There was a ceasefire agreement that officials agreed to, which was to dissolve their armed forces. The Armenians had backed up this area so that they could fight to protect themselves. They have agreed to disarm themselves to the Azerbaijani military because it has military superiority there. That essentially means they are sitting ducks. They are helpless. They are in a terrible situation. That is why we are bringing this up as a motion to debate right now. It is important.

I have heard different members from the other parties make suggestions about discussing this or that, as there are many issues of importance to debate. We can talk about many issues in the House. Right now, this is an opportunity to focus on a very serious situation that is happening in the world where many Canadians have connections to. They may come from the region, and they are very concerned.

There are also a lot of geopolitical problems. Iran is backing up Armenia. Russia is there, and there are a number of other nations. This has the potential to really explode beyond what the situation is right now, so it is important that we have this discussion and that Canada is at the plate to bring it forward, not necessarily long-term solutions, but things to help the situation.

There has been a humanitarian crisis and an influx of refugees. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh has a long history with two major wars being fought in the past three decades. Azerbaijan regained control of a significant part of this region in 2020 after a conflict. There was an agreement that Nagorno-Karabakh would cede the control of a lot of the villages around the main population of the city. That was an agreement between the Russians, the Azerbaijani and Armenia, with peacekeepers also being brought in.

There has been a renegeing of that agreement, which is causing some real serious problems. The number of displaced people is increasing and efforts to provide humanitarian aid and shelter for those people are being seriously affected. The situation highlights the challenges faced by refugees and internally displaced persons not only in that region but also worldwide. We have seen that also in Ukraine, with the invasion by Russia, where there have been many displaced people and many refugees. This is a terrible situation.

● (1250)

Canada is one of the most multi-ethnic, multicultural nations on this planet, so all these connections impact our nation.

The recent conflict has resulted in casualties, and there are concerns about the well-being of the Armenian population. The exodus highlights, and we have seen pictures of the thousands of people fleeing this region and all the cars lined up, the need for humanitarian assistance and protection.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has successfully negotiated a humanitarian consensus to deliver essential aid to the Nagorno-Karabakh region on September 18. It is one thing for people and nations to say one thing and it is another thing for them to actually do it, which is the concern on the implementation of the agreement.

Right now, there is a very dire situation. There is a lack of basic necessities getting through. Essentials like food, hygiene products and medical items are being rationed. Essentially, this area is under siege. What is a siege? Going back throughout history, a siege is when a region, a castle or an area is cut-off from being able to provide for itself.

This region is now under a siege warfare, which essentially has the purpose of having them surrender. The purpose is to have the people leave the ancestral area they have lived in for many hundreds of years for Azerbaijan. That is of great concern.

This is a very hilly area. As I mentioned earlier, it is a landlocked area. There is essentially one major road to get through, and that is called the Lachin corridor. In the past year or so, it has been very difficult to get humanitarian aid and medical supplies through. As the Conservative member for Wellington—Halton Hills mentioned, about one-third of the population is malnourished and at risk of starvation. There actually have been cases of starvation in this area. It is imperative we open up this corridor for food and medical supplies so people can freely provide for themselves. While looking at other alternative routes is fine, right now this is really the only viable solution as far as providing aid and assistance.

There are military tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We are right now on the cusp of seeing military action moving in, where there could be many thousands of deaths. It was not that long ago the Armenia population, the majority residing in this region, underwent a serious genocide. Over a million Armenians were killed or sent on death marches throughout the region. They just fell dead from exhaustion or malnutrition. This is in the recent past.

Our concern is not hypothetical. Our concern is the potential of another genocide happening in this area. We do not want to see this.

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We are calling on the federal government to exert pressure and to collaborate with others to open this corridor, and not just to be a silent partner. It is fine to say the words, but we call on it to be involved in order to see this corridor open, to see resolution and to allow the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to have self-determination.

● (1255)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the process that ultimately led us to having this debate at this time is very questionable. I will put that to the side right now, because the seriousness of the issue does deserve it. I will amplify what I believe, and the member has made reference to it, is the Lachin corridor's impact on communities. This is a very important connection. The impact of these obstructions causes so much harm, whether it is the potential of starvation or other significant things happening in communities because of the closing down of this corridor.

I am wondering if the member can provide his thoughts in regard to his constituents. This is very much about what we find with respect to Canadians values, that Canadians want parliamentarians to recognize when we see human rights being violated and have those discussions. This is one of the reasons we have a standing committee on foreign affairs. It is so policies and thoughts can be developed based on our values as a Canadian society, rule of law, freedoms and so forth, which are being limited in a very serious way overseas.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Speaker, we are hearing a different tone from the member, which is appreciated. Up to this point, he has been saying that we should not be talking about this or that, or that we are wasting time.

I do hear from constituents from various backgrounds. Canada is a peace-loving, democratic nation that wants to see the rule of law, that wants see people enjoying freedom and not being malnourished or ill-treated.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we come to the end of the debate, it is important to underline the importance of this topic and the importance of responding to what various experts have called a genocide, according to the international definition, recognizing Canada's obligations to respond, and also the importance of not brushing off international aggression.

I asked the foreign affairs minister earlier what Canada's response to this aggression was. She said that we would keep telling Azerbaijan not to do it. That clearly is not having the desired effect.

Therefore, I wonder if the member could share further comments on what the Government of Canada needs to do, if it is really serious about defending human rights and upholding our obligations under the genocide convention and about protecting people in this incredibly challenging and vulnerable situation.

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Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Speaker, one thing the government should make clear is that there is a right to self-determination. That has already been discussed and agreed to in the past, and it seems to have been put on the back burner. It is important to recognize that there are some very significant differences between the people in this enclave and the rest of Azerbaijan. They are different. They are Armenian; they are of a more Indo-European background as opposed to Turkic. They are Christian as opposed to Shiite Muslim. There are major differences. In some ways, the Russian government initially kept these different regions off kilter and off balance. We need to encourage provision and be an active part in international forums for the right of self-determination.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague from Winnipeg North. Let us drop the debate on the relevance of today's motion. I think we have talked about it enough since this morning.

However, the answers have not been clear. Essentially, Canada is a small player on the international stage. Something very serious is happening right now in Nagorno-Karabakh. What response would have a real impact on the Armenian people there?

How could we respond now, today? What can we actually do, here in the House, to improve the situation of the Armenian people there?

• (1300)

Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois member made a good point when he said that Canada is a small player, and I think that is really terrible. Our country is becoming more and more of a small player. Because of the Liberals and their international policies, we are in this sad and embarrassing situation and we lack power. We are losing power and influence, and that really needs to change. If we were to show leadership on this issue, it may slightly improve our influence on the world stage.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is on the motion. If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, we would like to have a recorded division on this.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until later this day at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

PETITIONS

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to present a petition that was signed by constituents of

Haldimand—Norfolk and Canadians across the country. There are 18,973, almost 20,000, Canadians from every provinces and territory who have signed this petition.

The petition addresses the changes to the international health regulations of the World Health Organization, which is the legally-binding rules that govern the conduct of nations when it comes to responding to public health events and emergencies, such as pandemics.

Understanding that since this petition was signed, further changes were made to the international health regulations this summer, the petitioners are still concerned that the proposed expansion of the World Health Organization's powers and authorities could have far-reaching impacts on health care, sovereignty and the lives and human rights of Canadians.

The petitioners are calling for an urgent parliamentary debate on the international health regulations amendments and on the World Health Organization pandemic treaty, which is due to be signed in May 2024.

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition from Canadians who are concerned about the right to protect Canadian citizens against discrimination. The petitioners acknowledge that Canadians can and do face political discrimination and that it is a fundamental Canadian right to politically be active and vocal.

It is in the best interest of Canadian democracy to protect public debate and the exchange of differing ideas. Bill C-257 seeks to add protection against political discrimination to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

The petitioners are therefore calling on the House to support Bill C-257, which would ban discrimination on the basis of political belief or activity, and defend the rights of Canadians to peacefully express their political opinions.

OCEAN ECOSYSTEM

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to table this petition on behalf of constituents from my riding in Parksville, Qualicum Beach, Courtenay and Cumberland.

Canadians care deeply about the health of the ocean and depend on a thriving ocean ecosystem. However, in 2019, over one million cruise ship passengers travelled off of British Columbia on their way to Alaska.

The petitioners cite that Canada's regulations under the Canada Shipping Act addressing the discharge of sewage and grey water are much less stringent than those in U.S. Pacific coastal states and that Canada permits sewage to be discharged with 18 times greater fecal coliform counts than does Alaska, which has an impact on the shellfish industry. The Salish Sea in Washington State is a no-discharge zone prohibiting the discharge of sewage in order to protect public health, water quality and sensitive marine resources.

The petitioners want to see that happen in British Columbia. They want set standards for cruise ship sewage and grey water discharges, designated no-discharge zones to stop pollution in marine protected areas and require a regular, independent, third-party monitoring while ships are under way to ensure discharge requirements are met.

• (1305)

OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to represent the extraordinary population of Saanich—Gulf Islands in presenting a petition that deals with a convergence of a number of really critical issues facing Canada today: issues of indigenous reconciliation, the climate crisis and our forests. Petitioners note the linkages here, that respect for indigenous peoples and their territorial sovereignty should lead us to greater protection of a key part of the carbon cycle and carbon sequestration, which is old-growth forests.

They call on the Government of Canada and provincial governments to recognize these linkages; to act with urgency to protect old-growth forests for their repositories of biodiversity, for storage of carbon and in recognition of indigenous sovereignty; and with indigenous management of lands recognized by levels of government as part of reconciliation, to act to preserve old-growth forests, stop their logging and move more urgently to address the climate crisis.

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand today to offer this petition that really adds protection against political discrimination. It is based on a private member's bill from my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Petitioners call upon the House of Commons to support Bill C-257, which would ban discrimination on the basis of political belief or activity. This is especially important in Canada today. They also call upon the House to defend the rights of Canadians to peacefully express their political opinions.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. Petitioners are calling for a change to the way CRA recognizes partner separations. As it stands, former partners who continue to reside at the same residence are still recognized as couples, which can affect benefit eligibility, especially in cases where children may be involved.

With housing costs continuing to skyrocket under the current government, many Canadians have no choice but to continue to reside in their former partner's home. Therefore, petitioners are calling on the Minister of National Revenue to instruct the CRA to modernize its definition of a common-law partnership to recognize that some former couples may remain at the same residence after separation.

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to present a

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number of petitions to the House today on behalf of my constituents. The first is in support of an excellent private member's bill, Bill C-257, which I have proposed.

The bill would seek to add political belief and activity as prohibited grounds of discrimination under the Canadian Human Rights Act. Petitioners note the ongoing and growing problem of people facing discrimination on the basis of their political views. People who have faced discrimination on the basis of other factors, such as religion, sexual orientation, ethnic background, etc., can seek remedy through the Canadian Human Rights Act, but a person who faces discrimination based on their political views cannot.

Bill C-257 seeks to change that by adding a new protection to the Human Rights Act on the basis of political belief. Petitioners, in addition to calling on the House to support this bill, call on the House to defend the rights of Canadians to peacefully express their political opinions.

• (1310)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am tabling deals with immigration from Hong Kong. In particular, it concerns people who have offences against them in association with their work for the democracy movement, who essentially have been charged by Hong Kong's politicized judiciary simply as a political tool for silencing them. Those charges could lead to their ability to immigrate or otherwise come to Canada being negatively affected.

The petitioners note that on many occasions, peaceful protesters in Hong Kong have been charged and convicted of penal offences through a judiciary that is neither impartial, fair nor free and that the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act renders foreign nationals who have committed or been convicted of a foreign offence outside of Canada inadmissible on grounds of criminality.

The petitioners are calling on the government to change that, to recognize the politicization of the judiciary in Hong Kong, to affirm a commitment to render all national security law charges and convictions irrelevant and invalid in relation to section 36 of IRPA. They are also calling on the government to create a mechanism by which Hong Kong people with pro-democracy-movement-related convictions may provide an explanation for such convictions, on the basis of which the government can grant appropriate exemptions.

Government Orders

The petitioners also want to see the government work with like-minded allies, such as our Five Eyes partners, France and other democracies, to waive criminal inadmissibility of Hong Kong people convicted for political purposes who otherwise do not have a criminal record.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition I am tabling raises concern about proposals the government has put forward to apply a values test to charitable status determination, another prospective instance of political discrimination. The petitioners want to see the government protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis, without discrimination on the basis of political or religious values and without the imposition of another values test.

The petitioners note the importance of charitable organizations' being able to do their work without being discriminated against in their ability to have that charitable status simply because the leaders or members of that organization may hold particular views on particular political or social issues.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition I will table today is about proposals for the legalization of euthanasia for children. The petitioners find these proposals deeply disturbing and call on the Government of Canada to block and oppose any attempt to legalize the killing of children in such cases in Canada.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fifth and final petition I will be tabling today is on the ongoing persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in the PRC. Petitioners explain that Falun Gong is a traditional Chinese spiritual discipline that consists of meditation exercises and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance. They note that since 1999, the Communist Party has launched a brutal campaign of repression against Falun Gong practitioners that has included organ harvesting.

The petitioners ask the government to speak out more on the persecution of Falun Gong and to take additional steps to combat this violence and persecution.

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present to the House today.

The first petition I am presenting is from numerous petitioners across Canada. They refer to the tripling of the carbon tax on home heating because, after eight years of inflationary spending by the Liberal government, Canadians must decide whether they want to heat their home or put food on their table.

The petitioners are calling on the government to cancel the tripling of the carbon tax on home heating, to ensure that there are no new taxes on Canadians and to ensure that Canadians and their families, homes and paycheques are being put first.

• (1315)

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am presenting today refers to comments made by Louis Roy from the Quebec college of physicians, recommending the expansion of euthanasia to babies from birth to one year of age who come into this world with severe deformities and very serious syndromes.

The petitioners believe that this proposal for the legalized killing of infants in Canada is deeply disturbing and wrong. They call on the Government of Canada to block any attempt to legalize the killing of children.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND GROCERIES ACT

The House resumed from September 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-56, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Competition Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be able to rise to speak to a very important piece of legislation. Bill C-56 is actually a reflection of many discussions that have been held throughout our communities, in virtually every community throughout the country from coast to coast to coast. In particular, I know my colleagues have been listening to what their constituents have been saying, and we have some very serious issues on which we need to work together in order to overcome them. The types of issues this bill is dealing with are things such as inflation and interest rates, indirectly if not directly. The bill specifically deals with issues like housing and competition. In order to ensure that there is a sense of stability, it deals with issues like groceries and how we have seen the rise and drop, though mostly the rise, in grocery prices.

I would argue that while some members, in particular the Conservatives, will focus their attention on being critical of personalities, the government and the members of the national Liberal caucus are very much focused on what is hurting Canada today and on listening to what Canadians have to say. That is what this bill is all about.

Just a few moments ago, I was reconfirming some headlines. One of them dealt with a developer who was saying that he was going to be moving toward building 5,000 new rental units because of the GST forgiveness, which is actually in this legislation. It is a bit dependent, as the developer is hoping to see provinces join and follow suit in terms of what the federal government is doing. We have actually seen a number of provinces do that. I believe that at the end of the day, in good part because of this legislation, we will see thousands and thousands of new homes being constructed.

We can think in terms of the issue of grocery prices and inflation and how much these are hurting the pocketbooks of Canadians. In the last budget, we created the grocery rebate for Canadians. Somewhere in the neighbourhood of 11 million Canadians were affected by that particular policy, through which we were able to put money into the pockets of Canadians to help alleviate the issue of inflation, in particular with respect to groceries.

In September, following the caucus discussion, the Prime Minister made a presentation about the importance of things like the Competition Act, of holding those who sell our groceries accountable, and the idea of bringing the big five, for example, before the minister and before the government, in one sense to hold them more accountable and to put in some deadlines. We want to see more stability in that area from Costco, Walmart, Loblaw's, Metro and Sobeys, which are the big five. I understand that just over 80% of grocery sales in Canada are through those five large companies. The minister and government laid down the expectations of the government. Stability in pricing is of great importance, and this legislation would help deal with the issue. The Competition Act is something that can have an impact.

• (1320)

There was a time when people would say that bigger is better; they would use the argument of efficiency. That argument does not sell anymore. We need to ensure that there is more accountability and transparency; it is not good enough to stand by and watch consumers being gouged. We are very sensitive to the issue of inflation.

If we look at it, and there is the odd little heckle or murmur from the Conservatives, at the end of the day, it would be easy to say that Canada is doing exceptionally well on inflation, which is true. We understand that people are still suffering from the impacts of inflation, and that is why we have taken measures, not only in this legislation but also in other legislation and in budgetary measures that have been brought before the House.

We can understand and appreciate what people have to go through. This legislation is a reflection of what we are hearing. We are responding to the needs of the people of Canada. We will continue to focus on the policy changes necessary to help and have the backs of Canadians. We have done this through the pandemic, up to this point, and, I would ultimately argue, since we formed government back in 2015.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, beyond the ridiculous nature of how the member opposite goes on about the inflationary crisis that the Liberals caused, we know very clearly that many farmers in rural Canada rely on tem-

Government Orders

porary foreign workers to help do their work. They build accommodations for those workers.

Will those farmers qualify for the GST rebate on the housing they build for temporary foreign workers?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize, as I started to say in my beginning comments on the issue last night, that when we look at housing, the Liberal government has supported housing as no other government in generations has.

We have done that through a national housing strategy. We have seen it through billions of dollars of investments in housing. We see it in the legislation that we have before us today and in our co-operation with different stakeholders, including provinces, territories and indigenous leaders. All this is an attempt to take a team Canada approach to dealing with the housing crisis that we have today.

This legislation would enable thousands of new homes to be constructed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with regard to housing, we approved the housing accelerator fund as part of budget 2022. It is a \$4-billion program to help the municipalities.

It is strange because this program is called the housing accelerator fund, but not a single penny has been spent in Quebec after a year and a half. I think that the Liberal government has not yet found the program's gas pedal. We learned that negotiations have stalled and that \$900 million that could be used to house the less fortunate in Quebec are stuck in Ottawa. From what we have heard about the negotiations, Quebec wants to focus more on housing, but Ottawa is talking about municipalities, infrastructure, cost estimates and zoning, when it should be focusing on building real housing.

Could my colleague tell us the status of the negotiations with the Government of Quebec with regard to that \$900 million?

• (1325)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what can be found over the last years is that there have been a number of housing programs, whether they were the enhancements through budgetary measures in 2022 in regard to housing co-ops, the ongoing hundreds of millions to support non-profit housing units, the rapid housing initiative or the legislation that we have before today.

For the first time we have a national government that is not only taking an interest but has also actually invested. A part of that is the housing accelerator fund. In good part, we have to work with the jurisdictions. It is not that Ottawa is one large ATM that just pushes out money.

Government Orders

At the end of the day, it is important for us to recognize that we need to work with different levels of government. We have seen many projects taken up and moved forward in that fund. I would hope that all provinces—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. The member actually mentioned the program for co-ops in budget 2022. As it stands right now, not one penny has rolled out of that budget measure. In fact, there is not even an agreement with the co-op sector to roll that money out.

Aside from that, with respect to this bill, why did the government explicitly exclude co-ops from accessing the exemption for the GST in the bill?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I believe the first part of what the member said, because on the second part, the co-ops are exempt already. They do not need to be exempted, from what I understand, because they are currently exempt. If I am wrong, I would apologize. Equally, if the member is wrong, will she stand up and apologize?

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we follow up on the question from the member for Vancouver East. On the point about the co-op housing funding from budget 2022, none of those funds have rolled out yet. When the member for Winnipeg North speaks about investments in housing, a really critical point is that investments in housing are not meant to be a one-off. Back in the 1980s, it used to be that co-op housing received investments every single year to build the affordable dignified housing we need.

Will the member champion continued funding for co-op housing every year?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I have always been and will always be an advocate for housing co-ops. This even goes back to prior to my being elected in 1988.

In regard to the GST for the expansion of new units, I believe housing co-ops are, in fact, exempt from it. If I am wrong, I would apologize to the member. I hope the member for the New Democratic Party would do the same and apologize if she is wrong.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after the solemn Yom Kippur holiday yesterday, as a Jewish parliamentarian and one who represents the largest Jewish riding in the country, before I speak to the matter today, I will address what happened in this place last Friday: a full-blown international embarrassment for our Parliament and for our country. A Nazi was invited to this House, welcomed and celebrated as a hero. I will say what nobody has said. Nobody from the government has said this: This man is not a hero. He is a monster, and he had no business being here. We will never accept collective responsibility for that. It is not anybody's dishonour to bear except for the government, which is responsible for allowing him in this chamber.

Yesterday, we observed Yom Kippur. It was the miracle of repentance. I will add this one thing, because I think it is important: It is not that we just start a new page; we also look back at the past and reflect on what happened. As I prayed and fasted, I thought about

my ancestors who prayed and fasted throughout the Holocaust, through the hunger, fear and risk of death. They kept their faith. They needed to show God that, despite being locked in hell, they were still capable of singing his praises. Such people as the one honoured in this House forced them into that hell. It is particularly troubling to me, as somebody with family members who lived on the eastern front in Ukraine. It is not trauma or pain; it is actually anger that has deepened, knowing that nobody in a position of power did anything about it.

I hope my colleagues listened carefully to that. I will turn to the matter at hand today, because I would like to move to the conversation on the floor. It is an important one.

Bill C-56 is a nice try at some new legislation but, ultimately, as the saying goes, “too little, too late”. Right off the top, I want to make clear that the government should have started building houses eight years ago, not today, two years in the future, four years in the future, eight years in the future or never. The government's inaction is actually the root of the housing crisis that we are debating today, which they woke up and had an epiphany about after a summer of bad polling.

For example, last year our population grew by 1.3 million people. We built 286,000 homes. Where did the extra million people go? If we take that times eight years under the Prime Minister, we can see why the price of a home has nearly doubled to \$900,000. We can see why the cost has doubled and why the average monthly mortgage payment has grown, in my neck of the woods, to over \$3,000 a month. That is what happens when the government is asleep at the wheel for nearly a decade and when government members did not prioritize construction, when they wake up after a summer of bad polling and decide that now is the time to do something about housing, when they add more red tape instead of cutting it and when they raise taxes instead of lowering them. That is what the government is doing to everyday Canadians.

Bill C-56 is a perfect representation of the Liberal-NDP failure on housing, because its central promise of ending GST on construction of rental housing is a promise they made six years ago. Here we are, eight years later, and the reality is that a house will take a lot of time to build. Endless paperwork needs to be completed, and workers need to be hired somewhere.

I also have to split my time with the member for Chilliwack—Hope.

The reality is that, because it takes so much time to build homes, this is too little, too late. One cannot snap one's fingers and expect to have a million homes sitting, ready to sell. Neither can the problem be solved by telling people that it just does not exist, although that is what we heard from them for almost eight years.

Government Orders

● (1330)

We saw finger pointing. The last minister's parting gift to Canadians was an op-ed in a national newspaper saying that none of this was his fault. In fact, they got the guy who actually lost a million people in the portfolio before that to become housing minister, to fix housing in this country. All of these things that are part of the Liberals' strategy on housing seem to be based in magical thinking.

What is more, we cannot change the inflation in Canada, affordability in Canada and interest rates in Canada, all the things that we are trying to address, without changing the fundamental framework, things like government spending, raising taxes, bigger bureaucracy and outright waste on consultants, and on apps that do not work and that nobody uses. The list is endless.

This government's endless tax-and-spend leads to record deficits that lead to higher inflation, which means higher interest rates. That means higher mortgages, higher costs to borrow and higher everything for Canadians struggling to keep a roof over their head, food on the table and gas in their car.

Without fixing that, we cannot do anything here. We will not actually make peoples' lives affordable unless the Liberals want to steal those ideas too.

By the way, all of these ideas are stolen ideas. One of them exists in our colleague's private member's bill. The other one was announced that same day.

It is going to take an actual new plan and a government that realizes that there is a problem, not one that tells us how it is doing on the world stage and that everything is fine and that Canadians have never had it so good.

That is what we hear from the benches opposite, except in a mild reprieve when they realize that, hey, maybe there is a problem, maybe Canadians are struggling and maybe it is their own caucus that is finally telling their Prime Minister that the summer they had in their ridings was probably the opposite of what they have been saying right here in the House.

This is going to take an entirely new plan. It is going to take entirely new ministers and it is going to take an entirely new government and hopefully a Conservative majority government after the next election.

Here are our ideas. It will not take long. Here are our ideas on housing and how to make it more affordable in Canada.

We need to drastically increase the pace of homebuilding by cutting red tape and removing gatekeepers to stop construction that raises prices, and encourage municipalities to put shovels in the ground with incentives and building bonuses for their top performers.

We also said that we would sell off 15% of government buildings to create the much-needed apartment housing in our biggest city centres, and, of course, we will end the carbon tax and the war on work, to lower the price of materials and labour that we need to actually build.

The Liberal plan on all of this is to have a bunch of meetings with bureaucrats in fancy suits, issue a press release, maybe issue a

press release calling for another meeting, reward bad behaviour with an endless supply of money with no strings attached, blame everything on Stephen Harper, we cannot forget that, and tell Canadians that their taxes need to be higher and that, again, they have never had it so good.

One cannot understand the extent of the problem that lies ahead if one does not think there is a problem at all. According to a recent report, we need to build 3.5 million more housing units on top of what we are already projected to build and we need to build it all by 2030.

I would like to ask Canadians who they trust to bring home those homes, who they trust to make life more affordable and affordable housing more attainable, more of what got us here or a bold plan to actually get costs down?

The cost of inaction is clear. That is why we are having this debate. That is why they rushed this legislation right through the House after a summer of brutal polling and constituents telling them that they have had enough.

● (1335)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am curious. At the end of her speech, my colleague said that we need 3.5 million housing units by 2030. It is almost 2024. That is a lot to accomplish in just six years.

I listened to my colleague, but I am not sure that we are going to meet that goal by providing the municipalities with rebates or bonuses to encourage them to build more. That measure alone is not going to get 3.5 million housing units built in Canada in the next six years. That just is not the case.

I would like to know what the Conservatives actually plan to do to deal with this issue. We are talking about 3.5 million housing units. That will almost require an industrial strategy. What is the plan?

[*English*]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, it is called “the building homes and not bureaucracy act”, and it would incentivize municipalities to hit and exceed their building targets with more federal funding.

The member is right, we probably will not get to 3.5 million homes, but we are going to do a lot better than the zero homes built by their accelerator.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am still in absolute shock. Last week, the Conservatives were the gatekeepers for the big grocery stores and CEOs. This week, they show up and they sound like New Democrats saying that CEOs and greedflation are part of the problem.

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What we actually need, and what people in our country need, is action. Will the Conservatives support initiatives that we brought forward, including taxing CEOs, or will they act like Conservatives in Britain where they charge an excess profit tax on oil and gas, or are they going to sit back and just talk more without action?

I want to see some action. Canadians deserve action.

• (1340)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, the action is not supporting this Liberal government every single day on the floor of the House of Commons. They used to be in opposition, and I am sure that the people in the riding of that member would love to see us axe the carbon tax. In fact, they have been saying so. That is one action that he can support us on today instead of voting to increase it every single time that vote comes to the House of Commons.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was interested in one of the points that the hon. member made in her speech about selling off public land.

In my riding, land is available, but it has been so financialized, and housing has been so financialized. However, I want to ask her specifically about selling off public lands. As we know in Ontario, Doug Ford tried to sell off public land and it did not go so well for him, and it is certainly was not in the public, not-for-profit sector's interests. I would like to hear more about that.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I think the member might want to bring that question to the Ontario legislature.

The plan is to sell off 15% of land. We have 37,000 federal buildings in this country. We actually have an example in Winnipeg where there are two office towers next to each other and both are 50% full. Now, it might not take a genius to figure out what we can do if both towers are 50% full. Maybe we can put all of those people in one tower and convert the other tower into affordable housing. It is not that complicated and it has nothing to do with the Ontario legislature.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the member made reference to the two towers. However, sometimes these towers are not structurally sound enough to be able to convert into housing.

I will leave behind the fact that the Conservatives completely ignored the issue of housing for 10 years, which is an absolute fact. However, does the member not recognize that, yes, Ottawa plays a very important role, which we have demonstrated through strong leadership on the housing file, but we also need municipalities, provincial entities, territorial governments and the different stakeholders that are out there, such as the many non-profit organizations that can contribute to the housing situation we have today.

I am wondering if the member can provide her thoughts on taking that holistic approach and not just the federal government.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, for a brief moment there I thought that the Liberals actually recognized the problem this summer. I thought that they had an epiphany and were going to do something about housing. In fact, we hear the same refrain that we heard from the last housing minister who left this country with an op-ed blaming everybody else except for themselves: municipal-

ities, provinces and all of that. They were going to do something about this and still they cannot drop the talking points of “It is not my fault. It is everybody else's fault.” It is shameful and Canadians deserve better.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to address the House of Commons on behalf of the people of Chilliwack—Hope.

We are here today discussing Bill C-56, the affordable housing and groceries act, which the government whipped together after its London caucus meeting. The government is great at the announcement part of things. It is great at the glitzy announcements and the flashy photo ops, but it really is terrible at delivering results for Canadians.

This is no more evident in any file than in the housing file. It had billions of dollars and promises for eight years about how it was going to revolutionize housing in this country, and what it has delivered is failure. Time and time again, when the rubber meets the road, it has not delivered the housing units that it promised, it has not delivered the funding that it promised. It is Canadians who have paid the price.

On the first day of the London caucus meeting where the panicked Liberals said they had to do something because what they were doing was not working and they were getting crushed at people's doors, the Prime Minister actually reannounced, for maybe the third time, the same funding that he had announced in previous budgets in years past. He said that Liberals were working with London and announcing new money, and, for once, the media did not buy it. It said what they were announcing was something they announced before and were a year behind in delivering, that this was old money and not a new promise of new housing for Canadians.

That did not work, so what did the Liberals do the next day? They came out with an eight-year-old promise from the 2015 Liberal red book. They again failed to deliver on the promises they made to Canadians at that time. They promised the GST rebate for apartments in 2015. It was 2023 and, on the back of a napkin half an hour before the Leader of the Opposition was releasing a comprehensive housing plan that included a GST rebate for rental housing, they whipped out this promise that they had buried and forgotten about for eight full years. That is not leadership, that is admitting failure, which is what they have done again and again on this file.

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It is the same thing with the grocery store photo op. It is the same government that gave millions and millions of dollars to Galen Weston and Loblaws to subsidize freezers and fridges. It is a good thing it gave the money. I heard that Loblaws barely scraped by last year. It barely made a profit and it is a good thing that the federal Liberals reached deep into taxpayers' pockets and took out \$12 million for fridges and freezers to gift to Loblaws. Then they have audacity to say they will bring representatives of grocery stores to Ottawa, they will tell them what is what, they will have a photo op and things will be different, that we should trust them. Nothing happened at that event except a photo op for the industry minister and a talking point for the Liberals.

When we asked the Liberals, as a result of this meeting, what will happen to the outrageous price of a head of lettuce, a bag of carrots, a bag of potatoes and a turkey, we heard nothing. They have no idea. This is a complete and total photo op by a government of complete and total failure. Every single time there is a problem, it comes up with a communications plan that does not deliver anything for Canadians.

Canadians are not holding their breath in my riding that a photo op meeting with some CEOs is going to make any difference in their grocery bills, but they know what would make a difference. What would make a difference in their grocery bills is axing the Liberal carbon tax because we know that when farmers pay a tax, they pass that on, when truckers have to pay a tax to pick up food from farmers, they pass that on, when manufacturers and food processors have to pay the carbon tax, they pass that on, and the grocery stores pass it on. The Liberals say it has no impact on the price of groceries. We know that it does. We know that taxes have an upward effect on grocery prices, but the government refuses to look at that and, instead, has gimmicks and photo ops that do not make a difference to the bottom line of Canadians.

• (1345)

The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader spoke just a few moments ago. He said that things were going well for Canada. It reminds me of the new justice minister. When he was appointed to his position, he said that the rising crime wave Canadians were feeling in their communities was all in their heads, that it was not actually happening. However, the data shows that it is happening, that the crime rate is soaring across the country. It is the same with the price of groceries. When the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader says that it is all in their heads, that things are going well, he obviously has not spent much time talking to his constituents.

People are suffering. People need help. People in my riding are living in RVs full time. They are living in their cars, they have taken over highway rest areas, which have become permanent encampments for people to live, and they are live in tents. It is because the price of rent has doubled in eight years under the Liberal government. The price of mortgages has doubled in eight years under the Prime Minister. The cost of a down payment has doubled under the Prime Minister.

We see a recycled promise from eight years ago, just in advance of the Leader of the Opposition's announcement, and the Liberals want us to applaud them for their housing plan. It is not working. I

wish they would adopt the rest of the Leader of the Opposition's private member's bill, Bill C-356, the building homes not bureaucracy act. We need to incentivize municipalities to actually get homes built, not talk about it, not plan for 15 years from now but to get keys in doors and people in homes. That is what the Leader of the Opposition's plan would do by incentivizing municipalities to get more homes built and punishing municipalities that stand in the way.

We know that the cost of red tape and gatekeeping in Vancouver, for instance, now adds over \$1 million to the price of a home. It has been revealed that even upper middle-class Canadians can no longer qualify for the average home in Canada. They cannot qualify for a mortgage, making \$170,000 a year. That is the state of play in our country, and the Liberals want us to say that they are doing so well.

One of the great tragedies, and having young people in my life, I think of my own family, is that nine in 10 young people, 90% of young people, have given up on home ownership altogether. They do not believe they will ever be able to afford a home. That was not the case before the Liberal government, and it will not be the case after the Liberal government is gone.

It is time for real action on housing. It is time for the Leader of the Opposition's plan on housing, which would take real action. Real steps and real metrics would be realized to deliver actual results. The Liberal plan has failed. We saw refugees coming to our country with the promise of a better life. They have been living on the streets and using food banks, living under overpasses. We have seen students forced to live in shelters and use food banks.

This is the legacy of eight years of the Liberal government, and this bill would not change that. Having a photo-op will not change that. Having a re-announcement will not change that. What will change it is real action. As I mentioned, the Conservative leader's plan is a real plan, unlike the back-of-a-napkin approach of the Liberal government.

We have said that we would withhold transit and infrastructure funding from cities until sufficient high-density housing around transit stations is built and occupied. That is key. Not planned, not built at some stage but when they are occupied is when they will get the money. We are going to incentivize cities with a super bonus if they do better. It is not just a stick; it is also a carrot. That is an important part of the Conservative leader's bill that is better than the Liberal bill.

We are paying performance bonuses to executives of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for this dismal failure of getting Canadians into homes that they can afford. We will cut those performance bonuses unless they can deliver results for Canadians.

Statements by Members

• (1350)

This bill just scratches the surface. If the government were serious about getting more Canadians into homes, it would axe the tax, which would not only help with the price of homes but would help with the cost of groceries. The fact that it has not done that shows that the government is not yet serious about this very important issue.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to it. The big plan for the Conservative Party, the big tax break, is going to be to get rid of the carbon tax. We hear that from member after member.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

• (1355)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, they heckle “Hear, hear!” I want to remind every member who just said “Hear, hear!” that in the last federal election, every one of them, including the member who just spoke, supported the Conservative election platform.

An hon. member: Nope, not a chance.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Yes, they did, Madam Speaker.

Every one of those candidates were signed off by Erin O’Toole, who was the leader of the Conservative Party, who endorsed an election platform that said they wanted a price on pollution. That is a carbon tax. The member across the way spoke in favour of the carbon tax.

Do any of the members of the party across the way have any regrets whatsoever for supporting Erin O’Toole and the price on pollution they were promising Canadians—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, the fact that the member can say Erin O’Toole’s name out loud means Erin O’Toole is no longer here. Many of us did not campaign on a price on carbon. We always have opposed a carbon tax, continue to oppose a carbon tax and will oppose a carbon tax until it is gone for good.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was listening to my colleague talk to us about a real plan. I think it is rather funny to base a real plan on misinformation. I have never seen a real plan based on misinformation and the Conservatives have certainly been spouting misinformation. The carbon tax does not apply in Quebec. Quebec has set its own price on carbon. It is not the carbon tax. The Conservatives keep huffing and puffing about a carbon tax that applies in Quebec. There is no second carbon tax. There is talk of clean fuel regulations. People are not fooled that easily.

The worst thing MPs can do is discredit themselves by introducing lies left and right. I get the impression that is what the Conservatives are doing, but sooner or later the truth will come out and they will look ridiculous.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, I think the member said that Canadians are not fools. His constituents are not fools. They know a tax when they see one. They know that the Bloc Québécois is not supported by Quebecers when it says that it wants to radically increase the carbon tax in Quebec. There is a second carbon tax, the Liberal carbon tax, that the Bloc Québécois has enthusiastically supported. We reject it. Its members will have to take that up with their voters in the election, and we will have many more Quebec MPs in the Conservative fold after that time.

* * *

RESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER

The Speaker: It is with a heavy heart that I rise to inform members of my resignation as Speaker of the House of Commons.

It has been my greatest honour as a parliamentarian to have been elected by you, my peers, to serve as the Speaker of the House of Commons for the 43rd Parliament and the 44th Parliament.

I have acted as your humble servant of this House, carrying out the important responsibilities of this position to the very best of my abilities.

[*Translation*]

I want to thank you, colleagues, for your support and collegiality during my tenure in the Chair.

[*English*]

The work of the House is above any of us; therefore, I must step down as your Speaker.

I reiterate my profound regret for my error in recognizing an individual in the House during the joint address to Parliament by President Zelenskyy. That public recognition has caused pain to individuals and communities, including the Jewish community in Canada and around the world, in addition to survivors of Nazi atrocities in Poland and other nations.

I accept full responsibility for my actions.

My resignation is effective at the end of the sitting day tomorrow, Wednesday, September 27, to allow preparations for the election of a new Speaker. Until that time, the deputy speakers will chair the House proceedings.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*English*]

TAIBU COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year TAIBU Community Health Centre in Scarborough North is celebrating its 15th anniversary. Along with health services and programs for local residents, TAIBU has a special focus on the health needs of the greater Toronto area’s Black-identifying communities.

Statements by Members

A Kiswahili word, *taibu* is used as a greeting that means “be in good health”. It is a mantra that has guided the organization as a source of healing. TAIBU heals communities scarred by systemic racism, heals inequalities in Black health outcomes and opportunities, and heals individuals through mental health, well-being and resilience.

Over the past 15 years, its dedicated staff and volunteers have engaged in transformative work by incorporating Afro-centric principles and lived experiences in their day-to-day practice. Bravo to executive director Liben Gebremikael, board president Michelle Tremblay, and the entire TAIBU team. May they continue to be in good health. *Taibu*.

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OUTSTANDING BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, I had the distinct honour of attending the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce 2023 Outstanding Business Achievement Awards. Each year, the event showcases and celebrates high achievement in Lincoln's business community. Since I was elected, back in 2004, this has been one of the most important events on my calendar, and I make it a priority to attend.

This year, the ceremony was held at Vieni Estates, a breathtaking 240-acre estate on the edge of the Niagara Escarpment in Beamsville. Here are just some of the winners.

Cherrylane, represented by Jennifer and Michelle Smith, accepted the award for medium-sized business of the year. Rodney Bierhuizen of Sunrise Greenhouses accepted the award for large business of the year, and I want to give a shout-out to his father, Robert, who has been a leader in the greenhouse industry in Niagara for over 40 years. The community partnership award went to Scott Holmes from Niagara Wireless Internet Company, or NWIC. I would also like to congratulate all those nominated, for being excellent examples of success.

I look forward to attending next year as we once again celebrate the leadership, accomplishments and resilience of our Lincoln business community.

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ANTHONY WADIH METLEGE

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to praise a life well lived and loved and pay tribute to my godfather, Anthony Wadih Metlege, a great man with an unshakable commitment to our family. Born in Diman and immigrating to Halifax through Pier 21, he was an entrepreneur, a storyteller, and a loving husband, father and grandfather.

From my youngest years, I looked up to Uncle Tony. Our families lived together at several points, and I was always his confidante and favourite niece. When I was considering political life, family members of all ages gathered at his home to share their advice and support. He was sharp until the very end. On his 95th, I presented him with congratulatory certificates from all levels of government, including mine. He shared his unwavering love and vision for me and Canada.

I know he is up there now, sharing a drink with my father and their loved ones. This weekend, we gather to commemorate the 40th day of his passing, and we know that they will be watching us from above.

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[*Translation*]**50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMITÉ DE SOLIDARITÉ TROIS-RIVIÈRES**

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Comité de solidarité Trois-Rivières is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

The celebrations kicked off on September 11, a date that refers to the coup perpetrated by General Augusto Pinochet in Chile in 1973. At the time, a strong movement rose up against the Pinochet dictatorship. That is how the Quebec-Chile committee was born. A few years later, it became the Comité de solidarité Trois-Rivières.

The committee's mission is to raise awareness and mobilize the public around international issues. Much of its work involves solidarity and international co-operation projects. The committee also provides young people with educational and information tools to raise their awareness of current global issues.

I would like to commend the work of the entire team at the Comité de solidarité Trois-Rivières, including its director, Valérie Delage, board chair Sarah Bourdages, and the team of volunteers and board members who work tirelessly to build a fairer, more supportive and greener world.

* * *

● (1405)

CARLO ROSSI

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to a man who left his mark on Canadian politics. I am talking about Carlo Rossi, Quebec's first MP of Italian origin to sit in the federal House of Commons.

Mr. Rossi was first elected member of Parliament for Bourassa in 1979. He paved the way for Quebecers of Italian origin.

During his three terms, he served as a parliamentary secretary and deputy whip. Prior to that, he was a police officer with the City of Montreal and was responsible for hostage negotiations.

When I became a Canadian citizen at the age of 22, he congratulated me with a certificate that I proudly display in my office. He led the way for me as well. He passed away on April 11, 1998.

To honour his memory, I would like to one day see his name engraved in a public space somewhere in the riding of Bourassa.

*Statements by Members**[English]***SHUSWAP WILDFIRES**

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bush Creek East wildfire in the Shuswap has been burning for 77 days, consuming over 45,000 hectares of forest and destroying hundreds of homes and structures, including homes of firefighters who fought the fire and the volunteer fire hall in Scotch Creek. It continues to burn today.

This year, Canada has lost six wildfire firefighters in B.C. and two more in Alberta and the Northwest Territories. We are extremely grateful there were no serious injuries or loss of life to the flames in the Shuswap. Local governments are calling for an independent review of this year's wildfire responses, and I support that call. Future wildfire responses must be informed by lessons learned. Communities across B.C. also need action on the findings of previous wildfire reviews.

Residents of the North Shuswap are determined to rebuild and determined to recover. I will continue to work with them and all levels of government as we navigate the road to recovery together, and I call on the Government of Canada to do the same.

* * *

KITCHENER PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently I had the opportunity to participate in a fire operations demonstration day hosted by the Kitchener Professional Firefighters Association at its official training site. Along with other local officials, I performed search and rescue in a smoke-filled building, entered a room fully engulfed in fire and performed an auto extrication. I wrapped up the day going up in the hundred-foot aerial ladder truck. They really put us through our paces, and we now know, beyond all doubt, why I am an MP instead of a firefighter.

I thank all our fearless firefighters, who put their lives on the line for us every day. I thank in particular the dedicated members of KPFA who volunteered their time to prepare the exercises and equipment, gave us the full experience and kept us safe throughout. Special acknowledgement goes to association president Brian Forbes, fire chief Bob Gilmore and my wrangler, Chris Vaux. What an educational and unforgettable experience.

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WORLD CONTRACEPTION DAY

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is World Contraception Day.

Last week, I hosted an info session about the merits of access to contraception. We were joined by very special speakers, including Dr. Rupinder Toor from northeast Calgary, Dr. Wendy Norman, Dr. Amanda Black, Lee Allison Clark and Frédérique Chabot. I thank them for their time, knowledge and passion.

Universal access to contraceptives is about so much more than public health. It is about equity and bodily autonomy, and it is an investment that pays for itself. It also has strong national support,

with a recent poll showing that 83% of Canadians approve of free birth control.

I was grateful for the chance to learn more about this great proposal, and on this special day I stand in strong support.

* * *

• (1410)

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to express again my deepest sympathies to the family of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, murdered in June.

If proven, the Prime Minister's allegation of a foreign government killing a Canadian on Canadian soil is about an outrageous violation of our sovereignty. These allegations must be investigated and justice delivered.

Many of our allies already have foreign agent registries. Conservatives introduced two bills, two and three years ago, to bring in a registry here to include agents from all countries, including India. Both bills were blocked by NDP and Liberals. Conservatives also moved a motion to create a foreign agent registry on May 4, 2023. All four Liberal members from Surrey voted against it, including the members for Surrey Centre and Surrey—Newton.

I am calling on Liberals and New Democrats to take the threat of foreign interference seriously, act with urgency and pass a foreign agent registry into law immediately.

* * *

RIDEAU HALL CRICKET MATCH

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday we hosted an epic match of cricket at the Rideau Hall cricket grounds between the Commonwealth diplomatic corps and Canadian parliamentarians. It was a thrilling showdown between high commissions and Canadian members of Parliament. Canada won.

This match of cricket not only represented an opportunity to build relationships throughout the Commonwealth, but it also highlighted the growing sport of cricket here in Canada. Many members of Parliament and diplomats played cricket for the very first time last Wednesday. I want to thank everyone from the high commissions, the ministers and the members of Parliament who participated in this match for their support for cricket.

Statements by Members

I thank as well the Rideau Hall Cricket Association and the Canadian branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for co-hosting and promoting the sport of cricket right here in Canada and across the world.

* * *

LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to tell everyone about the hon. leader of the Conservative Party of Canada.

Many know him as the common-sense leader this country needs. His schoolteacher parents know him as the boy they adopted and raised in their modest home in the suburbs of Calgary. His dad knows him as the son he took to early morning hockey games. His neighbours know him as the boy who used to deliver the morning newspaper. His children know him in French, Spanish and English as “papa”. I know him as a man who loves Canada and will fight to have it restored before the Liberal-NDP government destroys our nation. We all know him as the next prime minister of Canada.

When our leader says it does not matter whom people know or where they are from, but rather who they are and where they are going, these are not just empty words; he lived it. It is common sense; let us bring it home.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, access to housing is worse than ever.

In 2015, when Conservatives were in government and the Conservative leader was the minister of housing, rent for a one-bedroom apartment was \$970 a month. Today, the same apartment is \$1,900. A typical family home cost less than \$450,000, with a typical mortgage payment of about \$1,300. Now the payment on that same home is over \$3,500 and the down payment has doubled.

When the Conservative leader was housing minister, the budget was balanced, inflation was 1.4% and the Bank of Canada rate was half of 1%. After eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, inflation is at a 40-year high and the Bank of Canada rate is at 5%, because the Prime Minister has added more to the national debt than all previous prime ministers combined.

Canadians cannot afford the government any longer. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

* * *

● (1415)

POLY CULTURAL IMMIGRANT & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mr. Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the 50th anniversary of Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services.

Polycultural started as a group of dedicated volunteers providing boots on the ground to support newly arrived refugees from Poland.

It has grown into a multicultural, multi-faceted organization with seven locations across the GTA, helping community members from all walks of life, including newcomers, youth, seniors and victims of violence.

It never shies away from new or challenging situations. We remember, with gratitude, the support it offered to Syrian and Afghan refugees in their greatest time of need. Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services supports more than 30,000 individuals each year to find jobs and much more, and we are grateful for the work it does.

Congratulations to our friends at Polycultural for an amazing 50 years. I thank them for all they do.

* * *

NAZISM

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what happened in the House last week was shameful: the introduction of a Nazi as a hero, someone our vets fought against, part of an SS division that massacred Jews and Poles.

What is as shameful is the Prime Minister's failure to rededicate to fighting and calling out fascism and Nazism in our midst. Let us not forget that 1.1 million Canadians fought and 97,000 were killed or wounded fighting with our allies to liberate the world from the Nazis. Let us also not forget that we are a country that refused to admit Jewish refugees from Nazism in the 1930s, but admitted SS Nazi combatants in the 1950s.

At a time when Canada and the world are seeing the rise of neo-Nazism and fascism, the Prime Minister has failed to speak out. As Santayana said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

In the name of the victims of Nazism, Jews, Poles, progressives, LGBTQ people, Roma and millions of others, let us remember and let us learn from history: never again.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BOISBRIAND PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in honour of the 30th anniversary of the Boisbriand photography club.

The club has delivered a host of activities since 1993, including conferences, outings, contests, exhibitions and more, to teach and share knowledge about the photographic arts.

Oral Questions

As an amateur photographer myself, I was recently blown away by this club's talent, passion, creativity and attention to detail. I am not the only one: In 2019, the Boisbriand photography club won the Focus prize given by the Musée national de la photographie. In 2020, it placed second among 44 contenders for the title of best photography club in Quebec.

I congratulate its president, Marc-André Thibodeau, and all the club's members for their achievements.

I wish continued success to creative photography and amateur photographers.

* * *

[English]

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, life is so expensive. Chicken is up 35%, potatoes are up 68%, carrots are up 74% and lettuce is up 94%. It is no wonder that seven million Canadians struggle to put food on the table. That pain takes a toll. It is due to the costly coalition's policies, such as carbon tax 1 and carbon tax 2, which hike the cost of everything and do nothing to reduce emissions.

Gordie from Colinton said, "My daughter and her husband have 4 kids. Trying to feed them all is a shock. They both have good paying jobs but by the time you pay for rent, gas, power, and heating, you have to make a choice between eating or paying the bills." That is what happens when we tax the farmer who grows the food, the trucker who ships the food and the people who buy the food.

Canadians are out of money, and the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost. Conservatives will turn hurt into hope so Canadians can look forward to the future. We will use technology to reduce emissions and axe the taxes to bring home lower prices and make life affordable.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I speak for the first time as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence.

Last week, we celebrated National Legion Week for the very first time.

Since 1925, the Royal Canadian Legion has been providing support to veterans who have fought for our country, our values and our democracy. Through its 1,350 local branches across the country and its promotion of remembrance with the annual poppy campaign, the legion is doing what it can to make sure that Canadians never forget.

The legion is also a cornerstone in communities across the country. With one of the largest volunteer bases in the country, it is providing support to veterans and seniors, offering youth sports programs, volunteering to help those in need or simply offering a place to gather for fun and celebration.

I want to express my deep appreciation for all that the legionnaires do and for their tireless efforts to ensure that we remember the bravery, commitment and sacrifice of those who have served their country.

Lest we forget.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[Translation]

GUESTS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Speaker has resigned because of the great shame and embarrassment of paying tribute to a Nazi in the House of Commons.

However, the fact remains that the Prime Minister is ultimately responsible for our international reputation. The Prime Minister is responsible for the diplomatic and intelligence services that could have asked for and checked the list of all guests. Today, he must take responsibility in order to repair the major damage that has been done to our international reputation.

Will he stand up in the House and apologize for this massive, shameful mistake?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I think it is important to point out that the Speaker of the House of Commons is independent. All members of the House vote for him.

As I said yesterday, I want to thank the Speaker of the House for taking responsibility for his actions. As he said today, a few minutes ago, this was his decision. He is taking responsibility for it, and I think that is the honourable thing to do.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's protocol and intelligence services had the right to ask for the list of everyone whose presence would be acknowledged. What is more, the responsibility to defend Canada's reputation falls on the Prime Minister. We are now in the worst crisis of our history when it comes to our reputation.

Where is the Prime Minister? Where is he hiding? Why does not he not rise in the House of Commons to defend our reputation as Canadians?

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to remind the hon. members that we cannot say whether someone is here in the chamber. We are very close to that line.

The hon. House leader for the government.

Oral Questions

[*Translation*]

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition knows full well, since the Speaker of the House resigned today, the latter took responsibility for the decision he alone made to invite this individual and to acknowledge his presence. As everyone in the House knows, this was embarrassing for us as MPs and as Canadians. He took responsibility and that was the honourable thing to do.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Speaker has taken the fall for this massive international shame and embarrassment. However, we had a war leader from a country that is trying to defend its freedom from not only an invasion but also a propaganda war. The Prime Minister's protocol and intelligence units had the right to ask for the list of all those who would be present and recognized around him.

The Prime Minister did not carry out that responsibility, and now our nation's reputation is in tatters. Will he stand up and apologize to Canadians, the Jewish community, the Ukrainian people and the entire world for this mess that he helped create?

• (1425)

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I feel that I have to remind the Leader of the Opposition, although he knows this very well himself, that the Speaker of the House of Commons is independent. His election is voted upon by all members of Parliament, and he is the Speaker of all parliamentarians.

We know, and the Leader of the Opposition knows, that this was the decision solely of the Speaker of the House of Commons. He chose to invite this individual. He chose to recognize him without informing the government or the Ukrainian delegation. This was highly embarrassing. I accept his resignation, and I am glad that he did it.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says he is not responsible for our diplomatic reputation, even though that is precisely the job of the head of the government. He also said he is not responsible for the inflationary spending that led prices and interest rates to rise faster than at any time in history or for housing costs doubling after he promised to lower them. He is not responsible for dressing up in racist costumes so many times that he cannot remember; he says that all Canadians need to learn a lesson from his personal conduct.

Now he says that it is not his responsibility to vet the very people who come into contact with a visiting head of state. Is it that he is not responsible or that he is irresponsible?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would posit that the Leader of the Opposition is being very irresponsible right now in his accusations when, in fact, he knows the truth. This is why every party in the House has asked for the resignation, which has now been received, of the Speaker of the House. It was his decision and his decision alone to invite this individual and to recognize him in this chamber.

The Leader of the Opposition knows this. He is irresponsibly politicizing this issue. This is something that has brought shame and embarrassment to all of Parliament and, indeed, to all Canadians. The Speaker did the honourable thing in resigning.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am responsible enough to show up for work. I mean this literally. Has there ever been a greater diplomatic embarrassment in the history of our country? In coffee shops, gyms, businesses and boardrooms around the world, people are reading about this massive and shameful disgrace that unfolded under the watch of a Liberal Speaker and a Liberal Prime Minister; yet, he cannot even show up for work.

Where is he, and why is he hiding under a rock?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Underlining whether someone is here is not allowed by the rules of the House.

The hon. government House leader may answer. I will give her the option.

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is precisely why the Speaker of the House announced his resignation. He took responsibility for his actions, which have hurt parliamentarians and all Canadians and, indeed, Canada's reputation. That is why every party in the House called for his resignation.

I find it ironic that we have barely heard a word of support for Ukraine from the Leader of the Opposition until he sees a political wedge issue and tries to politicize this issue.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is less about the form and more about the substance, but if the leader of the official opposition and I agree on something, it must be because it is so evident. The Prime Minister did not make the mistake, but he is responsible for fixing it, as head of government, whether we like it or not, even for those who want to take his place.

Will he apologize on behalf of Canada and, unfortunately, also on behalf of Quebec, to all those who suffered as a result of what happened here, which was quite traumatic for many people?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. The Speaker of the House of Commons has already apologized for the decision he made, which was shameful for us all and shameful for Canadians. What matters is that he has taken responsibility for his actions and decisions. Everyone in the House called for his resignation, and that was the honourable thing to do.

Oral Questions

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, six questions later, I can hardly believe that the leader of the government in the House of Commons has failed to understand that the responsibility of the Speaker of the House and the responsibility of the Prime Minister of Canada are two separate things in such matters.

Though he stands accused of nothing, he cannot ignore his responsibility as head of government. He has to accept that responsibility and apologize to the Jewish community of Canada, Quebec and the world. He has to apologize to parliamentarians. He has to apologize to all citizens. He especially has to apologize to President Zelenskyy, who was handed to the Russian propaganda machine on a silver platter.

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, as a Canadian of Jewish origin and a descendant of a Holocaust survivor, I feel personally hurt by this incident. It has hurt all members of the House, all Canadians and President Zelenskyy.

The Speaker made his apology and took responsibility for a shameful decision that has hurt all of us. He did the responsible thing by resigning.

* * *

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday it was the producers' turn to be summoned by the Minister of Innovation. The minister knows full well that they have inflated prices because he is simply asking them to stabilize them. After the meeting, the minister said inaction is not an option, except that is exactly what he has been doing for the past two years.

Will the Prime Minister promise Canadian families that their Thanksgiving dinner will cost less than it did last year?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I am glad to see that he knows that inaction is not an option. That is exactly why we convened the country's food executives with a very clear objective: to stabilize prices in Canada. I expressed the frustration of 40 million Canadians, saying that the number one issue for Canadians is affordability and the price of groceries.

We have introduced Bill C-56 which, for one, will tackle competition, because we want more of it in this country. I expect my colleague to support this bill so that we can move forward for the—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby South.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Liberal inaction is much too costly.

[English]

On top of that inaction, we have a very serious situation in Halifax. People currently living in a campground fear they will be homeless when it closes for the season, because there is simply

nowhere else for them to go. These people have worked hard. They have jobs. Some live at the campground, and some work there. There is simply no other housing for them to rent in the surrounding area.

They do not have months to wait for the government to approve new housing. They will be homeless in weeks. This is the result of a Prime Minister who could have and should have built more affordable housing, but did not.

What will the Prime Minister tell them when they are homeless in a few weeks?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague on the need to continue to invest in affordable housing, including in the city of Halifax, including in my home province of Nova Scotia.

I would point out to the hon. member that right now, as we speak, the city council in Halifax is actually debating a motion to change the way that they permit homes to be built. As a result of the housing accelerator fund, it is going to yield more homes for people who live in Halifax.

In addition to changing the way cities build homes, we are putting incentives on the table to get more homes built, and we are going to work with jurisdictions that have local authority to figure out how we can continue to increase the affordable housing stock, as we have been doing for the last number of years.

I would be pleased to work with my hon. colleague to advance solutions for some of the most vulnerable people in Canada.

* * *

● (1435)

GUESTS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Speaker of the House of Commons took the fall, and the Prime Minister continues to blame everyone else. It a full-blown international embarrassment for our country, for our allies and for everything this nation did to defeat the Nazis.

An actual Nazi was invited to the House of Commons, welcomed and celebrated as a hero. The government vetted everyone here.

The Prime Minister has called Canadian citizens Nazis. Will he muster the courage to stand up on his feet today and take responsibility?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all feel the deep embarrassment and shame of what happened on Friday.

Oral Questions

Had anyone in this House known what the Speaker was going to do ahead of time and who this person was, I am certain that not a single person would have stood in this House of Commons.

However, the fact of the matter is, and my Conservatives colleagues know this, neither the Prime Minister nor the government nor the Ukrainian delegation nor any parliamentarian in this place knew ahead of time. It was the Speaker's decision. He has taken responsibility and he has resigned.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister who is now whispering was louder when she also painted Canadians as Nazis, and she cannot bring herself to apologize for an actual Nazi the government vetted.

Worse even, she tried to strike it from the historical record of this House as if it never happened. A descendant of Holocaust survivors distorting the Holocaust. You should be ashamed of yourself.

I do not know how—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: This is just a reminder that all questions and comments are to be through the Chair.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many times I am going to have to ask this Prime Minister for an apology in that he has slandered, dishonoured and embarrassed Holocaust survivors, but I think two times is two too many.

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the member opposite tries to personally attack me, I will actually stay focused on the facts.

The fact of the matter, and she knows this as well as every other member in this House, is that it was the Speaker who decided to invite this individual. It was the Speaker who acknowledged that he was going to acknowledge him in the chamber. No one in this chamber knew ahead of time who he was.

The Speaker has taken full responsibility for this. He has resigned. It was the right thing to do, it was the honourable thing to do and it had to be done.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Global Affairs, the Privy Council, the Diplomatic Protocol Office, the Parliamentary Protective Service and the RCMP, what do they all have in common? They all have massive resources for vetting visitors to this place.

The Prime Minister just threw the Speaker under the bus, but the truth is, the buck stops with him. Allowing a Nazi to be honoured in this chamber has embarrassed Canada on the international stage. Shame on him for bringing shame on this chamber. Will the Prime Minister finally take responsibility, do the right thing and apologize?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will remind my Conservative colleagues, because they seem to have forgotten, that they also called for the Speaker's resignation this morning. They recognized

that it was actually the Speaker who did this on his own. Instead of trying to cast blame where no blame should be cast, the Speaker has taken responsibility for his actions and has resigned. It was the honourable thing to do, it was the right thing to do, after a moment in our history on Friday that was deeply embarrassing, deeply shameful for Canadians, that has hurt all of us as parliamentarians and Canadians.

• (1440)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister and that member tried to bury this sordid affair with a motion to strike history from the record. For the sake of the six million Jews who perished at the hands of the Nazis, Conservatives said “no”.

This affair has resulted in a diplomatic disaster for Canada and gives the Russian government and its illegal invasion a propaganda win. When will the PM stop trying to erase history, take responsibility for once and apologize?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Speaker took responsibility for his actions and he apologized.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are a few of the international headlines that are making the rounds following Friday's incident: “‘Deeply hurtful’: Polish ambassador condemns Nazi veteran's invitation to Canada's Parliament”, “Unacceptable: Controversy in Canada after tribute paid to former Nazi soldier in Parliament” and “Nazi-linked veteran received ovation during Zelenskyy's Canada visit”.

Canada is the laughingstock of the entire world.

Will the Prime Minister show some backbone and stand up and apologize, or will he continue to hide?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every member of the House thinks that the actions of the Speaker of the House of Commons were unacceptable, inexcusable and completely shameful for Canadians.

That is why the Speaker of the House of Commons apologized, took responsibility and resigned.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the government does not seem to understand is that it had a responsibility.

Let us remember that, in 2015, legislative amendments were made to make the Parliamentary Protective Service responsible for doing checks on individuals to ensure that there are no safety threats or other concerns in situations such as visits from foreign heads of state.

The Prime Minister failed miserably in maintaining Canada's diplomatic integrity. Can he show some courage and rise in the House today to apologize?

Oral Questions

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned several times yesterday, the Parliamentary Protective Service followed all the security protocols. The Speaker of the House was the individual responsible for the invitation and the recognition. He has apologized and taken responsibility. He resigned a few minutes ago.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a wave of bankruptcies is coming for our small and medium-sized businesses if the federal government does not wake up. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business sounded that alarm today on the Hill. The government is giving SMEs an extra 18 days to get bank loans, but that is not going to help the SMEs that are in debt up to their eyeballs and have been struggling for three years to pay back their emergency loan. Unfortunately, bankruptcy is not far off.

When will the government finally open a direct line of communication with our struggling businesses to offer them payment deferrals that are adequate?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nearly one million businesses were able to stay open thanks to the actions of this government. We know that global inflation, the rising cost of supplies and everything that is happening in Ukraine are among the factors destabilizing businesses here in Canada. We are ensuring that they will have a way to continue operating.

We are also supporting people with the Canada child benefit and loans for workers. We are here for the businesses in Quebec and we will continue to be.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our small businesses are not asking for charity. They simply want to avoid bankruptcy while paying their fair share. The government could enter into payment agreements with businesses that are struggling without losing any subsidies. The government could then prevent closures and job losses and recover what it is owed, instead of losing it in a massive wave of bankruptcies.

When will the government finally realize that being flexible with SMEs is the only fair and responsible way out of this crisis?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear and look at the facts. We were here to support businesses during the pandemic. We are now in the post-pandemic period, and we have been very clear about what we are going to do for businesses that used the Canada emergency business account. We will be there to support them. We will also be there to support the people behind the businesses. We were there for entrepreneurs, and we will continue to be there for them.

• (1445)

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, nearly 2,000 small businesses in Quebec have already declared bankruptcy in the past year. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, this is just the beginning. One in five businesses expects to close within the next year. However,

the elephant in the room is that 60% of bankruptcies across Canada happen in Quebec, because small business is an economic model there. If the government does not show more flexibility, that entrepreneurial spirit and support for local entrepreneurs is going to suffer.

When will the government wake up instead of pushing our small businesses to the brink of bankruptcy?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before entering politics, I was an entrepreneur. I know very well what it is like to pay bills and make sure people get paid. I have a lot of empathy for businesses in Quebec, which is why our government has been very clear about the plan for people who have to repay the Canadian emergency business account program. We are going to give them up to three years to repay the loan. We are here to support businesses, and we are here to support entrepreneurs, too. That is our plan, and we will see it through.

* * *

[English]

GUESTS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that a member of the Nazi Waffen-SS was even invited to attend an event in the House of Commons is appalling. That he was honoured during the address of the Ukrainian president is an inexcusable failure for the Liberal government. The Waffen-SS committed numerous atrocities in Poland and members of the Polish government have now demanded an apology for this international embarrassment.

This has become a diplomatic disaster, requiring immediate action from the Prime Minister. Will he finally take responsibility, do the right thing and apologize?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows full well, it was the Speaker of the House who invited this individual, who chose to recognize him without informing a single member in this House, the government, the Prime Minister or the Ukrainian delegation. This has caused enormous hurt to communities across this country, including Polish Canadians, and for that the Speaker has apologized. He has resigned. That was the right thing to do.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and his office organized President Zelenskyy's visit, down to the most minute detail. Every moment of the visit was planned, and every guest in the House should have been or was vetted by the Prime Minister's Office, but somehow a member of the Nazi Waffen-SS was not only allowed to attend but also was celebrated on the floor of the House.

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The Prime Minister's Office organized the entire event. The Prime Minister's Office vetted the entire guest list, so when will the Prime Minister finally take responsibility, come out of hiding and apologize?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my Conservative colleague opposite continues to spread false information.

We know the Speaker has admitted it. He has apologized and he has resigned because it was he and he alone who invited this individual and recognized him. The guest list was vetted by the Parliamentary Protective Service, which followed all security protocols. The member opposite knows that the Speaker has a Speaker's gallery to which he invited this individual. No one in the chamber knew ahead of time.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Prime Minister has embarrassed all Canadians, and the indignation is global. His lack of judgment, his negligence, and his incompetence are making news around the world.

The news shames us everywhere. In France, a headline in *Le Monde* reads, "Unfortunate tribute to a former soldier in a Nazi division during Zelensky's visit to Canada". In the Czech Republic, they are saying that this gives ammunition to the Russians. In Canada, we read that a Nazi veteran was applauded in front of Zelensky.

Will the Prime Minister take responsibility for once and apologize for embarrassing all Canadians around the world?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, every member of the House has called for the Speaker of the House to resign because everyone recognizes that it was his actions that led to what happened on Friday and he was responsible. This was deeply shameful for us as MPs and as Canadians.

I would once again ask my Conservative colleagues not to politicize this issue and to stick to the facts.

• (1450)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is at stake is Canada's reputation, not the reputation of the Canadian Parliament.

In Finland, they say that the Parliament of Canada committed an embarrassing mistake during a visit by Ukraine's President, when it turned out that the guest of honour once served in Nazi Germany. In the Netherlands they are reporting that a former member of the SS got a standing ovation in Canada's House of Commons. In the United Kingdom, they are saying that the ridiculous Liberals have shamed Canada by honouring a Nazi in Parliament.

The news travelled around the world. The Liberal Prime Minister, who personally invited President Zelensky to address the House, is solely and ultimately responsible for this embarrassment and for the damage it caused to the people of Ukraine and to Canada's reputation.

When will the Prime Minister come out of hiding and apologize for this humiliating democratic disaster?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already answered this question. Conservative members are aware of the facts.

I would like to ask them once again to stick to the facts and not to say things that are untrue.

* * *

[English]

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people are seeing a rising tide of organized hate and hate-related violence. This week, a "Whites-only Moms and Tots" poster was put up at a bus stop in my community. The residents of Port Moody, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Anmore and Belcarra are outraged. They want the government to take stronger action against hate in their communities, yet the Liberals are nowhere to be found.

Will the government listen to Canadians and take concrete action to combat all forms of hate, discrimination, racism and violence?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we too are outraged by what we have recently learned. We take the issue of hate and discrimination in all forms extremely seriously. We are going to continue to work with local communities on how best to take concrete action. Make no mistake: We as a government feel that hate has no place in this country, and we will do everything we can to ensure that communities remain safe.

* * *

PENSIONS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Danielle Smith and her Conservative government are threatening to take Albertans out of the Canada pension plan. This is a page that comes directly from the Leader of the Conservative Party when he said he would cut the CPP. People need to know that their futures are secure. Of course, we have heard nothing from the Conservative Leader of the Opposition.

Canadians do not want Conservatives risking their pensions. This is not Smith's money. This is not the Conservatives' money. This is Canadians' money.

Will the Prime Minister do everything he can to protect the pensions of Albertans and Canadians from this absurd plan?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me and the government be very clear: Canadians, including Albertans, value the Canada pension plan.

Oral Questions

Every single Edmontonian and every single Albertan I have spoken to on this issue, including through email in my inbox this very day, says it is about the Government of Alberta keeping its hands off Canadian pensions and making sure they stay under the management of Canada. People have paid into the Canada pension plan; they want it to be there in their retirement. We will do everything in our power to keep the pensions in the hands of Canadians and in the CPP.

* * *

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year marked Canada's worst wildfire season on record, especially in the Northwest Territories, with three of our four largest communities and nearly 70% of our population evacuated. The \$28 million recently announced for the NWT by the Government of Canada is very much appreciated, but along with the real costs of fighting the fires, the evacuation resulted in many businesses having to close down for weeks.

Can the Minister of Northern Affairs please give an update on the government's plan to support businesses in the Northwest Territories as they get back up and running again after the evacuations?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I first of all would like to thank the member for his incredible work in helping his constituents during an unprecedented wildfire season in the Northwest Territories.

As the member mentioned, the government has been there during the worst of the fires, and will continue to be there as the communities continue to bounce back from the wildfires. As northerners know, small businesses are the backbone of the economy, and I can guarantee the member for Northwest Territories that more support is on its way.

* * *

● (1455)

GUESTS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, What do Global Affairs, the Privy Council, the diplomatic protocol office and the RCMP all have in common? First, they have massive resources to vet visitors in this place. Second, they all report to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is trying to shift the blame to the Liberal Speaker, but it is he and he alone who bears the responsibility for a successful state visit.

The Prime Minister is in Ottawa today. Will he take responsibility today for his international diplomatic disaster and apologize to Canadians and our allies?

The Deputy Speaker: I want to make a quick comment that the Speaker is just the Speaker. We do not belong to any party when we are in this position.

The hon. government House leader has the floor.

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question has been answered several times. The member knows that what she is alleging is not true. The truth of the matter is that it was the Speaker who took these actions. It is why he took responsibility. It is why he resigned. In fact, it is why every member of the House asked for his resignation.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government House leader lost all credibility when she moved to whitewash the official record and asked all of us to pretend this diplomatic disaster never happened. It did happen. The whole world saw it. It happened under the Prime Minister's watch, and he is refusing to take responsibility.

He is in Ottawa today. Will he do the honourable thing, the right thing, and stand in this place and apologize?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would know that when egregious acts happen in this place, they are sometimes struck from the record. In fact, when the member from St. Albert read some very inappropriate remarks into the record, they were struck from the record. That is something we took seriously.

The House decided not to do this. Again, had members of the House been aware of what they were doing at that time, I feel very confident no one would have stood and applauded this individual.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not just the reputation of Parliament that has been sullied; it is the reputation of this country on the world stage. This is not just a parliamentary issue; it is a full-blown diplomatic one. Ian Bremmer of Eurasia Group said yesterday that this was the "worst week for Canadian diplomacy in I can't remember how long."

Diplomacy is the responsibility of the Government of Canada, so when will the Prime Minister take responsibility for this diplomatic disaster?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think any member of the House disagrees with how horrific what happened on Friday was. In fact, that is why every single member of this place called for the resignation of the Speaker, because he brought shame and embarrassment not only to this Parliament, but also, indeed, to all Canadians. As I have said several times in the House, that is why he has apologized. It is why he has resigned. Now we must move forward, but we recognize the hurt this has caused to communities across this country as well as around the world.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Speaker bears responsibility, but so too does the Prime Minister. It was the Prime Minister and his office who made a decision on short notice to request a joint address for President Zelenskyy on the floor of the House. That decision came with consequences. That decision came with responsibilities. We are witnessing some of these around the world today.

Again, when will the Prime Minister for once take some responsibility for this diplomatic disaster?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge my hon. colleague, because he is the first and only Conservative MP who has actually acknowledged that this was the responsibility of the Speaker, which is why the Speaker took responsibility and why he resigned. I want to thank the member for sticking to the facts, which we have not heard from most of our Conservative colleagues.

* * *

• (1500)

[Translation]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, as the Climate Ambition Summit was in full swing, we learned that Canada intends to double Newfoundland's oil production by 2030. Yes, that is right: double its oil production. Yesterday, the Conservatives even applauded the government's move. Long live Canada, a great oil-producing country, as the Minister of Environment would say.

When it comes to fighting climate change, does the Minister of Environment think that it is a good thing to have the Conservatives applauding him?

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

Last week, we had not one, but two, very good pieces of news, as there are two new Canadian sites that will be designated as UNESCO world heritage sites. Not one, but two.

This is not good news for the Bloc Québécois because one of these two sites would have been producing oil, were it not for the hard work of environmentalists, indigenous peoples and the Quebec government. Today, thanks to that work, Anticosti is a UNESCO world heritage site.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 2023 is on track to be the hottest year on record. Massive, unprecedented wildfires raged throughout British Columbia, Alberta, the Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia and Quebec. Biodiversity is threatened and oceans are warming to record levels. Meanwhile, the Liberal-Conservative coalition is applauding the increased drilling in the Atlantic Ocean. Their applause seems to indicate that they think we should increase our dependence on oil, not reduce it.

What will it take for them to realize that they are playing a very dangerous game for humanity?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Bloc Québécois was as enthusiastic about working with us to combat climate change, then things would go even better.

Canada is the only major oil-producing country that was invited to the UN's Climate Ambition Summit last week. Why? That would be because we have the most ambitious targets for reducing methane emissions and we are the only G20 country that has eliminated fossil fuel subsidies. No other G20 country has done so. We

Oral Questions

did it two years earlier than planned, and the Prime Minister has announced that we are going to put a cap on greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas industry.

We are the only country in the world that has made that commitment.

* * *

[English]

GUESTS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have embarrassed Canada, insulted the Jewish community, undermined our Ukrainian allies and disrespected our veterans, and the Prime Minister refuses to accept any responsibility. He has either willfully or ignorantly discarded his duty to protect President Zelenskyy from this international disaster. Because of his negligence, the Liberals have helped fuel Russia's propaganda machine against Ukraine.

Will the Prime Minister finally accept responsibility, stand in the House and apologize to all Canadians and to our Ukrainian allies?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows, the decision to invite and acknowledge this individual was the Speaker's and the Speaker's alone. For that, he has apologized. For that, he has resigned.

This is something that has brought shame and embarrassment to all of us as parliamentarians and, indeed, to all Canadians. It has hurt Canadian communities across the country, Jewish communities, Ukrainian communities, any community that was impacted by the Holocaust.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, Parliament stood and honoured a Nazi. It is unbelievable that this happened. The Canadian people deserve to be represented with dignity in the House and on the world stage, and that was taken away from them. The Liberals have so profoundly failed Canadians. This is beyond shameful and embarrassing, and it will never be forgotten.

Now, the Speaker has resigned, but the Prime Minister bears responsibility. He is in charge. This happened under his watch.

Will he finally do the right thing and apologize to Canadians?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we all agree with my hon. colleague that we wish this had never happened, because it did bring shame and embarrassment to every single member of the House, as well as every single Canadian.

Unfortunately, it was the Speaker and the Speaker alone who chose to invite this individual and acknowledge this individual in the gallery, unbeknownst to any member of Parliament in here, which is why every single member present stood and applauded, because they were led to believe this individual was someone who he was not. We know that this was not the case.

The Speaker has taken responsibility and he has resigned.

Oral Questions

• (1505)

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no more time for Liberal excuses and more deflections. Canadians deserve far better than that. Friday was supposed to be a day where Canadians and Ukrainians were able to come together and stand against Putin's brutal regime and its illegal, brutal, deadly invasion of Ukraine. The President of Ukraine was in Parliament. The world's eyes were on Canada. However, due to Liberal negligence and incompetence, a Nazi was honoured at that time.

Canada has been profoundly embarrassed and there will be lasting international consequences. The Prime Minister cannot escape his responsibility to the House and to Canadians. The buck stops with him.

Will he be apologizing to Canada and our world allies, yes or no?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I would ask my hon. colleagues to please stick to the facts. They all know that this was the decision of the Speaker of the House of Commons, to both invite this individual and recognize him, without informing a single member of Parliament, the Prime Minister, the government or the Ukrainian delegation.

We all feel completely embarrassed and shamed by this fact. For this, the Speaker has not only apologized, he has resigned. That was the right thing for him to do after a very horrific incident for all of us.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many people in my riding, Laval—Les Îles, have shared their concerns with me about the rising cost of living when it comes to the price of groceries and housing.

Can the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry inform the House of the measures the government has taken to make life more affordable for Canadians?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the member for Laval—Les Îles for his work.

This is the number one issue for the people of Laval. The work the member has done has allowed us to take meaningful measures to help people at a time when we see that the cost of food is the top issue for Canadians.

This morning, I met with the major Canadian manufacturers to tell them three things. First, I expressed to them the frustration that people are feeling across the country, including in Laval, and told them that the price of groceries is the top issue. Then, I asked them to be part of the solution because we all have a role to play to help Canadians when times are tough.

I can assure the people of Laval that, with the member for Laval—Les Îles, we will continue to fight—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton Mill Woods.

[English]

GUESTS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to introduce the national Holocaust monument bill in the House, which received unanimous support from all parties. This monument helps Canadians learn more about the horrors of the Holocaust. Never did I imagine that in the same House of Commons a Nazi would be invited and honoured in this place.

When will the Prime Minister stand up, take responsibility for this massive insult and apologize to Canadians?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my family walked into Auschwitz, and only my grandfather and great uncle walked out. Never in a million years would I have imagined that the Speaker of the House of Commons would invite someone who fought for the Nazis to this place, recognize him in front of everyone and ask us all to stand.

We all placed our trust in the Speaker. It was broken. We are hurt by this. I personally am incredibly hurt by this, because never in my life would I have ever done this had I known otherwise. I assure everyone that no other member would have done that either.

• (1510)

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, as a result of the Prime Minister's inaction, a Nazi veteran was allowed access to this chamber. Although this person was invited by the Speaker, it is the responsibility of the government to organize and ensure the security of foreign dignitaries. Further, both the Prime Minister and this individual were present in the same reception room in West Block after the speeches.

There is no way this international embarrassment is solely on the Speaker. The inept Liberal government is responsible as well.

Will the Prime Minister finally take responsibility, do the right thing and apologize to Canadians?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the allegation that my hon. colleague has made is simply false. That did not happen.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what happened on Friday is unacceptable. We gave a standing ovation to a member of the Waffen-SS.

Canada's reputation has been tarnished across the world. Yesterday, believe it or not, the government ratcheted its mediocrity up a notch by asking to have the facts, the truth and history erased from the record. What cowardice. Those who erase history are doomed to repeat it. The response is typical for a government that always washes its hands of responsibility and tries to whitewash history.

Oral Questions

When will the Prime Minister stand in the House, acknowledge that he made a serious mistake, and apologize to the world on behalf of all Canadians?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows, things that go horribly wrong in the House and maybe even in committees are erased from publications. This was the case when the member for St. Albert—Edmonton read some extremely unsettling comments in committee.

Underlying the request of the House was the fact that no one knew who this person was ahead of time. Otherwise, I am sure that no one in the House would have stood and applauded. I am sure of it.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Mississauga—Malton, I know people are concerned about crime. They want to know what our government is doing to make sure that people are safe. This is why I was pleased to see the House unanimously pass Bill C-48 last week, which would help ensure that violent repeat offenders would not get bail.

Could the Minister of Justice tell us more about the progress of this legislation? What is the government doing to improve safety in communities across Canada?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking my colleague, the member for Mississauga—Malton, for his important advocacy.

Repeat violent offenders do not belong on our streets; everyone in this chamber agrees on that proposition. As a government, we have a job to do, which is to keep people safe. That is why last week, on the very first day of the House of Commons sitting this fall, we passed our bail reform legislation, our plan for keeping people safe. MPs on that day put politics aside for the safety of Canadians.

I hope the Senate will do the exact same and help make this bill become law. We need safe streets in our country. This bill would help us get there.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in British Columbia alone, more than 1,600 people have died, because of toxic unregulated drugs, since the start of this year.

This summer I travelled to Portugal, where I saw that things could be different. We could have nationwide evidence-based plan, including decriminalization, harm reduction, treatment recovery and prevention services, but the Liberals would rather stand by their patchwork approach that is not working.

Will the government right its wrongs by immediately delivering a compassionate and coordinated plan to respond to the toxic drug crisis?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has worked with us step by step in understanding that the toxic drug supply in our country is killing those we love. Families, communities, no one is left unharmed by this. That is why we have taken a comprehensive approach, province by province and working with our counterparts, to make sure that we are saving lives.

Decriminalization in B.C. was the first step to that, but we need a responsible, compassionate framework that balances public health with public safety. I will continue to work with the member on this.

* * *

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, investing in clean technology is crucial to the fight against climate change. In that fight, one of Canada's leading agencies, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, has had allegations of wrongdoing with the way it has spent its funding and the way it has treated its staff. It is yet again another example of incompetency.

Canadians deserve to know how the government makes decisions on spending for clean technology. The minister needs to release the full report in the House so Canadians can see the transparency they deserve and have paid for.

Whistle-blowers stood up and risked their jobs. Will the minister do the same thing and table the full report for all in the House and for Canadians?

• (1515)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no point in trying to politicize everything that is happening. The moment that we were alerted to the allegations we asked for a third-party to investigate and to bring back a report. I can assure the members in the House and all Canadians that we will look at the report and take all necessary actions.

We expect the highest standards of ethics and professionalism when it comes to agencies that are funded by the Government of Canada. Canadians can be reassured that we will take all appropriate actions.

*Points of Order***POINTS OF ORDER**

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order about the language that was used during question period today. I know how deeply hurt the government House leader has been by the actions of the Speaker on Friday. She has handled questions with dignity and grace and in a measured way, trying to bring truth to this.

During question period, the hon. member for Thornhill called the government House leader a disgrace. The Leader of the Opposition repeated that, calling her a disgrace. I do not think that is parliamentary language, and I would like them to apologize to the member.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I should have said is that the government House leader is a disgrace.

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to review the audio and come back to the House.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether it is in Beauchesne's or our Standing Orders, one will find that all members are hon. members. It is inappropriate for members to yell across the chamber saying that someone is a disgrace. There is no doubt that it is inappropriate. The deputy Conservative House leader just stood in her place and said the same thing, and that is—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We have had a really loud day today, which has been very difficult because of the difficult situation we find ourselves in at this time. Whether we accept one movement or another makes it that much more difficult.

I will recognize the hon. parliamentary secretary. I will listen to what he has to say, and then I will go back to review exactly what has been said.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, as you know, whether it is in Beauchesne's sixth edition or our Standing Orders, we will find that it is unparliamentary to use words such as “disgrace” because all members are hon. members, and the member who rose on the first—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I will start from where I left off.

The deputy Conservative leader said things that you, Mr. Speaker, said you would review. She then stood in her place and reinforced it verbally, saying that the government House leader was a disgrace. That goes against our rules of the House. The member

should do the right thing and apologize. If she does not apologize, it is important as you review what was said during question period to also review what the member just said officially on the record. Hopefully, she will apologize.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I am standing here. When I am standing here, I would like to have the opportunity to be able to speak for a few moments.

I did hear the reinforcement. I do need to remind everyone that we are all hon. members and that we should try to keep our comments about the character of others as truthful as we possibly can, and to make sure that we do not call people names when we are doing that.

I will look to the member for Thornhill as to whether she would like to retract that. I would suggest that maybe we should so we can move on to the vote that we are going to have today. No? I will review it and I will come back to the House on that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I will come back to the House on it after I review it and speak to the folks of the chair.

● (1520)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, this probably could all be resolved if the Prime Minister would actually take responsibility and stop putting women up to do his dirty work for him.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of debate.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NAZISM

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the House:

- (i) utterly condemn Nazism in all its forms,
- (ii) express its full solidarity with all victims of Nazism, past and present,
- (iii) condemn the invitation extended to a former Waffen-SS soldier on Friday, September 22, 2023, and withdraw any tribute paid to him.

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

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

STRENGTHENING THE PORT SYSTEM AND RAILWAY SAFETY IN CANADA ACT

The House resumed from September 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-33, Strengthening the Port System and Railway Safety in Canada Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, September 21, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment of the member for Langley—Aldergrove to the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-33.

Call in the members.

• (1535)

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

(Division No. 410)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Berthold
Bezan	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Calkins
Caputo	Carrie
Chambers	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Deltell	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Khanna
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lehoux
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Maguire	Majumdar
Martel	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Melillo	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Perkins
Poilievre	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff

Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Sgro
Shields	Shipley
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thomas	Tochor
Tolmie	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer— 116

Government Orders

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bergeron	Bérubé
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gainey
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga

Government Orders

Kelloway	Khalid	Ashton	Atwin
Khera	Koutrakis	Bachrach	Badawey
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Bains	Baker
Lambropoulos	Lametti	Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Lamoureux	Lapointe	Beaulieu	Beech
Larouche	Lattanzio	Bendayan	Bennett
Lauzon	Lebouthillier	Bergeron	Bérubé
Lemire	Lightbound	Bibeau	Bittle
Long	Longfield	Blaikie	Blair
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)	Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor	Blaney	Blois
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Boissonnault	Boulerice
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Bradford	Brière
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McDonald (Avalon)	Carr	Casey
McGuinty	McKay	Chabot	Chagger
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod	Chahal	Champagne
McPherson	Mendès	Champoux	Chatel
Medicino	Miao	Chen	Chiang
Michaud	Miller	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Cormier
Morrice	Morrissey	Coteau	Dabrusin
Murray	Naqvi	Damoff	Davies
Ng	Noormohamed	DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Normandin	O'Connell	Desilets	Desjarlais
Oliphant	O'Regan	Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Perron	Petitpas Taylor	Diab	Dong
Plamondon	Powlowski	Drouin	Dubourg
Qualtrough	Rays	Duclos	Duguid
Robillard	Rodriguez	Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
Rogers	Romanado	El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Sahota	Sajjan	Fergus	Fillmore
Saks	Samson	Fisher	Fonseca
Sarai	Savard-Tremblay	Fortier	Fortin
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe	Fragiskatos	Fraser
Serré	Shanahan	Freeland	Fry
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Gaheer	Gainey
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard	Garon	Garrison
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh	Gaudreau	Gazan
Sorbara	Sousa	Gerretsen	Gill
Ste-Marie	St-Onge	Gould	Green
Sudds	Tassi	Guilbeault	Hajdu
Taylor Roy	Thériault	Hanley	Hardie
Therrien	Thompson	Hepfner	Holland
Trudel	Turnbull	Housefather	Hughes
Valdez	Van Bynen	Hussen	Hutchings
van Koeverden	Vandal	Iacono	Idlout
Vandenbeld	Vignola	Ien	Jaczek
Villemure	Virani	Johns	Joly
Weiler	Yip	Jones	Jowhari
Zahid	Zarrillo	Julian	Kayabaga
Zuberi— 209		Kelloway	Khalid
		Khera	Koutrakis
		Kusmierczyk	Kwan
		Lambropoulos	Lametti
		Lamoureux	Lapointe
		Larouche	Lattanzio
		Lauzon	LeBlanc
		Lebouthillier	Lemire
		Lightbound	Long
		Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
		MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
		MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
		Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
		Masse	Mathysen
		May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
		McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
		McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
		McLeod	McPherson
		Mendès	Medicino
		Miao	Michaud
		Miller	Morrice
		Morrissey	Murray
		Naqvi	Ng

PAIRED

Members

Godin Lalonde— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion.

• (1550)

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

*(Division No. 411)***YEAS**

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya

Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski
Rayes
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sajjan
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Trudel
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Villemure
Vuong
Yip
Zarrillo

Normandin
Oliphant
Perron
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Sousa
St-Onge
Tassi
Thériault
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Virani
Weiler
Zahid
Zuberi — 212

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Berthold
Block
Brassard
Calkins
Carrie
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Doherty
Dreeschen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Khanna
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lawrence
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Maguire
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Paul-Hus
Poilievre

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Bezan
Bragdon
Brock
Caputo
Chambers
Cooper
Dancho
Deltell
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri
Gallant
Genuis
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lantsman
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Majumdar
Mazier
McLean
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Patzner
Perkins
Redekopp

Government Orders

Reid
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seeback
Shiplay
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Schmale
Shields
Small
Steinley
Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer — 114

PAIRED

Members

Godin
Lalonde — 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would indicate that the official opposition House leader was not in the proper place to record his vote. That vote should not count so I think we will have to amend the vote totals.

The Deputy Speaker: This is a reminder that we should be in our seats when we are taking a vote. It happened on both sides today when that was not the case.

The hon. House leader for the official opposition.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I did try to vote by the app. It did not work, so I came in. I endeavoured to try to save the House time by not getting up after to register my vote so I just did it while the roll call was being done.

Thanks to the parliamentary secretary, I see that my effort was wasted, but I did have technical difficulties so I came into the chamber to register my vote.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, on a separate point of order, since the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is being so particular about the voting rules, which I admire, if there is a review, there was a member who has voted during the last two video votes without a jacket.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, just to provide some clarification to the Conservative opposition House leader, if he was having technical difficulties, that would have been a point of order prior to the vote being announced, so I would suggest that his vote should not be allowed to count.

The Deputy Speaker: I am just going to do a review with the table and get back to the House.

The proper course of action if someone is having technical difficulties is to wait until the end and bring it up. I know the hon. member was really trying hard to save us all some time.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I encountered technical difficulties in trying to use the app and I would like my vote recorded as a nay.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am feeling very gracious. I am prepared to give unanimous consent to allow the member's vote to count.

• (1555)

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, given all that has transpired, I will seek unanimous consent of the House to have my vote recorded as a “nay”, out of respect to you.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

The question is on the motion.

• (1605)

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

(*Division No. 412*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
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

Carr	Carrie
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Chambers	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cooper	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Doherty
Dong	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Fergus
Ferreri	Fillmore
Findlay	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Gallant
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genius
Gerretsen	Gill
Gladu	Goodridge
Gould	Gourde
Gray	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hallan	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Hoback	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Jeneroux
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Kelly
Khalid	Khanna
Khera	Kitchen
Kmieciak	Koutrakis
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lake	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lantsman	Lapointe
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	Lawrence
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lehoux	Lemire
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Majumdar
Maloney	Martel

Government Orders

Martinez Ferrada
 Mathysen
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 McLeod
 Melillo
 Mendicino
 Michaud
 Moore
 Morrice
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Naqvi
 Ng
 Normandin
 Oliphant
 Patzer
 Perkins
 Petitpas Taylor
 Poilievre
 Qualtrough
 Redekopp
 Rempel Garner
 Roberts
 Rodriguez
 Romanado
 Ruff
 Sajjan
 Samson
 Savard-Tremblay
 Scheer
 Schmale
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Shields
 Sidhu (Brampton East)
 Simard
 Singh
 Sorbara
 Sousa
 Ste-Marie
 St-Onge
 Stubbs
 Tassi
 Thériault
 Thomas
 Tochor
 Trudeau
 Turnbull
 Valdez
 van Koeverden
 Vandal
 Vecchio
 Vien
 Vignola
 Virani
 Vuong
 Warkentin
 Webber
 Williams
 Yip
 Zarrillo
 Zuberi — 327

Masse
 May (Cambridge)
 Mazier
 McDonald (Avalon)
 McKay
 McLean
 McPherson
 Mendès
 Miao
 Miller
 Morantz
 Morrison
 Motz
 Muys
 Nater
 Noormohamed
 O'Connell
 O'Regan
 Paul-Hus
 Perron
 Plamondon
 Powlowski
 Rayes
 Reid
 Richards
 Robillard
 Rogers
 Rood
 Sahota
 Saks
 Sarai
 Scarpaleggia
 Schiefke
 Seeback
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Shipley
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Sinclair-Desgagné
 Small
 Soroka
 Steinley
 Stewart
 Strahl
 Sudds
 Taylor Roy
 Therrien
 Thompson
 Tolmie
 Trudel
 Uppal
 Van Bynen
 Van Popta
 Vandenbeld
 Vidal
 Viersen
 Villemure
 Vis
 Wagantall
 Waugh
 Weiler
 Williamson
 Zahid
 Zimmer

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 44 minutes.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, on decorum, I think it has been a weird, unexpected few days in here, and I would just like to remind colleagues that there are reasons why people are dragged into your chair, albeit they have probably changed over time.

I know that I would not want to have to sit in your chair and manage me, so on behalf of everybody in here, thank you for stepping into an unexpected breach today.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: 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 is as follows: the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Climate Change; the hon. member for Bow River, Carbon Pricing.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND GROCERIES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-56, Affordable Housing and Groceries Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will splitting my time with the member for Richmond Hill.

It is an honour to rise to participate in today's debate in support of Bill C-56, the affordable housing and groceries act. I have heard from many residents in my riding of Don Valley West about the rising prices they face every day, about the impact of inflation on their daily lives, and especially about the rising cost of rental apartments and high grocery prices.

Powerful measures are indeed needed to lower the costs of those two essential expenses for many families in Don Valley West, in Toronto and across Canada, those being housing and groceries. They are absolutely essential for our well-being in every sense of the word, and we need to take absolutely strong steps. Bill C-56 lays out some of the steps that the government needs to do to address this situation.

Our government indeed wants to put money in the pockets of middle-class Canadians at a time when they need it most. Our whole world is facing, and continues to face, supply chain crises and rising prices around the world, and Canada is no exception to that.

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Godin

Lalonde — 2

Government Orders

Bill C-56 addresses the housing costs that are far too high for far too many Canadians. This bill would enable the government to incentivize the construction of much-needed rental homes by removing the GST on the construction of new rental housing. To get it done, the bill would implement a temporary enhancement to the GST new residential rental property rebate in respect of new, purpose-built rental housing.

Just before this announcement was made in mid-September, a builder approached me in my own riding to say that he had successfully constructed a number of rental units and had approvals for many hundreds more, but was putting it on hold with the high costs in today's economy. He immediately spoke to me the next day and thanked me for this decision of the government because that incentivized and enabled him to take up the challenge to build more rental units.

For example, a two-bedroom rental unit that costs about \$500,000 to construct, with the enhanced GST rental rebate, would now have \$25,000 in tax relief, a significant move to lower the costs of construction of new rental units. This is another tool to create the necessary conditions to build the types of housing we need and that families want to live in.

The federal government cannot do this alone. We are calling on all provinces that currently apply provincial sales taxes to join Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and perhaps others who have announced that they will be reducing or eliminating the provincial portion of the HST on rental housing. We want all provinces and territories to join in on this, matching our rebate for new rental housing.

We have been leading the charge to make sure that an entire generation is not priced out of owning a home or even renting one. In budget 2022, we announced targeted and responsible investments that would help provide Canadians an affordable place to call home. Budget 2022 laid out important steps toward building more houses, helping people save for their first home, curbing speculation and unfair practices that are driving up housing prices.

Among those measures, the government unveiled the tax-free first home savings account to allow Canadians to save up to \$40,000 tax-free to help buy their first home. We also launched the rapid housing initiative, which is providing \$1.5 billion to create 4,500 new affordable housing units.

Since then, we have kept up our fight to help families. We are acting quickly to make a difference, but we recognize, very strongly, that there is more to do. We know boosting Canada's housing supply is critical to easing affordability challenges.

Earlier this month, we announced the government's first agreement under the \$4-billion housing accelerator fund, which was launched earlier this year to cut red tape and fix outdated local policies, such as zoning, and build more homes faster. This is an inter-governmental problem, and we need governments at every level to engage in the solutions, whether it is municipalities, provinces or our own federal government.

This initial agreement would provide some \$74 million to increase the housing supply in London, Ontario. We believe many more agreements are to follow, and would encourage all members

of the House to look for opportunities and to talk to their municipalities about this fund.

• (1610)

There is more. We will recommend that local governments end exclusionary zoning and encourage building apartments near public transit to have their housing accelerator fund applications approved. Our plan to double the rate of housing construction over the next decade will help build the housing supply we need. We will continue to work with provincial, territorial and municipal governments as well as indigenous partners to keep building more homes.

Building the homes a growing Canada needs will require a national effort, and the federal government is ready to lead. What we need first, obviously, are roofs over our heads. It is critical that people have affordable and attainable housing that will ensure they have that roof over their heads. Once they have the roof over their head, what they need is food to put on the table that is under that roof.

As I mentioned, the reach of Bill C-56 is also designed to help address escalating grocery prices. Last week, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry summoned the leaders of Canada's largest grocery chains to begin urgent discussions so we can move quickly to stabilize food prices. Yesterday, our government met with major international food processors, going up the chain, to continue our efforts to bring relief for Canadian consumers.

We are considering all tools at our disposal to restore grocery price stability. In an era when the whole world is facing a crisis in rising food prices, we cannot do this alone, but we will take the steps we can do as a federal government to bring grocery prices down so Canadians can eat well.

Bill C-56 would take the first legislative steps to enhance competition, with a focus on the grocery sector, by amending the Competition Act. Among the most recent amendments, the bill would grant the Competition Bureau with powers to compel the production of information to conduct effective and complete market studies. Bill C-56 would also empower the bureau to take action against collaborations that stifle competition and consumer choice, in particular situations where large grocers prevent small competitors from establishing operations nearby.

In conclusion, since 2015, the federal government has been working hard to ease the financial strain on Canadian families through the Canada child benefit, a middle-class tax cut, and in the next few years, \$10-a-day regulated child care on average all across the country.

We have strengthened the social safety net that millions of Canadians count on. We will continue to be there for Canadians, making sure they have a roof over their heads, groceries they can afford and the benefits they need to continue to prosper and excel in this country.

• (1615)

Mr. Shaun Chen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During the last vote earlier, I erroneously voted against when I meant to vote in favour, and I would like to ask the House for unanimous consent to change my vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for having this debate today because in Oshawa this is one of the issues I am hearing about over and over again. I was listening to the parliamentary secretary's speech. One of the complaints I get from municipal leaders is that there has been a lot of money put out there but really there is not a lot of results.

I believe in the last eight years the Liberal government has announced \$89 billion in funding for affordable housing, and we just do not know how many houses that has actually helped build. I was wondering if the parliamentary secretary could tell us today how many houses were successfully built over the last eight years with that \$89 billion and how much the cost was per house.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we have a market-driven economy that builds houses across this country in many different ways. There are houses that are built as rental units. There are apartments that are built and condominiums that are built.

I invite him to come to the riding of Don Valley West to the area at Redpath and Broadway to see the construction project, which is a fascinating public-private partnership building hundreds of units of affordable housing and market rent housing, as well as condominiums. It is one concrete example, literally concrete, where houses are being built and a difference is being made.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to my colleague speaking proudly and enthusiastically about the fantastic measure that we have just adopted to build rental housing by removing the GST on the construction of apartment buildings. This only applies to privately owned buildings, however. Municipal organizations are already exempt. Non-profits that are already partially exempt will not be fully exempt. Housing co-ops will not be fully exempt either.

Does the member find that logical? Does he think that we should make an effort to change that and take truly meaningful measures,

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like investing 1% of the annual budget in social housing to take pressure off the market?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, housing subsidies and other measures offered on the market, including by not-for-profit organizations, are not the same. It is a complex situation, with an integrated market overlapping two sectors. I think it is necessary to have housing supports offered by not-for-profit organizations and others aimed at the private market. Both sectors need different things in different parts of the country.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have known many young people, and I actually spent the summer helping move people out of Toronto because this is no longer a city they can live in. It now takes 20 years for a family to save for a down payment. It has been reported that 40% of the condos in Toronto sit empty or are being rented out on Airbnb.

This is a manufactured crisis. Therefore, when I hear my hon. colleague talk about the response, what I am not hearing is a credible plan for co-operative housing, which was a linchpin of making urban living possible and also of making rural and northern living possible. Due to the fact that the market forces have failed us, that there is market manipulation and that the housing market has been used by speculators, we really need a strong all-hands-on-deck approach to address the housing crisis that exists in every one of our communities across this country.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, the member will get no argument whatsoever from me about the importance of building co-operative housing. I have four such buildings in my riding, and I want eight or 10 or 12. We have to set the conditions for co-operative housing to be increased. I am happy to be on record as saying that I will push my own government to make sure that we have a way to encourage such projects. They are innovative. We may need to look for a 21st-century solution to what used to be a 20th-century example. I have been part of those projects. I myself have built three affordable-housing projects and I will engage in any good and credible solutions to find a way to put roofs over people's heads.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to discuss Bill C-56. This affordability bill has two important parts: the temporary removal of the goods and services tax, the GST, from new purpose-built rental housing, and a significant improvement to the Competition Act. On September 14, the government announced that the GST would be temporarily removed from new purpose-built rental housing to encourage an increase in the construction of rental housing. This removal would be in effect until the end of 2035.

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That being said, I would like to spend the rest of my speech today on the second part of this bill, which is about enhancing the Competition Act. Bill C-56 would make three targeted improvements to the Competition Act. It would stop big-business mergers with anti-competitive effects, would enable the Competition Bureau to conduct precise market studies and would stop anti-competitive collaboration that stifles small businesses, specifically small grocers.

Canada's current Competition Act was first passed in 1985. It is an understatement to say that since then, our market has evolved. For this reason, the government launched a wide-ranging consultation on competition legislation and what ought to be done to modernize it and make sure it serves the best interests of Canadians. One thing we know for sure is that over the years, there has been an increase in mergers and market concentration in many Canadian industries, such as retail grocery. Canadian consumers have made it very clear that they have concerns about how the competitive landscape has changed in these markets and that they believe the law needs to be changed to that ensure the marketplace is fair.

Business collaboration can take all sorts of forms, from innocuous dealings to the problematic anti-competitive agreements. In this latter category, we have the sorts of practices that are always considered harmful under our competition law, such as cartels to fix prices, allocate markets or restrict production. Rigging bids in response to a call for tenders is also treated in this manner, as now are wage-fixing and no-poaching agreements between employers, because of changes we introduced in 2022. These forms of agreements are criminal offences. They are the most direct and straightforward way to undermine marketplace competition and are illegal, no matter their results.

There are other sorts of collaboration, however, that are not so clear-cut. One might think of joint ventures involving two competitors, or an agreement to share certain information or jointly conduct research. These agreements are not cartels but may, nevertheless, still lessen competition because they involve co-operation between parties that are meant to compete. The Competition Bureau may examine these kinds of collaborations, and if it finds that they harm competition, the bureau may apply for a court order to remedy that. There is one hitch, however. The bureau can look to remedy these agreements only if they are struck between real or potential competitors in the same market.

Most other countries have a more straightforward rule, which is that an agreement made to restrain competition can be remedied. It is as simple as that, because there are cases where we should be concerned by an agreement made between two companies that are not direct competitors. Imagine, if we will, that a large grocery retailer opens a store in the only shopping plaza in the community and that, as part of its agreement with the landlord, it indicates that it does not want another supermarket or maybe even a specialty food store to open in the same plaza. The supermarket does not want a competitor eating into its profits. The landlord agrees because it wants the big grocery retailer to come to the plaza and generate traffic. The landlord is still free to rent other spaces to hardware stores, furniture stores or even pet shops. It is a win-win between them, right? It is not really. The end consumer is actually the one who loses.

• (1625)

First and foremost, the consumer misses out on the benefits of competition. The supermarket can raise prices because of its territorial exclusivity. How about a local entrepreneur who would like to open a butcher shop or a bakery? Unfortunately, they will be cut out of the list of potential tenants because the landlord made a promise.

What I have shared is not just a hypothetical scenario. Earlier this year, the Competition Bureau conducted a retail grocery market study. In its report, the bureau shared that it heard from Canadian businesses that said they have been unable to open stores in places they wanted to set up shop, because of property controls. As the bureau would conclude, these property controls limit entry by new grocers and deny consumers all of the benefits from added competition, like lower prices and more choice.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, or CFGI, raised an even more worrisome version of property control in its submission to the government consultation. CFGI raised the topic of restrictive covenants, which arise when a retail store is sold but the vendor wants to protect the land it is leaving from any rivals. When the chain sells its space, it may negotiate a covenant into its sale agreement with the purchaser, preventing any future owners from ever using the property to operate a grocery store. This can happen with lease agreements too, shielding the plot of land from new entrants even after the original supermarket has left.

CFGI and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre both point to this practice as contributing to so-called food deserts in many communities. This is not a good outcome, and it is the result of restraints on competition. It is time for Canada to update our legislation and ensure that we catch up to our international counterparts at the forefront of promoting fair competition. Amendments to the Competition Act would ensure that the Competition Bureau can review agreements like these where their very purpose is to restrict competition, even when they are made between non-competing parties like landlords and tenants. If the collaboration would substantially lessen or prevent competition, then the bureau would be able to seek a remedy, including an order to shut down the activity.

I wish to highlight that our office places great importance on proactive community engagement. To this end, we have established five community councils, among which the Affordability Council stands as one of the most actively engaged. It is with eager anticipation that I intend to present the affordability bill to my local Richmond Hill Community Council.

The matter of affordable housing and access to essential groceries stands as a paramount concern for constituents, and we are committed to addressing these critical issues through this affordability bill. I look forward to working with members of the House on passing this important piece of legislation.

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• (1630)

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague did make some good points. The member mentioned independent grocers. I work a lot with independent grocers, and he is right; they do face a lot more challenges than big chains. There are challenges in trying to get competitive pricing on goods they want to buy and resell in their stores. That is just one of the issues that independent grocers face.

If we have more competition in the grocery industry, we will see grocery prices fall, and that is the crux of the matter in Canada. I have been asking about this for years. In fact, I asked the Competition Bureau if it would look at abuse of dominance with big grocers in the industry, and I have had the opportunity to question the CEOs of major grocery stores.

Will the member's government stop providing Canadian taxpayer dollars to multinational corporations or publicly traded grocers that are making hundreds of millions of dollars in profits every quarter, and perhaps focus on keeping our independent grocers alive and well in the communities they serve?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member across the aisle for advocating for independent grocers, as I have been in my riding.

There are two pieces to that comment. One is about international grocers and collaboration. As members know, our government called on at least five of those grocers, along with some of the manufacturers, over the last week or so to have a conversation with them and to work collaboratively to come up with a solution to reduce prices. On the other hand, I come from a riding that is highly diverse and the small grocers who provide to some of the ethnic community play a huge role, so this is welcome news. Bill C-56 is welcome news for those independent, ethnic-based grocers who are providing products for those types of communities.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Competition Act, which was the main focus of the speech by my colleague opposite, has two components. It prohibits certain anti-competition practices, and it makes corporate mergers and acquisitions more difficult. In Canada, the status quo boils down to a single practice: efficiency gains. The efficiency argument allows buyouts. The Competition Bureau gives them a pass.

Could my colleague give us practical examples of how these improved competition rules will affect prices, and therefore, inflation, and how these factors will improve the lives of our fellow citizens?

[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, the point I was trying to make is that if we ensure that the bureau can review the agreements when the sale of a grocery store or a grocery chain has taken place and the land is not made available to other competitors of the same kind, specifically grocery, that violation is what we are going to look into, and that is what this bill intends to address.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Edmonton, I and the member for Edmonton Griesbach

have been meeting with Mayor Sohi regularly to talk about housing, because we are so deeply worried about the housing crisis in Edmonton. One of the things Mayor Sohi has asked is that this rebate on the GST also include those properties that are currently being built. However, there are restrictions being added to this by the Liberals.

Could the member explain to me why those restrictions are in place and whether the Liberals would be open to amending it to expand the availability of that rebate?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, any opportunity to improve Bill C-56 to ensure that we can increase the supply of housing, specifically purpose rental housing, is considered. I suggest that we pass this bill and get it to committee so that we can actually have the conversation that we need to have on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by stating that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert. For that reason, I will be talking less about housing than about competition. I would have plenty to say about housing, but my colleague will do a better job.

All I am going to say about housing is what I said earlier: This is just window dressing, like most of the Liberal government's announcements. We need concrete action and money for social housing on an ongoing basis. I will come back to this if I have time at the end of my speech.

That said, let us move on to the positive feature of Bill C-56, which is amending the Competition Act. It is good to see meaningful measures that are likely to actually improve things.

The first measure that was announced was one that was proposed in the report on a study during which we, too, met with the heads of the major grocery chains, but not only them. We also met all the stakeholders in the agri-food industry.

Let us talk for a minute about the smoke and mirrors show the government is putting on, convening CEOs and, this week, meeting with the major processors. I suggest that the government meet everyone, including everyday people. Of course this includes the small processors, people from the Conseil de la transformation alimentaire du Québec, which covers a significant number of SMEs, and those from the agricultural world. The message is being sent because if we want to act, then we need to be aware of the challenges that all these people meet along the way.

Let us come back to the first measure, which seeks to give real investigative powers to the Competition Bureau. I must make a confession. When we received people from the Competition Bureau at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, there was a moment when I was embarrassed. I was embarrassed to be an elected member from a G7 country listening to the people responsible for providing assurances of a healthy competition among businesses in the country tell me that they did not have power, explain to me plainly that they would ask the major grocery chains for their profit numbers, but that the chains did not want to oblige. They kept having to say “please” to no avail.

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I am going to tell you something even more galling. During the study, we hosted the five CEOs of the major grocery chains in committee. Knowing that the Competition Bureau had no authority to compel them to produce a breakdown of their profits, I personally asked each of them, one by one, to commit to provide Competition Bureau authorities with a breakdown of their figures, which these authorities would keep confidential.

Their standard response when we ask them for their figures is to claim that, as competitors, they cannot disclose that information to us. While they may be competitors, for some strange reason, they all change their prices at exactly the same time. Nevertheless, all five agreed to give us all their figures. A few weeks later I was bitterly disappointed on seeing the Competition Bureau's report. The bureau complained that several companies had refused to hand over their figures. I do not know how to characterize that. If we seriously want to ensure competition in a G7 nation, the institution responsible for market investigations needs the authority to do its job. It needs to be able to compel people to come testify and produce documents. I applaud this initial measure.

Now for the second measure. The law already prohibits agreements between competitors that will restrict competition. That is a no-brainer. However, agreements like that clearly happen at times; the trick is to catch them. Here is the adjustment that is being made to the legislation: Companies are not allowed to enter into an agreement with someone who is not their competitor for the purpose of restricting competition in a market. For example, if a business leases space in a shopping centre to set up a grocery store, it cannot tell the landlord that the only way it will sign the lease is if the landlord does not lease space to someone else who sells food in the same building. This restricts competition.

• (1640)

Another example is when a food-related business closes down. They sell the building and open another business a little further away. They renovate to make it look good. When selling the old building, they include conditions that the buyer will never be allowed to open a food market. These are real examples that show how competition is reduced. I applaud this measure.

The third measure will likely have a big impact, but it comes a bit late because we now have five major food chains that control 80% of the market. In economics that is called an oligopoly. Even though the owners of these five businesses swear, hand on heart, that they do not talk to each other, we can at the very least assume that they look at one another. We saw evidence of that when they simultaneously stopped giving COVID bonuses to their employees when COVID-19 was over, on the same day. When the average person sees that, they think that if they are not talking to each other, then they are looking at one another a lot. That is what makes them an oligopoly.

The third measure in the bill relates to not authorizing a merger that reduces competition on the pretext that it increases a company's efficiency. It is important to note that there was a provision in a piece of legislation called the Competition Act that allowed a merger and acquisition to be authorized if it increased a company's efficiency. I should hope that it makes a company more efficient. No company buys another company thinking it will become less effi-

cient or worse at what it does. This can happen because of poor calculations, a poor reading of the market or because it is just not a good company but, generally speaking, an entrepreneur who acquires a competitor on the market clearly intends to reduce competition and become more efficient. If that company is the only one, it can inflate its prices in the long term. That is how it always works.

I could not get over the fact that this criterion existed in the Competition Act. Bill C-56 proposes to remove that and I applaud that as well. There are some markets that are oligopolistic, but they do not all have the same need for regulations. However, when we talk about food or housing, these are essential needs. I would go further than that and I am sure that my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert will agree with me. These are more than essential needs. Housing and putting food on the table are fundamental rights. The government needs to take effective measures to address these issues.

We need to be aware of other factors that cause the price of groceries to go up. Let us consider the consequences of climate change that our vegetable producers faced this summer. I have sounded the alarm about this in the House a few times now and we still have not received a meaningful answer from the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food nor the Minister of Finance.

At the start of summer, some people invest \$2 million to \$3 million in their fields. If year after year they are told that they will have to work themselves out of a tight spot all by themselves, they are eventually going to stop investing that \$2 million to \$3 million. Instead of growing cauliflower, they might go into field crops, where there is less risk. Consequently, we could end up with a food shortage.

I do not want to sound too alarmist, but it happened in Britain and Ireland this year. The shelves were empty or half empty. They turned to the farming countries that can usually sell food, except that they, too, were having production problems, unfortunately, and could not sell anything. There were empty shelves, or shelves where the product was extremely expensive. We do not want that either.

With pricing policies like these, we need a long-term strategic policy, not a short-term plan. Politics' main flaw is that most decision-makers operate on a four-year timeline centred on the next election. I am calling on elected members of the House to take the high road and make the decision that works best for the next generation. That is our job. Otherwise, we have no business here. That is my philosophical take on it.

In the 50 or so seconds I have left, I want to say that the war in Ukraine has put the world grain market under a lot of pressure. Although these factors are beyond our control, the same is not true of the 35% tax still applied to Russian fertilizer, and Canada is the only country that has it. This measure is not effective. Once again, I am asking that this money be returned to farmers. It will cost less in the end.

I could also talk about percentage margins and many other things. I hope that my colleagues in the House will give me an opportunity to say more by asking me intelligent and structured questions.

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• (1645)

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his thoughtful intervention.

The affordable housing initiative that we are putting forward, with the removal of the GST on rentals, is part of our national housing strategy, which has a variety of different programs intended to reach different parts of the market. Removing the GST is the equivalent of a 5% reduction for developers to build rental units, so we can get more rental units into the marketplace. Now that the cost of interest has gone up, this would help decisions be made to have rental units created.

Could the hon. member comment on how important it is to have such a range of options in our housing strategy?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, of course removing the GST from housing construction is not a bad idea. All I was saying earlier is that this is a half-measure that will not have much of an impact.

My colleague mentioned it himself in his question. Interest rates are rising well above the 5% GST and builders will pass on the cost in the price of rent.

What we really need are measures that will lower the price of rent and increase the number of available housing, by using supply and demand. The market is currently out of balance.

The solution, I repeat, is 1% of the annual budget for social housing with no strings attached in Quebec and the provinces in order to make this happen quickly, instead of blocking the \$900 million — which, I would like the House to know, is still being blocked.

I find it revolting that the government claims to be taking measures for housing when it is keeping money from Quebec. They need to give us our money. We will build housing.

[*English*]

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, with whom I sit on the agriculture committee, for his great speech. He brought up a few points with respect to farmers.

We know that grocery prices have increased in the stores. For farmers, input costs have gone up. The biggest thing is the carbon tax. The second is interest rates on loans, so the costs have gone up for servicing debt. Minimum wage has gone up in many provinces. We are seeing those three basic increases, which contribute to the increased price farmers are asking for their products from the grocers.

If we look at lack of competition with respect to the grocery stores, here is one example. I will ask my hon. colleague to comment on this: The price of lettuce in Vancouver is more expensive than that in Toronto. Why would that be, when California, which supplies the lettuce, is closer to Vancouver than it is to Toronto? Why is it that people are paying less in Toronto for groceries than they are in Vancouver? The answer is simple: It is competition. There is more competition in Toronto—

• (1650)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. I appreciate the work she does.

Indeed, competition is the key. In fact, my colleague will recall that, in the report we produced, there were several recommendations, including one that suggested working on the supply chain and doing so effectively.

The problem with this government is that it does not take action. There is a report from the supply chain task force to incentivize investment, but it is going nowhere.

As I mentioned earlier, we also proposed abolishing the tax on Russian fertilizers. In addition, we have also proposed a package of measures to make life easier for our farmers, including a modernization investment program for small and medium-sized processing businesses. When are we going to see that?

These are structural measures that will address the labour shortage and make things more efficient, which could have a long-term effect on prices.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned long-term effects. I want to ask the member this: Unlike the U.S., Canada has never broken up a corporation to protect Canadian consumers, yet the Competition Board has the authority to review beyond initial transactions. Does the Bloc see value in having the Competition Board review the Loblaws-Shoppers Drug Mart merger from 10 years ago?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately it is very difficult to review a transaction that happened years ago. All we can do is take action for the future.

We are currently regulating future transactions, and that is fine. Now, what can we do to make it easier to enter the market?

Could the government not create measures that would favour independent grocers, that could increase food supply and therefore increase competition?

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, particularly the part about Bill C-56 that he handled so well. He spoke intelligently, very eloquently and passionately, as always.

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I am a little uncertain about how to approach today's debate. Over the past few years, I have talked a lot about housing, about those less fortunate, about people who are being left behind in this country. Last week we debated a motion moved by a Conservative colleague relating to, among other things, children with disabilities. That gave me the opportunity to say that I do not think we are doing enough for the most vulnerable members of our society. They are not being properly considered, and Canada is not doing enough to address the huge problems we are facing right now. Bill C-56 is right in the thick of it. We have a major problem.

This summer, I set out with my pilgrim's staff. I had read in the newspaper back in February that homelessness was now a reality in places where that had never been seen before in Quebec, places like Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, Lebel-sur-Quévillon or Saint-Jean-de-Dieu in the Témiscouata region. There were people sleeping in tents on the side of highways and in buildings in places where no one had ever seen anything of the sort. We know that the situation is dire. We have seen the numbers. We need 3.5 million housing units. That was mentioned earlier, and I will come back to it later.

When I heard about that, I decided to take a trip across Quebec over much of the summer. I left in May and June, and again starting in mid-August. What I saw was terrible. Quebec is on the verge of a humanitarian crisis. There are tent cities everywhere. I mentioned Lebel-sur-Quévillon, but there are some in Val-d'Or, in Shawinigan, in Joliette, in Trois-Rivières. How can we, in this country, accept that a single mother has to sleep in her car with her two children? I cannot accept that. I tell myself that I have some power. I was elected here. I am only one of 338, but I still have the power to do something. We need to act. I got on the road to get a sense of the situation.

This summer, we also heard about a young pregnant woman who gave birth in a wooded area in downtown Gatineau, about one or two kilometres from here. The mayor of Gatineau talked about it. She asked how we could accept that. As an elected official, she too finds that completely unacceptable.

Last week, I was in Quebec City at a symposium on homelessness. We talked about how to deal with this crisis. Bill C-56 brings us back to the housing crisis. What are people telling us about the homelessness problem? This was a problem 20 years ago in Quebec. We know how to deal with these issues. We developed a continuum of services for homeless people, which included emergency resources that are available 24/7, where people could go if it was -20 degrees outside and where they could sleep. These types of resources are not available everywhere, but they were there at one point. Then, there was a continuum of services for people with addictions and mental health issues. They could be brought to a transition house, where they could stay for a month or even two. There were services available there. There were psychologists that could help people. They were working to reintegrate these people back into society. Those who had an addiction got support. At the end of this community help chain to support the most vulnerable, this sort of service pipeline, this process for taking care of people, there was housing.

However, I have seen that, now, there is nothing at the end of the service pipeline. There is no more housing. The result is that home-

lessness resources are at maximum capacity. There is no room for anyone else, so people are sleeping in tents across the province. How is that acceptable?

• (1655)

I spent the summer talking about that. Everyone is talking about it. It makes the headlines in the media almost every—

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I understand that the discussions are interesting, but when the House of Commons is not very full, as is the case right now, private conversations tend to carry a lot more. Hearing our colleagues' conversations makes it hard to concentrate. I wonder if it would be possible to ask them to take their conversations elsewhere or to lower their voices.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): The hon. member raises a good point. I would ask all members to be quiet while the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert has the floor.

The member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert has five minutes left to finish his speech.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that we are at the end of the continuum of service for homelessness. As we saw, there are 10,000 homeless people in Quebec. That was a snapshot of the situation in October 2022, and every organization told me that it was likely just the tip of the iceberg, because the homelessness we see hides the homelessness we do not see. I am thinking, for example, of women trapped in toxic relationships who are forced to stay in the home because they have no resources. Every day in Quebec, a woman who is the victim of domestic violence knocks on the door of a resource for victims of domestic violence and returns to her apartment with her two or three children and her abusive husband. How is such a thing acceptable?

Here we are being offered a half measure. After hearing these testimonies all across Quebec, I expected the government to do something. I saw a poll or two this summer. I imagine that the Liberals saw the same thing and told themselves that the housing crisis was important and they needed to take action. Then they present us with a half measure, a GST credit.

This country needs to build 3.5 million homes by 2030, including 1.1 million in Quebec. We would expect the Liberals to take action if they want to be re-elected. That is one of the major problems of our time. We would expect them to introduce a structuring measure that will change people's lives and enable us to build housing quickly. Instead we are getting a GST credit.

Of course, private builders will benefit from this, but will they really build housing for the less fortunate? Will they build social housing? Rarely in my lifetime have I heard of private contractors getting involved in social housing. That does not happen very often.

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There was an attempt in Montreal. Mayor Plante tried, with the 20-20-20 bylaw, which required developers who build 80, 100 or 120 units to build 20% social housing, 20% affordable housing and 20% housing for families. Many developers would rather pay the penalty than build social housing. Obviously, people who live in \$2,500-a-month homes do not really like having poor people as neighbours. It can interfere with property values.

Nothing is being done to solve this problem. As my colleague so well put it, the government had one chance, and now that makes two missed opportunities.

The first missed opportunity was withholding the \$900 million. I cannot believe it. There is a program called the housing accelerator fund for municipalities. It was part of the 2022 budget, and not a penny of the program funding has been spent in Quebec. Clearly, no one has figured out how to accelerate this program. It has been a year and a half, and there is a desperate need, yet not a penny has been spent. We are being told that the Quebec government is investing money as well. That could add up to more than \$1 billion to quickly build housing to help our people. It makes no sense. How is that acceptable?

What I am hearing is that the people in Quebec City want to use this money to build housing, but the people in Ottawa want the accelerator fund to be used to help municipalities with zoning and infrastructure and so on. Perhaps that would be helpful, but right now, Ottawa is the one hindering housing construction. It has been a year and a half since this \$4-billion program was passed, and they have just started building homes elsewhere in Canada.

The second missed opportunity dates back to 2017, when the government launched its major national housing strategy, an \$82-billion program. It took three years before even a single penny was spent in Quebec. Who is holding up the projects? Both the Liberals and the Conservatives like to say that it is the cities that are delaying projects and that they are going to fix the problem. No, it is not the cities that are holding up the projects. It is the federal government that is holding up the projects. That is unacceptable.

There is something else the government could do quickly. In Quebec's low-income housing stock, 72,000 housing units were built before 1993, and 4,500 of them have been boarded up because they are too dilapidated. These housing units still come under agreements with the federal government. It seems to me that funds could be allocated pretty quickly in the current context. These nearly 5,000 units already exist, and we would not need to zone anything. They are there; they exist. These are actual social housing units that could house people.

The government made a promise and it has to pay for these renovations, but it is nitpicking, fussing over the colour of the wallpaper and the tiling, or the depth of the sink. We are not too sure. There are discussions among people of taste. How are these homes going to be built? There are 4,500 housing units. If the government signed a cheque now, it could have 5,000 brand new social housing units ready for next July 1 in Quebec. The victims of domestic violence I was just talking about could be housed there.

It seems to me that the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities could make a quick call to Ms. Bowers—

• (1700)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): The hon. member for St. Catharines.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that there are so many in the House who are passionate about building housing. I was concerned that he was downplaying the impact of the GST credit. It is not a magic bullet that will solve anything, but it will be significant. It will produce hundreds of thousands of units of housing.

Just today we have seen, in Toronto, 5,000 units of housing that are going to be built because of this tax credit. That is one announcement, in one city, in one moment.

Why is he downplaying this when it is already having an impact?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I want to know why Bill C-56 does not include an affordability criterion as part of the eligibility for the GST credit. Including it would have made things simple. The government could force private builders to make housing truly affordable. However, it was not included.

Perhaps my colleague from Joliette will manage to get this added at committee, but I do not understand why the government did not include it. With this GST credit, all the government is going to do is hand out more money. The main problem with the major national housing strategy that was launched is that it is giving a lot of the money to private developers. The private sector wants to line its pockets. That is how capitalism works.

It is absolutely essential that the government invest in building real social housing.

• (1705)

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to join in the debate today. I have heard, often, my Bloc colleagues talk about there being no carbon tax effects in Quebec. I am sure all of the food that is consumed in Quebec is not produced in Quebec.

There is a carbon tax on the farmers that produce the food. There is a carbon tax on the truckers that truck the food, so why would he not think that the carbon tax would affect the consumers in Quebec?

It gets produced in other parts of the country and trucked from all across the country, so that food is more expensive in Quebec because of the carbon tax.

Would he not agree with that?

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, what is most expensive in Quebec right now is housing and rent. That is what is needed right now. I listen to the Conservatives here in the House and I try to find solutions. I listen to what they are proposing. All they want is to punish cities. They say that cities cannot get it right, that they will get in there to clean up the mess and make sure that cities build housing.

Come on. That has never worked. If it worked, we would know it. Punishing cities is not the way to go. What we need is for the federal government to really step up, because it has taxation power.

According to the IMF, we gave the oil industry \$50 billion in 2022. Meanwhile, people in Quebec have to sleep outdoors. How is that acceptable?

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert came to see us in Shefford. The problem is very serious in Granby. The member toured Quebec, and what the organizations in Quebec are asking for is assistance for community groups.

Community groups in Quebec are not talking to us about taxes. The idea of investing more money, for example 1% of the GDP, speaks to community groups, those that work every day with people in social housing and the homeless. There are also the acquisition funds. People tell me about ideas like giving more clout to other types of projects and taking this file out of the private market.

My colleague addressed the issue of victims of domestic violence and that is why I wanted to take the floor. He talked about the \$900 million that is being held in Ottawa right now. In the middle of the pandemic, while women were stuck 24 hours a day with their abuser, Ottawa was withholding money for women's shelters. That was in the middle of the pandemic. It is unacceptable. The federal government was withholding the money because it was trying to impose conditions.

It is time to give the money to Quebec. These are matters that fall under Quebec's responsibility. The government needs to stop withholding the money. Women and children are at risk.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right; that is unacceptable.

The government seems totally clueless about this problem. As I have said, we need to build 1.1 million housing units in Quebec and 3.5 million in Canada. A GST break alone is not going to make a big difference.

We absolutely have to have a strategy. We need an industrial-strength strategy. When the pandemic hit, the government managed to organize everything, send cheques out to workers and businesses and roll out vaccination across the country. How did it do that? It all happened in record time.

Why can we not mobilize the entire Canadian government behind this issue? It seems to me that we should all be able to get on board with taking care of the least fortunate.

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is quite adamant about waking us all up

on important issues, which I appreciate. When it comes to the market, however, I think it is important to delineate two facts. One is that the housing market we are seeing in Canada is largely a privatized one. It has been the belief of both the Conservatives and the Liberals that the market is going to fix itself.

Does the member agree with the New Democratic Party that we need non-market solutions to what is, in fact, a crisis facing Canadians?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): Sadly, we are out of time. We have to continue.

The member for Winnipeg South Centre.

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

On June 19, the people of Winnipeg South Centre put their trust in me to be their voice in this chamber. It is with the greatest sense of pride and humility that I rise today for my maiden speech as a member of Parliament.

The people of Winnipeg South Centre are as diverse as the country itself. It is a riding comprising individuals who have arrived in Canada recently and those, such as my ancestors, who escaped the pogroms of Europe, who came some time in the more distant past, as well as first nations and Red River M tis. We are blessed in Winnipeg South Centre to reflect the foundation of diversity upon which Canada is built.

What I appreciate most about the people of Winnipeg South Centre is their deep social conscience. They hold a collective belief in the responsibility that we all bear to look after one another. They care about those around them, never limiting the scope of their concerns to themselves only, but extending it broadly. It is an honour to be an extension of that here.

I saw these values reflected in the thousands of conversations I had with neighbours during the recent by-election campaign. Whether it be concerns related to climate change, reconciliation, mental health or education, my constituents are engaged, and they care.

I come to this role with a deep sense of gratitude and responsibility. As I took my seat last week and walked in this chamber past colleagues from all sides of the House and all parties, I was overcome by the magnitude of this place and reminded of how great a privilege it is to have the honour to serve one's community within these walls.

Today, I am thinking of those who have helped to shape me along the years: teachers, coaches, friends, family, neighbours and constituents. Whether it was Monsieurs Sokalski and Young at Kelvin High School, who fostered my love for civics and history; my coaches, Romu and Urbanovich, who taught me to always keep my head up and do my part as a member of a team; my dear friend who we lost earlier this year, Lydia Hedrich, who reminded me to always focus on my north star; or my mother and father, who instilled in me the foundational values of kindness, hard work and honesty that guide my actions today, I have been incredibly well served by those who collectively raised me. Of course, I am eternally grateful to my partner, Amy, for the positive influence she is on me every day.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

I am a product of bilingualism in Canada. Like many Canadians across the country, I was in a French immersion program from kindergarten to grade 12. It was during a French speaking competition that I first announced, “One day, I will be an MP”.

The public service has guided a number of the decisions I have made throughout my lifetime. I will continue to improve my French as best I can here in the House.

[*English*]

With every job or duty that I have undertaken in my life, the underlying aim has been to contribute to the benefit of the community that helped raise me. Whether it was as a teacher, volunteer coach or school principal, I have tried to immerse myself in actions that give something back.

Of particular focus for me over the coming months will be to advocate for the advancement of our collective journey toward truth and reconciliation, and I am grateful for the opportunity to sit on the Standing Committee for Indigenous and Northern Affairs. I have had the privilege as a teacher and principal to work closely with indigenous students and their families. I feel that, despite the significant progress that has been made since 2015, there is still much more work to do at the federal level to ensure equity and opportunity for young people from our indigenous communities.

By fostering stronger bonds with these communities and working together with our provincial colleagues as well as post-secondary institutions across the country, we can achieve meaningful progress.

I come to my work as a parliamentarian with a view through many lenses. In addition to conveying the thoughts and aspirations relayed to me by the people of Winnipeg South Centre, I arrive here as a teacher, as a Jew, as a son and as a westerner.

My hometown of Winnipeg is a special place. As an emerging destination for newcomers and economic development in the 19th and 20th centuries, Winnipeg served, and continues to serve, as the gateway to the west. As I look to the future of this great country, I see no region playing a more critical role than western Canada.

As we tackle the climate crisis, the Prairies will be there to innovate. With technologies like carbon capture and green hydrogen, wind and solar power, vast networks of clean hydroelectric energy, and critical minerals, we will lead the way.

Government Orders

Although I have been assured that my maiden speech can be somewhat less relevant to the debate at hand, it is timely that we are discussing the issues of affordability as I give these remarks, for the future costs we will assume or avoid as a country are rooted in the issues I have just highlighted.

If we do not address climate change, we will bear significant costs, ranging from massive increases in insurance premiums to emergency preparedness, infrastructure and more. If we do not follow the facts and medical expertise on how to effectively address the drug and mental health crisis we face in this country, including the implementation at provincial levels of supervised safe consumption sites, our costs for health care and within the criminal justice system will never be resolved or recovered.

If we do not continue moving towards closing the gap with indigenous education, we will leave the nation's fastest-growing generation's ideas and intellect behind and perpetuate the harms of the residential school era. In my home province of Manitoba, of the 11,000 children in the care of child and family services, 90% of them are indigenous.

In addition to the west, I am eager to contribute where possible to the growth and stability of our north. In my home province of Manitoba, the Port of Churchill will play a vital role in economic export activity, clean energy transmission and, of growing significance, Arctic sovereignty.

As we talk about affordability, it is a combination of these social and economic policies that will ensure that life is better for Canadians from all parts of the country. Along with the announcements the government has made in recent days pertaining to the GST on purpose-built homes, inclusive of the proposed changes to the Competition Act, are significant steps in our ongoing efforts to make life more affordable for Canadians, and to ease the financial burden being driven by myriad global factors.

As I conclude these maiden remarks, I want to turn my memory for a moment to my father. Less than a year ago, he stood courageously in this very chamber, just a few seats away from the one that I occupy today, and he used, literally, the last days of his life to continue fighting for the country and the region that he loved. The aspect of his work that I, as his son, was most proud of, across a long and diverse career of public contributions, was his unwavering commitment to building bridges and a conduct that evaded hyper-partisanship at every opportunity. Whenever the time may come that I look back at my own parliamentary career to judge its successes and shortcomings, I hope that I will be able to genuinely say that I have lived up to the standard that he set for us all.

Government Orders

• (1715)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on his election and appointment to the agriculture committee which he did not mention in his speech, which I find completely shameful. That should have led off his entire presentation, but that is okay.

I know he did not talk a great deal about the bill that we are talking about here today. I certainly appreciate that when someone is giving their maiden speech, they want to thank those who worked hard to get them here and what it means for all of us. However, now that he is member of the agriculture committee, with one aim of this bill being to reduce the grocery prices of food that all Canadians are struggling with, I would ask my colleague this.

We know now from the Canada food index that an average 5,000-acre farm will pay \$150,000 in carbon taxes. Farmers will be paying close to a billion dollars in carbon taxes between now and the year 2030. The Liberals are also going to be putting \$2 billion in new costs on farmers, producers and processors on front-of-pack labelling. Could the Liberals not address the food crisis and the price crisis right now by eliminating the carbon tax and eliminating this regulatory red tape?

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Speaker, I admit it was an egregious error not to begin my remarks by highlighting the fact that I have also been named, as he has, to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. I look forward to working with the member; as I mentioned earlier, the west is going to be at the forefront of change in this country, and the agricultural industry is critical to that change. Whether it is advancement that we are going to see in transportation, in clean energy or in the social issues that I mentioned previously in my remarks, it will be western Canada at the forefront. We have the brains and the leadership in the Prairies to lead the way.

Specifically related to the price of food, I will note that, in preparation for my work on the agriculture committee, I read through the report that the committee produced just a few months ago related to the price of food. At no point since the pandemic had the cost of food in Canada surpassed that in the United States. The point here is that this is a global issue. We are taking concrete measures, and we will continue to do so through this legislation.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to welcome the member to the House of Commons. I would also like to say that I was here when his father gave his farewell speech in the House, and I was here when people paid tribute after his passing. The words of my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia left not a single dry eye in the House. With utmost respect, I welcome him to his new role as a member of Parliament. I am sure he will fill those shoes with dignity and professionalism.

Since my colleague is a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, I would like to talk more about food prices and inflation, which is hitting Quebecers and Canadians hard these days. I know that the government is trying, that it has summoned the heads of the major chains and major agri-food com-

panies, but I think we need to consult farmers. They should be part of the solution and part of the conversation.

Should the burden on farmers not be eased because they are at the base of the chain?

Should the burden on farmers not be eased so as to reduce costs throughout the supply chain?

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his kind words. As I said earlier, these are global challenges that we are also facing in Canada. We have taken and will continue to take concrete action to ensure that grocery costs continue to drop.

I would once again like to thank my colleague for his words. I will have the opportunity to work with him on these issues in the weeks and months to come.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my hon. colleague to the House. I had the honour to sit beside his father. In the final weeks, I asked him every day, “Jim, how are you doing?” He said, “Every day is grace.”

I welcome my hon. colleague, and I thank him for his words on indigenous education and the climate crisis. We know there are many in this House who do not believe that our planet is on fire and would rather have it burn if it made a few extra bucks for big oil. We all need to work together, so I thank my colleague.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an absolute honour to have been afforded the opportunity to share my time today with the member for Winnipeg South Centre, who has just delivered his maiden speech in this House. I want to echo others in saying that we deeply miss his father. He was such an incredible asset to our team and provided great insight. He was always an incredible individual to interact with, whether in the government lobby or wherever it was. Right up until his last day in this House, he had so much energy, and it was always a pleasure to deal with him.

I am equally delighted and excited to have our newest member, the member for Winnipeg South Centre, here as part of our team. I look forward to working with him in the future.

There are a few things I want to talk about in relation to Bill C-56. I want to echo some of the comments I heard my colleague from Winnipeg South Centre mention a few minutes ago in response to the first question with respect to affordability, more generally speaking, and how this is really a global issue and global problem that people are facing.

Government Orders

The member hit the nail right on the head when he made comments about agriculture and how food prices in the United States have always inflated a lot faster than they do here in Canada. I know that is small comfort to those who are really affected by it, in particular, some of the most vulnerable in our communities. However, it is important, in the context of our debates, to recognize that inflation is a global thing, something that has happened globally.

I will provide the latest statistics in terms of inflation. Canada ranks second lowest in the G7 in terms of inflation. We all know that it is 4% right now, but the only country lower would be Japan, at 3.3%. Indeed, the U.K. is at 6.7%, Germany is at 6.1%, Italy is at 5.4%, France is at 4.9% and the U.S. is at 3.7%. That would make two countries below Canada.

I realize that this is very insignificant and small comfort for those affected by it. However, it is important, when we are having these discussions, to talk about where we are in terms of our position within the G7 and our comparative countries, so that we can understand how to properly address the issue. If we are not recognizing where the issue comes from, it is going to be very difficult to address where to go and to create proper policies to help deal with it.

That is where this bill comes in. In particular, I want to talk about the competition improvements in this bill and what it seeks to do to further enhance competition in the marketplace. We know that when companies are competitive and there is robust competition in our economy, consumers end up with the best deal. That is the way it is supposed to work, but sometimes, of course, that does not happen, because different businesses get together and carry out particular practices that end in not having that robust competition.

Specifically, I am sure everyone can tell that I am speaking about when businesses get together and collude on price-fixing. That does not help anybody. It certainly does not help the consumer. In terms of efficiency, it does not help the economy; does not help the businesses in the long run either when they become used to the ability to fix prices in that way. That is why I bring to the attention of the House that, back in 2022, we introduced legislation to improve competitiveness in the marketplace. Unfortunately, Conservatives voted against it.

What did we see as a result of that? As a direct result of that legislation that was introduced in 2022, we saw Canada Bread sentenced to pay a \$50-million fine after pleading guilty to fixing wholesale bread prices. Therefore, we know that this type of legislation is working. We know that it was able to contribute to rooting out a price-fixing practice, properly fining those responsible and, ultimately, setting them on the right course to prevent this type of activity from happening into the future.

• (1725)

In that case, which was just resolved in June, the Canada Bread Company, Limited was fined \$50 million by the Ontario Superior Court after pleading guilty for its role in a criminal price-fixing arrangement that raised the wholesale price of fresh commercial bread. This is the highest price-fixing fine imposed by a Canadian court to date, or at least that was the case when this happened.

We know that the legislation we introduced back in 2022, which Conservatives unfortunately chose not to support and voted against,

had a direct result in terms of the ability of the government and agencies that are tasked by the government to ensure that they can continue to maintain competitiveness. This is very important, especially when we are talking about bread or groceries. We know the price is increasing.

I will just give a quick stat. In the United States, Walmart has the largest share of grocery sales; I believe it is right around 20%. It might be just under 20%. In Canada, it is Loblaws, which has around 43%. Our largest share, as a percentage of grocery sales in Canada, has more than double the shares that Walmart has in the United States.

Loblaws merged with Shoppers Drug Mart under Stephen Harper's watch, and that has continued to build. We brought in legislation in 2022 to try to help deal with this; Conservatives voted against it.

Now we have more legislation, and I really hope Conservatives will vote in favour of this, that specifically goes to improving once again on the competitiveness in the industry. This bill would give the Competition Bureau the power to stop big business mergers with anti-competitive effects. It would also enable the Competition Bureau to conduct precise market studies and get the data and information from companies it is examining. Moreover, it would stop the anti-competitive collaborations that stifle small businesses, especially small grocers.

I know the default reaction to this from Conservatives was that they brought forward a private member's bill and the government stole their idea. One of the concerns of the Conservatives seems to be that this was their idea, through a private member's bill of one of their members, and now it is suddenly in this bill. This seems to be what they are upset about. I did not think policy was created to satisfy one individual's ego. I thought it was for the betterment of Canadians.

Here we are with Conservatives complaining about the fact that this was their idea and we stole it. Should they not be flattered? My mother used to always say that imitation is the best form of flattery. I know this better than probably most members in this House, because back in 2016, I introduced a bill that had EI reform in it, which the government totally voted against but the Conservatives all voted in favour of. Once it passed, the government took my idea and put it in the budget, and I was thrilled by it. At the end of the day, I knew that what I was doing, my idea and what I put forward, whether it had my name on it or not, was something Canadians would benefit from.

I hope Conservatives take pride in the fact they had a great idea. Whether the government had the same idea or saw their idea and took it is completely irrelevant. What is important is that, at the end of the day, we have policies in place that are for the betterment of all Canadians. That is our job here, and I am proud to sit across the aisle from individuals who have come up with similar ideas and have a similar approach to it.

Government Orders

• (1730)

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that my colleague is talking about the price of food increasing but does not do the simple, basic math. When one taxes a farmer and puts a tax on fuel for farmers to take the food from the field to the farm, and when one taxes truckers to ship it to the grocery stores and then puts the carbon tax on the fuel for the families to go to the grocery stores to buy their food, it is no wonder food is expensive. It is the policies of the government that are outright making food more expensive.

To my hon. colleague, maybe if you took away the carbon tax, and it was a more competitive environment for our farmers to grow in, instead of competing with other countries around the world that do not pay this carbon tax on the things they grow, we would see the price of groceries decline in this country. Would you comment on why you are making it so hard for farmers to grow food to feed families in Canada?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): I will just pause to encourage members to direct questions through the Speaker.

We have a point of order from the member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I know the member who represents the Green Party does support making polluters pay; the Conservatives do not. I think it is unfair that she is singling you out when it is really the member for Kingston and the Islands.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice): That is obviously not a point of order.

The hon. deputy House leader.

• (1735)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, of course that is the narrative the Conservatives are playing all the time and they want everyone to believe it.

How about this one? Ukraine was growing 15% of the world's grain. What happens when that stops all of a sudden? Do members think the price of grain is going to increase by 15%? If someone has even the most rudimentary understanding of free trade and the global economy, they will realize very quickly the price is going to shoot up.

Conservatives come into the House day after day and try to paint the picture as though this is strictly a problem that exists within Canada, but that is just not true. I started my speech by giving the statistics on that and letting the House know exactly where we stood in the world. This is a global problem. If we are just going to look day in, day out at how this is a problem and if we are just going to look within Canada and not look at it globally, we are never going to come up with a proper solution because we are not recognizing the real problem.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with this bill, which is a mini-reform and contains a few small measures, is the government admitting that the Canadian housing strategy is a failure? Objectively, it has been a failure.

Is that what the government is admitting?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I focused my remarks today on the Competition Act amendments part of this, and to suggest that it is minor is an incredible disservice. I already told members about how, in 2022, we brought along provisions that led to a \$50-million fine for Canada Bread Company earlier this year.

What we have already done in terms of anti-competition, which the Conservatives voted against, has resulted in significant fines and significant abilities to do something about the competition and anti-competition practices in this country.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing up the merger between Loblaw and Shoppers Drug Mart. I am sure the member knows now that bread is also for sale at Shoppers Drug Mart.

If the member knows that Loblaw has 40% of the market share on bread, why have the Liberals not tried to break up these monopolies?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, this bill is at the stage where it is going to go to committee. The member will have the opportunity, at that time, to raise these very important questions and then decide what the recommendations out of committee will be.

My point in my observation earlier was to show how anti-competitive things are in Canada right now, especially as compared to the United States, as I did in my speech.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[*English*]

After eight years of the Prime Minister, housing costs have doubled, rent has doubled, mortgage payments have doubled and the down payment needed for a new average home has doubled. Before the Prime Minister, it took 25 years to pay off a mortgage. Now, in Toronto, it takes the average family 25 years to save for a down payment.

Before the Prime Minister, one could buy an average home for a modest \$450,000 and at significantly lower interest rates. Now, one has to pay over \$700,000 for the exact same home with the exact same walls, roof, windows, floors and basement, and one must pay much higher rates on the mortgage for that home. Under the Prime Minister, housing costs 50% more in Canada than it does in the United States, and one can buy a castle in Sweden for the price of a two-bedroom, rundown home in Kitchener.

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After eight years of the Prime Minister, Toronto now ranks as the worst housing bubble in the world, according to the UBS bank. Vancouver is now the third most overpriced housing market in the world when we compare average income to average house price. It is worse than New York; London, England; and Singapore, a tiny island with 2,000 times more people per square kilometre. All these places have more money, more people and less land, and yet somehow, miraculously, their housing is more affordable.

According to the IMF, Canada now has the riskiest mortgage debt in the entire G7. We have by far the most indebted households, all of which have had to take on these massive mortgages to pay for the exorbitant house prices that have skyrocketed under the Prime Minister.

Speaking of those rocketing prices, they have two causes. One is that the Prime Minister had the central bank print \$600 billion. When it does that, it does not just drop the money out of airplanes or deliver it to the PMO in a Brink's truck, as much as he might like for that to be the case. Rather, it buys government bonds on the secondary market, which makes it easier for the government to borrow and spend, which the Prime Minister loves, but it also has the by-product of massively increasing the cash in the financial system that gets lent out in mortgages, disproportionately to the wealthy insiders who have connections to the banking system, who then bid up housing prices. During that money-printing orgy, we saw the number of homes bought by investors literally double in a year and a half, a 100% increase, which led to the fastest increase in house prices ever recorded in Canadian history.

The second cause deals with supply. After eight years of the Prime Minister, Canada has the fewest homes per capita of any country in the G7, even though we have the most land to build on. Why? It is because we have the second-slowest building permits out of all 40 OECD countries. Only the Slovak Republic is slower.

So what are the solutions to that? One, we need to cap spending and cut waste to balance the budget and bring down interest rates and inflation. Two, we need to get rid of the government gatekeepers who block home building.

Now, the government has come up with this idea of a housing accelerator fund. It is a \$2-billion program. The Liberals announced it a year and a half ago and so far it has not built a single, solitary home anywhere. They had one photo-op announcement, where there was a promise that it would eventually build 2,000 homes. Well, it sounds like a lot, but according to CMHC, we need to increase the projected home building by 3.5 million homes between now and 2030. In other words, even if they keep their promise of building 2,000 more homes in London, Ontario, they would have to do that same announcement and execute the announcement, with results, 1,500 times to get up to the 3.5 million homes we need.

Now, there is a very big difference. A lot of the media tried to say that the Prime Minister's accelerator is an attempt to copy my housing plan. It might be the same in messaging and rhetoric, but in practice it is totally different, and here is the difference: He is funding bureaucracy; I will fund results.

• (1740)

Let me use a hockey analogy. A team wins the Stanley Cup if it scores the most goals in the most games, gets into the playoffs, wins the most games in every series and ultimately win the finals. Winning is about putting pucks in nets.

Can members imagine if, instead, the referee said that he was going to give points based on the practices of the team members? He would go to the Calgary Flames' Saddledome and say that they have an excellent skating drill, so he is going to give them 10 points. Then he would go over to the Maple Leafs, which may be a bad example, and say that they have an excellent pep talk before each game, and he is going to give them a few points. Then he goes over to the Vancouver Canucks and says that they do an excellent job of practising their shooting accuracy on the ice, and gives them a bunch of points.

However, he does not realize that, when he has turned his back, the Flames hockey team might be having a beer and pizza party every night that fattens up the teammates and makes them less successful on the ice, or the Toronto Maple Leafs spend more time on the golf course than they do on the ice, or the Vancouver Canucks do not practise when the referee is not looking. Therefore, when the referee is not looking, he does not know what they are doing.

Let us bring this example to housing. The Liberals want the Minister of Housing to go around to judge the practices, as he sees them in his eyes, of each municipality and then give them lump sum grants based on what practices they take. They might speed up permits one day when the minister is looking, but then they might increase the cost of development charges on the next, or add a new site plan process that adds a bunch of extra time after it has this big grant and photo op from the minister. In other words, it might not build more houses. Just today the minister was forced to cancel a photo op with the City of Vancouver because it is proposing to raise its development charges on new home building, even though last week it made a favourable announcement.

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What is the solution to this? Why do we not judge our cities and their approval processes by how many homes they complete, or in other words, how many pucks go in the net. That is judging by results. My common sense approach is very simple math. I would require every city in Canada to boost housing completions by 15% per year. If it beats that target by 1%, it gets 1% more money. If it misses it by 1%, it gets 1% less money. If it beats it by 10%, it gets 10% more money, but if it misses it by 10%, it gets 10% less. It is very simple: build more, get more. Incentives work. That is why we give kids who perform best on their exams a higher mark to take home on their report card to their parents. That is why employers pay bonuses to high-performing employees. That is how the real world works.

I am not going to tell the cities how to do it. As long as they safely allow for builders to complete 15% or more home building every single year, they would get more money from my government. By the way, they would generate more money for my government because more home building means more people working, which means more people paying taxes.

All of this is common sense. My government would be paying for results across the board. We would clear away the bureaucracy and get things done. Those who help me get things done would be rewarded. Speaking of rewards, just like with the Stanley Cup, those superstar municipalities that massively increase home building would be eligible for an even bigger home-building top-up, a massive building bonus, so they can take that money and use it to service the new communities they have allowed to be built.

Some say it cannot be done, that we cannot safely build homes faster. The Brits and Americans approve building permits three times faster than us, and they do it just as safely. It is not just them. Thank God the Squamish people in Vancouver do not have to follow Vancouver city hall rules because they are on a reserve. Can members guess what they did? They approved 6,000 new homes on 10 acres of land. That is 600 homes per acre. Now people will have affordable homes built that would not have been possible if the gatekeepers had been in the way.

Imagine if we could have stories like that right across the country. That is what my plan, the building homes not bureaucracy act, would enable. Let us build homes of the future. Let us base it on the common sense of the common people united for our common home, their home, my home, our home. Let us bring it home.

• (1745)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, in Vancouver Kingsway, we have an intense housing crisis and have had for several decades.

I would say that one of the most successful models of affordable housing has been co-ops. We had a very successful federal co-op program in this country that started in the 1970s and 1980s. It built tens of thousands of units across this country, many of which in my riding still exist today. This was thanks to CMHC long-term financing combined with provincial government support. The municipalities contributed land and were helped by non-profit societies that did the building.

I am just wondering whether my hon. colleague would agree with me and the NDP that we need a vibrant, robust, modern co-op program to build hundreds of thousands of co-op units for Canadians. Does he think that would help solve the problem? Would he support that?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, of course. Just name it: co-ops, market housing and purpose-built private rentals. We need it all. However, to get a co-op housing complex completed, there need to be rapid permits. The local gatekeepers need to get out of the way.

The NDP premier in the member's province said recently that he was trying to fund housing for developmentally disabled people that has been held up for two years by local government gatekeepers. The question is, why has the NDP government there not legislated away those obstacles that municipalities, which are creatures of the province, have put in the way? The reality is that under the NDP in B.C. and the Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa, housing costs have doubled. Nowhere is it worse than in NDP Vancouver. We need to get the government out of the way and build homes, not bureaucracy.

• (1750)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition comes here and just recycles old slogans. He is not providing anything substantial. He is threatening municipalities with cutting infrastructure but expects them to build more housing.

This bill is already having impacts, and it has not yet passed. Today, we have already seen a Toronto developer announce 5,000 new units of housing in Toronto. Without this bill having passed, it is already having an impact. Why is the Conservative Party standing against it?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, we are not. I do not know what he is talking about.

Speaking of 5,000 homes, if he believes removing the GST on purpose-built rental is what is needed to build 5,000 homes, then why did the Liberals not do it eight years ago when they promised it? More importantly, why did the Liberals decide to do it now? It is because they got wind that I was going to announce it, and they wanted to front-run my announcement and avoid the embarrassment of having, once again, been outdone and outperformed by the Conservative opposition, which has led this debate from the very beginning.

The bill before us today is mostly promises that the Liberals already broke or things they stole from the Conservative Party. All the Competition Act components of this bill came from my competition shadow minister, the member for Bay of Quinte. Of course we are going to support the measures we have proposed. However, this would go only a small step towards undoing the damage the Prime Minister has caused by doubling housing costs. If the Liberals really want a solution, they should pass the building homes not bureaucracy act.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have blamed municipalities for the delays in housing construction. However, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the National Bank and TD Bank, the lack of housing in Canada has more to do with a sharp rise in demand. This sharp rise in demand is partly the result of immigration.

What does the Leader of the Opposition think of the government's immigration targets?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, government targets have nothing to do with the ability to build houses. That is why the Conservative Party had common-sense targets when it was in power. We welcomed immigrants, but we were also able to build housing, create jobs and reduce wait times in the health care system, all at the same time. That is a common-sense approach.

The Bloc Québécois, on the other hand, will never be able to do anything about that, because all it wants to do is drastically increase taxes on the backs of Quebecers. We in the Conservative Party will cut taxes.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am always very happy to rise in the House. It is always a privilege. I will say one thing, though. Speaking right after the leader of the official opposition is quite a challenge for me.

[*English*]

Before going into the bill we have to address today, I just want to warn the leader when he talks about hockey, because he made an analogy with a hockey team in the NHL and he talked about the Toronto Maple Leafs. I like them. I am the one who likes them, even though I am from Quebec City. We have to win in Toronto, by the way, so we will win, first of all, with the Maple Leafs.

This reminds me of a good joke made by Prime Minister Harper in 2014 when he was in Quebec City. Maybe the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles was there too. The prime minister said that Quebec and Toronto have a point in common, common ground in some aspects. Those two cities dream about having an NHL again team one day, because the Toronto Maple Leafs are not exactly a very NHL-level team, but that is coming.

[*Translation*]

We are gathered here to talk about Bill C-56, which basically covers two things: the Competition Act, which I will talk about a little later in my speech, and support that needs to be provided for building houses.

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We all know that Canada is in the midst of the worst housing crisis in our history. We need concrete, effective, well-thought-out measures to re-energize the construction sector. People say that, when construction goes well, everything goes well. In Canada, that has never been truer. Construction is not going well here, and neither is anything else, certainly not when it comes to the economy, taxation or inflation.

Earlier, our leader astutely pointed out that, in just eight years of Liberal government, the housing situation overall has deteriorated dramatically, and that has really hurt Canadians. That is why we have to take concrete, effective, meaningful measures that will have a positive impact on everyone. It is time to stop setting easy targets, spouting lofty principles and making grand announcements. It is time to produce results.

That is why our leader introduced a bill that essentially reflects the broad outlines he set out in his now-famous speech in Quebec City on September 8, when 2,500 Conservatives from across the country gathered together. In his speech, the leader laid out the key areas we will focus on as a government when Canadians put their trust in us in the next election.

It is essentially about incentivizing performance to build housing and encouraging real results. This means that, as a first step, cities will have to have realistic ambitions of more than 15%. We need to increase housing construction by 15% to have more than 15% new housing, year after year. Cities that meet this target will have the necessary funding. If cities exceed that target, they will be rewarded and encouraged, because we will give them more. We are not going to punish performance. On the contrary, we will reward it. Conversely, if, by chance, some cities do not reach this target, funding will obviously drop. It is just common sense.

The same goes for public transit. Residential density will have to be established where public transit already exists and must go. The funding will guarantee both. If we build high-density housing near public transit services, more people will take public transit and there will be more funding for that. It makes sense. It is not a question of announcements to please one side or the other. It is about results.

We are also introducing penalties for blatant cases of “not in my backyard”. All too often we see developers and people in the housing sector saying that they want to work on a certain project, that they are going to do it in a particular location, but not where a certain population lives, because it might upset Mr. or Mrs. X. That is not the right approach. Rather, we need to encourage construction and go where the needs are. We must avoid the “not in my backyard” principle, which unfortunately all too often hinders housing construction.

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• (1755)

That is essentially what our action in terms of housing will be based on, because that is what we need. There are other aspects to our housing strategy. Our approach to housing also considers the fact that, at this very moment, there is unused space in federal buildings, mostly because of the pandemic and telework. How many federal buildings are there across the country? The answer is 37,000. That is a lot.

We want to turn 15% of these 37,000 buildings into housing units. Federal buildings are essentially office buildings. Office buildings are usually located downtown. Turning half-empty buildings into housing units is a very smart and common-sense solution. Work areas will simply need to be set up more efficiently and the workforce will have to be reinstalled accordingly. It will not be easy, we are aware of that. Not all buildings will be well suited for that. It is up to us to figure that out to make sure that we can bring people back and revitalize the downtown cores and have affordable housing in the downtown areas of our cities so that people can have access to housing and services. We would do that in the first 18 months of a government led by the member for Carleton.

It is also important to be aware that there is an organization in Canada that was created several years ago to provide assistance with housing construction. I am talking about the CMHC. We are well aware that, in a situation as urgent as this one, it is time for a swift kick in the pants, as they say, to make sure there is a review of the CMHC's mandate.

I am not saying that what the CMHC is doing is not good, but we need to ensure that things are done correctly and a lot more efficiently. Since the CMHC is a Crown corporation that is a bit more independent from the government than others, it must be accountable. That is especially true for public agencies.

That is why we want to speed up the issuing of permits. Right now, it takes far too long to get a permit from the CMHC. We need to speed that up. We therefore need to reduce the salaries and bonuses of the decision-makers who are not delivering the necessary results. We need to target an average of 60 days and be very sure this will get done faster than the average we have right now.

I would like to remind the House that in my region, Quebec City, we currently have an extraordinary project called the Fleur de Lys project. It is a private investment of \$1.7 billion. I had the chance to visit it two weeks ago in my riding. This project by the Trudel family is absolutely fantastic. It is getting support and assistance from the municipality. The people from Quebec City are drawn to this project because it is in a sector that was not necessarily at its peak. They are in the process of creating an extraordinary focal point. It is a \$1.7-billion private investment. These are successful people who want to share their success with everyone.

This project is so impressive that it is a bit too much, it seems, for the CMHC. The CMHC needs to be more flexible to ensure that projects like this, in Quebec City, can achieve their full potential. It is perfectly normal. We do not want to turn things upside down just to please everyone, but it is normal, in an extreme housing crisis like the one we are in right now, to have another look at the entities and the rules that are in place. When we are in an emergency situation, it takes new emergency measures to see things.

That is why Canada, now more than ever, needs a common-sense government. Now more than ever, Canada needs people who will lead the country by focusing on results instead of trying to cajole the people with empty announcements. Now more than ever, we need realistic targets and real action that will address the issues that are directly impacting Canadian families. We all have friends or family members who struggle with housing. We need action. We must build more housing units.

Our approach will build new housing units by incentivizing people to do more with better incentives and financial support instead of pretending that everything is fine. Over the last eight years, the situation has gotten so bad in this country that new constructions, sadly, are not welcome. We need to start building again in the second-largest country on the planet, where there is no shortage of space. That is common sense.

• (1800)

Yes, more than ever, we will be proud to welcome new Canadians.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned the bureaucracy, and the previous speaker, the member for Carleton, took credit for other people's work. One of these people is Mike Moffatt, author of the National Housing Accord. He had the chance to read the Conservative proposal for affordable housing.

[English]

He said that "this bill is an exceptionally weak response to the housing crisis, riddled with loopholes." I am referring to the private member's bill, Bill C-356, which is not the bill we are talking about today but is the bill that they have been referring to on the other side.

He notes that this bill is going to increase bureaucracy, that it is going to bring more red tape, that it is actually going to increase the cost of housing and create more bureaucracy for housing.

When the foremost speaker and thinker on housing rejects his plan entirely, what is his response?

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• (1805)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to answer the question of the parliamentary secretary of my counterpart on climate change and environmental issues. We have the pleasure of working together at the environment committee.

[*Translation*]

If I were the parliamentary secretary who just spoke, I would be very embarrassed to judge our proposals so harshly when his party has been in power for eight years. What have the Liberals done on housing for the past eight years? The cost of housing has doubled.

Renting an apartment is twice as expensive as it was eight years ago. Getting a loan is twice as expensive as it was eight years ago. Making a down payment is twice as expensive as it was eight years ago. Ontario is one of the worst, if not the worst province in terms of the housing bubble. Is that the legacy of this government? Houses in Canada are twice as expensive as in the U.S. Is that the legacy of eight years of Liberal governance? A common-sense government cannot come soon enough.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, we hear the Conservatives make criticisms and talk about what they will do when they are in power if they are elected. However, the housing crisis is urgent and is happening right now. The election might happen at any time, but it might not happen for another two years.

In the meantime, \$900 million is dormant in the federal government's coffers and it is meant to go to Quebec City. I was pleased to hear my colleague talk about solutions such as repurposing federal buildings and using them for affordable housing. I think that is great, but that does not apply in every region or in every town. That being said, I was pleased to see that solutions were being proposed.

I would like to know whether my colleague agrees that the \$900 million meant for Quebec that is currently dormant at the federal level should be sent to Quebec and the municipalities so that they can take care of fixing the housing crisis, which is their responsibility.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Drummond, whom I respect and hold in high esteem. I think it is reciprocal. Perhaps he could pass the message on to others.

I want to say two things.

First of all, not all office buildings can be converted into apartment buildings. I have spoken with some leading experts who told me that it is not easy to do. That is why our common-sense plan does not apply to all buildings. Our current goal is to convert 15% of the buildings we currently have and then do an assessment to identify the ones with the most potential. It may be easier in large urban centres than in rural or suburban areas. We recognize this right away, and that is why there is no question of implementing a one-size-fits-all solution overnight. Instead, we want to target the places where it is most likely to happen.

Clearly, the money that is available must be used. We do see a problem right now. Initially the Prime Minister said he had ambitious targets, but then he went on to insult the cities, saying that it

was their problem and they were incapable of solving it. That is not exactly the right approach.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to cite a report from 2019 that suggests, "Over 800,000 rental units...were 'lost' in the decade between 2006-2016. When these units shift to higher rent bands, more households pay over 30 percent and many over 50 percent to afford the remaining homes."

The last time the Conservatives were in power, we lost 800,000 homes in our country, affordable homes that were lost. These are credible reports from, for example, Steve Pomeroy, a fantastic housing expert across our country. He cites this directly during the period the Conservatives were in power.

How can Canadians trust them?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I would just like to remind members that our government faced the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Our country, under the leadership of the Right Hon. Stephen Harper, was the first in the G7 to get back on its feet during that major crisis.

We are very proud of the way we managed Canada under Stephen Harper. Let us wait and see what we do with the MP for Carleton. It will be extraordinary. Common sense will finally be in power.

[*English*]

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Davenport.

It is a pleasure to rise in the House this evening. This is the first time I have had a chance to give a speech in this fall session after having been at home, like all other members, and having the chance to speak with constituents.

It is very appropriate that I am able to speak in support Bill C-56, which is an act to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Competition Act, perhaps more appropriately known as the affordable housing and groceries act. Among other concerns that I heard from constituents, including ferries, congestion on the roads and the impact of the climate crisis, it was really the cost of living and the cost of housing that are top of mind for residents of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. While inflation has slowed in Canada, it is still increasing with grocery prices and housing prices, which is why it is very appropriate that the first legislation we have introduced this fall session would take significant steps in tackling both of these challenges.

Private Members' Business

First is housing. The cost of housing has always been a huge challenge in my riding, but it has set new records, where the average home was selling for about \$4 million in West Vancouver and Whistler. With low interest rates and the ability to work more from home, we have actually seen house prices increase significantly in other regions in the riding. With people being increasingly priced out of the markets, we are seeing additional demand for rentals, and with a highly constrained supply, we are seeing prices continue to elevate. Now, some of the most expensive rents in the entire country are in my riding.

This is a profound injustice for young people, who have not benefited from owning rapidly appreciating real estate nor having long-term rents at low cost. They are still mostly at entry-level positions and lower-paying jobs. Worst yet, with interest rates rising to where they are now, developers are abandoning new construction projects, because the business case is simply not there, and badly needed rental stock is being sidelined even further. This challenge has been highlighted by CMHC, which shows that we need to build an additional 3.5 million homes, on top of what we are already on track to build, just to restore affordability in Canada. This is a big challenge to make sure that we can build homes for the middle class, and it requires all orders of government to work together.

The federal government used to be heavily involved in the housing market, particularly in the business of building rentals. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, the Government of Canada brought in financial assistance for new home buying, loans for co-operative housing, and low-interest loans for municipal, private and non-profit housing. In fact, I can still see the apartment buildings that line Ambleside and Dundarave in West Vancouver, which were built during this era. Unfortunately, Brian Mulroney's government eliminated these measures in 1986, and for three decades successive Conservative and Liberal governments stayed out of the housing game. A good example of this is the net of over 800,000 affordable homes that were lost during the dark lost decade of the Harper Conservative government.

The federal government launched the national housing strategy in 2017 to get back into building housing, and by my count, 784 below-market homes have been funded through this program in my riding in the last four years alone. We are also now rolling out the housing accelerator fund, where we are supporting municipalities to speed up their processes to get more housing built. I note that nearly all of the municipalities in my riding have applied to this program, showing that they are also on board to do what needs to be done. I am pleased that we have a strong partnership with the Province of British Columbia, with the premier and cabinet joining in Ottawa this week to coordinate how we can do more together on housing.

However, it is clear that more needs to be done, which is why I am so pleased to see that Bill C-56 would be eliminating the GST on all purpose-built rentals. This would greatly assist in getting more rental housing built. Do not take my word for it. The Smart Prosperity Institute estimates that this will lead to an additional 200,000 to 300,000 new rental units being built. The B.C. housing minister, Ravi Kahlon, notes that this is "positive news, and a significant step toward enhancing housing affordability." B.C. has similarly eliminated the PST on purpose-built rentals.

With that, I see my time is up and I look forward to continuing at our next session.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1810)

[English]

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

The House resumed from May 29 consideration of the motion that Bill S-222, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood), be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the House to speak on the bill, which is a small but important bill when it comes to greening our economy and fighting climate change. As always, I am very privileged to rise as the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Today I am going to be addressing Bill S-222 and how the use of a sustainable and renewable material such as wood can help build a greener and healthier economy for all.

Before I begin, I would like to thank the retired senator Diane Griffin for sponsoring this small but important bill, as well as Senator Jim Quinn, who saw it through its passage in the other place in this Parliament.

The effects of climate change are all too apparent, with warmer winters, heavier snowfalls, floods, storm surges and extreme weather happening around the world. Just this year in Canada we have seen record wildfires and other climate events. We do not have to look far to see the effects of climate change. They are growing in frequency and intensity with every passing year, which is why it is absolutely critical that we all step up our work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

That is why our government introduced the 2030 emissions reduction plan, our path to meet our target under the Paris agreement to get to net-zero emissions by 2050. The plan maps out how we will reduce our emissions from 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030, consistent with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Private Members' Business

Just last week, at the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Prime Minister reaffirmed Canada's commitment to fighting climate change while also building a Canadian economy that works for everyone. Indeed, the need for action on climate change has never been greater. There is always more we can do, and more we should do, every day on every front, and that includes in every facet of the Government of Canada's operations. That is where Bill S-222 comes in.

By putting a preference on the use of building materials that have environmental benefits, Bill S-222 encourages the use of wood when planning construction projects for federal buildings and infrastructure. Most of these types of projects fall under the responsibility of Public Services and Procurement Canada.

The department oversees the procurement of some \$25 billion of goods and services annually. It also serves as the government's designated custodian of facilities, overseeing one of the largest and most diverse real estate portfolios in Canada. Under the greening government strategy, we have a plan to transition to net-zero carbon and climate-resilient government operations, positioning Canada as a global leader in green government. Public Services and Procurement Canada is especially well positioned to help the government fulfill this commitment.

I know the department is placing a strong focus on delivering sustainable infrastructure and retooling procurement processes to support environmental and climate priorities. With Bill S-222 and its focus on the greater use of materials with environmental benefits, such as wood, we have yet another tool to encourage a greener government.

Wood is a renewable resource that is abundantly available in most areas of this country. The many benefits of wood in construction have been clear for centuries. Newer wood products, such as mass timber, can meet the needs and demands of our dynamic world. It is also natural, renewable and sustainable. Not only does it contribute to carbon dioxide reductions, but it is a vital source of prosperity for people and communities across the country.

The forestry industry employs Canadians in nearly every province and territory and provides economic benefits in many rural, remote and indigenous communities. If mass timber products were used more extensively in construction, as proposed in the bill, those benefits would be multiplied. Indeed, we have heard during second reading of S-222 that the bill could help Canada's forestry sector produce more jobs and create more wealth within rural communities.

Simply put, increasing the government procurement of mass timber products would increase the domestic markets for our lumber. To be clear, the bill and a rejuvenated domestic market for lumber would not necessarily mean increased forest harvest, but it would absolutely mean getting more value added out of the trees we do cut.

• (1815)

Canada is already a leader in the engineered wood sector, and this bill would help Canadian companies scale up to maintain and grow our position. It means the creation of more jobs right here at home. It is good news for Canada's forest industry.

However, I do not want us to lose sight of how Bill S-222 would help us continue to fight against climate change. During the study of the bill, we heard specifically about how forest products could help decarbonize construction. Of course we know that long-lasting wood products store carbon that was taken out of the atmosphere as trees were growing, and we heard important information about how new trees that replace those that are harvested continue to store carbon throughout their lives.

At the end of the day, products such as mass timber have a lighter carbon footprint than other construction materials. If used more extensively in construction in Canada, it is estimated that it could mean removing more than half a million tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere every year by 2030, which is equal to taking 125,000 gas-powered cars off the road. Right now, only 5% of large buildings use wood as a primary component.

That means we have a huge potential for growth here in the use of these products, which translates into massive potential to help decarbonize Canadian construction across the board. Bill S-222 can help us do just that.

I truly hope that we could all agree that the need for action on climate change has never been more urgent. We must continue to take every action we can, and we must take it further and faster. By making government operations greener, Canada could reach its sustainability goals. We know that one way to do this is to make better use of sustainable and renewable products, such as wood for construction and renovating federal buildings and infrastructure.

That is why our government is supporting this small but mighty bill, and I encourage my colleagues in the House to do the same. Similar bills have had backing of the House in the past, and we were happy to see such resounding support for Bill S-222 at second reading. I hope to see the same support for it this time around.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is obviously in favour of Bill S-222. In fact, I feel like saying “finally”, even though the bill may not go far enough.

Private Members' Business

The Bloc Québécois has long been committed to promoting the forestry sector and the ecological value of forestry products. We have long proposed that the federal government use its procurement policy to support the forestry sector. Since memories tend to fade, I will take the liberty of sharing the history of our commitment to this issue.

In March 2010, during the 3rd session of the 40th Parliament, elected representatives in the House debated a bill proposed by the Bloc Québécois, Bill C-429, which was sponsored by Manicouagan MP Gérard Asselin. The text of this bill was very similar to that of Bill S-222, which is the subject of the current debate. At that time, the Bloc Québécois was already proposing to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act to encourage construction projects involving greater use of wood products.

Unfortunately, neither the then-Conservative government nor the NDP official opposition supported the Bloc's solution, which was something the industry had asked for. In February of 2014, during the 2nd session of the 41st Parliament, we proposed the same solution again with Bill C-574 from the member for Jonquière—Alma, Claude Patry. Again, the Conservatives voted against our bill, along with a good number of New Democrats.

In September 2020, the Bloc Québécois presented its green recovery plan focused on Quebec's regions, the result of extensive consultations held across the province. It offered concrete solutions to fight against COVID-19 and to get the economy going again, including through investments in sustainable forests.

In October 2020, thanks to the initiative of my colleague from Jonquière, the natural resources critic for the Bloc Québécois, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources undertook a study on the forestry sector. The committee recommended that the government renew its support for the sector and develop a value chain for that industry by creating new market opportunities. It also recommended that the government create a public procurement policy to encourage buying and using low-carbon products, including wood products, by including carbon footprint as one of the criteria for the awarding of contracts.

That is a good idea. It seems timely to me because with climate change and the natural disasters that are on the rise and intensifying, I cannot believe that anyone still doubts the need to act with rigour and vigour. Incidentally, in parallel to Bill S-222, which specifically focuses on the use of wood in construction, we should also consider the government's broader green procurement policy.

Let us come back to the genesis of this. In April 2021, the Bloc Québécois organized in Trois-Rivières a forum on forests and climate change.

This event allowed partners from the college and university research community, people from industry, community and politics to discuss a key issue to Quebec's socio-economic development, the forest bioeconomy.

During the 2021 campaign, the Bloc Québécois proposed a plan to maximize the potential of Quebec's forests whose goal was local transformation, technological innovations development and increased productivity in a labour shortage context. The Bloc Québécois's plan also sought to reduce Quebec's vulnerability to

trade agreements. We have certainly had a taste of that. It also seeks to alleviate pressure on primary resources by increasing job diversity, including through transformation. It also focuses on developing exportable green technologies. That is the constructive and positive work of the Bloc Québécois.

We have been asking for years for Quebec's forestry sector to get its rightful share of federal investments. People are not fooled. Everybody knows that, historically, the federal government has prioritized the auto sector in Ontario and the oil and gas industry in western Canada over Quebec's wood. Federal support should, among other things, be subject to a public procurement policy that encourages the use of wood products. The use of wood products in the construction sector is on the rise, and its contribution to the fight against climate change is well established and recognized. To choose wood as a building material is to choose a product that is locally sourced, sustainable and renewable. A life-cycle analysis of wood shows that it has a very good environmental performance.

● (1825)

Continuing its historic commitment, the Bloc Québécois has made a concrete contribution in recent years by presenting the federal government with detailed proposed actions that would support the forestry sector.

The Bloc Québécois idea is simple: The more a company pollutes, the less public money it receives and, the less a company pollutes, the more government support it receives. The Bloc Québécois is out there in the trenches, so it is always up to date on the major issues and the direction Quebec industry wants to move in. Everyone welcomes this option with open arms.

Incidentally, in its green recovery plan, the Bloc Québécois proposed establishing the carbon footprint variable as a criterion for awarding contracts and purchasing in government procurement policies. In short, with figures to back it up, Quebec is counting on the forestry sector to support regional economies and contribute to the fight against climate change. For years, the Bloc Québécois has been demanding that the federal government give Quebecers their fair share of public assistance.

It is important to note that Quebec is definitely not lagging behind other provinces in that regard. On the contrary, it is a pioneer of best practices in the use of wood products. Quebec's policy of using wood as a building material is built upon five forward-looking principles: promoting Quebec's economic development, contributing to the fight against climate change, ensuring the safety and well-being of occupants, focusing on learning, and promoting the multiple uses of wood.

Unfortunately, the interests of the Canadian oil state all too often take precedence over those of the Quebec forest state. Here are a few numbers. From 2017 to 2020, tens of billions of dollars were given to the country's most polluting sector. Over the same period, the entire forestry sector in Canada received only \$952 million, nearly 75% of which are repayable contributions. Quebec's share, assuming that it gets 22.5% of that amount, is a paltry \$71 million per year. Let me remind the House that forestry is the economic sector that is best positioned to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and capture carbon already in the atmosphere. It also has a lot of potential in terms of jobs, economic growth and innovation.

It is high time we pull our heads out of the sand and start to urgently address the state of the planet. This partisan foot-dragging on both sides of the House has, over the years, contributed to disadvantaging Quebec's forestry industry, as well as the industry's direct and indirect economic players. Waiting in vain for Canada to understand what works in Quebec is costly, both in terms of the economy and the environment. Clearly, the energy transition, forestry, fisheries, aerospace, agriculture, tourism and culture are all working, but we are not moving as fast as we should. Canada is not keeping up. Canada is a pro-oil state and that is becoming less and less acceptable to Quebecers. It will be wonderful to regain our self-determination so we can choose the cutting-edge supports for and direction of Quebec's industries to ensure that they are sustainably developed.

We must immediately make every effort to tackle climate change since we are already behind. For some, this will start with acknowledging it. Others, who are more forward looking and have already started, need our support. It is our duty to act and support our forestry industries for our children and our future.

• (1830)

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to rise to speak to Bill S-222. I want to thank my hon. colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay for his tremendous work, for being a champion not only for our planet but also for workers and for all Canadians.

It takes a special kind of person to present such a bill as this one, which would seek to enhance Canada's ability to combat the climate crisis. It is no secret that the use of a private member's bill is oftentimes under constraint in this place in terms of being unable to spend. People often find that these bills go unrecognized. However, they are important; although there is no expenditure to this, there truly are savings. The savings that would come from this would be in our children's future. We would be limiting, by way of the passage of this bill, the amount of direct embodied carbon that would otherwise be found in non-wood-use buildings.

To put this in perspective, Canada's built environment is a significant contributor to greenhouse gases across the globe. It accounted for approximately 25% of greenhouse gases coming from construction, use and maintenance of residential, commercial and institutional buildings. This is, of course, by way of non-wood products. Therefore, the use of wood in the construction of any building in Canada that would otherwise use things like concrete or steel would, in fact, result in a lower embodied carbon. This would mean

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that we would reduce the amount of carbon emissions by way of the passage of this bill.

It is also important to recognize that Canadians, whether in the generations before us or the generations to come, will be utilizing wood. I come from the province of Alberta. Half of our province is the northern boreal forest. This, of course, is a tremendous resource, not just for the many generations of indigenous people who have utilized these territories for the production of their own homes, industries and jobs, but also for many other Albertans. Approximately 17,500 Albertans are directly employed in this industry, and over 23,900 people are in supporting occupations. The revenues exceed \$7.6 billion.

This is truly a renewable industry, as long as we properly manage it. Part of the proper management is making sure that the outcome production of wood goes toward greenhouse gas reduction. This is the actual textile used with the product of the harvesting of this lumber. These are things that are possible in our country.

I spoke to a constituent just last weekend, and she mentioned that, with the rising cost of natural gas, she is hoping for her business and even her home to get green. She was suggesting that even more work be done to make sure that homeowners could truly utilize advanced products, usually by the wood industry, to ensure that her own footprint was reduced. Canadians at home are taking climate change seriously; the government must follow suit.

There is no question that we are in a climate crisis. We must do everything we can to ensure we get this under control. Although the solutions that are present from the current government are not ambitious, it is incumbent upon the government to adopt a policy such as this one, which would actually move the mark in some ways. Any and all efforts are to be called for.

In budget 2017, the government provided Natural Resources Canada with \$39.8 million over four years, starting in fiscal year 2018-19, to support projects and activities that increased the use of wood as a greener substitute material in infrastructure projects. Bringing this forward is our way to call on the government to continue to support this activity through government procurement.

Government procurement plays a massive role in terms of how demand, production and supply are maintained across many industries. No different is the forestry industry from this sector. The government has a huge amount of stock when it comes to buildings and supply right across this country. Whenever it is maintaining or building new units and new projects that are on federal lands or federally managed, it would be appropriate to utilize low-embodied carbon products made from Canadian-supplied wood.

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In the tradition of many indigenous folks, we utilize wood because it is a renewable resource; it returns to the land, just as it came from the land. This is the principle of being renewable; it is also a principle of reciprocity. When we are practising reciprocity not only in our daily lives but also in terms of how we build our country, we will truly get paid dividends for our children.

● (1835)

Should we look after our environment now, it will look after our children. This is a promise and a compact that we have with our environment and with our environmental stewards, those who do this work for a living.

When it comes to making sure that we have energy efficiency within buildings, there ought to be further regulations to ensure that more can be done so we see a continued reduction in greenhouse gases. This would be by way of other processes, other amendments and procurement of the government's resources and material. This is one concrete step that the member has put forward that would truly do this by ensuring that we have a reciprocity approach to how we treat natural resources in the country, so we are not robbing mother earth blind of all of its resources but making sure it is more sustainable. That is truly the desired outcome for New Democrats.

When it comes to ensuring that we have, for example, proper forest management and proper resource management, this also plays to the tremendous value of those in the industry who are currently participating as we see an increase in natural disasters. Natural disasters are a common feature today in Canada, by way of the climate crisis. We saw it this summer. We have seen escalating and extreme wild events, particularly wildfires and floods. My province, of course, was surrounded by wildfires from the north, the Northwest Territories. Yellowknife's evacuation been the largest evacuation in Canadian history. Edmontonians and other Albertans took many folks in, given this huge crisis. Of course, west of us, in the riding of the member who presented this bill, we have seen massive forest fires.

We must take the climate crisis seriously. We must ensure that our children and the next generation see that we are serious about making sure we lower our greenhouse emissions. Part of the solution is using wood. This is something that we can do today. This is something that the government should be investing even more into. When we are presented with a choice between producing, for example, units like homes or even commercial buildings on behalf of the government, they truly should be reviewed with the outcome of producing a net-zero building. This is an important piece to our future. The climate crisis is so serious, in fact, that if we do not make these investments, if we do not make these changes, we will pay huge amounts for lifetimes to come.

We have one opportunity, one chance, to take as seriously as we can the crisis that is at Canadians' doorstep. That is the climate crisis. We need to do everything we can. This is one piece to getting it done. We can, in fact, do the work to support good-paying, strong, union jobs like those found in the forestry industry while also bringing down our greenhouse gases. This is a promise that I think many folks right across our country expect: the marriage between industry and making sure we have good outcomes for Canadians like reduced prices and ensuring that we can combat the climate

crisis. The Conservatives would like to pit these two things against each other. They would like to see workers and environmental policy at odds with each other.

New Democrats know that when these industries unite, when we have workers and industry come together toward a solution to something as big as the climate crisis, we can get achievement. We can do something for our children. We can do something to try to end this crisis. People are watching us. They expect this from their government. They expect this from their elected leaders. They expect us to act, and that is exactly what this bill would do.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is great to be back. This is my first opportunity to rise in my place since we have come back for the fall session. I want to re-emphasize the gratitude I have for the people of northwestern Ontario, in the Kenora riding, who have placed their trust in me to represent them in Parliament. It is an honour to be back, as we work to make life more affordable for all Canadians, to address the housing crisis and restore safe streets, but that is not the topic of the debate presently.

I want to acknowledge the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for bringing this bill forward. I understand he has announced that he will not be running again in the next election. I wish him the best in whatever comes next. It is perhaps a bit premature as we still have a couple of years left in this Parliament, but I want to wish him the best. I did not get the opportunity to work with him as much as I would have liked, but I have always appreciated the chances I had to work with him. I find him a very fair and reasonable person from the other party.

I want to thank him for bringing this bill forward. This is a very important bill that we are debating, and one aspect that I really like about this bill is that it does not prescribe the use of one material over the other. It does not explicitly state any restrictions, but, rather, encourages the consideration of all materials that can help reduce emissions and what has been a primary example of that. This is important because Conservatives believe in the duty of the federal government to ensure openness, fairness and transparency in the procurement process. We certainly would not want to see anything handicap that ability, so to speak, or anything that would place strict limitations on the procurement process. The member got this proposal right in ensuring that he is not doing that. He is simply helping to encourage the alternatives.

The environmental components of this bill are perhaps the biggest benefits that we see. Conservatives believe in common-sense measures to help reduce emissions. We have spoken quite a bit about, and will continue to talk about, our plan to bring in innovative technologies and support innovative greener alternatives instead of taxing hard-working Canadians. We know as well that our plan to address climate change and to lower emissions has to include responsible and sustainable forest management, and wood products are an incredible way to do that, as has been mentioned by other colleagues during this discussion.

In Ontario alone, there are over 20 million tonnes of carbon stored in wood products. It is an incredible way to sequester carbon and ensure that it is harvested and utilized. When trees are harvested, it makes way for younger trees to be planted, which will absorb carbon more rapidly and help to reduce emissions, and the carbon within those products is taken away before forests can burn. Unfortunately, we continue to see forest fires. Fortunately, in the Kenora riding and across our district, we did not have any major evacuations that we saw in years previous, but forest fires continue to be a challenge.

We have to make sure that we are harvesting trees before they catch fire and release the carbon stored within them into the atmosphere. It is twofold: It is the ability to ensure we are absorbing and preserving the carbon within wood products, and that new trees are planted to help ensure that we are reducing emissions.

• (1840)

To that end, there is a statistic I would like to share, which is something we should all be proud of: In 2020, there were over 62 million trees planted across Ontario. I think that is an incredible achievement. It shows the sustainability of our forestry industry and the incredible work we are doing to protect the environment here in Canada.

Of course, we cannot ignore the incredible economic benefits that come with it as well. To have a sustainable resource and industry such as forestry is massively important to our economy right across the country. As the member for Kenora, I am going to focus more specifically on Ontario and northern Ontario. It is vital to our economy. In Ontario, as of 2020, \$4.3 billion is the amount that forestry contributed to the domestic product, and, of course, there are billions more in exports. In 2021, the sector supported nearly 150,000 well-paying union jobs right across Ontario, important jobs for the people in my riding and right across the north.

With the resource revenue-sharing, 35 participating first nations in Ontario received over \$93 million from Ontario's forestry sector as a direct benefit to first nations across northern Ontario. As a member who represents 42 first nations, I can say again that it is an incredibly important piece of our economy to support jobs for first nations and the communities as well through that direct resource revenue-sharing.

Whether I am in Kenora, Dryden, Ignace, Ear Falls or any of the communities across my district, there is obviously an urgent importance to support forestry, the environment and the good jobs that come with those across our district, but it flows right across northern Ontario. In the summer I had the opportunity to join the Leader of the Opposition, our common-sense Conservative leader, on a

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tour across northern Ontario. We had an incredible visit, although outside of my riding, with workers at the GreenFirst mill in Kapuskasing. It was an incredible opportunity to engage with them and learn about the work they are doing in their everyday jobs to support our economy and our environment. It is really extraordinary work they do.

As we were going around, I would think about the workers back home in our district of northwest Ontario, in Kapuskasing and all across northern Ontario. We emphasize them as the importance of supporting this vital industry, not just through the procurement process, of course, which is incredibly important and is the topic of the debate here today, but looking at duplicate or redundant regulations and ways that we can help support the forestry sector to make it easier for the sector to thrive. Of course, addressing the softwood lumber dispute is something that is very important. The government must act with urgency on this to help provide stability for the sector and the workers who rely on those great jobs right across Canada.

In short, I appreciate the member from the NDP for bringing this forward. It is a very important initiative. I want to urge all my colleagues here in the House to ensure we are working together to support Canada's forestry sector and good jobs for first nations and people right across northern Ontario while ensuring we are protecting our environment at the same time.

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill S-222, which finally appears to promote the use of forest products in public works. After all, it was about time, was it not?

The Bloc Québécois has repeatedly proposed that the oh-so-generous federal government use its procurement policy to support the forestry sector. It is such a bold idea that it could even have economic and environmental benefits. We have already tried this twice.

In 2010, we gently proposed amending the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act to encourage the use of wood products in construction. I have to say, the Conservatives at the time were not very co-operative.

We tried again in 2014. However, the Conservatives, and even some NDP members, chose to ignore the importance of the forestry sector for Quebec's regions. We sincerely hope that this third attempt will finally be the one that works. The mere fact that we are now at third reading of the bill makes us almost optimistic.

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However, we cannot ignore the fact that the current bill lacks teeth, to put it politely. The minister is taking into account — those are the words being used — environmental benefits and can authorize the use of wood in public projects. The audacity. When my colleague, the member for Jonquière, tried to propose an amendment for the minister to maximise the use of wood, he received massive support from one person: himself. That is entirely representative of the importance given to the oil interests by the Canadian government compared to those of Quebec.

The numbers speak for themselves. Between 1917 and 2020, the oil sector received a tidy sum of \$23 billion, while the forestry sector, for all of Canada, was given only \$952 million, three-quarters of which had to be paid back. Through all that, Ottawa is still claiming to be seriously fighting climate change. How logical is that?

The forestry sector could be a tremendous boon if we gave it a chance. Every cubic metre of wood used in construction captures 900 kilograms of CO₂. A house built using 20 cubic metres of wood would capture the equivalent of three years' worth of emissions from a car. Studies even suggest that by reclaiming forestry and agricultural waste, we could reduce our oil imports by 1.6 billion litres, or 20% of our annual consumption. Still, why support a green industry when we can throw more money at the oil sector, right?

It is high time for Quebec's forestry sector to get its fair share of federal investments. After all, it deserves at least as much attention as Ontario's auto industry or western Canada's oil sector. Ottawa has to wake up and implement a public procurement policy that truly encourages the use of wood products and sustainable materials. Quebec has already done it. What is Ottawa waiting for?

The Standing Committee on Natural Resources also recommended that the government establish the carbon footprint as a criterion for awarding contracts. That idea was also part of the Bloc Québécois's green recovery plan. We are happy to see that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources finally recognized the importance of such a policy. However, once again, it took a while for Ottawa to wake up and smell the coffee. Politics are all well and good, but real action is better, is it not?

Such a policy makes sense not just environmentally but also economically. A study published in 2021 on the maximization of the economic and environmental benefits of our beloved forestry sector showed that the optimal management of our precious forests could lead to the creation of over 16,000 jobs in Quebec in the next decade, which would represent an increase of 27%. All of that while reducing greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 7.7 million tonnes a year, which is equivalent to 20% to 30% of Quebec's environmental targets. Is this just a dream?

The forest is our hidden treasure, our green gold mine. The government must therefore do its part to develop our forests' full potential by encouraging the use of wood in construction, supporting local processing and investing in environmentally friendly technological innovations. Yes, the future lies in the responsible, sustainable and sound development of our natural resources.

• (1850)

I now urgently call upon the Liberals to develop a comprehensive strategy. If they feel at a bit of a loss, then I invite them to take a look at the Bloc Québécois's road map from 2021. It had unanimous support in Quebec because it was created in collaboration with all the forestry sector stakeholders. It also has the support of every forestry workers' union, including the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec and Unifor. What is more, it brought together 24 elected representatives from all nine of Quebec's forestry regions.

In addition to a public procurement policy that encourages the use of wood products, we recommend increasing budgets for basic research and developing a value chain for secondary and tertiary processing of our precious forest resources in order to foster the creation of an industrial bioeconomy cluster in Canada.

As the international trade critic, I also urge Ottawa to do everything in its power to obtain a full exemption from all tariffs on softwood lumber exports from our American friends. We also have to actively encourage diversification of export markets for our forestry products. We need a long-term vision.

In closing, I want to say that I strongly believe, as do my Bloc Québécois colleagues here, that Quebec should have exclusive jurisdiction over all of the natural resources on its territory, including its waters, fish, forests, mines and agriculture. I am convinced that the Quebec state is in the best position to fully develop the potential of our forests, a green industry that contributes to our identity.

While we wait for that glorious day to come, it is incumbent upon Ottawa to seriously consider this issue. The federal government can count on the Bloc Québécois to support any environmentally friendly development measure that shows vision and economic patriotism.

* * *

• (1855)

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House:

(a) at the time of adjournment on Wednesday, September 27, 2023, the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, the Dean of the House, be deemed elected Interim Speaker of the House of Commons until a new Speaker is elected; and

(b) the election of a new Speaker be the first order of business on Tuesday, October 3, 2023, provided that the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel preside over the election of the Speaker or, if the member is absent, the member present who has the next longest period of unbroken service shall preside over the election.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. government House leader's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

[English]

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill S-222, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood), be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am always honoured to rise on behalf of the people of Timmins—James Bay, who are very interested in this bill. Their region is rich in natural resources.

I am also proud to rise in support of my colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay, who is not only a great parliamentarian but also a respected author and biologist. In his bio, they put those things first, which shows how important he is in other aspects, as well as bringing forward a motion on sustainability.

This bill is really important. I am going to say that, in all my years in Parliament, there has been lots of talk about Canada being a world leader, our forests and blah blah blah. However, the fact is that we have been failing on a number of fronts, and we have to address that. We are in a time that the Greeks would have called “kairos”, which is both a crisis and an opportunity. The crisis happened when we lost 14 million hectares of forest land this year from the climate catastrophe that is unfolding, which the Conservatives would exacerbate with their addiction to burning more fossil fuels. We are seeing our forests under threat from climate change and the changing pressures on the softwood and hardwood resources that we rely on in our communities.

In my region in northern Ontario, there is an issue of glyphosate spraying in the cutovers. This ignores indigenous rights and the hunters and trappers who are out on the lands.

We have to deal with this, yet in the face of the climate catastrophe, we have huge opportunities as a nation. One of these is to start looking at sustainable building. This is the reason I think the option of including and changing building codes is going to be fundamental to making us more sustainable, as is bringing in more wood products.

When I was in Berlin meeting with government officials last year, I was so amazed at how far ahead they are and so embarrassed at how far behind Canada is in terms of housing, building and having a net-zero approach to all building strategies. We do not have that at all. One only has to look at Doug Ford, Mr. X and their buddies, who were going to sell off the Greenbelt land to make a bunch of bucks for insiders. That is not a vision.

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What do we need to do in order to respond to the need to build more sustainable housing? We have the skills; we have the tools. Our region in northern Ontario has the wood. They call it the “fibre mask”, but I prefer to call it the trees; it is the natural environment.

We have taken a real beating over the years from the softwood lumber disputes. We saw how Stephen Harper sold Canada out when we wanted every World Trade Organization dispute on softwood lumber. We were left with a crippled market. We could use those mills to bring forward the products that could be used in more sustainable building.

When wood is compared to cement, cement is responsible for 8% of the world's global emissions. Cement is higher in its impact on the global environment and GHGs than aviation is. We focus a lot on aviation, but cement is a serious issue. We are going to have to rethink how we build. Forestry can do that. However, we are going to need to actually go beyond talk and move forward.

I would like to point to my colleagues and suggest they look at the United States. They brought in an all-of-government approach through the IRA. There has been explosive, unprecedented growth in clean tech. We can look at the state of Texas. Texas is so right-wing, it would stand out even on the Conservative backbench, although maybe they would move it to the front bench these days. However, Texas has embraced clean energy. It is now bringing more clean energy online than any other jurisdiction in the world other than China. There are now 890,000 jobs in Texas in clean tech, and they came through the brutal, deadly heat waves. They were able to keep their air conditioners on because they had so much solar capacity.

What is happening in the United States is that all-of-government approach on infrastructure, on building, on the tax incentives and on procurement. Procurement is what we need to talk about, so we can say to our forestry communities, such as Elk Lake, Timmins and Kapuskasing in my region, that we can use these products. We can then say to the mill towns that we have lost, such as Smooth Rock Falls, Iroquois Falls, Espanola and Kirkland Lake, that there is potential for restarting mills to build new products, new fabrication and sustainable housing. The market is there.

We could be selling this internationally as well. We need to do it sustainably and with full indigenous involvement, consultation and participation. We need to do it with the lens that we are dealing with a time of kairos.

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● (1900)

A climate catastrophe is unfolding. We need to get serious as a nation, to move beyond talk and actually become the global leader that we should be and can be and will be if we follow motions like what we see with this excellent motion tonight.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): For his right of reply, I recognize the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I proudly rise today for the final right of reply to Bill S-222 at third reading. This bill, commonly known as the use of wood in government infrastructure bill, has a long history in this place, but I think it is safe to say after debate this afternoon and a vote tomorrow that it will finally become law in Canada.

I will try to be brief in my remarks, but I should give a little history of what is happening here today. It all started 13 years ago, in 2010, with a private member's bill put forward by the Bloc Québécois MP Gérard Asselin, as my colleagues here in the Bloc have already pointed out a couple of times this afternoon.

That bill specifically asked the minister of public works to consider the use of wood in building federal infrastructure, much as the Wood First Act had done in British Columbia the year before that and the Quebec Charte du bois did later in 2013.

My legislative assistant, Cameron Holmstrom, brought the bill to my attention in 2016 when I was looking for private members' bill ideas. I was keen on supporting the emerging mass timber sector, because the main proponent of that sector in Canada, indeed North America, was Structurlam, a company based in my hometown of Penticton, British Columbia.

I tabled that bill as Bill C-354 in 2017. It passed second reading into committee, and there it was amended to deal with some concerns about its specific focus on wood. Thanks to collegial work and some good ideas, some of them coming from Sandra Schwartz at Natural Resources Canada, the language in the bill was changed to emphasize the environmental benefits of prospective building materials.

I must say I was actually happier with the new version, which is something one does not always hear from someone who has had their private member's bill amended. It passed through the House of Commons in May 2018. Unfortunately, it languished in the Senate, an innocent bystander to some shenanigans there, and died with a lot of other private members' business when that Parliament ended just over a year later.

I want to thank once again my friend, Senator Diane Griffin, who introduced it in the other place as Bill S-222 in this Parliament in November 2021. That is what we are debating today. After passing through the Senate, it came to this chamber and is nearing the end of that journey.

I want to thank everyone who has spoken to this bill over the years and everyone who has supported it and made good suggestions about it.

I have talked to Adam Auer, an old student of mine, who is now the head of the Cement Association of Canada, about the new concrete products that will compete well under the terms of the bill.

I want to highlight also the support of the Forest Products Association of Canada, particularly Derek Nighbor, who has been a constant source of encouragement.

For decades, we built our big buildings out of concrete and steel. One of the main goals of this bill was simply to point out to the government and society as a whole that engineered wood is now a real option. Engineered wood, mass timber, will give our forest sector another domestic market to sell to, allowing us to reduce our reliance on the United States for lumber sales. Canada leads the continent in these sectors and government procurement will help us keep on track to stay in the lead.

The government has the capacity to carry out the intent of this bill. Through life-cycle analysis, it can provide fair assessments of all building materials for their carbon footprint and other environmental benefits.

This bill is a win-win-win for Canada. It would help build better infrastructure in our country, beautiful and safe buildings that would have a light footprint on our environment. It would also help us meet our climate targets and would spur innovation in the building materials sector.

This bill has enjoyed unanimous support throughout its latest journey in Parliament, and I am hoping that will continue after this debate.

Thanks once again to all who have spoken to this, to all who have contributed to it over the years.

● (1905)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 98, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 27, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, as members know, the climate crisis is on our doorstep. This year, our country has been burning from unprecedented, climate-fuelled wildfires, with 131,000 square kilometres of land burned this summer alone, which is more than double the next-worst wildfire year on record. In a vicious feedback loop, this in turn has released more than one and a half times our annual emissions from carbon stored in trees and soil.

It is clear that we need urgent and bold action, and it should go without saying that this means we need to stop building fossil fuel infrastructure. In fact, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, “the truly dangerous radicals are the countries that are increasing the production of fossil fuels.” He goes on to say, “Investing in new fossil fuels infrastructure is moral and economic madness.” However, this is exactly what the Province of Ontario is doing. It is planning to build new gas plants that will increase emissions from the province's electricity sector and then lock them in with long-term contracts and financing arrangements.

While the governing party has committed Canada to achieving a net-zero carbon electricity grid by 2035, its recently released regulations meant to achieve this have been weakened so badly that loopholes now allow for expanded and prolonged use of natural gas on the electricity grid. Specifically, these loopholes allow for two natural gas plants to operate at full capacity, 24-7, until the end of 2040 and 2037. They allow for all of Ontario's gas plants, except one, to operate for 450 hours per year. Worst of all, they allow for the Government of Ontario to proceed with its plans to build up to 1,500 megawatts of new gas-fired generating capacity.

What does this mean? It means that these loopholes in the draft regulations allow for greenhouse gas pollution from Ontario's power plants in 2035 to exceed their 2017 levels by up to 178%.

What is the point of so-called clean electricity regulations if they allow emissions to almost triple? There are 35 municipalities, including the City of Kitchener, I am proud to say, together representing almost 60% of the province's population, that have now passed resolutions calling for the opposite: to phase out gas power in Ontario by 2030 or sooner.

The good news is that it is not too late. The federal government published these draft regulations on August 10. The formal consultation on the regulations ends November 2. We could still have regulations that truly do achieve net-zero emissions from Canada's electricity sector by 2035, as the government has said its intention is, but to get there, we have to absolutely stop building new fossil fuel infrastructure, and this includes expanding natural gas-fired electricity.

We could do it sooner if we really wanted to. A new report from the Ontario Clean Air Alliance shows that Great Lakes wind power could supply more than 100% of Ontario's current electricity needs.

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We could build it in less than a year at 40% the cost of nuclear. The Ontario government though is not going to do it on its own.

Will the parliamentary secretary today commit to strengthening the clean electricity regulations and closing these loopholes?

● (1910)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it has been a good summer, and it is nice to see you back here in the House of Commons. It is also nice to see my friend and colleague from Kitchener Centre. The member from the Green Party is a voice of reason in this House, and I want to thank him for bringing really good ideas forward to this House.

I have accepted this new position as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and every time I have stood up in the House of Commons on behalf of the minister until now, it has unfortunately been to speak to the opposite, to speak to members of the Conservative Party who believe that we are doing too much to fight climate change and that we should do less to fight climate change. It is refreshing to be sitting just down the way from a member who believes, like I do, that we ought to do more to fight climate change and who agrees that creating a clear path forward to a net-zero electricity grid by 2035 is absolutely essential to enabling other parts of the economy to decarbonize by switching fuels.

To exemplify why I personally believe that this is so important, I have a brief anecdote. I often talk about my past as an Olympic athlete in this House. It is where I come from. We all come from different places in this House. There are 338 members with 338 different backgrounds. When I was 20 or 22 years old, I was training at a very high level. In 2005, the air quality was so bad in Ontario that I actually had to travel to Europe for the remainder of the summer to complete my training for the world championships. This was disappointing because, living in Canada, we grow up thinking that this is a beautiful and clean country with a massive hinterland and lots of trees that clean our air. However, the fact was, back then, in 2005, that Ontario still relied on coal to generate electricity, which led to really bad air quality levels. In 2005, there were actually over 40 smog days in the province of Ontario, which disproportionately affected our little area, halfway between Hamilton and Toronto, on Sixteen Mile Creek at the Burloak Canoe Club.

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I was really proud of the fact, back then, that the Liberals of the day ran on a commitment to end all coal-fired power generation, and that we, in Ontario, were actually the first jurisdiction in North America to do so. It is important to recognize that today, in 2023, we are 15 years or so removed from that reality of ending coal-fired power, and since then we have not had a single smog day. These policy decisions have a really important impact on our life, our health, our livelihood, our communities and certainly our ability to fight climate change, which is the most existential threat of our generation.

All G7 countries have committed to net-zero electricity by 2035, and the U.S. government just released its clean power regulation last spring. A clean electricity grid is also becoming an increasingly important factor in international competitiveness, as investors, industry and consumers are all looking for clean power.

Our government is using a range of tools, including regulations, investment tax credits and funding programs, to clean Canada's electricity grid, and it is working closely with provinces to identify regional priorities for clean energy.

I would like to acknowledge that across Canada, every province has a different intermix of electricity generation. We have provinces, like Saskatchewan and Alberta, that still use quite a lot of coke, coal and a majority of natural gas. Gratefully, in Ontario, our strong hydroelectric contributions, as well as nuclear, mean that over 80% of our grid is greenhouse gas-free. It means that only 6% of our electricity generation comes from natural gas. However, it is important to make sure that this does not grow. We want to make sure that our grids get cleaner and cleaner, particularly the ones that are still using coke and coal to generate electricity, which is last-century technology.

To send clear and early signals to investors and utilities, we published the draft clean electricity regulations in August 2023 for public comment. This will set a technology-neutral emissions performance standard that fossil fuel-fired electricity generation will need to meet by 2035. Those draft regulations include some flexibilities to enable some provinces and utilities to continue to provide reliable and affordable energy and electricity to their consumers as they transition to 100% clean electricity. Those flexibilities enable some ongoing natural gas generation in strictly circumscribed conditions. It is certainly not all and certainly not in the way of growing those capacities.

The CER, along with other complementary measures, will help spur investments in clean electricity and send strong signals to avoid investment in new unabated—

• (1915)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I congratulate the parliamentary secretary on his new role. I am looking forward to working with him.

However, given his experience in Ontario, he should be just as angry as I am that we have a province that is looking to actually increase natural gas on the electricity grid. The only way to stop do-

ing so is by closing what he calls “flexibilities”, and what I am calling a loophole, in these regulations.

Will the parliamentary secretary commit to ensuring that these regulations do not allow for new fossil fuel infrastructure to get built in Ontario?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, the clean electricity regulations, along with other complementary measures, will help spur investment in clean electricity, sending strong signals to avoid investment in new unabated natural gas generation products, and will help drive forward the development of emerging clean technologies.

We really need to address the squeakiest wheels in Canada. I am angry at the provincial government's plans to increase natural gas electricity production in this province, just as my colleague mentioned. I am also frustrated that we have provinces in Canada that continue to use coke and coal to generate electricity. It means that if a consumer buys an electric car in one of those provinces, when they plug the car in, instead of running on gasoline, it actually runs on a less clean product, like coke and coal, which is something we want to try to avoid and ensure that provinces get off.

In conclusion, the clean electricity regulations are just one action we are taking to move Canada's electricity sector to net zero and to expand the generation of clean electricity to support other sectors in their decarbonization plans. I thank the member—

• (1920)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The hon. member for Bow River.

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is good to see you back and good to see my colleague on the opposite side. We have had many conversations over the years, and I appreciate the opportunity to have that discussion again tonight.

One of the things that happened in this particular summer was a tour. There were ag journalists from all over the world at a conference in Alberta. One of the options they had was to tour around to different places. One of the tours was in my riding, looking at irrigation and ag producers. It was a privilege to be invited along with this busload of journalists from around the world, and I was sitting beside one from Montreal, one from Iowa in the U.S. corn belt, and another one from Brazil. We talked about agriculture. Of course, because I am from the government, the journalists asked me about the policies of how it works.

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I could not resist asking about carbon tax. The journalist from Montreal suggested that they did not have a carbon tax because they have cap and trade. I asked, “What about the second carbon tax, the clean fuel standard?” He said, “Oh, we do not have that in Quebec.” I said that he might want to check on that. The journalist from the U.S. said, “carbon tax?” She was not familiar with it in their country. I said, “When we stop at producers' places, why not ask them about the carbon tax?”

We are not talking about the diesel. We are not talking about rebates, because these ag producers do not get a rebate. These people are not the rebate people. We are talking about the power for electricity on pumps for irrigation. Seventy per cent of the irrigation in the country is in my riding. That is 4% of the arable land in Alberta producing over 20% of the ag GDP.

When we stopped, The U.S. journalist asked a farmer whether they pay carbon tax. The farmer said, “I have bills I can show you. I have paid \$100,000 in carbon tax alone.” Afterwards, the journalists were surprised. The one from Iowa said they did not know how we compete in the world market. They are happy in the U.S. because we cannot compete with them because they do not have that carbon tax. The one from Montreal said that they do not have a carbon tax either. I said, “Check on it. You have the clean fuel standard, and that is in your ag sector.” The one from Brazil said, “I do not know how you are going to compete on the international market.”

That is the challenge with our irrigation: the carbon tax on the electricity. I am not talking about diesel. These guys do not get rebates. Seventy per cent of irrigation is in my riding, and the farmers are paying huge carbon tax on the electricity. This is a challenge to stay competitive. This is a challenge to stay in the ag business as producers, and it is going to triple. The ag producers do not understand how they can stay in the business.

We are talking about innovative agricultural producers. We are talking about carbon sequestration in their crops. We are talking about the way they are developing their crops with zero tillage. A lot of the activities they are doing are world-leading, but the carbon tax is killing our food security because these ag producers cannot sustain this level of tax on the electricity it takes for their irrigation pumps to work. It is problematic for food security in this country.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know that Conservatives do not like to deal in facts, but I am going to put a few facts on the table and the first one is around affordability. In 2006, when the Conservatives came into office, Canada ranked 17th in the OECD when it came to child poverty, and by the time they left in 2015, Canada ranked 24th. It is a little hard to take them seriously when they talk about poverty.

Members do know one thing: After coming into office in 2015, Canada now ranks second in the OECD when it comes to child poverty. There is more work to be done. Facts matter and the member deals in falsehoods and things he makes up because there are no facts on the table when talking to the member regarding climate change or poverty in this country.

Another point is when the member talks about farm fuels. Farm fuels in Alberta and across the country are exempt from the price on pollution, and the reason some electricity in Alberta might be subject to carbon pricing is because 80% of the grid in Alberta is still fuelled by coke, coal and natural gas. That is a problem for Canada because climate change is a problem for Canada.

Throughout this summer, we had unabated, unprecedented wildfires that took the homes of thousands of Canadians and forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of Canadians. I will take no lessons from the Conservatives when they talk about climate change, primarily because my colleague, and all Conservative members, ran on a commitment to put in a carbon pricing scheme.

Canadians looked at that plan. It was far worse than any other party's plan to fight climate change and that is why they did not earn votes from any environmentalists in the last election. I do remind the member that he, along with all of his colleagues, including the member for Carleton, ran on a commitment to price carbon.

Not only do the Conservatives have no credibility when it comes to fighting climate change, but they also have no credibility when it comes to following through on their commitments. The only thing they have been arguing over the last two years is their “axe the tax” slogan for T-shirts and bumper stickers.

On food pricing, I will say food is too expensive in Canada. We need to find real solutions to drive down the price of food and stabilize grocery bills for families. Trevor Tombe, an economist from the same province as my colleague came out with some facts, some figures and some actual numbers to indicate the impact that carbon pricing in Canada has on grocery bills in our country.

What he came up with was a very clear representation of the exact price for an average family. Food has gone up by dozens of dollars a month, but he attributes just \$2 a month on the price of groceries to the price on carbon in Ontario and \$5 a month on the price of groceries for an average family in Alberta.

When the member opposite says that axing the tax, as the Conservatives have been repeating ad nauseam for the last two years, it is going to be a way to fight for affordability for families, that is not based on facts. That is based on rhetoric. That is based on bumper stickers. That is based on this gut, common-sense feeling the Conservatives rely on for policy, but economists disagree. Smart economists with calculators sort these things out.

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Again, we will take no lessons from the Conservatives when it comes to affordability or fighting climate change. In budget 2023, we announced historic clean technology investments and I will get to that after the next comment.

• (1925)

Mr. Martin Shields: Madam Speaker, I can get the farmers' bills on the actual cost of the carbon tax. I am talking about electricity. I am talking about the electricity generated that it costs for food. I am talking about the actual impact of the carbon tax on our ag producers. It is a fact.

About 7% of the generated Alberta grid is produced by solar and wind. We have more solar and wind than any other province in Canada. However, when it is -30°C in January, there is no solar power. In the summer when the wind was not blowing, there was no power for wind turbines because they were not moving.

We need food security. That is economic security and that is important. I am standing up for our ag producers—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, this trope that renewable energy does not work in cold climates or that renewable energy requires sunny days and windy days exclusively is tired and

it is not based on facts. Alberta is the sunniest province in Canada. Its capacity for generating renewable electricity knows no bounds.

The investments in renewable electricity in that province are also extraordinary, but this past summer, Premier Danielle Smith said it was putting a moratorium on any renewable energy projects for the rest of the year, putting in jeopardy its commitment to end its reliance on coal and coke.

The member opposite just cited the number 7%. That is how much of the electricity on the grid in Alberta is generated by wind and solar; that is not enough. By the way, wind and solar are not the only renewable energy sources. We can also generate electricity with hydroelectric, nuclear and many other ways.

This conversation for my colleague is one that he ought to have with his provincial colleagues in Alberta who are refusing to green their grids.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:30 p.m.)

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