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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 21, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)
[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Science and Research, entitled “Support for the Commercialization of Intellectual Property”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

* * *

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-366, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (substances in menstrual tampons).

He said: Mr. Speaker, today is a special day. It is the culmination of the Create your Canada contest in my riding. I want to give credit to two students from my riding, Isha Courty-Stephens and Hana Reid, who are both in Ottawa today to witness the introduction of their bill.

Every year, millions of Canadians use menstrual products without readily accessible information about the risks to human health of the substances contained within them. There is a lack of adequate research on the side effects and possible dangers of certain common ingredients in tampons and certain undisclosed ingredients that have been labelled as possibly carcinogenic by the World Health Organization. Many tampon companies have also included harmful ingredients, such as fragrance, bleach, aluminum, alcohol and hydrocarbons.

Today, I am very proud to rise and table this bill, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act regarding substances in menstrual tampons. This enactment would amend the Food and Drugs Act to provide that labels on menstrual tampons must include a list of the sub-

stances they contain. The bill would increase awareness around menstrual products and the ingredients used in tampons. I think there is a strong will in Parliament to strengthen labelling requirements for these products to increase transparency and to better allow Canadians to make informed choices about the menstrual products they purchase.

I want to congratulate both Hana and Isha and recognize them for their work on this issue and for being the driving force behind this bill.

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

* * *

• (1005)

PETITIONS

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise this morning to present a petition signed by Canadians addressed to the Government of Canada. The petition recognizes that Palestinians in West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem have endured Israeli occupation and continuously expanding Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.

Gaza has been under a blockade for 17 years, which has included restrictions on movements, basic services and human rights, and nearly 50% of the population of 2.5 million are children. It is estimated that 13,000 Palestinians have been killed in the last month and 5,000 of them were children.

The petition calls on the Government of Canada to engage with the international community to work toward a ceasefire and genuine pathway to a political solution in the form of a two-state solution and to condemn violations of international law. It calls on the Government of Canada to condemn anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and all forms of bigotry and to advocate for the Israeli government to meet its commitments under the Geneva conventions and international humanitarian law.

Canada was a leading voice 67 years ago in advocating for action “not only to end the fighting but to make peace”, in the words of Lester B. Pearson.

Routine Proceedings

PAKISTAN

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to stand in this place to present petitions that are important to Canadians and my constituents. Specifically, I have a petition today that was brought forward by a constituent of mine and signed by a number of Canadians from across the country.

The petition says that the people of Pakistan and Pakistani Canadians are becoming increasingly concerned about reports of political turmoil and the uncertainty in that country. There is particular concern about reports of violence and threats of violence being used as a way to suppress opposition parties in Pakistan in the lead-up to general elections in that country later this year. Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of violence as a political means in Pakistan or anywhere else in the world.

It is an honour to present this petition in the people's House of Commons today.

OLD AGE SECURITY

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to be here to speak on behalf of my constituents of North Island—Powell River, many of whom signed this petition.

They note that OAS, old age security, payments were increased by 10% for seniors 75 and older in July 2022 and that seniors aged 65 to 74 have not received that increase. That means over two million seniors were left out by the Liberal government's decision to create a two-tiered system for OAS. We know that across this country, the cost of living is increasing and is having a very profound effect on seniors, who often have a fixed income and cannot afford basic necessities.

Seniors are asking the government to change that and make sure there is not a two-tiered system but one system and that OAS is increased for all seniors, including those from 65 to 74.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am tabling a petition that was initiated by multiple pro-democracy and human rights groups across the country. In total, the petition garnered 5,799 signatures.

The petition notes that in view of the recent CSIS revelation on China's interference and influences in Canada, the petitioners are deeply concerned that some members of the community are using the centenary anniversary of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, to undermine the government's commitment to proceed with the foreign influence transparency registry.

It also notes it is imperative not to conflate the racist act, which discriminates against all Chinese, with the registry. It is applicable only to those, Canadians or not, who lobby on behalf of foreign governments. Anti-Chinese racism cannot be used as a shield to distract from and minimize the urgent actions required to preserve our Canadian democracy. Setting up a comprehensive system of our own foreign influence transparency registry is one of the most effective ways to safeguard our Canadian democratic system and up-

hold the universal core values of freedom, democracy and justice. Canada must be in step with our allies, including Australia, the U.K. and the U.S., each of which has established its own registry. Canada simply cannot afford to play politics with our national security or democratic process.

As such, the petitioners are calling for the government to, one, move expeditiously with the passage of the foreign influence and transparency registry legislation in the coming fall session of the House; two, develop a proactive and comprehensive strategy in eradicating systemic racism in all its manifestations within Canada; and finally, develop a proactive public education strategy on promoting civil engagement and democratic participation.

• (1010)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I remind hon. members that presenting petitions is for just a summary of a petition and not necessarily the reading out of the whole petition.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a petition to present, signed by many Manitobans, with regard to health care and health care workers.

The petitioners are asking for the federal government and the provincial government to look at ways to work together to improve the retention of health care workers, recognizing the skills they bring to Canada, often through immigrant credentials, for example, and to be there to support and have the backs of our health care providers.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM ACT

The House resumed from October 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-52, An Act to enact the Air Transportation Accountability Act and to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Canada Marine Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will start by letting you and the table know that I am splitting my time with my hon. friend and colleague from the beautiful riding of Kenora. Although he is not from western Canada, he is on the western side of Lake Superior and it is a beautiful part of our nation.

It is an honour to rise to enter the debate on Bill C-52 and kick off the debate we are having here today.

I will take a brief moment to acknowledge one member of my team whom I had the honour of honouring last night with the presentation of her five-year service pin, although with a four-year delay, for her time in the House of Commons. I note on the record how appreciative I am of my casework manager Amy. I know that all of us in this place work diligently, but we could not do what we do without the good people who support us in our offices. I give a big congratulations to Amy, although the presentation is four years late because of COVID, for her five-year pin, which she was granted last night at a ceremony where so many long-serving members and employees of members of Parliament were given pins.

We are here debating Bill C-52. Although I cannot show it to members, I did share a video on my social media shortly after it happened that highlights what I would suggest is the failure of the Liberals when it comes to the air transportation sector.

I will take members back a number of months to when the president of the Greater Toronto Airports Authority was holding a press conference and talking about how improved the service at the Toronto airport was. The cameraman, who I hope still has a job, did a great job of exposing something that we often in politics refer to as gaslighting.

As the president of the Greater Toronto Airports Authority was at Pearson airport talking about how great their service record was and how they had recovered from the challenges related to COVID, with a long speech opining on how great their work was, the cameraman simply panned the camera up toward the departures screen of the airport. I encourage members to imagine this shot. Anybody who is watching can google this and easily find the video. If I was not prohibited from showing it in this place, I would show it, because it was a demonstration.

As this high-placed president of the Pearson airport authority talked about how great their service record was, the cameraman simply panned the camera up toward the departures screen. I know all of us in this place spend a fair amount of time in airports. I know my colleagues experience this on a daily basis. What we see when there is a delayed or cancelled flight is an orange or a red line. A majority of the flights that day had been delayed or cancelled,

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which was completely contrary to the message being presented by this airport official.

I bring that up here today because it is an illustration of the government's record when dealing with challenges that our nation faces. The Liberals are quick to talk and quick to make announcements, but when it comes to delivering results for Canadians, they fail and the facts prove it. As we saw in that video, the cameraman did more investigative reporting than probably the Minister of Transport and his office had done when it comes to showcasing the failures of our transportation sector.

As a member of Parliament who represents a rural area of Alberta, I do not have any international airports in my constituency, although I have a whole host of airports of a regional nature, and I have many constituents who are required to use our transportation system. I have heard from hundreds of people, probably more than a thousand, over the course of the last number of years about how frustrated they are with the level of service being provided.

● (1015)

It was the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, the member for Carleton, shortly after he was elected leader of the party in what was the largest leadership vote of any political party in Canadian history, as a note for the record, who made the comment that everything in Canada feels broken. It was interesting that the Prime Minister and many Liberals over there took great offence to that: How dare the Leader of the Opposition make such a statement? Something was quickly repeated to myself, and many of my Conservative colleagues, and I know for a fact that it was shared with many members of the Liberal Party.

I have just a slight aside. I find it really interesting that members of the Liberal Party stand up and say they have never heard from a constituent about a real concern. For example, we can take the carbon tax, frustrations when it comes to our air transportation sector or any other of a host of issues. Maybe my colleagues could enlighten me if I am the only one here, but I am getting cc'd on emails that are being sent by constituents of Liberal members of Parliament who find my content on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. They cc me when sharing their concerns with Liberal members of Parliament.

It is very interesting when those Liberal members stand up. I believe it was a constituent in the riding of the parliamentary secretary, the member for Pickering—Uxbridge. The member said she had never had a concern brought to her attention related to the carbon tax. I am cc'd on emails sent to those MPs, and I think it speaks to how out of touch the Liberals are.

We have Bill C-52 before us, with three parts that sound great. However, when it comes to the substance of the bill being able to address the challenges we face, we certainly heard from stakeholders who shared that this bill does not deal with the meat of some of the challenges that our airports face. I know we have also heard some concerns about how this would affect other federally regulated transportation sectors, including ports and our rail system. There are concerns about whether the measures in this bill would be enforceable.

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The former minister of transport in this country oversaw one of the worst failures in our transportation sector. It led to Canadians facing, in many cases, tragic frustration because they would miss things such as weddings and funerals because of the failures in the system. The minister was fired, yet here we are debating this bill that simply does not address the meat of the challenges that our transportation sector is facing.

I look forward to being able to answer some questions about why we need to ensure that we have a transportation system that works for Canadians. Unfortunately, under the Liberals, we have seen a deterioration of the trust that Canadians should be able to have in that sector. As a large country, we need to know that our infrastructure works for Canadians. Under the Liberals, that system has become broken. This bill would not take the steps required to fix it. I look forward to answering questions on this subject matter.

• (1020)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am curious about why the members opposite would be opposed to transparency in the transportation system.

Is it because, when they were in office, their infrastructure plan consisted of fake lakes and gazebos? Are they suggesting that transparency in building infrastructure is not needed, so they can continue to build fake lakes and gazebos and pretend that this actually helps Canadians?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, when it comes to the previous Conservative government, we had a legacy of building things for this country. Thousands of projects were built across this country. We saw economic stimulus that built the infrastructure that actually served the best interests of Canadians.

However, the member's government has overseen a multi-billion dollar boondoggle in the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which has built zero projects. I find it rather rich that this member is asking for transparency.

Specifically, let us get back to this bill, which highlights exactly how hypocritical and out of touch the member and the Liberals are. We have a backlog of over 50,000 complaints when it comes to the Canadian Transportation Agency. It is taking more than 18 months for those complaints to be heard.

When it comes to transparency and accountability, the Liberals fall so far short of the mark that I do not think they know whether they are coming or going. Just like the Canada Infrastructure Bank, they have overseen failure after failure.

It is time for real leadership in this country that can bring accountability back to our transportation sector. When it comes to infrastructure, let us be a country that builds again.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have always thought about bringing back the Homer Simpson award.

I really believe Conservatives are out of touch. It is unbelievable that they would be so critical of the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

Does the member have any concept, any idea whatsoever about the tens of billions of dollars, approximately a third of which is coming from government support at the national level, and the projects out there that are going to help millions of Canadians? Why is the Conservative Party so naive that it is trying to mislead Canadians by saying that the Canada Infrastructure Bank is a bad idea? It demonstrates very clearly just how reckless the Conservative Party of Canada is today.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that there seems to be no other Liberal who is capable of standing up and defending the government's record other than the often-on-his-feet member for Winnipeg North.

That aside, we are trying to talk about the transportation sector here. I get why the Liberals are so afraid to talk about it. It is because Canadians are so disgusted with their management of something that is directly within federal jurisdiction.

Coming back to what the member asked about the Canada Infrastructure Bank, let us look at the facts. Infrastructure is meant to be built in this country. The Liberals have been unable to do it. When Conservatives are in charge, we will be a country that builds again to ensure that Canadians have the world-class infrastructure that is required to ensure that we can serve the best interests of Canadians and build prosperity for the future of our country.

The Liberals have failed. Conservatives will bring home a Canada that builds things again.

• (1025)

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, we heard the government members talking about the need for transparency. Much of what is being proposed in this legislation will be set forward in regulations from the minister rather than being embedded directly in the legislation and having to pass through Parliament. Does my friend from Battle River—Crowfoot, who was so kind as to split his time with me, have any comments about his frustration or concern, which I am sure he would share with me, in relation to this?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, it is a great question. I am glad the member will be covering that because if I had been given the opportunity to speak for the full 20 minutes, I would have gotten into some of the challenges when it comes to a typical trend the government has undertaken, which is to defer responsibility.

This bill in particular gives the minister an incredible amount of latitude to determine what the regulatory framework will or will not look like in this. Unfortunately, what we have seen in the record of the Liberals is simply one of perpetual failure. Canadians want a bill that has teeth. This bill does not have that.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is great to rise in the House. The Liberals could clap too. I appreciate the warm reception from my colleagues, even if it is a bit sarcastic. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and share some comments today on behalf of the people of the Kenora riding and right across northern Ontario. I apologize for causing so much chaos in this place. It is certainly not my intention.

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It is an honour to rise today and speak to Bill C-52, the enhancing transparency and accountability in the transportation system act. As was alluded to by my friend from Battle River—Crowfoot before me, this bill was brought forward on the tail end of a disastrous travel season for Canadians.

Looking back on 2022, we know that there were people who were stranded on the tarmac, stranded in planes for hours and stuck overnight at airports. I heard many colourful descriptions of the Toronto Pearson airport over that period of time. In particular, not just Canadians, but people right around the world expressed their frustration with Canada's air travel system. We were in international headlines for a lot of the wrong reasons throughout this period.

The Liberals dropped this piece of legislation, Bill C-52, on the table in June. I believe it was the day before we rose for the summer break, which is a concerning trend that we have seen from the Liberal government. It drags its feet for weeks and months on end; then, at the 11th hour, it puts forward a piece of legislation, saying that it is very important and that we need to move forward on it, right before the summer break.

In some instances, when it comes to indigenous legislation specifically, the Liberals will drop it on the table without proper consultation and expect it to be rushed through the House of Commons. It is a concerning trend, and we see it here with Bill C-52.

To speak to the bill more directly, I would note that, substantively, this bill proposes to set publicly reported service standards on private sector companies and government agencies responsible for air travel at airports, almost exclusively through regulations created by the minister. I will get into that more specifically later on.

The bill would establish requirements respecting the provision of information to the Minister of Transport by airport operators, air carriers and any entity providing flight-related services. It requires that airport operators take measures to help Canada meet its international obligations in respect to aeronautics in accordance with directions issued by the Minister of Transport.

As well, the bill authorizes the Governor in Council to make regulations respecting the development and implementation of service standards related to flights and flight-related services. This includes a dispute resolution process in respect of their development and publication requirements for information related to compliance with those standards.

Further, the bill goes on to propose that airport authorities formalize noise consultation processes, publish climate change action plans and publish information on diversity among the directors and senior management of those airport authorities.

I want to bring it back to the issues the transport sector is facing. We particularly talked about them in 2022, with all the issues that we saw as a result of the government's mismanagement. The Liberal government was very focused on the announcement of the bill and bringing this bill forward, again, at the 11th hour, right before we rose for the summer.

Throughout this time, we have seen that the backlog of complaints with the Canadian Transportation Agency has grown by an average of 3,000 complaints per month. There are currently over

60,000 complaints awaiting adjudication. This bill does nothing to address that massive backlog.

• (1030)

Passengers who have been unable to resolve compensation claims with airlines are having to wait over 18 months to have complaints considered by the Canadian Transportation Agency. It would have been a positive step to see the bill include some standards for the CTA as well to address the fact that, as we have seen quite clearly as a result of the government's mismanagement, an incredible number of people are waiting for a response from that perspective. Conservatives have been advocating and will always advocate the rights of air passengers to receive compensation in instances where there was inadequate service provided, or perhaps even no service provided in many instances. We believe that every federally regulated entity that has a role in air travel must be financially responsible for delays or cancellations. This should include airlines, of course, and it should include airports, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority and the Canada Border Services Agency.

In looking at Bill C-52, we know that the CBSA would be excluded from it. It is further unclear which entities would in fact be considered under the bill, as it would be broadly left to future regulations. It is unclear what service standards would be and what consequences there would be for those who fail to meet them. Again, as a result, this is setting the pathway for much to be decided through regulation by the government and by the minister directly. That is something that I just want to focus on a bit more. It is part of a concerning trend with the current government, which is moving forward with trying to give its ministers more power, rather than respecting Parliament's ability to debate and pass legislation.

Overall, the bill is at best a toothless one that contains no specific remedies to the issues we are seeing in the air transportation sector, but the more concerning part is the power going directly to the minister. I say it is concerning because it is definitely not the first time we have seen an example of the current Liberal government going for a heavy-handed approach. We see, on a regular basis, the government's desire to move time allocation and limit debate on bills in the chamber, not allowing MPs the opportunity to rise and to speak to issues of concern to them, or to speak to different pieces of legislation.

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We also cannot forget that it is the current government that brought forward the online censorship bill, which gives too much power to the government itself to regulate what people can see on the Internet. As a result, as we all know, it has been almost impossible to share certain news articles and pieces of information on social networking sites. I will remind members that it is the current government that brought in the overreaching Emergencies Act during the freedom convoy protests. It is the government that originally looked to ban a number of firearms through an order in council instead of bringing the issue to Parliament to be debated. If members can remember all the way back to 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, buried in an initial aid package, the current Liberal government attempted to grant itself unlimited tax-and-spend powers until the end of 2021, which would have been, at that time, over a year of unfettered and unchecked spending. I share all of these examples because there is a concerning trend of the current government's granting more power to itself and trying to, in many ways, circumvent the will of Parliament.

In terms of Bill C-52, it is difficult to comment specifically on many of the service standards and what their effectiveness may be, because we do not know what they are. The government is asking Parliament and Canadians to trust that it will be able to get this right through regulation. However, after eight years of the government's mismanagement, Canadians are losing their trust in the Liberals, and I would say that I am as well. It is not that they ever had my trust, but I certainly do not trust them to move forward on these regulations.

I look forward to questions, hopefully from the member for Winnipeg North.

• (1035)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, not wanting to disappoint the member, I do have a question, which is in regard to the marine aspect of the legislation.

I understand that members of the Conservative Party are now taking the position that they are going to be voting against the legislation, but there are some substantial changes coming for the marine component. We would have an agency that would be able to look at the ports and establish possible fines and the amounts of the fees being charged, which would really have a significant impact, I would suggest to the member, for producers on the Prairies, for example.

Members of the Conservative Party are very eager to be critical of the legislation, and are now on the record saying that they are going to be voting against the legislation, but it seems to me that there is a lot of good stuff within it. Why is the Conservative Party not actually reading the legislation and providing an alternative with respect to what they would like to see in it?

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I am very happy to respond to a question from my friend across the way from Winnipeg.

It is a good question, because the member raised the point that there are some aspects of the bill that we are certainly in favour of. We are not opposed to many parts of the bill, but again, as I stressed, overall we see that it is moving forward with many regulations and service standards that would be decided solely by the

minister and the government, and that is something that is a major red flag to us. I would much prefer that the government were able to explicitly state within the bill what the service standards should be so we could debate them, discuss them and bring in witnesses at committee to have input and just provide more transparency. Therefore, even though there are some aspects of the bill that we are certainly in favour of, it is very difficult to support, not knowing what many of those broader issues would be.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague from Kenora on his speech. We have here a government that is trying to rein in the airlines. I would like to mention a very specific situation that is happening in my region, the Lower St. Lawrence. As of December 4, the Mont-Joli regional airport will no longer be offering any regional flights within the Lower St. Lawrence, nor will it be offering flights to Quebec City, Saint-Hubert or Montreal. We are isolated. The government has no problem giving billions of dollars in subsidies to Air Canada, but when it comes to finding solutions and requiring airlines to provide services to the regions of Quebec, it does nothing.

In Bill C-52, which is before us today, the government is seeking to increase transparency by requiring airport authorities to publicly disclose information respecting directors and senior management, but that is not what people in the regions need. They need airlines. They are isolated in terms of transportation. It is impossible for them to travel to urban centres. We do not have any trains. As members know, Via Rail is a fiasco. The train comes through twice a week at two o'clock in the morning. That is the service that is provided in my riding. Well done to the federal government on that one. As of June 2020, Air Canada closed its doors and sold all of its assets in the Mont-Joli regional airport.

I would like my colleague from Kenora to tell us what he intends to do if the federal government provides billions of dollars to airlines that are not active in the regions of Quebec.

• (1040)

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, the member highlighted, which I think I made very clear in my remarks, the concern I share with him on the lack of transparency in Bill C-52. He spoke of the transportation difficulties in his area, and I would echo that, as there are many similar transportation challenges in northern Ontario. He mentioned Via Rail, and there is a Via Rail "station" in our riding where people are standing outside, often at 2 a.m. or 3 a.m., waiting for the train to come through. It is a very limited service and a difficult service for many people to access, so I share a lot of the concerns the member raised. Hopefully, we will be able to work together and with the other parties to bring more transparency to the bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-52.

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I think the Conservative Party really needs to get a better understanding of the substance of the legislation. It appears as if Conservatives are going to be voting against the legislation, giving the false impression that it in essence does not do anything for Canadians. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are substantial aspects of the legislation that would improve things such as efficiency, transparency, accountability and accessibility. These are all very important aspects of the legislation. We have had two members of the Conservative Party stand up to say virtually that the legislation would not be doing anything. That at least implies that they are going to be voting against the legislation, even though when I posed the question to the member across the way, he indicated that maybe there are some good things in the legislation.

I would encourage those members to take a broader look at the importance of things such as our airports and the roles they play in our community, and at the airlines. The first speaker about the legislation made reference to the Toronto international airport, one of the finest airports in the world, I would suggest. Yes, there are some problems with the Toronto international airport; I have even had my own complaints and concerns in regard to it. I think the member and the Conservative Party are wrong to blame some of those issues strictly on the airport authority. There are many aspects to an airport. The legislation attempts to deal with a wide spectrum of issues that are important in order to make sure that our airports, airlines and different stakeholders are all going in the right direction, because we recognize their true value.

There were interesting topics raised by members speaking to the bill. I made a quick note of some of them. One member made reference to the issue of time allocation, saying that the government is trying to push through legislation. So far, in listening this morning, I suspect that the government is going to have a difficult time without using time allocation on the legislation, primarily because it appears as if the Conservative Party is prepared to continue to talk and talk about this particular legislation. We will have to wait and see. I suggest it is important legislation, and hopefully, the Conservatives will come to the realization that it is in Canadians' best interests. We all know that members across the way could prevent the passage of the bill very easily by just talking. It does not take much to use up time when there are 100 members of the Conservative opposition who are determined to prevent legislation from passing.

Another issue that was brought up by members opposite in dealing with this is the issue of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, about which I was able to ask the member a question. Our airports are very important to us. They are a very important aspect of Canada's infrastructure. We know that as a government, because we have actually invested in airports in a very real and tangible way. We have argued that by investing in infrastructure, we are building the economy. I think members need to be aware of the degree of importance our airports play in contributing to the economic well-being of our communities. There are large international airports, such as the ones in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, and in Calgary, which is growing exponentially, along with other airports, like my very own, the Winnipeg international airport.

• (1045)

These airports play a critical economic role, but it is not just the large airports. In the province of Manitoba, there are the Winnipeg

Richardson International Airport and the St. Andrews Airport, where training programs are provided. When we look at the St. Andrews community, we can see the impact aerospace has had on that community, which is just north of Winnipeg, just outside of my riding. There are training programs for domestic and international students to make sure there will be pilots into the future. People also rely on the transportation there.

In the past, there have even been industries, such as the aerospace industry, which has invested in aerodrome in that area. Things like potential satellite development have been looked at.

There are smaller airports throughout the province, such as in Brandon. There are also grass runways to help farmers with fertilizer and so forth. Airports are very important.

The member made reference to infrastructure, and I would suggest we undervalue our airports if we are not prepared to invest in them. Investing in airports is something we have done as a government.

Conservatives talk about a lack of actions by the government, trying to give the impression that things are broken. This is a consistent message we hear from the Conservative Party. Its members go around the country espousing how Canada is broken in every aspect. It is as though everywhere a Conservative member walks or flies, there is a black cloud over them. They want to rain negative thoughts as if everything were going wrong in Canada. The degree to which they push that is amazing. Whether it is on the floor here in the House or through social media, they want to give the impression that Canada is falling apart and is broken.

Conservative members have stood already to talk about this legislation. They have said that it was terrible legislation and that they would be voting against it. This is legislation that would make a positive difference. I have news for my friends across the way, and it is that the vast majority of Canadians recognize and know Canada is not broken. They know there is good reason to believe Canada is on the right track and moving forward, especially if we compare Canada to virtually any other country in the world, particularly the G7 and the G20 ones, the most powerful industrialized countries. Canada is doing exceptionally well.

This legislation supports the idea and principles of moving forward. The government has a responsibility to bring in budgetary and legislative measures that would have a positive outcome for Canadians. We have seen that consistently from day one.

I would suggest to my Conservative colleagues that they let a little sunshine come in and start talking about some of the good things that are taking place, even here in Ottawa. I will give some specific examples. Even though the Conservatives are apparently going to be voting against this legislation, let me make references to what this legislation would do.

Government Orders

• (1050)

The bill would establish requirements respecting the provision of information to the Minister of Transport by airport operators, carriers and entities providing flight-related services. It would establish requirements. How is that a bad thing? It is building up expectations. We should all have expectations of the different stakeholders. I would think members on all sides would support that.

The legislation would make regulations respecting the development and implementation of service standards related to flights and flight-related services, including a dispute process. Those who travel, especially who travel frequently, I am sure, could share all forms of stories. I have been to the Ottawa airport, as all of us have, and I have heard the reasons and rationale that are often given. It is not just one sector of the airport.

I have been in a situation of waiting for a flight crew to arrive because of traffic issues. I have been in a plane that sat on the tarmac waiting, as other passengers have, for a ground crew to arrive. I have spoken with constituents who talked about the problems with baggage. The problems are wide and varied. I have had frustrations with Air Canada, in particular, most recently with the cancellation of direct flights and the excuses given. There is a wide spectrum of factors that need to be taken into consideration, so the idea of making regulations respecting the development and implementation of service standards related to flights and flight-related services, including, I would emphasize, a dispute resolution process, is a good one.

How many times do we hear from individuals who have legitimate concerns about what is taking place at airports, things that cause all sorts of delays for people needing to get to their destinations in a timely fashion, which might cause other problems? This aspect of the legislation is very positive, yet the Conservatives seem to have overlooked that because they are again voting against the legislation.

Hopefully, as I go through some of these things, they will reconsider their position on the legislation. What we are really talking about is, in essence, a framework and principles. If the legislation is allowed to go committee, members would be able to add additional thoughts. If there are ways they think they could improve the legislation, they could put them in the form of amendments. Conservatives should at least have an open mind, as opposed to saying they do not support the legislation and that they will not allow it to go committee because they want to talk it out. As Conservative members who spoke before me indicated, they are concerned with issues such as time allocation, so they are setting down some track on that particular issue. They do not want the legislation to go forward.

I will go through other issues, but just based on a couple of the things I have mentioned already, why not allow Canadians to have the types of laws that will impact the quality of services at our airports, such as the dispute mechanism, as I pointed out, to address the frustration?

• (1055)

People want to understand that there is a way to allow them to receive some sort of attention with respect to the concerns they raise, as opposed to, let us say, contacting an airline and hoping to

talk to someone live, who then tells them they have to go through a particular department, or whatever it might be, let alone trying to contact an airport itself.

The bill would require airport authorities to publish information on diversity among directors and senior management. I have been to airports that have an airport authority board. The diversity of our boards is important to the government. We saw a feminist Prime Minister who said that the makeup of cabinet needs to reflect the makeup of Canada. I would argue we have the most diverse cabinet in the history of Canada. One should not be surprised to see that we want some of these other corporate entities to also incorporate diversity. Whether it is the federal government through showing leadership or within some of the corporations we are responsible for, sending a message of expectation on diversity is a positive thing.

I would think the Conservative Party would be inclined to support something of that nature. However, if that is one aspect it does not support, then it can attempt to bring in an amendment at committee stage to see if it can get a majority from the MPs. After all, we have a minority government here. That means it takes more than one political party, even at committee stage, to get something passed. Could the Conservative Party get enough support for some of its ideas? Maybe one of the reasons it does not want it to go to committee is that it knows that, in many ways, it cannot generate the support required.

The bill provides for an administration and enforcement mechanism that would include an administrative monetary penalty framework. The legislation does not necessarily have to go into the details, which we have already heard from some of those speaking to the legislation. They are saying that it is not specific enough. The legislation does not have to deal with the specifics of everything, and members know that. This particular point talks about providing an administration and enforcement mechanism that would include an administrative monetary penalty framework. There needs to be a consequence, and that consequence can be defined better through regulations. I again see that as a positive thing. If things are not going right at our airports, being able to establish fines and other potential consequences would be a positive.

I am very quickly running out of time. I wanted to talk about the port authorities and highlight them because the members opposite did not talk about that. I raise the fact that these changes to that aspect of the legislation, the Canada Marine Act, is in the best interests of all of us. I am thinking specifically of our farmers and producers in the Prairies. I am being very fussy on that, but we need to look at how fines and fees are established, and we have to ensure there is some sort of dispute resolution mechanism in place to protect the interests of our prairie farmers.

There is so much within this legislation, but I have already run out of time. I hope the Conservatives will flip-flop and support the legislation.

Government Orders

• (1100)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, that felt like a long 20 minutes. I do want to make a commentary about the member admonishing the Conservatives for simply bringing forward concerns with legislation, expressed both by our constituents and stakeholders. The member for Battle River—Crowfoot mentioned that the legislation would not address the 60,000-plus complaints.

I would draw the attention of all members of the House to the fact that the parliamentary secretary complains about members standing in this place to raise concerns. He has spoken over 3,000 times in this place since 2021. That is more than every other member of the Liberal Party right now. In fact, he has spoken 20 times more than any other member in the House.

If we rise in this place, it is simply to speak on behalf of our constituents and stakeholder groups, which have pointed out defects in the legislation. This information can then be used at a committee. People will follow up and look at the transcripts, as I do when matters are brought up. Members have mentioned organizations and constituents who have concerns. That is the job of this place.

The parliamentary secretary has already said that the government will guillotine the debate if this continues, but we will not stop representing our constituents and Canadians in this place.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, even the Conservative Party has to acknowledge that, as an opposition party, there is a responsibility to ultimately allow decisions to be made in the chamber. There is only one of two ways that the Conservative Party will allow that to happen. It has to be clearly demonstrated that what we are doing is so terrible that they are literally shamed into allowing a vote to take place, or it has to be done through some form of time allocation. The true Conservative agenda is to debate things endlessly, never allowing it to come to a vote.

The member said that Conservatives would like to make some changes at the committee stage. In order to make those changes, the legislation has to get to the committee. The Conservative members have already said that they do not support the legislation. Maybe the member, and other members, could tell us what kind of amendments they would like to see. They could show us how they want to benefit Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was struck by something my colleague said in his speech. He said that the bill itself does not need to be overly specific.

There is an airport in my riding, the Saint-Hubert airport. I held a public consultation on the subject last year, because this airport's development has been problematic for years. In particular, there are noise-related issues, because this is an airport in an urban environment. That is somewhat new, but there are also many groups who oppose the airport's development as part of the fight against climate change. We know that the aviation industry produces a lot of greenhouse gases. It is a problem and people are very engaged in the issue.

Why does this bill not include measures on that? If the government is serious about fighting climate change, it has to start by legislating and writing bills with measures that will actually help reduce greenhouse gases. It could have done that here. Why are there no specifics in the bill?

• (1105)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question, but in fact it is done. It would establish requirements for airport authorities to create plans respecting climate change and climate change preparedness, and it would authorize the Governor in Council to make regulations respecting reporting requirements for those plans.

The Liberal government has recognized that there are issues for communities and that airport authorities need to have noise abatement advisory committees to support the airports and protect the people who live in and around the airports.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, we get to hear that member speak a lot, and I guess we do our best to enjoy it.

My question about the legislation is incredibly important. I have a lot of constituents who represent organizations that work on behalf of the community of persons living with disabilities. They talk about the many challenges they face in travelling.

The Auditor General of Canada published a report in March of this year entitled “Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities”. It examined the accessibility of federally regulated transport services. Between 2018 and 2020, 2.2 million persons with disabilities travelled. Those were the ones who were willing to take that risk. A lot of people choose not to travel simply because they are not treated in a way that is encouraging and inclusive. Of those 2.2 million people who used transportation during that time, 63% faced significant barriers. That concerns me.

This bill takes some steps in a direction that are somewhat positive, like ensuring that data is available to the public. That leads to more accountability. It would require service providers with the federal transport system to establish a process for dealing with accessibility complaints. The report from the Auditor General stated clearly that the Canadian Transportation Agency had insufficient tools and enforcement staff to address all of these barriers.

Does the member agree with the NDP that we should see more inclusion of these organizations and people living with disabilities, as we figure out these regulations moving forward?

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in part 2 of the legislation, there is a section dealing with the issue the member has referenced. We recognize this and it is one of the reasons we have incorporated that into the framework of the legislation. It would enable the Governor in Council to put together regulations that would assist in dealing with the importance of accessibility for people with disabilities. It was not that long ago that Air Canada made a formal apology for an incident that involved an individual with a disability. It was appropriate for Air Canada to make that public apology. Hopefully more attention will be brought to this when it goes to committee. I suspect we will hear from different stakeholders. I hope one of those stakeholders will be from a disability organizations.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always take great joy when the hon. member is speaking in this chamber. Some days bring more joy than others.

I know I am going to have a bad day when I hear someone on an airplane thanking me for my patience. It usually means I am either having a bad day or I am about to have a bad day, and it is a phrase that unfortunately all of us in this chamber, who are all frequent travellers, hear all too frequently. I noticed that part of this bill is to authorize the Governor in Council on service standards.

Could the hon. member opine on some of the service standards that are not being met on an all-too-frequent basis for those of us who travel on airplanes fairly frequently?

• (1110)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, there is an area I have not really provided very much comment on to improve standards, and that is the issue of competition. It would be a wonderful thing to see.

I genuinely believe that the best way to improve some of the services we receive is through competition. We need to encourage and promote that competition. Where there is a lack of genuine competition there is an obligation on agencies, such as government, to ensure some basic service standards are being applied. Canadians deserve equality.

Obligating airlines and airports to start publishing records would ensure more accountability. Registering the complaints and how airlines and airports are dealing with them would go a long way in improving service standards. In other words, let us start publishing that information for accountability and transparency purposes.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank hon. colleagues for allowing me to be part of this debate on Bill C-52.

I have listened intently to the debate. I even went back to listen to the debate of October 27. Some may ask why I did that. I spent about 25 years in aviation and I am keenly interested in the transportation sector. I think there might be a handful of us in the House who have lived it, breathed it and know what we are talking about when it comes to aviation and our transportation networks. Therefore, I am going to be come at this in a few different areas.

I have heard what our Bloc, NDP and Liberal colleagues have said, and a few things need to be addressed. Bill C-52 was an opportunity that the government had, after eight years, to actually fix

some of the problems with the disastrous travel seasons in the last couple of years post-pandemic.

How did we get here? We had a summer season that was horrible. We had a winter season, a Christmas season, when passengers were sleeping on the floors of our national airports. I am probably not going to make any friends with my airport colleagues, probably limiting any of my post-political career job opportunities, when I say that our national airports or our gateway airports are failing us. Why are they failing us? Because the government has failed to put into place measures to make things better for passengers, Canadians and the travelling public, the people coming to and from our country.

Only a decade ago, Canada had a government that understood that our country was a trading nation, that our success as a nation was predicated on our ability to move people and goods seamlessly and securely. Our former Conservative government invested in our ports and airports, our roadways and railways. We were able to move people and goods seamlessly and securely. We did not see the blockages or blockades to the number we see now. We are losing our reputation on the world stage to be a frontrunner of trade and in the movement of goods and people. Our success is predicated on being able to move the goods and the talent we produce here to other countries.

The member for Winnipeg North talked about Bill C-52 and its goals to increase the efficiency, accountability and transparency of our ports and airports. He said that the blame was on the airports, but the blame is spread a little throughout. The government has failed to do what it could in the last eight years. It has really fallen down.

This was most evident during the last Christmas break when thousands upon thousands of visitors to our country and Canadians were forced to camp out on the floors of our airports and major gateways for hours and days. I was on an aircraft for six and a half hours waiting for deicing fluid for deicing tanks. However, my time was minimal compared to those who spent days in that airport. I am so proud of Vancouver, YVR, one of our major gateway airports, but I was very vocal about how it had failed.

The reason I say this is because I have sat in pre-winter briefings with our major airports as a small airport manager. As a regional airport, we have to funnel our passengers through our major gateway airports to get them to and from our country.

Government Orders

• (1115)

We ask our major airport officials whether they are ready for Christmas and for the snowfall. They say, “We are ready.” As a matter of fact, YVR released a shiny video with all its snow removal equipment. We get two or three inches of snow, which is a normal dump of snow for those of us in rural areas and our airports stay open, but it causes chaos in our major airports. Therefore, they will pardon me if I get a little frustrated when our major airports continue to fall down.

I was invited to join a winter debriefing call. I challenged our airport and airline colleagues as to whether they were ready, and what were some of the lessons learned. I heard they have learned their lesson. How many times in 20 years have I heard that? It is so frustrating.

My travel day is 12 to 15 hours on a good day. Most times, it is delayed, but I am okay; I signed up for this and I just take it as it comes. What about the average Canadian passenger who is delayed or cannot make it to a funeral or a wedding?

Our concerns are that Bill C-52 proposes to make airports more accountable, but it does not look at the aviation ecosystem as a whole. What about Nav Canada? What about CBSA? Again, there is flow control. How many times are Canadians forced to sit on a plane due to flow control because Nav Canada has not been able to staff up our air traffic control towers?

I heard from our Bloc colleagues about air service development. Bill C-52 would do nothing about air service development. Here is a news release saying that Bill C-52 would not do anything about it. The only thing they can do is work with their regional carrier. The reality is that we are all in competition. Every community across our country is in competition for air service. There are 26 airports in our national airport system and four regional airports that have over 200,000 passengers. There are 71 regional airports and we are all in competition.

Not only are we in competition with one another, but we are in competition with our border communities in the United States. Billions upon billions of dollars are lost every day because we are failing in our competition with airports and ports just across our border. We have people who leave Canada out of my province and take a flight out of Bellingham. Why is that? It is because a \$29 fare in Bellingham is a \$29 fare. In Canada, a \$29 fare would be probably about \$174, if not more. That is because we have a user pay system in Canada. The idea is that the costs for airports, for the operation, for airlines and whatever are borne by the air travellers. It is in the form of airport improvement fees. That was introduced in the 1990s. YVR, I believe, was one of the first airports to allow for airport fees for renovations. We do that because we as a country view our airports as cash cows and not necessarily the economic engines that they really are, so airports have to recover their costs in one of a few ways: landing fees, terminal fees, real estate and commercial fees. That is really the only way that they can do it. There are very limited revenue opportunities for airports.

I will get back to Bill C-52. I am on a soapbox right now, and I apologize for that.

Our colleague across the way said that we over here on the opposition side like to talk and talk about legislation. Is that not what we are here for? Is that not like the pot calling the kettle black? As my colleague just mentioned, that colleague from Winnipeg North has stood up over 3,026 times, I believe, since 2021.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That's not enough.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I am hearing from one of the colleagues that it is not enough.

• (1120)

I, on the other hand, have risen 162 times. Shame on me. I should be getting up a little bit more. I have to be doing my job a little bit more. I get heckles from across the way.

I listened to the debate on October 27. In response to a question from a Bloc member about why there is no air service in their region, that they have an airport but they do not have air service, and shame on this government, the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Transport stood up and said that he had heard the same from one of his colleagues in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories and that he is working on that.

One is telling me that the government is going to pick winners and losers, once again, as it has throughout this whole eight years, that it will subsidize air service in the Yukon and Northwest Territories but perhaps not in Quebec or not in B.C. or not in some of our rural or remote areas that some of our other colleagues on the opposition side represent. Once again, we see Liberals picking Liberals over the rest of Canadians. That is shameful.

Our colleague from the Green Party talked about the fact that Bill C-52 fails to mention intermodal opportunities. She is right. We missed a great opportunity in following up on the great work that our former Conservative government had started, investing in intermodal opportunities, making sure that we can seamlessly move people and goods through our airports, ports, railways and roadways.

We have the fastest and greenest marine port to Asia in the Port of Prince Rupert just adjacent to my riding. We have the fastest and greenest railway into the U.S. Midwest, connecting the Port of Prince Rupert from Asia and bringing goods by rail into the U.S. Midwest. If Canada ever figured out what we really wanted to be in this world, we could set the world on fire. We could really do some incredible things.

Bill C-52 was a great opportunity for the government to put a stamp on the transportation network and yet it did not.

Government Orders

This government does some things really well. Let us give credit where credit is due. It does photo opportunities incredibly well. We had the transport minister banging his fist on the desk, saying that he sure told those airlines and the aviation business and they are going to listen to him.

Bill C-52 does nothing. It is lacking in so much detail. All we have asked for is to be provided some details. Who are they going to make more accountable? Where are the regulations for CATSA? Where are the regulations for CBSA?

It would require “airport authorities to publish” an annual report on “diversity among directors” of the airport authority and members of “senior management”. We have among the most diverse individuals, with the most expertise, on our airport authorities than any other nation, I believe. We have incredible people on our airport authorities.

It would force airport authorities to create and publish five-year climate change adaptation plans.

One Bloc member talked about how there is no air service in their region and then another Bloc member said that it is GHG emissions and the noise abatement issues. One cannot suck and blow at the same time. One cannot have it both ways. What is it? Does one want air service or not? As for noise abatement issues, there are regulations for airports. Our airports do have to report to Transport Canada. They are heavily regulated. As a matter of fact, we have among the most heavily regulated and we have the highest cost aviation jurisdiction in the world.

Why can we not attract carriers to our country? We cannot attract carriers to our country because it is expensive to fly into our country. It is expensive to even just fly over our country. They have to pay NavCan fees.

I will go back to intermodal opportunities now. Our colleague from the Green Party mentioned bus service. My community of Prince George is on the Highway of Tears and the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls has been widely publicized.

• (1125)

Far too often, members of our indigenous and our rural and remote communities are forced to hitchhike to get to major service centres or other communities because there is no national bus service anymore. Greyhound, the national bus service that we had for so long, that served some of our smaller communities, pulled its service in 2021. I believe the last service was in Ontario and that service was pulled. There are no coordinated services amongst provinces. We have smaller bus agencies that are trying to get another bus service, but without a coordinated plan, either federally or provincially, we are going to continue to see that.

I was amongst the first employees of WestJet. We looked at how to pick markets to go into. We did bus surveys. The idea was we were going to get bums out of bus seats and into planes. WestJet has been pretty good at that, but the ripple effect makes it harder for people in rural and remote communities, because of the departure of our national bus carrier, Greyhound.

Our colleague, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood mentioned service standards. He asked our colleague, the member for Winnipeg North about the service standards that are not being met. It was interesting, because he did not ask about the service standards in Bill C-52. There are no service standards in Bill C-52.

Bill C-52 lacks a ton of details, and that is our concern. It gives the authority to the minister, once again, without having to come before the House or Canadians to say that this is what the government is going to do.

Earlier in the day somebody said to me that trust and respect are earned. I would hazard that the Liberal government received the trust and the respect of Canadians in 2015, but in the last eight years, the Prime Minister and his government have squandered that. Fool me once, shame on them; fool me twice, shame on me.

What we have seen over time is that Canadians are just waking up to the fact that the government is not worth the cost. Bill C-52 is yet another piece of legislation where the government is saying, “Do not worry about it. We will get it to committee and work on it.” The Liberals say all the time that it is the Conservatives who are squandering time and delaying bills, but they have a majority with their NDP coalition, and now with their Bloc coalition. If Liberals really want to force things through, and believe me, I sit on the committees and I see it all the time, they could get it done, if they really wanted to do it.

We are on the record.

I see a colleague across the way waiting to get up and ask me a question. I will simply leave with this, Bill C-52 is just another example of a bill where the Liberals are saying, “Trust us”. Canadians know they can no longer trust the government to get anything done, and that Conservatives will come in and clean up the mess.

• (1130)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, nobody is saying, “Trust us.” I do not think anybody is saying that at all.

All we are saying is that we should use the Westminster parliamentary system in the way that it is intended to work, which is to bring an idea before the House, have a debate here about it and move it to committee to make the required improvements that the member wants. Every Conservative who has stood up so far has basically said that the bill does not go far enough. Why on earth would we not at least get it to committee, which is the way our system works, and then we could try to improve where Conservatives do not think it goes far enough? Then we could bring it back to the House in due course.

Government Orders

The member says Liberals have a majority with the NDP and the Bloc. That is how the system works; that is how Parliament works. We debate things, we vote on things and we move on. Just because the Conservatives might be upset that they are in the minority, and are against a particular bill, does not mean they should just throw up their hands, throw their bike in the ditch and run home.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, is that not what our Prime Minister does when he does not get his way? That is exactly what our Prime Minister does. If he does not get his way, he throws a hissy fit. He grabs his toys and complains that we are picking on him.

Again, I am going to use the same comment. One cannot suck and blow at the same time. One cannot say one wants Westminster style and wants democracy and then force closure all the time. The government lobbied and promised Canadians sunnier ways and that it was going to be truly transparent. I have lost count of how many times the government has forced closure on debate.

I will wait for the next question, because that one was just laughable.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am somewhat surprised by my colleague's words. A Bloc Québécois member said that the regions are poorly served by Air Canada, and another said that aircraft noise can be a nuisance. My colleague said this is contradictory, so everything should be tossed out and no improvements are possible.

He finished his speech by alleging there is an alliance between the Bloc Québécois and the party in power. This strikes me as symptomatic of something I have noted among the Conservatives for some time, which is an appalling lack of rigour. When a party leader can stand in the House and say there are people asking for medical assistance in dying because they have nothing to eat, and a group of members are ready to vehemently defend the notion that there is a tax on carbon in Quebec when there is none, this kind of speech follows.

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, perhaps it was in the delivery or perhaps it was in the translation, but what I was saying in terms of noise abatement and regional air service is there are mechanisms in place to deal with that. In his local community, the regional airport will have noise abatement rules it has to follow. Canadian aviation regulations need to be followed. It should have a noise abatement committee or a director responsible for noise abatement.

Another colleague was looking at air service development. Again, I offer to my colleagues, free of service as a matter of fact, some constructive ways their communities can maybe partner with airlines to put air service development plans in place. There are mechanisms in place for those communities to do that.

Bill C-52 clearly is another opportunity that was missed. It does not address any of those areas. That is merely what I was saying. We have one Bloc colleague blaming noise abatement issues and greenhouse gases and then another one talking about not being able to get regional air service. They should coordinate their questions.

Again, if any of them want to talk about air service development, I did it for a long time and perhaps I can offer them some tips on how they can get their community some direct air service.

• (1135)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the first two Conservative speakers today implied they are going to be voting against the legislation. Given the member's first-hand experience, would he not at the very least acknowledge there are many positive things within this legislation that would in fact be of great benefit for Canadians as a whole, and in particular air travellers? Would he not agree having it go to committee at the very least affords the opposition the chance to improve upon the legislation?

Why would the Conservative Party not want to vote in favour of the legislation? What within the framework is so appalling that the Conservative Party is going to vote against it?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, one of the frustrating things with Bill C-52 and the Liberals' argument is they failed to mention the Canadian Transportation Agency. Complaints to this agency have grown to over 3,000 per month. There are over 60,000 Canadians who are waiting for their complaints to be adjudicated by the agency. Their complaints are waiting to be adjudicated by the agency, and yet Bill C-52 does not even mention the Canadian Transportation Agency.

Liberals continue to tell Canadians or whoever is listening, whether it is with this legislation or others, that Conservatives are obstructionary and do not want to get it to committee. We have seen this time and time again. I go back to the comment, "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me."

Liberals keep asking why we would not just let the bill get to committee where all these issues could be resolved. What we have seen time and again is when we get a piece of legislation to committee, they partner with their NDP colleagues, ram it down the throats of Canadians, and we get flawed bills.

The government should be held accountable. The government should be accountable to Canadians who elect all 338 members of Parliament. However, what we have seen time and again is the Liberals shirk the issues. Bill C-52 is another example of that.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am going to pick up on a comment from another colleague across the way, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Let me state for the record that I do not enjoy the member for Winnipeg North speaking quite as much as he does, but I want to pick up on the question he asked the member, which my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George also referenced, and that is the lack of service standards. Where is the specificity? That is what Canadians are looking for, not another promise or photo op. Would the member agree?

Government Orders

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I would agree 100%. That was my comment. Who sets that service standard? Are they going to set up yet another committee of industry experts who will meet and do nothing? Who sets those standards? Who agrees to those standards?

What we see in Bill C-52 is that, once again, it would give all the power to the minister with no accountability to Canadians. Who sets those standards? That is the question Conservatives have.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there seems to be some confusion between what is law and what is regulation.

This would be a law that possibly sets up an agency for the creation of regulations. This is not the place to ask for specific standards as to when baggage should or should not arrive or when airplanes should fly on time or not fly on time. It probably would be better in committee. Once the bill is passed and the regulations are published, there would be a scrutiny of regulations committee to establish whether the regulations are appropriate.

Can the hon. member give us his understanding of the interaction between the creation of law and the creation of regulations?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, the hon. colleague, who has been in this House a lot longer than I have, summed it up quite succinctly.

The issue that Conservatives have with Bill C-52 is it lacks the meat, the intention and the direction for when it gets to committee. What is the mandate for the committee? What is the direction and where is the meat in Bill C-52 that will set the guidelines for the work that the committee is going to do?

Bill C-52 fails to do that. Similar to what the government has done in the last eight years, it has failed Canadians on the transportation file.

• (1140)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would really love some understanding on where the hon. member stands.

I understand that we are talking about service standards and regulations, and I too am concerned about an industry that self-regulates. That has consistently been an issue, especially when dealing with the safety of Canadians.

Is the member saying it is imperative that it be part of this bill, that there should be transparency in government to ensure that transportation standards cannot be self-regulated and that those significant changes be made in the bill?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, if I understand my colleague correctly, no. Our transportation sector is among the most regulated in our country. Are there areas that we need to focus on? Absolutely.

We need look no further than news reports in recent weeks about those who have disabilities and travel. One gentleman was dropped in the middle of the aisle and had to literally crawl his way to the front of the plane. That is absolutely unacceptable.

Bill C-52 has some points in it that I think are great and I support, but there are areas that we need to address. Bill C-52 does not go far enough. That is what concerns Conservatives.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I look forward to discussing Bill C-52.

Before I do that, I want to say that just as the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader was finishing up his speech, I got a real kick out of seeing a Conservative member come running into the House to jump up and criticize the member for Winnipeg North for having spoken over 3,000 times. It was as if somebody had punched things into a computer in the backroom to figure that out. The reality is that we are now in a position where Conservatives are criticizing members for wanting to get up and repeatedly represent members of their community.

The member for Winnipeg North should take great pride in the fact that he stands up for his constituents so many times. Over 3,000 times he has stood up for the people of Winnipeg since 2021. That would be something to celebrate, in my opinion. Only a Conservative would come in here and suggest that it is somehow to the detriment of democracy that the member for Winnipeg North continually stands up and represents his constituents. It is no wonder the man keeps getting elected and sent back to this place by the people of Winnipeg when they see that time after time after time he gets up to represent his constituents. If we could all represent our constituents to that effect, we would be absolutely incredible members of Parliament, all 338 of us. I take great pride in sitting so close to such a passionate member who represents his community.

Let us talk about Bill C-52 for a few minutes. This is a very important piece of legislation.

I find it quite interesting that the most recent Conservative member who got up to speak, in response to a question from the NDP, basically admitted that the bill does a lot of what he thinks it should do, in particular, with respect to the scenario that my NDP colleague brought up. He said that he thought the bill would actually do a lot of that stuff and would be good in that regard; however, it does not go far enough in another area that he is concerned about. However, the Conservatives have had a difficult time articulating that today. None of them have really pinpointed where that is, other than to say that regulation is bad and extreme competition is good.

Why will they not at least send the bill to committee? Why will they not at least get it to committee? Then the member or his colleagues who are represented on that committee could talk about it and try to address the issues they have.

I would suggest it is not because Conservatives are genuinely interested in the bill or genuinely interested in advancing any kind of meaningful policy for Canadians. I think it is just that they do what they always do, which is to delay and prevent legislation going forward at any cost. It does not matter what the issue is.

I actually have a hard time sitting here wondering when the last time was that Conservatives voted in favour of anything the government proposed. I understand if they say they disagree with everything that this government does, but what are the odds that they would just happen to be against absolutely everything? I think that it is really—

Government Orders

• (1145)

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, there does not appear to be a quorum in the House.

And the count having been taken:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I believe we now have quorum.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands may proceed.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, if this were the first speech I ever gave in the House and we lost quorum, I would feel personally offended that everyone ran out of the room when I started to speak. However, I am going to assume it is that it is close to lunchtime and people are hungry, so I will not take offence at the fact that we seem to have lost quorum during my speech.

In any event, let us talk about Bill C-52, because I think it seeks to address a lot of the issues we see with airports in our country. Before I identify some of those key challenges, let us reflect on Canada's transportation ecosystem.

In the year 2019, for which I have the data, a total of 162 million people boarded and deplaned at Canadian airports. It is really important to note that 69% of those people either boarded or disembarked from a plane in these four cities: Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Montreal. That is really important, because it speaks to why we need this legislation, given that so many people are using just four airports.

There were 26 airports in the national airport system that served around 90,000 air travellers since the 1990s. Most large airports were operated by private not-for-profit entities, which we know as airport authorities, through long-term leases with the federal government. There were 150-plus other airports owned and operated by provinces, territories and municipalities, including the municipality of Kingston. Of the air carriers, in 2019, Air Canada and WestJet accounted for 86% of the market share domestically. Let us think about that. Two operators accounted for 86% of the market share. Multiple mid-sized and small carriers existed. Those airports would often hire external service providers for baggage, ramp handling and refuelling, for example.

Canada's geography and population density can lead to unique challenges, as members can imagine. We have those four primary locations where people get on and off planes, which literally, if one were in Europe, would be several countries apart with respect to geography.

It is also important to point out that private or not-for-profit corporations are responsible for civil air navigation services across 18 million square kilometres of Canadian airspace, and they oversee more than 3.3 million flights a year through a network of air control centres. That is all done, as we know, by Nav Canada.

There are CATSA, CBSA and U.S. CBP. It was indicated that the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority screened just under 68 million passengers between 2018 and 2019. The Canada Border Services Agency is responsible for guarding our border, for immigration enforcement and for customs services. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection currently provides pre-clearance at eight airports. That provides the context for where the challenges exist, and

I think it is important to understand what the ecosystem looks like in order to do that.

There are key challenges, and I will identify five of them.

The first challenge is with enhancing federal oversight legislation in the air sector. Canadian airports are not subject to an oversight framework legislation, apart from, as we know, safety and security. I think that is a major need, in the transportation sector specifically, and we really need to address it to provide that oversight framework.

The second challenge is the accountability deficit that impacts air service to Canadians. There are long-standing concerns, particularly about major disruptions like storms, and about system accountability and transparency, because we quite often hear about them.

• (1150)

I will never forget waiting to board a plane, and it was four or five hours late. We were told it was out of their control. Due to weather, the plane was going to be late, and nobody was going to be compensated. I looked out the window, and it was a bright, sunny day. I wondered how it was even possible that they blamed it on the weather. It turned out, after I bugged some people, that it had more to do with what the weather was like for the crew who had to fly from another area of the country.

There has to be accountability when it comes to those things, and quite frankly, it does not exist right now. How many times can we allow that domino to fall over? Eventually, one is going to hit somewhere in the world that has bad weather that can impact one's flight down the line. That is where there is a deficit in accountability.

A third challenge is that the system lacks service standards and a reporting framework. Canada's air transportation ecosystem lacks clear standards among key operators to ensure the delivery of efficient air transport. Why is having those standards so important? It is very important, especially in a sector that has fewer players, because the competition is not as robust.

We should have standards in the aviation sector anyway. Specifically, when a sector has only two key players, Air Canada and WestJet, that make up 86% of the market in our country, it is extremely important that we have standards in place. In some instances, we cannot rely on the competitive nature to develop those standards, especially when the competition is so low in terms of the number of players.

Government Orders

The fourth challenge is insufficient accountability in the marine mode. We know there are concerns that Canadian port authorities are not sufficiently accountable and are lacking appropriate recourse mechanisms when taking certain decisions like changing fees. Right now, those port authorities can, at their own will, change their fees to whatever they want, and there is no oversight mechanism.

It is important because it is not as though those fees can be done by somebody else. The fee is inelastic from an economic perspective. It is a fee that the marine port authority can charge at its discretion, and users have no recourse. That is a big challenge.

The last challenge I want to address is specifically with respect to data about accessible transportation, which needs to be improved. The Auditor General of Canada has called for better compliance data for service providers to identify and to remove barriers to accessible transportation. That one is self-sufficient. We heard a question regarding that. That is why it is so important. Those are the challenges that exist.

I would now like to talk about how this bill attempts to address those challenges. First, the bill introduces legislation, the air transportation accountability act, that would establish an oversight framework for airports on noise; establish requirements to provide information, environmental reporting, and equity, diversity and inclusion reporting; and provide regulation-making authority for the creation of service standards and the associated public reporting for operators in the airport ecosystem.

As I indicated, there are some authorities with respect to safety, but it pretty much stops there. We brought in a bill of rights back in 2018 for airplane passengers, but that pretty much stops at the actual interaction on the plane itself. That does not extend to everything else that happens from the moment one arrives at the airport to the point when one departs from a Canadian airport. We are looking to extend that framework and to allow it to encompass all those things in the ecosystem of the airport, not just on the plane itself, in addition to the other issues I talked about regarding noise and providing information on environmental reports.

The second thing this bill would accomplish would be to amend the Canada Transportation Act to provide the Governor in Council with the authority to make regulations: to require certain persons to provide data on key accessibility metrics to the Minister of Transport and to the Canadian Transportation Agency to support an accessible transportation system; and with respect to the process of dealing with complaints related to accessibility.

• (1155)

We did hear, earlier in the debate, examples of individuals who were put in extreme hardship as a result of not having that information in place. We know we have to do more for people with disabilities, and we have an obligation to bring in meaningful changes to ensure that people are treated with equity and fairness. However, we also need the data to be able to properly develop those regulations, and that is what the second part of the legislation would do.

Finally, this legislation would amend the Canada Marine Act to improve Canadian port authorities' accountability and transparency on fee setting and the related complaints process established in the

regulations of dispute resolution mechanisms. I mentioned earlier that a port authority at a marine location can change its fees at its own discretion, whenever it wants and without consultation. We would put in place a mechanism to ensure consultation would take place with users, and there would be a mechanism to file a complaint if the users did not feel they had been justly informed and included in the creation of fees or the changes made to those fees.

Again, this is about making sure the framework is there to have a better experience for users. This entire bill would do that. It is about making the experiences for users of our airport authority ecosystem and of our marine ports better and more accountable. It is incredibly important.

I am getting the sense, after listening to the debate this morning in the House, that the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc will likely be in favour of moving this to committee. I recognize that the Conservatives appear to have some issues with the bill not going far enough, which is what we have heard them say. I do not know why that would prevent the Conservatives from at least voting for it at this point to get the bill to committee.

In the eight years I have been around here, times have become perhaps slightly cynical, but I would suggest that is a bit of a red herring. The Conservatives do not want to support the bill, but it is easier to say it does not go far enough, and it should go further; therefore, they will vote against it. It is probably more along the lines that they do not like the framework and do not think the framework should be in place. They believe in a form of extreme competition, even when it only includes two major players in the airline industry, for example, and they do not believe we should have regulations in place for standards. Perhaps that is just my cynical side, but it certainly has come across over many years of listening to debate in the House.

I hope that, at the very least, Conservatives will not filibuster this bill so it can never get out of the House to committee and that we do not have to work with the NDP and/or Bloc to time-allocate the bill so it does get to committee. However, I know that is another game the Conservatives like to play, so we might end up going down that road as well.

In any event, this is a very important bill. It would improve the experience of people utilizing marine ports and the airport ecosystem. I strongly encourage all members to support it so we can get it to committee, make the required amendments, and then bring it back before the House so it can become law for the betterment of our country and of those transportation systems.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, people living in the northern boroughs of Montreal, be it Ahuntsic or Montréal-Nord, are extremely concerned about the noise from Pierre Elliott Trudeau Airport's air corridor. For years, they have been pleading for noise mitigation measures.

While there are good things in Bill C-52, the New Democrats would go further. We would implement World Health Organization standards for noise around airports. We would make public Transport Canada noise data for areas surrounding airports, and we would improve data collection on ground-level airport noise. All these actions are found in the report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities released in 2019.

Why has the Liberal government not decided to go further, pushing forward to protect citizens suffering from excessive noise in the vicinity of airports?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the comment, but I think the important thing here is to recognize the fact that, while this NDP colleague brings forward a concern, he also knows that he can address it when the bill gets to committee.

The member referenced a report where this issue about noise has already come up. The member for Scarborough—Guildwood made a comment earlier about the difference between legislation and regulation. I do not know if the member's concern falls into the legislative part of it, which is what we are dealing with now, or the regulation that comes out of the framework that is created. In any event, what we are trying to do here and what the bill would establish is the oversight framework for those airports.

As I indicated, I think 69% of all air travel in Canada is in four airports, with Montreal being one of the busiest four airports in the country. Obviously, the other three will probably have similar concerns with respect to noise. However, this framework would set up the manner in which the data that the member is talking about will be collected; the rules, decisions and regulations can then come out of that framework to better improve the negative experience that people are encountering at the Montreal airport.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, the bill purports to make travel experience better, but it does not really have service expectations or standards set out clearly. A lot of it is just left to the Governor in Council, or in other words, cabinet. I think it would be unfounded, but the member may have comfort in the Governor in Council today. He may not have that comfort in the future. Could he comment a little bit on whether the bill should not have more service standards and expectations built into it?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question, but the member must not have been in the House to hear a similar question from the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, which would have answered it.

However, this is where I think the Conservatives are just using the issue as a red herring. The member should know better than to suggest that those specific details should be included at this point.

Government Orders

The bill is about setting up the framework to be able to collect the data and then make those regulation decisions.

The member is basically asking why that detail is not in here, which I think is a red herring. This is just the Conservatives' excuse to vote against the bill. The member should know better than to suggest that this information should be included at this stage. This is about setting up the framework so that what he is going after can actually be obtained and then decisions made with regard to the regulations.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to carry on from the two previous questions and the information in the bill. The bill would create a formal process for notifying and consulting the public on changes to aerospace designs that affect aircraft noise near airports and ensure that communities would be consulted.

The simple question here is this: Does the hon. member, or any of us, know anything about aircraft noise? I dare say that, in my case, I certainly do not. I am interested in the hon. member's views on his expertise on aircraft noise.

• (1205)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am certainly not an expert on it, nor do I claim to be. However, I know that there are experts out there, and they are probably the ones we should be relying on to collect the evidence and to make recommendations.

This is the exact point. From time to time, we have to put in a framework such as this one, with various pieces of legislation. The criticism, which I think is just a red herring, is that we are not doing the regulations. Well, would we not want to consult people first, obtain the information, talk to experts and then put in regulation? Of course we would, and that is what this bill would do; it would set up the process to allow that to happen.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just have a couple of quick comments and then a question for the member.

Early in his speech, the member asked about the last time Conservatives voted in support of a Liberal bill. We did that yesterday, not even 24 hours ago.

The second thing is that I just want to thank the member for putting on the record that every member of Parliament should have as many interventions in the House as the member for Winnipeg North does, with 3,000 in the last two years. We may have two years left in this Parliament. I am looking forward to every other member in the House getting 3,000 interventions in the chamber in the next couple of years. That would be a great way to represent our constituents. I want to thank the member for putting that on the record.

Government Orders

Part of this bill would set up a framework for dealing with the challenges in our air industry, particularly the complaints. The member represents an area that has a local, regional airport. Having flown out of it many times in the past, I have run into a number of challenges flying through Kingston.

Could the member elaborate on whether he has heard any concerns in the last couple of years about his airport in Kingston?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, Kingston has had an airport since World War II. It continues to operate today.

Absolutely, there are always concerns. One of the challenges for Kingston, which other people see as a benefit, is that it is located two hours from Ottawa, two hours from Toronto and two hours from Montreal. The member said he flew through Kingston, and I do not understand that; one is either arriving or leaving to go to one of those other spots. However, the point is that while we have what might be seen as a detriment to Kingston, in terms of our airport, we also have the fourth-busiest train station in the country. People might not expect that of Kingston, but it is the case because of our proximity to the other cities I just mentioned.

In Kingston's case, it makes more sense for the average traveller to take the train, for example, from Kingston to downtown Toronto, jump on the train to Pearson, and then fly out of there. There are some people who still prefer to fly right out of Kingston, but the options are not as great as they are for some other small regional airports.

We have challenges, and I want this framework in place so that some of those challenges could be dealt with. That is what the framework is all about.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend by colleague from Kingston and the Islands for his speech.

While the bill is well intentioned, certain aspects create great uncertainty. I would like my colleague to offer his opinion on the matter.

We note that the regulations in this bill give the minister a lot of latitude. Most of the changes will be through regulations. This raises many concerns for the various industries involved. Furthermore, it does not give legislators either control or certainty regarding the scope of the measures.

I would like my colleague to enlighten us on this matter.

• (1210)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, this is the theme of my questions.

The member for Scarborough—Guildwood said this better than I can. The framework is put in place, the regulations are put in place and then we have a committee that can oversee the regulations. If a member of Parliament has an issue, they should talk to their representatives on that committee, where the regulations that have been put in place by the minister could be scrutinized.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House and speak on behalf of the incredible constituents of Calgary Midnapore.

Before I begin my speech, I would like to state that I will be splitting my time with the member for Provencher. I look forward to his remarks following mine.

When I received the request from our shadow minister for transport, the member for Chilliwack—Hope, I was, in fact, very honoured. One of my greatest achievements in my time in the House of Commons was serving as the shadow minister for transport during the pandemic. I can certainly tell everyone that things did not function as they should have during that time. They did not function at all, in fact.

My experience, based upon that time, leads me to the conclusion that there is, in regard to the government, lots of regulation and no responsibility. This also summarizes my conclusion regarding Bill C-52.

I think that this is a theme we have seen with the government. We have seen this with some recent decisions made at different levels of government, as well as at higher courts, including with regard to Bill C-69, the “no more pipelines” bill, as we called it here. There, they put in significant regulation against not only pipelines but also, actually, lots of other pieces of infrastructure. We see that this was, in fact, overturned.

Just this past week, as well, we were very happy to see, on this side of the House, the overruling of the single-use plastics legislation that was put in by the government. Again, the government imposes all this regulation on industry, on Canadians and on third parties without taking the responsibility for the regulations that it has imposed upon itself. I think we are seeing this again in this bill.

I am sure that we are aware that 2022 was a disastrous summer travel season, as well as a terrible holiday travel season through December. Really, if we look back at that, it was for the reason that I gave at the beginning of my speech, which was poor management of the transportation sector through the pandemic.

Frankly, they had no plan for the airline sector at that time. As the shadow minister of transport, I certainly tried to get them to produce a plan. They did no such thing. This had significant and widespread consequences not only for Canadians but also for workers across Canada, as well as for different communities and regions across Canada.

Government Orders

I implored them to come up with a plan for regional airlines at the time. Regional airport authorities were left to fend for themselves. I, along with my colleagues, made a very strong push for them to implement rapid testing and implement it sooner than they did, in an effort to more easily facilitate both travel and the travel sector. As well, I tried very hard to convince them not to use the supports for sectors for executive compensation. All these requests that I made as the shadow minister for transport fell upon deaf ears at that time.

In addition, of course, I was not alone in doing that. There were also my colleagues, the member of Parliament for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman and the member of Parliament for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Sadly, in September 2020, we saw 14% of Nav Canada employees being laid off in centres in Winnipeg and Halifax. That is just another example of the lack of action of the government during the pandemic. At that time, 750 families had to go home and tell their families that they did not have a job anymore.

I said back in September 2020, before the throne speech, that our economy simply cannot function, let alone thrive, without major carriers and airport authorities. Ironically, I said that on mini-budget day, and here we are again today.

In 2020, the Calgary Airport Authority alone was expecting a 64% drop in passenger traffic from 2019 levels and projecting a loss of \$245 million in revenue. Other airport authorities across the country were facing similar challenges at the time. Stakeholders also reported that some supply chains had been overloaded as a result of the pandemic, with demand for some products having increased by up to 500% and vulnerabilities having become apparent.

At that moment, I asked for the government to develop a plan with common-sense solutions. We continue to ask for such solutions today; again, they are not apparent in Bill C-52. Once again, we see a government that has lots of regulations, yet takes no responsibility.

• (1215)

I will turn my speech now to the point about complaints. Over the past year, the backlog of complaints with the CTA, the Canadian Transportation Agency, has grown to an average of 3,000 complaints per month, with a backlog of over 60,000 complaints now waiting to be adjudicated by the agency. In fact, the bill before us would set no service standards for the Canadian Transportation Agency and would do nothing to eliminate the backlog of 60,000 complaints. I have an example from my riding, where, as of July 2023, I had a constituent waiting two years for a response from the CTA to the complaint they had registered. In the same eight months when the CTA processed 4,085 complaints, the complaints grew by 12,000, doubling in that time. It is no wonder Canadians are dissatisfied with the current process in place, and the legislation would do little to improve it without said standards.

As well, it is not clear which entities would be covered by the bill as the bill would be left to future regulations. A theme we have heard on this side in discussing the bill today is there are lots of regulations. In fact, we have seen from the other side of the House that members take advantage of the regulations. They take advan-

tage of Canadians in using these regulations. We might see something that is perhaps gazetted and then all of sudden brought into implementation, with both industry and Canadians being forced to respond and to pay the price for the use of regulation by the government.

Fundamentally, the bill remains a toothless bill that contains no specific remedies to the problems that have been plaguing the system since the pandemic. I will add that during the difficult time coming out of the pandemic, the then minister of transport blamed Canadians for forgetting how to travel. I talked about the government's shirking responsibility, and there we see it again with the minister of transport's not saying that it was his bad or that he should have come up with a plan during the pandemic, but rather blaming Canadians. He was not even addressing it through the complaint process, nor was he willing to fix the complaint process.

I have a quote from a significant air passenger rights advocate, Gabor Lukacs. Anyone who sits on the transport committee certainly will have communicated with him. He says, "There may be penalties, but even those powers are left to the government to create." Since I am throwing out Gabor Lukacs's name, I would also like to mention Roy Grinshpan, who has also been an incredible advocate for passenger rights and passenger advocacy.

Even the pilots with whom I worked so closely during the pandemic are not in favour of the legislation. The president of ALPA Canada, Captain Tim Perry, for whom I have a lot of respect, brought to my attention that safety might be compromised as a result of the implementation of the bill to ensure that passengers are taken care of. This is simply another concern, which is that passengers are not being taken care of, and even the pilots who fly the planes are voicing their concern over this.

To conclude, I talked about the implementation of regulation, so much of it, but again there is no responsibility. The then minister of transport said that there would be consequences for service providers that do not meet the standards, but he did not disclose what they would be. Again, there is so much regulation and no responsibility. The government tells Canadians and industry time and time again that they have to do this and that, but it never takes responsibility for the legislation it implements.

In conclusion, Bill C-52 and the government are about lots of regulations but no responsibility.

• (1220)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, because today I understand that the Conservatives are doing a count, I think this is my 3,260th or so time that I have actually stood up in the House. I can honestly say that this is in good part because the Conservative Party continues to want to mislead Canadians and direct them off track. Unfortunately, that means I do have to stand up periodically to set the record straight and put some facts forward, as opposed to the mischief that the Conservative Party wants to constantly create and spread throughout social media.

Government Orders

The bill is a very good example. Bill C-52 is good, solid legislation that would improve the conditions of air travel and port fees for Canadians virtually from coast to coast to coast. It is good, substantial legislation, yet the Conservative Party is going to be voting against it. Why would the Conservative Party vote against the legislation, as opposed to supporting it, allowing it to go to committee and maybe looking at making some changes like the member herself is? It seems to be common sense.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I did not hear a single thing the member said after I heard that he has stood up in the House 3,000 times and is not a member of cabinet. I think, rather than responding to that, I am actually going to start a petition that the member should be brought to cabinet. I encourage the member to keep advocating anything and everything. I am not getting a lot of support for the idea on this side of the House. I guess with 3,000 interventions, we have to wonder who is listening. I was not.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it shows that Conservative members, much like the member said, are not listening. That is part of the problem. Conservative members do not listen to what Canadians are saying. They are more concerned about what I mentioned yesterday: bumper stickers.

The legislation is sound legislation that would improve air travel in Canada, yet the Conservative Party wants to filibuster and to see the legislation defeated, as opposed to recognizing the good within the legislation. If they have some ideas, which has been very rare unless it has been about cryptocurrency or something silly like that, at the end of the day, the Conservative Party does not want to contribute to good, healthy legislation but, rather, oppose and filibuster. How does the member justify such irresponsible behaviour to her constituents, given what we hear on a daily basis coming from the Conservative Party of Canada?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I think I made it very clear in my speech. I am listening. I am listening to stakeholders that the government has ignored for years, including pilots, passengers, airport authorities, airlines and Canadians. Do we know who has not been listening? It is this member. He is talking and has done so over 3,000 times.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would just like my colleague to elaborate a little bit on the challenges that passengers have been having, maybe from her riding. The Canadian Transportation Agency has a backlog of over 60,000 complaints. I know I have had people in my riding complain. I would just like to give her the opportunity to expand on what she is hearing in her riding of Calgary.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound was instrumental on the leadership team during the time of the pandemic, so I appreciate that.

In fact, I do have an example from my riding. This is from a constituent: “On June 25, 2022, I filed an air travel complaint with the Canadian Transportation Agency. By November 25, 2022, I was 10,203 in the complaint queue out of 40,000 complaints. As of today, I am 6,118 in the queue out of 52,000 complaints”. Do members know who should listen to this? The Liberal government should.

• (1225)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a privilege to speak on behalf of Canadians and, particularly, of my constituents in the riding of Provencher. For those who do not know where Provencher is, it is in southeast Manitoba.

Today, I am speaking to Bill C-52, An Act to enact the Air Transportation Accountability Act and to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Canada Marine Act. While there are parts of the bill that I believe go in the right direction, I will affirm that I have concerns. Probably one of the biggest concerns is the bill's title's not living up to its intentions, and not just missing an opportunity but also missing the point. Members may remember the story of the man in a restaurant who calls out to the waiter, “What is this fly doing in my soup?” The waiter is at first silent, then looks down at the soup and exclaims, “The backstroke.” Like the waiter, the bill misses an opportunity and misses the point.

Something Conservatives have observed over the last eight years is that while the current government is very good at photo ops and making announcements, it is much harder for the government to implement initiatives that get to the heart of the real issues. The importance of considering how each decision, each effort and each initiative would make a difference to the big picture in any bill or directive gets lost in the photo ops and glossy announcements. However, let me say what I believe the bill intended to do, based on its title, because accountability is a foreign concept to the NDP-Liberal government and something that has not proven easy for the government to even comprehend.

No doubt my hon. colleagues will remember the summer of 2022, with 9,500 flights being cancelled in July and August, and the Christmas that followed. My colleagues will well remember the time, because their offices were flooded with travel stories that went wrong. After being cooped up, isolated, mandated and restricted, Canadians were finally free to travel, to visit loved ones they had missed through COVID, to catch up celebrating family milestones that had been neglected, and to embark on new adventures and experience the joys of travel, but also free to grieve and mourn with those whose loved ones had passed away.

However, as the stories unfolded, the long-held dreams became deflated with long wait-lists, overflowing baggage halls, stranded passengers, flight cancellations and delays. On-time performance, according to Greater Toronto Airport Authority president and CEO, Deborah Flint, was at 35% in the summer of 2022. That would be a failing grade even by Liberal standards. It was reported that Toronto Pearson Airport was listed as the second-worst in the world for delays. Travellers made every effort to avoid connecting through Toronto, yet luggage lagged even farther behind, with some headlines reporting that airlines were donating unclaimed baggage to charities after 90 days. In some cases, frustrated and angry travellers traced their luggage through the use of air tags and found their luggage stowed away in off-site storage facilities. This past January, it was reported that a shortage of pilots compounded the problem. Regardless, people slept on floors and endured the relentless chaos.

As we can see, the problems were layered and complicated. It was good that the government finally felt compelled to act, and Bill C-52 was its response. Clearly, the layers of accountability need to be considered and addressed, which is why Conservatives believe that every federally regulated entity that has a role to play in the delivery of air travel must be held responsible for delays or cancellations, including airlines, airports, CATSA, Nav Canada and CBSA. If security lineups are delaying people to the point that they are missing flights, airport baggage handling is not functioning in a timely matter or CBSA is not staffed sufficiently, then there are concerns that need to be addressed. Each layer of service and delivery needs to be held accountable.

One of my biggest concerns with the bill is how much power it gives to the minister and cabinet to develop regulations in the future. Instead of including concrete improvements in the legislation, on the final page of the bill, in the closing section, key sections are referenced as coming into force at a later date to be determined.

If I may, let me tell another story. A fellow was walking along a country road when he came upon a farmer working in his field. The man called out to the farmer and asked how long it would take to get to the next town. The farmer did not answer. The guy waited a bit and then walked on. After the man had gone about 100 yards, the farmer yelled out that it would take about 20 minutes. The traveller thanked the farmer, but asked why he did not tell him that when he had asked, to which the farmer replied that he did not know how fast the traveller was going to walk.

- (1230)

Providing the needed information in this bill and considering the fullness of information is important as the details make a difference to the outcome of the expectations. How can we know if we agree with future measures that cabinet and the minister would be putting in place?

As a Conservative, I do not believe that giving more power to government is the solution. Instead, I believe that accountability helps set up organizations for better success and improved service delivery.

The law firm McCarthy Tétrault provides insight into the bill in a blog based on their assessment. Referencing the bill “Authorizing the Governor in Council to make regulations respecting the devel-

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opment and implementation of service standards related to flights and flight-related services”, it notes as a concern the uncertainty of what these service standards may entail at a future time, and how they will impact day-to-day operations. It also captures the element that deeply concerns me when it states:

The Act grants the Minister broad powers to request information from airport operators, air carriers, and entities providing flight-related services. Requests may include information regarding (a) the capacity and development of the Canadian air transportation system, (b) operations and air traffic; and (c) compliance by an airport operator with Canada’s international obligations in respect of aeronautics; as well as any information that an airport authority is required to keep in accordance with its governing corporate legislation.

The problem is that this is a toothless bill that contains no specific remedies to the problems that have been plaguing the system. It gathers a lot of information, but does not have any teeth.

Without specifics, we are told that we need to trust the minister and his word to solve all the problems. The minister and cabinet would solve all these problems by future undefined regulations. However, in the interim, the bill would allow for data collection and sharing that would somehow make it better for Canadian travellers. What data would be captured and what it would look like when service standards are not met are not even mentioned.

In his speech in the House, my colleague from Chilliwack—Hope referenced McGill University’s aviation management lecturer, John Gradek on this subject, who said, “There’s lots of stuff about data sharing but not much about what or who would be taking action and in what conditions would action be taken”. The lack of detail on important issues is alarming. What about the backlog of complaints with the Canadian Transportation Agency, which has grown by 3,000 complaints per month with a backlog of over 60,000 complaints, all now waiting to be adjudicated by the agency?

I remember a number of months back, chatting with a friend who said that it had become their expectation that they needed to factor in travel delays in their business planning. In fairness, while we have moved past the horrific status of having the second worst number of delays in the world, people are still waiting for answers. Passengers are unable to resolve their compensation claims and are waiting over 18 months to have their claims considered by CTA. Unfortunately, nothing in the bill deals with this.

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This bill is vague and, once again, as is common with many of the actions and posture of the Liberal government, projects “a government knows best” attitude. All we have to do is give away sweeping powers for this to happen. The government and Governor in Council have no business in the boardrooms or management of Canadian corporations or businesses. What the government should be focused on is achieving outcomes.

I will come back to my first point, which is that I think it is unfortunate that this bill missed an opportunity. Having said that, I want to end on the points that we do support. Let me start by saying that we have no problem with the accessibility and disability portions of the bill. We also appreciate that this bill may have had good intentions, but it has missed the mark completely.

Fortunately, common-sense Conservatives will continue to advocate for Canadians and do everything we can to help the government redirect its efforts in support of Canadians.

Ms. Jennifer O’Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, if these common-sense Conservatives believe that they are going to do everything to help Canadians, then why would they not support the bill that would help address issues of accessibility and persons with disabilities? Why would these common-sense Conservatives not support measures that create more accountability to create a framework and to create standards?

That does not sound like common sense. That sounds like Conservative politics, which actually disadvantage Canadians. If the member opposite supports the measures in the bill for persons with disabilities, why is he voting against it?

• (1235)

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that, if a member supports any one item in a bill, the Liberals think right away that the member endorses or supports the entire bill. That just is not the case.

I think I articulated fairly clearly in my speech that this bill has many flaws. It sets out a regulatory regime that we would be handing over to cabinet or the Governor in Council for them to determine the regulations. This is without any indication that there would be any accountability from the service providers in our transportation industry. That is what is glaringly missing from this bill. There is no mechanism in here for responsibility within the transportation industry or to hold it accountable to its commitments and our expectations.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, in 2018-19, the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities undertook a study on the impact of aircraft noise within the vicinity of major Canadian airports.

One of the recommendations was to implement public noise consultation committees, which this bill would implement. We know that community groups have expressed concerns that these committees would be a hollow gesture. There is nothing that would guarantee their ability to be heard or that public input would be implemented moving forward.

Could the member talk about why this is important? How important is it for us to look at this bill at committee to change some of those things so the people's voices can be heard?

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, the member's question is a great question. “Noise abatement” is the term commonly used in the aviation industry. I have first-hand experience in that industry, being a pilot myself.

Just this past summer, I completed my instrument rating. I can talk a bit about Nav Canada and how great the folks were at the Nav Canada office in Winnipeg while I took my flight test. They were a little short-staffed, and they allowed me to complete the approaches necessary to fulfill my licence requirements. I want to thank the good folks at Nav Canada in Winnipeg.

In answer to her question, for those of us who are not necessarily fascinated with aviation, other than it being an opportunity to travel from one destination to the next, some people may wonder why, when a jet aircraft in particular takes off, it does certain things. It will change course, climb to a certain altitude and reduce power. I know some people think that is an engine problem, but it is not. It is noise abatement. They are flying over a built-up or residential area and want to reduce the noise level for the folks on the ground.

I think the aviation industry is very conscious of that. Perhaps it needs to dig further into that subject. It is something I think it is addressing, but we can always do better.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, we know that this bill deals with standards for air carriers and airport authorities. The bill also provides for the production of reports to the minister or the department. There is also an accountability objective. The bill gives the minister a lot of latitude.

This bill may be worthwhile, but what about airport maintenance? Take the Val-d’Or airport for example. For a year now there have been calls to resurface the 10,000-foot runway and replace the runway lights. What is happening?

The government is not helping the airports, including the one in Val-d’Or.

I would like my colleague's thoughts on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, I think we need to have a Canadian airport strategy. We need to be working, through our infrastructure department, to have a trade corridor that would include upgrading our airports to facilitate international trade.

We talked about a free trade agreement with Ukraine yesterday. We have around 50 active trade agreements with other countries, and we need to build on those. We can do that by investing money in our airports to accommodate that.

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● (1240)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will say at the outset that I will be splitting my time with the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge, who has some expertise in this subject.

I make no claim to expertise. I am a mere consumer of transportation services, just like pretty well everyone else in the chamber. I would say a lot of us consume a lot of transportation services on a weekly basis because of the requirements of this particular job. I am coming at it from that standpoint.

Before I get to that point, I just want to make a distinction between the passage of a bill and the creation of regulations. When we pass a bill in this chamber, we are essentially setting up the legal framework to be able to promulgate regulations. If we do not have that legal framework, then we will not be able to proclaim any regulations. It is not as if anyone in this chamber actually has any expertise on, say, noise abatement, which was discussed earlier; when baggage should arrive; what the proper standard is for flights to be on time, or not, as the case may be; or the various other irritants that go with travel in this country, which is quite frustrating at times.

This legislation would set up the authority, and the regulations would put meat on the bones. After some period of time, members could initiate inquiries into the quality of the regulations through the scrutiny of regulations committee, which is a jointly chaired committee of the Senate and the House. It is not a very popular committee because it deals with exceedingly boring stuff, but there are certain members who are keen on exceedingly boring stuff.

I want to talk about three things, if I may: service standards, security and competition. I have been switching airlines. I have the good fortune of living in the GTA. Therefore, I do have some choice, which is unlike some members who have no choice. I have a strange idea in how I should make my choice.

My choices should be, number one, for the airplane to fly on time. I know that is a novel ideal to fly the airplane on time, but that is probably going to get me to choose that airline. The second standard I have is to not lose my baggage. Lately I have noticed that people do not put their baggage in. They carry it on, and I dare say that is largely driven by the fact that a lot of baggage is getting lost. I have a third rule, and that is to not treat me badly. Those are the three rules that I have for any airline I use: fly the airplane on time, do not lose my bag and do not treat me badly. I think that is pretty fair. After all, I am paying, or somebody else is paying, a pretty significant sum of money for me to fly to my destination.

In that vein, BillC-52 would bring in an accountability mechanism by permitting the creation of regulations requiring airports and other operators within airports to create service standards for their part of the passenger journey. I do not see what is so complicated about that. Over the course of today's debate, hon. members have shared their experiences, many of which are actually quite negative, so this is a timely bill. We could make the argument that it should have been put forward earlier, and so should a lot of things have been done earlier

● (1245)

However, here we are trying to deal with the creation of a legal framework so that the complaints I just enumerated can be dealt with in an organized fashion. That is the point of this bill. Examples include how long it should typically take for a bag to arrive on the carousel. I have no expertise on that. Maybe other members do, but I do not know how long it should take for a bag to get off the airplane and onto the carousel. This bill, through its regulations, would create some standards. When a bag is lost, and we have all been in airports where there are stacks and stacks of bags, there should be some standards to which the airline is held.

The second part of the standards would create an enforcement mechanism. Currently, enforcement mechanisms are pretty grim. My family was flying to Europe and their connecting flight was through Montreal. That flight was late, they missed the connected flight and they had to do a day in Montreal. It was not a burden, really, but the application just to get compensation required the services of a Bay Street lawyer. Anything to make that process a little easier would be good.

Part of what the bill could do, which I hope to see in the course of its review before committee, is look at the security arrangements at the entry into the airport. There is a delusion, I would say, that redundancy creates security. However, all redundancy creates is redundancy and time wasting.

It was exemplified to me that there was no risk analysis when the former minister of public safety, Ralph Goodale, was taken out of the line for a special security examination. I do not know what Mr. Goodale's security clearance was at the time, but I daresay it was about as high as high gets in this country. Why would someone looking at the passport of a minister of the Crown who has the highest security clearance want to take him out of the line for a special security clearance? That is the height of absurdity, and I daresay it is the height of absurdity for many of us. Why are NEXUS cardholders put through checks that are similar to those of the people who do not have a NEXUS card? After all, we have been checked by the RCMP and checked by the CIA. It just seems to me that no thinking goes on with security.

Finally, I want to deal with the issue of competition. My hon. friend from Winnipeg North, who members seem to be quite fond of listening to, made the comment that competition would start to eliminate some of these absurdities and get better service standards. Interestingly, WestJet has pulled back from eastern Canada, for reasons I do not really know. Porter, on the other hand, has expanded into international flights and many other locations outside of Toronto.

It is an interesting area. I encourage members to give the committee a chance to do its work and to pass this piece of legislation so that the frustrations that I and other members have enumerated can be dealt with.

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• (1250)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's explanation of how the framework of the legislation allows the committee to have other potential amendments brought forward to improve it.

I have a concern with respect to the members of the opposition party across the way. They seem to be critical of the legislation for not being specific enough and falling short, and even though they seem to support many aspects of it, they are still going to vote against it as opposed to allowing it to go to committee at some point.

Given the very serious nature of what the member talked about, could he provide his thoughts as to why it is so important to pass the legislation?

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, let me put it this way. If we do not pass this legislation, the complaints we already have, which are in abundance in this chamber alone, will only multiply and the frustration will go forward.

Frankly, I do not know whether the analysis we hear particularly from our Conservative friends is a failure to understand the process or there is something else to it. I would never want to attribute improper motives to colleagues across the way who might have different political agendas than that of the government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I emphasize the importance of the fact that we are not just talking about airlines such as Air Canada, WestJet and Porter. The legislation also incorporates airports and airport authorities, and, as one example, the diversity of boards.

I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on the changes to compel more diversity among airport authorities and on the benefits to the consumer.

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, it should be an operating principle that the board reflects the travelling public. How we achieve that I am not quite sure. My preference would be a less onerous way of going about it, but there is no doubt the principle should be that the board looks like the travelling public so that all perspectives can be brought to bear when decisions need to be made.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Before I begin my question, I want to give a shout-out to Antonio and Seraphina Spada, who will be celebrating their 70th anniversary in Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. They are key members of the Italian community. I wish them all the best. I wish they were here to tell us their secret for making it to 70 years. Happy anniversary to Antonio and Seraphina.

My question for my hon. colleague is this. The Liberals have bungled transport from day one, it feels like, with delay after delay, whether at Pearson or in transport in general. Why now should we be relying on them to do anything good, when at the end of the day, they have messed up this portfolio so markedly?

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, first of all, I congratulate those folks who made it to 70 years. That is quite impressive.

The hon. member has a contradiction in his question. Here is legislation that would deal with the so-called bungling, which I disagree with profoundly, and he is going to vote against it. He apparently prefers that the current state of affairs in Canada's airports continues. I assume that he, as I do, consumes a lot of travelling services and knows that the state of Canada's airports is not the best. Here he has a chance to do something about it and he is blowing it.

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

As my hon. colleague, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, said, I have the privilege of chairing the Liberal caucus that addresses our relationship with the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, the GTAA. We call it the airline caucus or the airports caucus. I am very happy to speak to Bill C-52, an act to enact the air transportation accountability act and to amend the CTA and the CMA.

As many of us who live in the greater Toronto area know, whether we live in Mississauga, Vaughan, northwest Toronto, the Etobicoke area or High Park, there is an immense amount of airline traffic. That applies to Brampton, Caledon, Kleinburg and other areas. We hear quite significantly from our constituents about aircraft noise, aircraft routes, changes in aircraft routes brought on by Nav Canada and the subsequent refurbishment of runways at the GTAA and the Toronto Pearson airport, which impact people's daily lives.

It is really great to see that in Bill C-52, we would establish “requirements in respect of noise management committees” and would set out “notice and consultation requirements relating to aircraft noise”. We would provide “a process by which to make complaints respecting notice and consultation requirements in relation to aircraft noise”. That means for constituents who go to the Pearson airport or other airports across Canada, we would have a formalized process for complaints respecting notice and consultation requirements in relation to aircraft noise. We would also provide for “an administration and enforcement mechanism that includes an administrative monetary penalty framework”. This is just another way we are responding to consumers.

Before I make my formal remarks, I will say that it is so great to go back to our constituents and say that we have listened to them, we want a consultative process that works and we are going to have a consultative process. The bill would create a formal process for notifying and consulting the public on changes to airspace designs that affect aircraft noise near airports to ensure that communities that would potentially be affected by such changes can be engaged. That engagement and the consultation process are so important.

Now I will get to my formal remarks.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-52, the enhancing transparency and accountability in the transportation system act, which offers concrete measures to address a number of concerns that were raised about the accountability and transparency of operators across the sector.

I think we can all agree on the importance of having the efficient, accessible, accountable transportation system Canadians deserve. That includes making sure that Canadians have access to a system in which operators are transparent and accountable to stakeholders, users and passengers.

As we all know, air travel has reopened to Canadians since the pandemic. However, as an ecosystem, it is lacking clear terms of service between operators and passengers. As a result, passengers are often unaware of who is responsible for which activities and who they should talk to if a trip does not go as planned. This bill will help address those concerns.

[*English*]

We all dislike when our flights are delayed or cancelled.

[*Translation*]

I want to take a second to talk about the part of the bill that enables the creation of regulations requiring flight operators and anyone delivering flight-related services to set service standards. These standards would apply not only to airport operators, but also to other companies that deliver a range of flight-related services in airports. The plan would be for the airport operator to coordinate the development of standards at their airport. They would work with airlines, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, Nav Canada and others.

Service levels are an important issue of concern to all Canadian travellers. As we saw when airports were congested in the summer of 2022 and the holiday period that followed, passengers did not really know who was responsible for what, who could provide information, or who they could contact to fix their situation. This kind of uncertainty can be frustrating, causing disruptions and inconvenience.

That is why the new proposed regulatory authorities aim to improve the overall delivery of service in our transportation system. Once the regulations are adopted, the service standards will provide clear guidelines on a variety of services that affect passengers' experiences. The specific services requiring standards will be defined in the regulations, and the standards themselves will be negotiated among the parties concerned, but examples may include the time allotted for luggage to reach the carousel after the flight lands and the expected waiting time for security screening.

That is not all. To ensure accountability and transparency, the service standards will be published and specify how they are to be enforced. The various operators in the airline industry will be responsible to one another and to the travelling public throughout the trip.

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Even though the regulations will describe the types of services requiring standards and include services that affect the passengers' flight experience, the intention is to make airport operators responsible for ensuring and coordinating the development of these standards.

The specific target parameters, for example, luggage delivered within x minutes after landing, will be more suitably worked out by the parties having business relationships and operational expertise, and they may vary from one airport to the next. We want to make sure that the service standards will be adapted to the specific circumstances of the airport in question.

The regulations could establish another procedure for dispute resolution if the various parties do not manage to come to an agreement on the appropriate service standards.

For the moment, the initial focus will likely be on major airports. Details concerning airline sector participants, services, and other issues will be defined in the regulations.

If Bill C-52 receives royal assent, the development of regulations on service standards will follow the normal regulatory process and consultations will be held with all parties concerned.

The government will remain open-minded throughout the regulatory process and support the industry in implementing these standards, which should support the industry's actions.

Our objective is to encourage better collaboration among all the entities involved in our travel system and make our airline industry more efficient. By working together, we think that we can improve travellers' overall experience and enhance service quality.

This approach focuses primarily on travellers' needs and on measures that benefit them directly. It also encourages information sharing with the public so that passengers can make more informed decisions while travelling.

In conclusion, the advance creation of service standards and the obligation to publish them, along with a collaborative approach, should result in positive changes for our air transportation system. We look forward to a future of smoother and more efficient travel, centred on passenger needs.

• (1300)

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would be interested in the hon. member's comments with respect to the ease with which passengers are getting through security, particularly at Pearson airport.

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I had the experience on the break week of travelling to Washington and, frankly, the experience was as it should be. I would like to think it would have something to do with my colleague and his group's advocacy. I would be interested in his comments on the security situation there, and indeed at the Ottawa airport, for those who have a NEXUS card.

• (1305)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood is a very learned member of the House.

As the GTAA caucus chair, we meet with the officials regularly on a monthly basis. We inform them and we have a kit for our travellers and our residents. As the member for Scarborough—Guildwood said, the process of going through security at Toronto Pearson airport, at the Ottawa airport, at the Vancouver airport or other airports across the country has vastly improved over the last year or two.

We have put in process improvements and have provided funds, but there is also ongoing collaboration between CATSA, the airport authorities, Transport Canada and the Minister of Transport's office. That type of collaboration is what Canadians want and expect us to do it. They are seeing the results of that in a very streamlined, efficient and effective process when they go through security to get on a plane to go home or to go on vacation.

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I also want to call on the expertise of the hon. member with respect to competition in the airlines. We have seen WestJet pull back. We have seen Porter expand. We see the Billy Bishop airport wishing to expand and being able to accept jets. We have seen quite a number of new airlines start up in the last little while. It seems to run contrary to the narrative that we hear. Therefore, I would be interested in the member's observations.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I was able to participate in the wall-breaking ceremony at Billy Bishop airport for a new U.S. pre-clearance facility, so Canadians travelling, in particular in the GTA departing from Billy Bishop airport and going down to Boston, New York or Florida or wherever the destination, will save their time. We have seen airlines like Porter Airlines continue to expand their routes across Canada, internationally and cross-border into the United States. We have seen some other airline operators come to fruition and operate. Obviously, we enjoy the services of Air Canada and WestJet. When they are on time, we are always very happy. When they are not, we are kind of grumpy.

However, on the serious side, the hon. member is exactly right. We need competition in our airline sector, along with all sectors of the Canadian economy where competition provides for innovation, lowers prices and provides for better services.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague from Vaughan—Woodbridge for his speech.

The purpose of the bill is to ensure efficiency and transparency in air transportation. I want my colleague to understand that my region has practically no air transportation. Air Canada closed its offices in June 2020, at the height of the pandemic. It tried to justify

its decision by saying that there was no traffic. All planes were grounded.

I would like my colleague to comment on whether he thinks it is responsible for the federal government to spend billions of dollars subsidizing airlines that do not even provide regional service in many regions of Quebec.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[*English*]

Much like the colleague whose riding may be in a rural part of Quebec, I grew up in northern British Columbia in the riding of Skeena—Bulkley Valley. We had one airline flying in at the time. It was Air Canada and I believe it still is, though maybe a second one has been added. With respect to the notion that airline service should be provided to rural areas of Canada and that there may not be a very strong business case but it may be marginal or may need assistance, I am very much in favour of that. We need to keep all Canadians connected to all parts of the country. Canada is a big place and airline service is critical for that.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are in the House today to debate Bill C-52. It is a highly anticipated bill, as far as I am concerned anyway. There are a few things in this bill that we consider to be positive and we think are worth mentioning.

We often complain about the government. In fact, that is the Liberals' chief criticism of us, but that is kind of our role. We are in the opposition. We are across the way from the governing party. Our role is to hold the government to account. Obviously, when things are not going well, it is our job to say so.

Bill C-52 has several objectives.

The first thing I want to talk about is the thing that excites us the most. It is the idea of introducing service standards for airports. These standards will help determine how long it should take a passenger to go through security, collect their luggage and get to their gate. This idea makes sense. I might have a chance later on to come back to why this did not exist before.

The second good thing that I wanted to mention about this bill is the noise management committees. Certain airports will now be required to set up soundscape management committees, which will force them to discuss the situation with the public, recognize the effects that aircraft noise can have on people and look at how they can mitigate the inconvenience to those living near the airport. We think that this is a positive step forward, but I will talk more about this measure later, because we think that it may need to be fleshed out a little.

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The third thing that we want to highlight is the environmental obligations. Not so long ago, the House was debating Bill C-33, which is now being examined by the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Bill C-33 seeks to impose environmental obligations on Canadian ports to make them part of the climate change strategy, so that we can reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. I think that it only makes sense that airports should also be part of that effort, that they should be subject to the same type of requirements and that they should prepare this sort of plan. I think that is a very good thing.

The last part of the bill is a little out of step with the rest of the bill. It amends the Canada Marine Act to provide port users with recourse against port authorities if they feel they are being charged too much. It seems as though this may have been left out of Bill C-33 so it ended up in Bill C-52. However, the two bills were introduced just a few months or weeks apart, and they were probably drafted at the same time. I have to wonder why it is not in the right bill. Perhaps we will have the opportunity to explore this question further.

First, I would like to emphasize the whole issue of service standards. Why is the government suddenly proposing the idea of implementing service standards at airports? The Liberals did not just wake up one morning with this idea in mind. There have been so many problems over the last few years that they could no longer be ignored. Many people have been traumatized by the chaos at airports and by what they have seen in recent years and even over the past few months.

We know there was a pandemic, and all the planes were grounded. Unfortunately, the reality is that an airport's primary source of revenue is takeoffs and landings, airport fees, the people using the airport infrastructure. It is the same for airlines. Their revenue comes from tickets bought by people who want to fly to visit family, sightsee abroad or take advantage of business opportunities.

During the pandemic, no one was selling airline tickets. This also meant that many staff members were suddenly told they were no longer needed. That included pilots, flight attendants, customer service agents and employees who worked in kiosks and restaurants.

● (1315)

There was no longer a need for pilots, air traffic controllers, customs officers and security guards. All of a sudden, all these people got sent home. For nearly two years, they all stayed home.

Service began to resume when it was announced that the pandemic was over and people could travel again. What were the companies to do now? Could they rehire the people who had just spent two years at home? Some of them had decided to do something else with their lives. They did not just stay at home and wait patiently to magically be hired back. The reality is that everyone has bills to pay.

The other reality is that, while much of the world did one thing, Canada did another. It decided not to help its aerospace industry. It decided not to help its airports. Airports and airlines therefore had to lay off their staff. They had to let them go, pass them off to EI or CERB. That caused a huge problem. The entire aerospace industry protested, wondering how they would ever get off the ground again.

It is important to note that, even if airports let all their people go, they still have infrastructure projects. How are they supposed to expand if they do not have revenue? They still have loans because they may have taken on debt to build that infrastructure. How are they supposed to repay those loans? The same goes for airlines. They have to pay for their planes and maintain minimum staffing levels. They had a massive problem. The government thought it was saving money, but, as it turned out, our industries, our airports and our airlines went into debt. They ran deficits during the pandemic.

For example, Nav Canada unilaterally imposed a 30% rate increase all at once. Even though planes were no longer flying, the airlines were being asked to pay more if they wanted to take off, because the government refused to help them. That killed air transportation, especially at the regional level. Far fewer people fit on a regional airliner than on large aircraft that fly transcontinental. It amounts to a difference of 300 passengers compared to six. A 30% increase gets spread out among a lot more people on a large plane than on a small one.

Clearly, the federal government's dismal management of the pandemic and lack of empathy for airline workers have had consequences. We saw this when travel resumed. Airports were in total chaos. Passengers would get to the airport only to see mountains of luggage piled as high as Everest. People were buried in luggage. No one knew what to do with it all. It was everywhere. The airlines said they had lost it, but customers reported that Air Canada had sent it somewhere. There was too much luggage. It had to be sent somewhere. Things had reached a point where the airlines were practically losing luggage on purpose just to make space. Some clever passengers put tracking chips in their luggage and were able to see where it ended up. This got the airlines in a lot of hot water.

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When airlines were finally allowed to operate again, they wanted to make some money. They hired back as many employees as they could but, like it or not, when pilots have not flown for two years, they cannot be retrained overnight. They have to start practising again. The same goes for other staff. Security checks are needed. Not just anyone can work in an airport. There are security risks involved, as we know. Once again, the government was very slow to issue security permits, so airports were stuck. Airlines were also stuck. They could not hire staff. After that, because there were so many delays and late flights, the government blamed the airlines, which is kind of crazy. It was the government that had decided not to help them, but then it blamed those same companies that it had refused to help because they could not keep up with the demand. That is how the government managed things during the pandemic.

There was another problem. We were hearing that airlines were overbooking flights. I think there is some truth to that. If airlines do not have enough staff to handle the number of flights they want to offer and sell tickets for, of course there will come a point when they can no longer manage the same number of aircraft and flights.

• (1320)

The government blamed the airlines, but did not consider its role in this. Some of the problems are on the government. It could take hours for people to get through security. Why is that? It could take hours for people to get through customs. Why is that? Why were there not more air traffic controllers? Why did flights have to get cancelled because there was no one to guide the planes?

The government tried to blame the airlines and the airports saying it was their fault, not the government's fault. In reality, it forgot to consider its role.

We saw all those people in trouble, left on the tarmac. When they got to the airport they were told that their flight was cancelled. Could no one have told them that before they got to the airport? No, they had to wait until they got to the airport to be told that their flight was cancelled. It is totally ridiculous, but that is what happened.

Of course, this resulted in terrible congestion at our airports. People were extremely frustrated. There were people who were sleeping in airports without even a toothbrush, who were not offered a hotel room or anything to eat. There were people stuck in other countries, either down south or in other tourist destinations, who could not get back, and the airlines did nothing to help them.

What happens is that the same aircraft is often used for multiple flights. That means that, when one flight is delayed, the next flight is, too. What about lost luggage? The flight arrives late, but the luggage was supposed to be transferred to another plane. If the flight does not arrive on time and the connecting flight leaves before the plane with the luggage arrives, then the luggage does not get to where it is supposed to be. Imagine the chaos that created.

Among other things, we asked the government to tighten the rules for airlines. For example, people who want their ticket refunded when their flight is cancelled should get a refund, rather than being told they will be put on a plane in two or three days. Never mind the wedding they missed; that is their problem. If their busi-

ness meeting did not happen because they could not travel, it is no big deal. They get 48 hours. That was the government's policy.

It was even worse before. During the pandemic, they got nothing at all. A credit for some day in the future. They were told that maybe they could get their money back when flights resumed.

Here is what we were asking for. First, we wanted people to be able to get their money back. Second, we wanted to shorten the ridiculous 48-hour deadline that was set last fall. Catching a flight two days later does not always work and makes no sense. Third, people should be able to eat when they are on the tarmac. Fourth, people should be compensated when there are delays.

Many of our demands were heard. Many things were included in this spring's budget implementation act and are soon to be implemented by the Canadian Transportation Agency. Pretty much everyone went through hell, but at least that part is good. We have reason to hope that we will see improvements and progress soon.

But the approach was the same. The government attacked airlines. It put the burden on airlines without considering its own role in all this.

Service standards might be a stroke of genius. Perhaps the government has seen the light. It has realized that it has some problems to deal with, too. At least with service standards in place, things are measurable.

When a company has to refund a ticket or provide compensation to customers when their flight is late, those customers are not questioning whose fault it is. When flights are late or cancelled, customers want their money back. That makes sense. It is normal. It is what people expect.

That said, there is something wrong with telling airlines to compensate everyone because the government is not doing its job, because there are no air traffic controllers, security personnel or customs agents. That makes no sense.

The idea of service standards is a good place to start, at least. There has to be a minimum level of service that people have a right to expect.

We welcome the idea of implementing service standards. The bill states that the government will be able to impose service standards. That is fine, but we do not know what those service standards will be. Obviously, I know nothing about operating airports.

At some point, it is important to ensure that this makes sense. There is still no guarantee that this is the case.

● (1325)

We will see in committee whether any clarifications can be made or if we can get a bit more information on the direction the government wants to take on this. This bill could allow a lot of progress to be made and that is why we would like it to be referred to committee.

There is another part of the bill that I would like to address, the issue of noise management at the airports. Why do I want to talk about that? Obviously, it is not the strongest aspect of the bill. There are just a few paragraphs where it says that the airports will have to create noise management committees. The airports that use common sense already have such committees. This will not change much for them.

The bill provides a bit of a definition of the type of noise management committee the government would like to see. These noise management committees would bring together at least one representative from Nav Canada, which makes sense, an elected municipal official, an airline representative and a representative from the airport in question. The mandate of these committees would be to answer the public's questions and listen to people's grievances.

We think that the creation of noise management committees is a good thing, but we would like the government to take this a little further. I found out a little bit about what is being done elsewhere in the world, but I will come back to that later.

Under the bill, the obligation to create noise management committees will apply only to airports with 60,000 or more movements per year. I checked to see how many airports in Canada meet that criterion and only four airports do. I do not know exactly how many airports there are in Canada, but there are at least a hundred on the list that I have. I can understand why a small airport that does not even have employees would not be asked to meet this criterion, but these committees need to be set up in a lot more airports. That is what we think.

There are service standards for airports, and we think that there should also be sound emission standards to protect people who live near airports. Such standards do not exist in Canada. Airports can make as much noise as they want and the public has no say in the matter. The way this issue is being dealt with right now is rather unfortunate. There must be social licence for development.

Other countries around the world have noise emission standards. In the United States, there is a noise limit for people living near airports. In Europe, for example, there are noise emission standards. The World Health Organization has worked on noise emission standards to protect people's health. Why, in Canada, a G7 country that is a member of the OECD, modern and all that, are there no noise emission standards for people living near airports? It just does not make sense.

We think we need to move in that direction. We need to measure noise and report it. Noise is already measured, but is the method being used the right one, and can it be perfected? There is a theoretical calculation system for measuring noise, known as noise exposure forecast, or NEF. We think that this NEF system should also be available to the public. It would be great if people who are about to buy a house could find out how much noise they can expect at that

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location. If the noise exceeds set standards, measures could be put in place to reduce it. This would help everyone make better decisions while promoting community well-being.

That is one of the big changes we want to make to Bill C-52. We hope everyone at the table will collaborate. We are here to work constructively to improve every bill introduced in the House for the betterment of all. Even though Canada is not our country, at the end of the day, as long as we are part of it, we will work to improve legislation. Our end goal, obviously, is to get out of it ASAP.

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 66(2), I would like to designate Wednesday, November 22, for the conclusion of debate on the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

* * *

ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-52, An Act to enact the Air Transportation Accountability Act and to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Canada Marine 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.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to standards or expectations.

Service standards are really important to this government as we understand and appreciate the valuable role that our airports and airlines in general play in society. The legislation, as the member points out, sets out the framework for those standards.

Once the bill goes to committee, I understand that the Bloc members have some details they want to add to those service standards. I am wondering if the member has some specifics in regard to that particular issue that he is prepared to share with us at this time. For me personally, I like to think of on-time departures and arrivals, but I also believe there is so much more that we can do to enhance the experience of travellers.

● (1330)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question, which is very relevant in the circumstances.

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Bill C-52 covers service standards for airports. If I understand correctly, it would be up to airports to enforce those service standards, and it would be up to the government to develop them. That sounds good, but there are some unanswered questions. I think we will have the opportunity to hear from witnesses in committee who will tell us exactly what those service standards should be and where the biggest challenges lie.

There is one nagging issue as far as I am concerned. Customs services do not seem to be part of this. Maybe we will find out in due course why the government thought it best not to include that service in this process.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague, who seems satisfied and dissatisfied with the bill at the same time.

Could he tell me what he is really concerned about?

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, but perhaps he could have indulged in a bit of rhetorical flourish at the end, as he usually does when he speaks.

I would say it is as if we were going somewhere for a meal and in the end are only served an appetizer. We are left unsatisfied. We would like to see a little more. This bill is like that. It is as if they began the work, but did not see it through to the end. Clearly we would like to see a little more ambition, more substance, something more dynamic.

That is what we will do in the committee: ensure that this bill improves things for people. If we now adopt it as it is presented, there is no guarantee it will improve anything, either in terms of the soundscape or service standards. We are not told what the service standards are, and in terms of the soundscape, people will only be consulted once in a while. It is not bad, but it does not guarantee results.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague raised a point that I believe touches people from many regions in Quebec, as well as the people of Montreal, in terms of the noise caused by the airports. COVID-19 aside, air traffic is increasing dramatically. This causes many problems for people, especially in the air corridor in the northern part of the island of Montreal towards the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Airport.

Having an advisory committee and a citizens' committee is good, but why does my colleague think that the Liberals have not simply adopted the recommendations in the 2019 report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities that stated that the standards of the World Health Organization were to be used regarding the noise caused by air traffic around airports?

The Liberals still have the unfortunate tendency of doing things halfway and not going through to the end.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, that is a great question. I went and read the 2019 report by the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. I was not sitting on the committee back then, but I could see that a lot of the people who were committee members at that time are still members today. If they supported the contents of the committee's 2019 report, I hope they will still be receptive to its contents in 2023.

To be honest, I would say that the committee's recommendations are not really included in Bill C-52, despite the hard work done by a lot of people. As my colleague mentioned, witnesses came and gave evidence, including the citizens' group Les Pollués de Montréal-Trudeau, and Longueuil's Comité anti-pollution des avions. I am sure that the committee met people from other places who were also experiencing soundscape issues.

Unfortunately, Bill C-52 only provides for a single committee to cover four airports. It is pretty lacklustre compared to what the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities proposed.

• (1335)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, a major part of the legislation deals with the Canada Marine Act, where we are looking at ways to ensure that there is a fairer system in place to provide some accountability and transparency on fees. This would apply to our ports. There are many sectors of our economy that very much depend on going through the ports, and this is one way to ensure that there is more accountability and transparency in the way fees are structured. Therefore, if one is a prairie grain grower or exporting a certain product out of Canada, there is a higher sense of accountability. Does the member have any thoughts in regard to that issue?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, I imagine port users will be very happy to have recourse should they feel they are being overcharged by the ports. However, we wonder why ports would choose to charge absurd fees. If they are doing this, they must have good reason. Usually, businesses do not want their customers to go elsewhere. They want to stay in business.

We will listen to what people have to say in committee. We will look at both sides of the issue, then make a decision. We are having real trouble making up our minds on this issue. The process will help us determine the best approach. It will show us whether we should fine-tune what the government is proposing, oppose it or go in a completely different direction.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I have a last question regarding competition. I genuinely believe there is an issue with competition. We have seen a number of direct flights being lost and communities losing air transportation. It is devastating for some communities and very inconvenient for others.

Could the member provide his thoughts on airlines and the government's role in ensuring there is a higher sense of equity within the system, which is one reason why, hopefully, companies such as Air Canada will be called before the standing committee?

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[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, that is an interesting question, although I have trouble seeing how something in the bill could address this issue. We know that, in this country, regional air transportation is the poor cousin of air transportation. Canada is a vast country. Quebec is smaller, but still covers a huge area, so the challenge of regional air transportation would still exist in an independent Quebec. Sadly, it seems this government, like its predecessors, lacks the will to do what it takes to make regional air transportation viable. I have seen no specific policy on this issue from the Conservatives, either.

People should be able to fly out of the Gaspé peninsula, the north shore or Abitibi and know the flight will in fact happen and will not cost thousands of dollars. Fares should be reasonable. We need service we can be proud of. Unfortunately, I get the feeling the government takes a more business-minded view and believes flights need to be profitable. What we must ask ourselves is whether regional air transportation is an essential service. If it is an essential service, then we have to ensure that the people who need it can use it. Fixing this problem may take major systemic changes, not just tweaks. I see absolutely nothing in Bill C-52 that will fix this problem.

[English]

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for St. Catharines. I want to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered today on the traditional, unceded territory of the Algonquin and Anishinabe peoples.

I am very pleased to be speaking about the topic we are discussing today, enhancing transparency and accountability for port fees. I will be talking about that.

Canada's ports are vital hubs in our country, in our supply chains and in all aspects of the transportation system. They are a vital part for my home province of British Columbia and our port network, which contributes over 30% of Canada's economy.

The transportation system is in some way connected to the operations that happen at ports every day. Ports help grow our economy, create good jobs for Canadians, deliver goods and support Canada's growing export industry. When our port system works well, it plays a crucial role in helping keep life affordable for Canadians and stores full of consumer products.

There are 17 Canada port authorities that manage our country's most strategic ports. While these port authorities are federal entities, they operate at arm's length from the government in a commercially oriented and financially self-sustaining manner. They also fulfill important public policy objectives, such as supporting national economic development and performing many regulatory functions relating to safety and environmental protection.

An independent board of directors is responsible for managing port activities. This includes ensuring that port planning and operations are made firmly within the public interests, meaning that the projects they embark upon and the decisions they make help ensure affordability for Canadians. Port authorities provide port facilities

and offer services to port users; acting as landlords, they lease out port operations to private terminal operators.

For over 20 years, this governance model has served Canada well. It has provided Canadians with world-class services while ensuring that capacity grew in support of Canada's economy in a gradual and financially sustainable manner.

Ports are key gateways in the transportation system, and Canadians rely on them to get the goods they use and consume, as well as to get their products to domestic and international markets. However, as inflationary pressures strain Canadian pocketbooks and make life more expensive, Canadian companies and transportation industry stakeholders are concerned about the rising costs to move goods and do business, including fees that are charged by service providers, such as ports, as well as lease arrangements for the operation of terminals.

As Canada port authorities are part of the federal family and manage key public assets, there are opportunities to improve, to strengthen the governance framework, to make these entities more transparent in their operations and decision-making, and to make sure port users have a voice. Ports need to modernize approaches to enable them to thrive in an increasingly complex environment and be able to align their national mandate with local realities.

As we know, our government tabled Bill C-33, the strengthening the port system and railway safety in Canada act. This would amend the Canada Marine Act, among other acts, to promote transparency in port planning and operations and to position the ports for success well into the future.

The Canada Marine Act amendments in Bill C-52 would provide a framework to reinforce port authorities' due diligence and foster more responsible planning and decision-making, building on the reporting and transparency measures put forward in Bill C-33. Enhancing public engagement, accountability and oversight is a key objective at the core of the government's approach to ensuring greater transparency at Canada port authorities.

It is with this perspective that Bill C-52's reforms to the Canada Marine Act would establish new processes focusing on port fee setting and establishing recourse mechanisms for those impacted by port decisions. These new measures would build on what already exists under the Canada Marine Act and expand the provisions to foster greater accountability and consistency in the marine sector.

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• (1340)

The first proposal in the bill aims to establish a modernized framework to govern how the port fees are developed and implemented, and establish a complaint process. There is a need to ensure a stronger connection for port users, and for Canadians more generally, on how a port sets a fee. Just as important, when there is a concern about how fees are set and charged, that a process is in place for raising a complaint.

Amendments would establish fee-setting principles to provide port users and stakeholders greater clarity and better understanding of how port fees are set, which would support a consistent and standardized approach across all Canada port authorities. Some stakeholders have raised concerns about a lack of clarity when it comes to how port fees are established and this provision would directly solve the problem.

While I understand there may be some initial concern about how this standardization could impact the ability of ports to continue to pursue transportation infrastructure projects off port lands or even to advance community-based initiatives that are vital to helping ports be good neighbours to the communities in which they operate, I am confident that the measures I am bringing forward for the consideration of members today are sufficiently broad so as to enable ports to fix their fees and spend some of the revenues on these types of initiatives. It is not the intention of this government to constraint the ability of the ports to do the work they do for our country's trade and economy; it is about principles of fairness, transparency and accountability.

The port authorities would need to adhere to these principles, as well as an explicit methodology established and published by the port authority, when setting their fees. To support the capacity of ports to generate revenues, the principles would require that port fees be set at levels that allow the authority to operate on a self-sustaining financial basis and be fair and reasonable.

In addition to the new fee-setting principles, an associated public notice requirement would be established that would provide a formal public consultation process for any port user or stakeholder to raise concerns with a port authority. This would ensure their views are acknowledged in the entire process and provide greater accountability for fee-setting decisions made by port authorities.

In addition, the bill would establish a process where people who made written representations during the consultation process may file a complaint with the Canadian Transportation Agency if they believe a port authority did not comply with the fee-setting principles or the public notice requirements. If the complaint is well founded, the proposed amendments would then enable the agency to order a Canada port authority to cancel the establishment or revision of the fee in question, reinstate the previous fee, provide refunds, reconsider the fee or take any other measure it would consider appropriate. This would help ensure that corrective measures are in place to respond to complaints when necessary.

This will reinforce the rigour and integrity of how fees are set by Canada port authorities. It will maintain the key principle of financial self-sufficiency for port authorities and their ability to generate revenues needed for future developments and investments that support port operations, including those outside the ports, while rein-

forcing their need to be responsive to users and transparent in the conduct of their activities.

The proposed approach to fee setting is not new for transportation services providers. It is consistent and aligns with the processes already established for pilotage authorities and Nav Canada, which are two entities that also have significant transportation public policy goals in the government's portfolio. The processes have provided both the entities and their users with more clarity in how fee-setting decisions are made as well as clear grounds for objections.

The second proposal in Bill C-52 would enable the government to make regulations establishing an alternative dispute resolution process for lease disputes that might arise between a port authority and port user with respect to leases for the operation of terminals at ports. This would help build fairness and transparency into the relationships shared by ports and their tenants. This may include a role for the Canadian Transportation Agency to administer and oversee the processes.

• (1345)

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

The reality is, and I mentioned this to a Liberal colleague earlier, the Liberal government was really asleep at the switch when it came to transport. I know many people were avoiding, for instance, the Toronto Pearson International Airport because there were difficulties.

As I understand it, a backlog of 60,000 complaints remain. I remember experiencing travel issues. I was probably one of many millions of Canadians. As I said, the Liberals have been asleep at the switch, so how can we trust them to eliminate and deal with these 60,000 complaints when they cannot seem to get anything right after eight years in government?

• (1350)

Mr. Parm Bains: Madam Speaker, during the port modernization review, we heard from many stakeholders. I heard from representatives in the trucking industry who welcomed these changes. They look forward to ensuring there is more transparency in what is being set forward, so they can have arguments to pose with regard to the fees set before them.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague finds this somewhat strange. While the Conservatives were in government, they did absolutely nothing to support airline passengers. Now that they are in opposition, they are voting against legislation that would support air travellers.

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It is enabling legislation that would establish a framework to provide for a higher sense of accountability, efficiencies and transparency that will benefit air travellers.

Does the member not agree that the Conservatives should, at the very least, support the legislation and allow it to go committee?

Mr. Parm Bains: Madam Speaker, I am surprised. I spoke about transparency and accountability, the ability to bring complaints forward, to look at measures and bring arguments forward in a clear way.

I have heard from agriculture producers. They have looked at measures in the bill that could improve how they get their exports out, and fees, if set in a certain way, that would be detrimental to their industry. I am hope members opposite are not limiting the voice of farmers and agriculture producers by not voting in favour of this legislation.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know things have not gone back to normal since the pandemic, and we are a bit in the pandemic.

There is no accountability for these big airlines. We know that travelling is still an issue. We know that passenger rights are still not being upheld. I know the member is talking about more accountability, but the Liberal government has really failed to improve things.

I know my hon. colleague has spoken about the vast improvements that have been made. I wonder if he would agree with me that we continue to have a long way to go to really uphold the rights of passengers.

Mr. Parm Bains: Madam Speaker, there is always more work to be done. We need to continue to chip away at this, and that is what this bill would do.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is wonderful to rise today on Bill C-52 brought forward by the Minister of Transport. I was his parliamentary secretary when he was the heritage minister. We went through a couple of other pieces of legislation, but it is excellent to be here to speak to this legislation today.

After the 2019 election, I had the fortune of being the parliamentary secretary to the minister of transport, Minister Garneau. It was an unfortunate time to be the parliamentary secretary as we, due to COVID-19, had to see almost the entire sector close. We are still dealing with the impacts of that three years later.

This legislation is fundamentally important. At times, it may seem technical, and this may not be legislation that garners the most excitement and the fiercest debate in this place, but it is important. The legislation would improve Canada's transportation sector in terms of its efficiency, accessibility and accountability. The air transportation accessibility measures would lead to improved passenger experience.

I know you and I, Madam Speaker, seem to find each other at Pearson airport a lot. We seem to be on the same travel itinerary coming to this place. Many other members and Canadians have experienced the air transportation sector and have been rightfully dis-

appointed in their experiences. As I mentioned, with respect to COVID-19, the pandemic and the labour issues, the ripples they have had throughout the entire system have been shocking, and we still see that.

The last few years have been incredibly difficult. I know many of us, except those who are fortunate enough to represent the national capital region and are able to head home to their own beds at night, have to get here by plane. We understand the frustration that Canadians are experiencing. They have saved money for a family trip only to spend additional time at the airport because of cancelled flights or delays.

It is fundamentally important, as we head into another busy travel season, to keep in mind that we have seen how disruption in one part of the system can have effects across the entire network. Together, the measures in the proposed legislation will help create a more accountable, transparent and accessible national transportation system that meet the needs of Canadians. That is what we want to see.

It is unfortunate that we see some members of the opposition throwing a bit of shade this way, but we are used to that. However, as my colleague pointed out, after 10 years of being in government, the Conservatives did nothing on the file. We brought in regulations, the passenger bill of rights, but we see that more needs to be done. We are willing to roll up our sleeves and do that work to ensure there is transparency and accountability, not just with airlines but across the system.

It is something that is fundamentally important to this government and the minister to ensure that when Canadians do go on that vacation, which they have saved hard for, they have an enjoyable experience at our nation's airports. At the best of times, even a positive, on-time airport experience will not be the best part of our vacation experience or our time getting to Ottawa, but it is important we ensure that Canadians are looked after when they head to the airport for those important vacations.

Bill C-52, as I mentioned, would create a more efficient, transparent and accountable system in three parts.

Part 1 would introduce the air transportation accountability act, which would ensure shared accountability by permitting the creation of regulations requiring airports and other operators within airports to create service standards for their part of the journey. Examples could include how long it should typically take for a bag to arrive on the carousel or expected wait times to enter security screening.

• (1355)

Operators would also be required to publish their performance against these standards. The primary enforcement mechanism would be the obligation to publish standards and compliance with those standards. The precise publishing obligations would be established in the regulations, and failure to publish in accordance with the requirements could lead to the application of monetary penalties.

Statements by Members

It seems that, unfortunately, my time is up, which may bring some applause from the opposition, but I appreciate the opportunity to speak today.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

DIWALI

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Sunday, Richmond Hill Hindu residents gathered at the 43rd annual Diwali gala and fundraiser at the Canadian Museum of Indian Civilization located within the Vishnu Mandir headed by Dr. Doobay. It was an evening dedicated to celebrating the magnificence of Diwali and supporting a heartfelt cause, raising funds for yet another dialysis clinic in Guyana and a beacon of hope for many.

We also celebrated another milestone: the establishment of the Doobay-Gafoor Medical & Research Centre in Guyana and Canada. On Monday, a memorandum of understanding was signed with McMaster University to form the research education institution of this joint venture.

Diwali is the glorious festival of lights, a time when millions around the world illuminate their homes and hearts, symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. In these times, when the world grapples with numerous conflicts, the essence of Diwali resonates more profoundly. In the spirit of enlightenment, we also observe Hindu Heritage Month, acknowledging the rich traditions and contributions of the Hindu community to our diverse Canadian tapestry.

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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL IN WINNIPEG

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 10, after eight years, the Beaver Brae Broncos were back playing in the finals of the Winnipeg High School Football League. The Broncos had an undefeated regular season to claim the AAA division regular season title and faced off against a familiar rival, the Fort Frances Muskies, at IG Field in Winnipeg.

Although it was the Muskies that gained the final victory, I would like to congratulate the Broncos on an incredible 8-1 season record. I want to thank the dedicated coaches, especially head coach Chris Penner and his father, Ferg, who have been the pillars of football in Kenora for decades. As well, I thank the parents, guardians, school staff and all who support this great program year after year.

Finally, I have to thank the players, who played with intensity, have a great work ethic, worked hard for one another and also played with class and showed great respect for their opponents throughout the year. They have made us all incredibly proud.

Go Broncos.

UKRAINE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 90th year since the great famine of 1932 to 1944 in Ukraine: the Holodomor. It was recognized by the Government of Canada as a genocide of the Ukrainian people, in which millions died of starvation and murder.

Today is also an opportunity to honour the resilience and strength of the Ukrainian people. As the world reflects on this painful historical event, Moscow is perpetrating its blockade of Ukraine's grain exports that has sparked grain and fertilizer shortages, putting millions of people at risk of hunger. This date is an alarming reminder of how easily we take some things for granted.

Let us take a moment to commemorate the many victims and to appreciate the bread on our tables and the initiatives that are still giving access to food to those in need during these challenging times around the world.

* * *

[Translation]

CHARLY WASHIPABANO

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we were very sad to hear about the death of Charly Washipabano, an important figure back home in my riding. He was a member of Hockey Abitibi-Témiscamingue's board of directors and program coordinator with the Eeyou Istchee Sports and Recreation Association.

Charly Washipabano was a former player with the Amos Comètes midget AA and Amos Forestiers midget AAA teams in the late 1990s, and he later joined the U.S. college circuit in New Hampshire.

After his hockey career, he played a key role in developing hockey in James Bay as a coach trainer and coach of several minor hockey teams.

In 2022, he was invited as a guest coach to the Montreal Canadiens development camp for hockey hopefuls.

A charismatic and iconic figure within the Cree Nation, he left us far too soon.

I offer my deepest condolences to his family, his friends and Cree communities.

* * *

EDITH DUMONT

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, I had the honour of attending a ceremony in the Legislative Assembly at Queen's Park to watch Edith Dumont be sworn in as the 30th Lieutenant Governor of Ontario and the first Franco-Ontarian to hold that office.

Edith Dumont is a respected educator and manager with a life-long commitment to education, leadership, and community service. Driven by a desire to build relationships, strengthen communities, create collaborative teams, and advocate for diversity, inclusion and the celebration of the francophonie, Madame Dumont's journey has led her across Canada and around the world, to countries such as France, Morocco, Romania, Rwanda and South Africa.

A proud Franco-Ontarian, she devoted the last three decades to supporting francophone communities while working at the Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario and as a vice-president at the Université de l'Ontario français.

We are very proud of Edith Dumont, the new Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, farmers from across the country are in Ottawa for a rally outside the Senate. Why are they out there today when they should be finishing their corn harvest? They are asking a few Liberal-appointed senators to stop playing games and put my bill, Bill C-234, to a vote. It is a bill that would axe the carbon tax from propane and natural gas to dry their crops and heat their livestock barns on farm. Axing the carbon tax would save Canadian farmers \$1 billion over the next 10 years.

Farmers feed cities and they help feed the world. At a time when the high-priced, high-inflation Liberal government should be helping farmers, it instead tells them to install a heat pump in their hog barn. How out of touch can they be?

Whether they are trying to raise a family, enjoy retirement or make an honest living as a farmer, Canadians know one thing: After eight long years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

* * *

PEACE GATHERING IN RICHMOND HILL

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, I joined our community in Coming Together for Peace, a gathering hosted by Karen Dale of the Richmond Hill United Church. I would like to thank Doug Loweth and Marj Andre for organizing this evening. I would also like to thank Sarah Loretta Schuster of the Turtle Clan for the smudging and traditional hand drumming, pianist Barry Peters and violinist Nadine Bargout for the soulful music, and all the speakers and volunteers who rounded out the evening.

In candlelight, we came together to contemplate our common humanity through music, readings and times of silence. We gathered in response to the divisiveness and intense emotions in our community surrounding the war raging between Israel and Hamas. This beautiful evening brought together people of many faiths to focus on peace and have conversations to heal the divisions.

Statements by Members

Change in a country begins with one person. We each have the power within ourselves to bring about massive change through immense love and peace within.

* * *

[Translation]

FRANCO-SASKATCHEWIAN BOOKSTORE

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw members' attention to a major development for the francophone community in Saskatchewan. On November 18, the Fransaskois Nation boutique opened a bookstore in Saskatoon.

The grand opening was attended by many Franco-Saskatchewanians, who are thrilled to have a new French bookstore. This is the only French bookstore in the entire province of Saskatchewan. In addition to selling books, the Fransaskois Nation boutique offers its customers a whole range of products that showcase Fransaskois culture. It is important to promote Fransaskois heritage and nurture a sense of belonging in Saskatchewan's francophone community.

I commend Fransaskois Nation for the grand opening of its bookstore, and I wish the store owners and all Franco-Saskatchewanians every success as they celebrate their identity and our pride in the French language.

* * *

[English]

UKRAINE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, we stand with Ukraine as Ukrainians mark the Day of Dignity and Freedom, commemorating the Orange Revolution of 2004 and the Revolution of Dignity of 2013.

Ten years ago today, we saw the beginning of a new era for Ukraine. Young students craving change took to the streets of Maidan to stand up for their aspirations of Euro-integration and to reject lawlessness. They stood for justice, truth and freedom and our shared values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The world witnessed their strength and resilience.

What started as barricades on the Maidan was shortly transformed into the trenches of Donbass, and, for the past 636 days, we have watched Ukrainians' heroic resistance against Russia's illegal invasion. What started as a defence of liberty and democracy has evolved into safeguarding Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Opposition to domestic tyrants like Viktor Yanukovich shifted to armed resistance against the barbaric raiders and terrorists led by Russian dictator Vladimir Putin.

Every day, Ukrainians unite for democracy, peace and prosperity, not only for their homeland but also for all western democracies.

*Statements by Members**Slava Ukraini.*

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● (1410)

WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one in four children around the world is impacted by conflict and disaster and is more likely to be displaced or living in a refugee camp. November 20 is World Children's Day, an opportunity to recommit our support for the fundamental rights of all children, including access to education, health and nutrition, and safety from violence.

Earlier this month, youth leaders from across the country were in Ottawa to advocate for the health, protection and security of children worldwide. They shared their experiences at a parliamentary reception I co-hosted with Results Canada, a national organization enabling everyday people to help put an end to extreme poverty.

With over 500 million children facing crisis situations globally, it is critical to engage next-generation leaders to tackle the challenges of today. As we confront the realities of rising global conflict, let us raise our collective voice and champion children in emergencies.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for years now, the Minister of Finance has brought forward statements not on what will be done for Canadians, but on how she can throw money around to address the latest "crisis". Let us go through them: an environment crisis, a cost of living crisis, a housing affordability crisis, a national unity crisis, an addiction crisis, compounded by a homelessness crisis, a food bank crisis and a spiralling debt crisis. These crises have been caused by the NDP-Liberal government.

A rule doctors follow as a first step when taking action is to do no harm. The government's actions over the past eight years are killing the Canadian economy. Canada needs a new approach, one that puts results ahead of empty words and the splashing around of other people's money. It is obvious that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Let us start with balancing our budgets and focusing on building homes, jobs and futures for Canadians. Common-sense Conservatives will deliver powerful paycheques, not empty words.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the most expensive government in our history, it is Canadians who are suffering the real world consequences.

There are now a record number of Canadians who are using food banks. Housing costs have doubled. Canadians are reportedly cutting back on basic necessities just to afford their energy bills. The cost of living is spiralling out of control here in Canada, and it is the NDP-Liberal coalition that is responsible. It continues to hike taxes and add fuel to the inflationary fire, driving up interest rates.

The only way to undo the damage that it has done is to reverse course in today's fall economic statement.

Conservatives have provided a plan to cancel the planned quadrupling of the carbon tax, to announce a plan to balance the budget and to deliver a plan to build homes, not bureaucracy.

Canadians are desperate for common sense. Let us bring home lower prices.

* * *

[*Translation*]**MUNICIPALITIES**

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take this opportunity to welcome municipal representatives from across the country to our great national capital region. They are here, of course, to represent their local communities at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Advocacy Days on Parliament Hill.

[*English*]

The FCM is the national voice of municipal governments, with over 2,100 municipalities of all sizes, from urban to rural, and representing more than 92% of all Canadians.

● (1415)

[*Translation*]

If we want to ensure that the realities of all Canadians are taken into account, it is essential that municipalities and the federal government work together. That is why I would like to thank the mayors, reeves, councillors, municipal executives, staff and the FCM for being here and working with us.

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[*English*]**MUNICIPALITIES**

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities is in Ottawa this week to discuss the essential work its members do in over 2,000 communities. Sixteen of those communities are in my riding: Fruitvale, Montrose, Trail, Warfield, Rossland, Castlegar, Slocan, Silverton, New Denver, Nakusp, Grand Forks, Greenwood, Midway, Osoyoos, Oliver, Penticton and the regional districts of Okanagan—Similkameen, Kootenay Boundary and Central Kootenay.

I want to single out Leah Main who is a councillor from Silverton. Leah is a champion for rural issues on the FCM executive.

Statements by Members

Municipalities are at the pointy end of the stick on some of the toughest issues, such as housing, climate adaptation, public safety, mental health and more. Small towns lack the funds to tackle these massive problems, and many even lack the HR capacity to apply for existing funding programs.

We need to fix this with a more direct allocation of funds so that communities across Canada can do the work that we depend on them to do.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, which we are marking with the Bowvember campaign.

Quebeckers are especially motivated this year, because it was prostate cancer that took the life of Karl Tremblay, the lead singer of Les Cowboys Fringants. He was not even 50 years old.

Growing a moustache or wearing the Procure bow tie is great, because it helps get information out there and it supports medical research. However, there is something even more important that all men can do to fight prostate cancer, and that is to get screened for it.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend a friendly invitation to you and to all my colleagues in government and in opposition that might, in other circumstances, be considered unparliamentary. My message is this: “Guys, go and get your prostate checked”.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, eight years of the NDP-Liberal government have given Canada the worst economic growth since the Great Depression. The OECD predicts that GDP per capita growth will be a paltry 0.7% per annum over the next 10 years, putting us dead last among advanced economies. We are facing declines in investment, innovation and productivity. The Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

This country is quickly approaching a fork in the road. Canadians can choose between the last eight years of record food bank usage, crime and chaos in our cities, and Canadians losing their houses because of high inflation and high interest rates or a Conservative plan that will empower Canadians to pursue their dreams unfettered by burdensome regulations, punitive tax rates and corrosive inflation.

It is time for a new direction. It is time that Canadians started winning.

* * *

HOLODOMOR

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the famine genocide in

Ukraine known as the Holodomor, when Joseph Stalin closed Ukraine's borders and confiscated all food to destroy a Ukrainian population that was opposed to his rule. Nineteen people per minute, 1,200 per hour and 28,000 per day were dying of famine at the height of the Holodomor. The world was silent, and millions died as a result.

My grandmother, Olena, was a survivor of the Holodomor. She once told me that she hoped the victims of the Holodomor would not only be remembered, but that they would be honoured. Honouring them for her meant not just remembering them or commemorating them, but taking the steps to ensure that a crime like this never happens again.

Right now in Russian-occupied Ukraine it is happening again. Russia is killing, torturing and raping civilians. Russia is deporting Ukrainian children to Russia. Russia is committing genocide in Ukraine again.

The only way to stop this is for Canada and our allies to give Ukraine the support it needs to ensure that it recaptures all of its territory, to ensure that it achieves a decisive victory.

Let us do as my grandmother would have asked if she were here today. Let us remember the victims. Let us commemorate the victims. Let us honour them.

The Speaker: There has been a request for unanimous consent to allow a member to make her statement again, because another member had walked in front of her at the time. Does the member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

• (1420)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Mr. Speaker, we were very sad to hear about the death of Charly Washipabano, an important figure back home in my riding. He was a member of Hockey Abitibi-Témiscamingue's board of directors and program coordinator with the Eeyou Istchee Sports and Recreation Association.

Charly Washipabano was a former player with the Amos Comètes midget AA and Amos Forestiers midget AAA teams in the late 1990s, and he later joined the U.S. college circuit in New Hampshire.

After his hockey career, he played a key role in developing hockey in James Bay as a coach trainer and coach of several minor hockey teams.

In 2022, he was invited as a guest coach to the Montreal Canadiens development camp for hockey hopefuls.

Oral Questions

A charismatic and iconic figure within the Cree Nation, he left us far too soon.

I offer my deepest condolences to his family, his friends and Cree communities.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

A Scotiabank report indicates that government deficits, with the federal government deficit being the largest, have increased interest rates by 2%. That adds \$700 a month to the average mortgage. For the average family, it means an additional \$8,400 in interest because of this Prime Minister's deficits.

Is he going to table a plan today to balance the budget and lower interest rates so that Canadians can keep their homes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are well aware that the Conservative Party's approach is austerity and cuts.

We are investing in housing. We are investing to ensure that Canadians can live more affordably. We know that things are difficult for Canadians.

Austerity and cuts are not the answer. The answer is strategic investments to support families, create the jobs of tomorrow and build hundreds of thousands of new housing units in the years to come.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, austerity and cuts are exactly what Canadian families are living with today. Seven million of them are cutting meals because they cannot afford food prices after he has inflated them. Many are cutting homes and are forced to live in tents because mortgage rates have risen so fast under the Prime Minister's deficits.

Scotiabank now calculates that government deficits are adding two full percentage points to the rates. That is \$700 per month in higher mortgage payments. In the next three years, \$900 billion of new mortgages, or two-thirds, will come up for renewal. We risk a massive default crisis.

Will the Prime Minister announce a plan to balance the budget, to bring down mortgage rates, so Canadians can keep their homes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have seen this movie before. The Conservative politicians' approach to facing challenges is always cuts and austerity. He recognizes, as we all do, that Canadians are facing difficult times, and his solution is for the federal government to do less, to invest less in Canadians and to be there less to support Canadians.

That is not what we are going to do. Over the past number of months, we have announced the construction of over 200,000 homes across the country. We are delivering supports for people,

for buying groceries, with greater competition, and we are moving forward with clean jobs into the future.

Whether it is manufacturing with Stellantis or Volkswagen, or whether it is resources, we are moving forward to support workers.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we are proposing is for the federal government to do less damage and cost less money, so that Canadians do not have to live in austerity and cuts as they do today.

Today, we found out that rent rose faster in October than in any month in 40 years. The Prime Minister's solution to that is to quadruple the carbon tax.

Will the Prime Minister announce in an hour, in his fall economic statement, that he has gotten a little bit of common sense, that he is going to cancel the quadrupling and cap the tax until the carbon tax election, when I will win and axe the tax altogether?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our solution for Canadians who are having trouble affording housing is to build more housing. It is to invest in working with municipalities, to unlock more homes built and to bring down rents. These are the investments we are making.

It is interesting that the Leader of the Opposition talks about the damage we are doing to Canada by delivering \$10-a-day child care, the damage we are doing to Canada by delivering dental care to kids who cannot afford it and the damage we are doing to Canada by continuing to step up for seniors and protecting their pensions.

If that is damage, then we really see what the Conservative leader is made of.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is forcing Canadians to give \$15 billion to one battery plant. We now learn that it is going to employ 1,600 foreign workers with Canadian tax dollars. Now, \$15 billion works out to \$1,000 in federal taxes for every single family in Canada. One would think he would have read the contract he signed with this multinational company.

If he did, can he tell us what section in the contract limits the number of foreign workers who get Canadian tax dollars?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even having watched the Leader of the Opposition in his almost 20-year political career, it is still astonishing to see the way he chooses to use any misinformation to score political points.

The fact of the matter is that he opposes the investments in manufacturing in Canada. He opposes the Stellantis deal to create EV batteries. He opposes the Volkswagen deal that is going to create up to 30,000 direct and indirect jobs in St. Thomas.

He continues to stand against a plan to grow great jobs into a net zero future, and he will use any fake excuse to try to advance that cause.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has spread nothing but disinformation on these very projects.

He was billions of dollars under in estimating the original cost, before the shovels were even in the ground. He claimed the thing would pay itself back in five years. Now we know it is 20 years.

Now we have learned that the majority of the jobs are going to go to foreign workers. That is right: Struggling single moms and seniors will pay \$1,000 in taxes, mostly to pay the wages of foreign workers who will not even keep the money here.

Why does the Prime Minister so thoroughly disdain and disrespect Canadian workers that he wants to send their money to another country?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is, flat out, false. It is the kind of fearmongering from the Leader of the Opposition that Canadians are seeing almost every single day.

These are thousands of good jobs for Canadians, because this Liberal government has stepped up to reinvest in manufacturing. After years of neglect under a Conservative government, we are stepping up to deliver for Canadians. We are delivering a strong future into a net zero world. The Leader of the Opposition wants to take us back to the Stone Age.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the economic stakes are high for Quebec and Canada, and that certainly justifies an economic update. However, before I go back to talk to Quebec's seniors in the coming days, or before I go back to talk to Quebec's chambers of commerce in the coming days, can the Prime Minister confirm that the economic update explicitly contains an increase in the old age pension for seniors, and that it explicitly contains an extension of the repayment deadline for the COVID loans granted to small and medium-sized businesses?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the past eight years, we have been there for seniors with investments to increase their pensions. We have been there for the most vulnerable seniors with programs that have given them help

and support in their communities. We have invested in housing for seniors. We will continue to be there for seniors.

During COVID-19, we were there to support small business and help entrepreneurs, and we are going to continue to be there. I look forward to sharing the contents of the fall economic statement with my hon. colleague, but he will have to wait a few more hours.

• (1430)

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if maybe I should send my questions to the Prime Minister ahead of time, so that the answer might have something to do with the question. I understand that there will be no extra money for seniors. I understand that there will be no money for the tens of thousands of businesses that are at risk of closing as a result of the pandemic.

Maybe the government is afraid of running out of money, but I have an idea for the government. Why does it not just eliminate the oil subsidies so it can support seniors and businesses?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to send the appropriate schedule to the leader of the Bloc Québécois to point out that the economic statement will be presented to the House and to Canadians at four o'clock this afternoon. This will give members a chance to ask any questions they may have about it.

I will say that help for seniors and for Canadians, investments in housing, investments to help people with the cost of living and investments to build a more prosperous economy in a changing world are all things that will be included in this statement. I look forward to seeing it presented to my colleagues here in the House.

* * *

[English]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister announced the Stellantis battery plant in Windsor, he said there would be good jobs for a generation of Canadians. Now we are learning that there is potentially a secret deal for 1,600 foreign workers.

When the Prime Minister made this announcement, was it just a photo announcement or was it really a plan to create jobs for Canadians? Will the Prime Minister make this deal public so that Canadians can find out whether he broke yet another promise?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that nobody in this House was surprised that the leader of the official opposition fell prey to disinformation and chose to attack the Stellantis deal, but it is disappointing to see the NDP leader, anchored in the community of Windsor, speaking out against the Stellantis deal based on nothing but rumours and disinformation. The reality is this means thousands upon thousands of good jobs for Canadians, good jobs that will grow the local economy and contribute to the battery and manufacturing supply chain in Canada

This is a good deal for Canada. Everyone should get behind it, especially people who care about Windsor.

* * *

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister has nothing to hide, then he should just make the deal public.

[*Translation*]

Loblaws and Metro just reported much higher profits than last year. Meanwhile, one in 10 Quebeckers is using food banks. This morning, we learned that grocery inflation outpaced headline inflation for the 23rd month in a row.

Will the Prime Minister announce today the measures we have been calling for to lower the cost of groceries?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have long been concerned about the price of groceries. That is why the parliamentary committee and the minister convened the heads of the grocery chains to work with them to stabilize the price of groceries. We know how important it is to be there to support Canadians.

I can assure hon. members that in the fall economic statement that we are presenting in a few hours, there will be measures to further enhance competition in the grocery sector in order to help people buy groceries and support their families during these difficult times.

* * *

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year, the finance minister promised to balance the budget in her false hopes update. She then did a massive flip-flop and promised to balance the budget in the year never. The Prime Minister did a massive flip-flop recently too, on his carbon tax scam, when he gave a temporary carve-out for Canadians in Atlantic Canada, where his poll numbers were tanking. That is 3% of Canadians.

After eight years, the Liberal-NDP government is not worth the cost and still plans on quadrupling it. Why not pause quadrupling the carbon tax in today's failing economic update and call a carbon tax election so that Canadians can decide?

• (1435)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague often neglects to mention a whole range of important facts. The price on pollution is an important component of a broad approach to fighting climate change. It is done in a manner that addresses affordability concerns. Eight out of 10 Canadian families get more money back than they pay.

With respect to home heating oil, it is a specific case. We are focused on ensuring that we do it in a manner that will help us drive the fight against climate change while ensuring affordability for Canadians. It is a responsible and thoughtful approach to public policy, something we never hear from the Conservatives.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's best climate change plan is going to be a change in government under the common-sense Conservative leader as prime minister.

Two million Canadians are going to a food bank in a single month. One in five is skipping meals. Food inflation is out of control. Failed woke policies like the carbon tax are driving up the cost of gas, groceries and home heating. While the NDP-Liberals continue to miss every single climate change target they set for themselves, Canadians get less in these phony rebates, and they still plan on quadrupling it.

Why not put a pause on quadrupling the carbon tax and go to an election so Canadians can decide on the carbon tax themselves?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side, and for Canadians across this country but particularly in Ontario, when we hear the words "common sense" and "Conservatives", we get the shivers. We remember the time when they cut services to education, when they cut services to health care and when they cut important services for water that led to deaths in Walkerton. When we hear "common-sense Conservatives", we know that means cuts for Canadians and harms to Canadians, and nothing good comes of it.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, grocery and home heating bills continue to rise, as do rent and mortgage payments. Scotiabank has said that inflationary government deficits are to blame. If our deficit-maker-in-chief was to show fiscal responsibility, it would drop interest rates by 2% and save the average family \$700 a month off their mortgage.

Oral Questions

Does the Prime Minister understand his deficits are making it difficult for people to afford basic necessities like food and housing, or does he think all Canadians are auditioning for *Les Mis*?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member opposite and inform the House that this morning Statistics Canada indicated that inflation has dropped yet again in this country. It is now at 3.1%. Canada continues to have the lowest deficit among all G7 countries.

With respect to the report my hon. colleague cites, the report indicates that it is provincial spending, not federal, and COVID supports that have resulted in the statistics he is citing. The facts are important.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we all quiet down, we can already hear the fiscal engines in the background starting to rev up, as the only solution for inflationary spending for the Prime Minister is more inflationary spending.

The Conservative leader has challenged the Prime Minister to stop his carbon tax hikes, reduce his deficits and build homes, not bureaucracy. Will the government address these issues in the mini-budget today, or will it reject this common-sense plan and show that the only thing not subject to rising inflation in Canada is the competence of the NDP-Liberal government?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister stated just a few moments ago, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance will be tabling the fall economic statement at 4 p.m. in this House. All members, including the member opposite, will have a chance to look at all the numbers, and we will have a chance in this House to debate the economic plan our government has put forward.

I would remind the member opposite, as he talks of deficits, that Canada continues to have the lowest deficit among all G7 countries. We will continue to be fiscally responsible.

• (1440)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of Liberal inflationary spending, the Prime Minister is not worth what inflation is costing Quebecers. In October, Quebec's inflation rate of 4.2% was the worst in Canada yet again.

According to Scotiabank's calculations, government overspending has added two percentage points to interest rates in Canada, raising monthly mortgage payments by \$700.

In today's mini-budget, will the Liberal Prime Minister announce a plan and a deadline for balancing the budget to bring interest rates down so Canadians and Quebecers can keep their homes?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the fall economic statement will be tabled at 4 p.m., not long from now. My hon. colleague will have a chance to look at the numbers then.

Right now, however, I can confirm that Canada will continue to have the lowest deficit in the G7.

We will continue to be fiscally responsible.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today's figures showed us that rents have increased by more than 9% in Quebec in the past year.

This morning, the Journal de Montréal reported that a homeless 30-year-old Sherbrooke man is getting ready to spend his first winter on the street.

After eight years of Liberal inflationary spending, we fail to understand why the Bloc Québécois would want two more years of the same, plus a drastic increase in the carbon tax. The Bloc Québécois clearly only cares about the balance of power, not a balanced budget.

Did the Prime Minister persuade the Bloc Québécois to let him keep recklessly spending billions of dollars, or will he finally listen to Conservative common sense and balance the budget?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives tell us that they are worried about people and about Canadians, but they could not care less about what is happening. They could not care less about torrential rainfall, floods, forest fires or what is going on. They want us to back away from investing in climate change. They want to take us backwards, step by step, with cuts.

We will not let that happen. We will not go back to the Stone Age.

* * *

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what Radio-Canada has uncovered is very serious. Mexican drug cartels are engaging in human trafficking at Canadian borders. The federal government cannot allow criminal organizations to exploit migrants.

That is not all. The RCMP confirmed that the crossings the cartels are using for human trafficking are the same ones they use for weapons and narcotics trafficking. Needless to say, the federal government cannot allow Mexican cartels to set up shop at our borders.

When will the government take back control of Canada's borders?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague. We will never allow cartels to take control of our borders. However, the member must be careful not to exaggerate when asking questions.

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Our government is very concerned about what Radio-Canada has found. That is exactly why we are working more with our law enforcement agencies, the Canada Border Services Agency and, most importantly, our American partners to combat what my colleague was talking about. I have full confidence in the work of the RCMP and border services.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question was not exaggerated, but the government's complacency sure is.

Cartels will not stop at committing crimes at the border. They are directly involved in crime in Quebec. Radio-Canada revealed that South Americans who entered our territory with fake Mexican passports organized a burglary ring in Quebec. According to the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal, they come to the country for the sole purpose of stealing from people. The Montreal police even called Quebec an easy target because of the porous border.

I have one simple question. What will the federal government do to regain control over the borders?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to keep fighting organized crime in a number of ways. We have invested more—\$400 million more—to give our law enforcement agencies, the Canada Border Services Agency and the RCMP the tools they need to work with their partners in Quebec and the United States to fight organized crime coming into the country.

My colleague is well aware that I have discussed this with Minister Bonnardel. We will be taking further action with Quebec and our U.S. partners because we take this threat very seriously.

• (1445)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government cannot allow cartels to exploit migrants. It cannot let them spread misinformation on social media in order to take thousands of dollars from these less fortunate people. It cannot let them put these people at risk of imprisonment in Canada and the United States.

As we speak, there are vulnerable people making their way to Canada based on lies, people who are being robbed and arrested.

When will the government put an end to this exploitation?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we fully share our colleague's concerns about the exploitation of these individuals.

The Prime Minister raised the issue of irregular migration with the President of Mexico. My colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, is also in discussion with her counterparts in the United States and Mexico. I myself have had this discussion with the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, precisely to ensure that all possible measures are in place to prevent exactly what my colleague just mentioned.

[English]

HOUSING

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised to make housing more affordable for Canadians, but we know that was not totally true. After eight years of the Liberal government, rent has doubled, housing prices have skyrocketed, doubling as well, and mortgage payments have gone through the roof. In fact, today, Scotiabank confirmed that mortgage rates have increased by 2% just due to the government's overspending.

With no other factors considered, just the government's overspending, mortgage rates have gone up by 2%, which means, on average, \$700 a month extra on a family's mortgage. When will the government do the responsible thing and rein in its spending so that Canadians can afford to put a roof over their heads?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in order to address the national housing crisis, we are making the investments necessary to get Canada building again. I have good news for my colleague: It is working. When we look at the Statistics Canada report from yesterday, we see significant increases in the investments in residential construction. In fact, the heading of the section from the report is "Strong gains in residential investment", indicating a nearly 8% increase just this past month.

We have a plan to continue to cut costs for home builders and to make the investments necessary to get the homes built that the economy and families that live in them need.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what Liberal report the hon. member is reading from, but the statistic is that fewer homes are being built and investment in the market is down by 14% for new construction. That is a fact. Added to that, rent is doubling for Canadians, mortgages are skyrocketing and housing prices have also doubled.

Canadians cannot afford to house themselves. Their mortgage rates are up by an average of \$700 a month, and that is only due to the government's overspending. Just due to its overspending alone, with no other factors considered, mortgage rates are up \$700 a month.

When will the government rein it in, do the responsible thing and allow Canadians to afford a roof over the heads?

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to my hon. colleague, she just does not have her numbers right. She is entitled to her own opinion but certainly not to her own facts. I will tell colleagues specifically what Stats Canada indicated. It is not some Liberal organization; it operates independently. It indicated this month that investment and residential building went up 7.3%, single-family home investment increased 6.4% and multi-unit construction rose 8.2%.

If the Conservatives are concerned about the housing crisis, why are they committed to cutting funding for homebuilding and to raise taxes on home builders?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, rent has doubled, house prices have doubled and mortgage payments are up 150%. Just now, Statistics Canada shows that investment in housing construction is down 14%. It turns out that photo ops with the housing minister in a hard hat do not build homes. Who knew?

Will the government end their photo ops so Canadians can get houses built?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it fascinating that there are accusations of using photo ops for political gain when the leader of the Conservative Party, when he was the minister, actually violated the election rules for a photo op when he showed up wearing a Conservative party logo when he was there on behalf of the government at that time.

With respect to my hon. colleague, he has the facts wrong. Stats Canada has indicated that we are seeing an increase in housing investments in the residential sector. Housing starts are up. In fact, we are on pace to build more than 50,000 additional homes, over and above the record that the Conservatives achieved while they were in government.

• (1450)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservative leader was the minister of housing, a typical family home cost only \$450,000. Investment in housing construction is down 14% under the minister today. Rent has doubled. House prices have doubled, and mortgage payments are up 150%.

Will the government end their photo ops so Canadians can get houses built?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Conservatives like to make up facts, but I did not realize that they were trying to make up a new way of doing math. When Statistics Canada says that housing starts are up 7%, that does not equal a decrease of 14%. I would encourage the members opposite to look at the Stats Canada report, but we understand that they do not have a lot of respect for Stats Can. They were the ones who cut the long-form census when they were in government.

They do not like to make policy based on data because then they would have to realize that they are making bad policy.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's public service workers stepped up during the pandemic and every day since to deliver the critical services Canadians rely on. How did the government thank them? With a disastrous rollout to a new health care plan. Workers are paying thousands of dollars out of pocket for their medication and health care, and are waiting months to be reimbursed, which is forcing families to make impossible decisions. The Liberals' lack of urgency to act just shows how out of touch they are.

When will the government stop delaying and fix this mess so workers can have the benefits they have earned?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's public servants and their families deserve to have access to their benefits as quickly as possible. I have been in close touch with the supplier and have ensured that the supplier will agree to bringing down call wait times to between five and 10 minutes by December 31, opening call centres on weekends as well as introducing escalation processes for those who are not served well.

We will always make sure that Canada's public servants are reimbursed for their benefits. We are grateful for their service every single day.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are getting the fall economic update from the government today.

Let me give an update from small businesses in northern Ontario. First, they were hammered by the pandemic. Then they were hammered by high inflation. Now they are being hammered by Liberal indifference. If the Prime Minister does not change course on the CEBA repayments, many of our businesses are going to be forced to close their doors in January.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and extend the loan repayment deadline so that our small businesses can get back on their feet?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know times were tough and are still tough for small businesses.

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If they are unable to repay by January 18, they still have a full three years to repay their CEBA loan. We extended the term loan repayment deadline to make sure that small businesses are able to focus on navigating pandemic recovery. We are also cutting taxes for growing small businesses and lowering credit card fees by up to a quarter. We will always be there for small businesses. That will never change.

* * *

PENSIONS

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada pension plan is a key pillar in the federal government's commitment to support Canadians in their retirement. Residents in my province are worried about the attack it is facing. Even more alarming is the official opposition's continued silence on the issue.

Could the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages tell us what our government is doing to protect Albertan pensions and ensure that the Canada pension plan we have all paid into is there for people in retirement?

• (1455)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Calgary Skyview for his hard work.

Albertans must speak up on this matter. As a federal government, we will always protect the pensions of Albertans and fight the reckless and risky proposal of Alberta Conservatives to pull Albertans out of the CPP.

Every member in the House should be defending the CPP, but what do we hear from Alberta Conservatives? Silence, zero, zilch. Their silence speaks volumes about their unwillingness to protect Albertans and their pensions.

We will stick up for Albertans every day and for the Canada pension plan. They can do whatever they want. We have the backs of Canadians.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, we know the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. He is planning to quadruple the carbon tax on gas, groceries and home heating, but our common-sense plan is to axe the tax to bring home lower prices.

Today the government has an opportunity. Will it include in today's mini budget a plan to finally stop its carbon tax hikes?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party pretends to offer certain principles and if people do not like those, they have other principles.

In the 2008 platform of the Conservatives, it states, "We will work...to develop and implement a North America-wide cap and trade system for greenhouse gases and air pollution." In their 2021 platform that they all ran on, they said, "We recognize that the most

efficient way to reduce our emissions is to use pricing mechanisms."

Given the flip-flopping on that side of the House, how do Canadians believe anything those folks say?

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the simple fact is that the government's plan just is not working. It continues to miss climate target after climate target. It is only driving up the cost of living for Canadians.

In northern Ontario, we cannot afford to pay more for gas and home heating, but the Liberal and NDP politicians across northern Ontario continue to leave their residents out in the cold.

I will ask this again. Will we see in today's mini budget a plan from the government to finally cancel its carbon tax hikes?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the record. The Harper government did not meet any of the environment targets it had. We are on track and are 85% of the way to meeting our 2030 targets. We have six years left to get there, and we will meet the interim 2026 targets. We are meeting our targets when it comes to climate change, protecting nature and phasing out plastic pollution.

Conservatives do not believe in any of this. They want to increase pollution in Canada, but not us on this side of the House. We are working for Canadians, for the health of Canadians, and for the future of our kids and our grandkids.

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[Translation]

HOUSING

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Scotiabank has calculated that government overspending has added two percentage points to Canada's interest rates. As a result, Canadians who are struggling to pay their mortgages are still suffering.

I remind members that, in eight years, this government has yet to present a balanced budget. Will the government announce a plan to return to balanced budgets in today's mini-budget so that interest rates can come down and Canadians can keep their homes?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives looking to blame inflation on federal government spending have a very difficult job indeed.

The report my colleague is citing says that COVID-19 support measures and provincial government spending are responsible for an increase, not federal government spending.

My colleague is a former member of Quebec's National Assembly. Is she saying that we should demand that the provinces spend less? Is that what she is saying right now?

* * *

• (1500)

FINANCE

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I have a reality check for my colleague. The economic situation is such that a 30-year-old man from Sherbrooke has to resort to spending the winter in a tent because he does not have access to affordable housing.

The costly Bloc-Liberal coalition wants to drastically increase the carbon tax, and that makes everything more expensive. Voting for the Bloc Québécois is costly.

Today, we want the government to do three things in the mini-budget: cancel carbon tax increases, balance the budget and build housing without bureaucracy. Will the Minister of Finance surprise us and balance the budget, or will she disappoint us once again?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is disappointing for many of the people watching us right now is the fact that the opposition member, who was part of a government that supported carbon pricing and who advocated in favour of fighting climate change, is now flip-flopping. Gone is her belief in climate change. Gone is her belief that it is important to fight to protect the environment our children and grandchildren will live in.

That is what Canadians find disappointing.

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NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our media are in crisis.

Yesterday, the big boss at Québecor said that TVA was hanging on by a thread. The vice-president of Bell Media added, “The longer we wait, the more we put ourselves at risk, and the more we risk losing news sources”. Meanwhile, what does the minister have to say? She said, “We hope to have a new regulatory framework by 2025.” The media are at risk now. Do I understand correctly that we might have to wait another two years?

By 2025 it will be too late. What exactly is the minister waiting for?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows full well, since the media crisis began in Canada, our government has been engaged in introducing tax credits, among other things, and launching new programs, which we will continue to do.

We have now given the CRTC all the tools it needs to adapt the regulatory framework to today's reality, and especially to ensure that web giants pay their fair share and participate in the success of

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our Canadian businesses and of our Canadian creators. We will continue to work in partnership with everyone in the media industry.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are some good ideas in Bills C-11 and C-18, but, for now, they are not working. They are not doing anything. That is why, pending the conclusion of negotiations with the web giants in the case of Bill C-18, an emergency fund for the media is required. That is reasonable. It is essential to maintain the diversity of information in the short term. In the long term, much more will be needed.

Now, we can send a clear message to our media that we are taking action to save them. Will the minister quickly set up an emergency fund before we find out that other newsrooms are closing in our media?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and for the fact that, unlike the Conservatives, the Bloc has contributed to ensuring that we get through the process to adopt the Online News Act, but also to modernize the framework of the Online Streaming Act.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission is now ready to begin implementing this new regulatory framework. We will see the results in the coming months and years.

One thing is certain: Unlike the Conservatives, we have always been there to support our creators and our artists. We will continue to do so.

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[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost.

The Liberal-appointed chair of the green slush fund resigned in disgrace after it was revealed that she funnelled more than \$200,000 of taxpayer money into her company. An independent report reveals that this just scratches the surface of corruption at the foundation.

How many more Liberal insiders have used the green slush fund to line their pockets?

• (1505)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Canadians who are watching the member are wondering what he is saying. Let me bring facts to the story.

From the moment we heard the allegations, we commissioned an independent investigation. We froze the funds of the institution. We accepted the resignation of the chair. The CEO has resigned.

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We are going to get to the bottom of this. We are going to continue to have these companies in our country.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the independent report revealed that multiple board members voted to funnel money from the fund to companies they had an interest in. This is scandalous.

In the face of evidence of self-dealing and corruption, the minister has not seen fit to fire anyone. Why? Which Liberal insiders is he protecting?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is scandalous is the Conservatives making claims and allegations against people.

What a responsible government does when there are allegations is investigate. That is exactly what we did. We suspended the financing of the organization. The CEO has resigned. We have accepted the resignation of the chair.

We are going to get to the bottom of this. We are going to continue to help companies in this country. We will invest in green technologies.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Again, I hope that all members will be so kind as to listen to the hon. member ask his question, and to the answer.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years in power, unfortunately, ethical issues are a defining trait of this Liberal government. Unfortunately, the most recent example is the \$1-billion fund for a green economy.

The Auditor General is conducting an investigation into the \$40 million in mismanaged funds. The chair of the fund also gave her own company a \$200,000 subsidy. She resigned because she was caught red-handed.

Canadians who are watching at home want a clear answer from the government. When and how will the government hold these people to account and pay back the money that they used to line the pockets of Liberal cronies?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent. He is an honourable man.

Today, the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent who are watching him are wondering about what he said, because he knows very well what the government did. As soon as the allegations were made, we commissioned an independent report to get to the bottom of things. We suspended the organization's funding. The CEO of the organization has resigned, as has the chair of the board of directors.

We are getting to the bottom of things, but we will continue to help our Canadian companies.

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether we are talking about my beautiful region of Madawaska or about Restigouche or elsewhere in the country, Canadian tourism companies are flourishing and continue to attract more tourists. They come from all over to visit every corner of our big, beautiful country. Our tourism industry represents a golden growth opportunity, so much so that the World Travel and Tourism Council predicts it could double its contribution to Canada's GDP by 2033.

Can the tourism minister tell us how our government is supporting Canadian tourism to attract more tourism to our country?

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right. The tourism industry represents 1.9 million jobs, it is represented in every municipality in the country and it generates \$266 million a day.

Yesterday, we launched the tourism growth program, a \$108-million fund that will be delivered by the regional economic agencies. These investments are designed to support businesses and organizations as they grow and offer authentic tourism experiences.

Tourism is not just about the economy, it is about pride.

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[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal government spent \$54 million on the arrive scam app and now the RCMP is investigating contractors. This is more evidence that after eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Two senior public servants have accused each other of lying about who made the decision to hire GC Strategies. GC Strategies is a two-man company that does nothing and subcontracts all the actual work.

Will the minister responsible for this decision stand up now and explain to the House why GC Strategies was chosen?

• (1510)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I am happy to explain to the House is how seriously our government takes allegations of inappropriate behaviour with taxpayers' money and contracting or subcontracting. We are obviously very pleased that the committee is looking into this matter. We are pleased that the Auditor General is also seized with this question.

We are also pleased that the Canada Border Services Agency, when these issues came to light, took the appropriate action with internal reviews and, as was appropriate, referred any and all of these circumstances to the appropriate authorities.

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, South Korea's ambassador told Windsor officials that the auto giant, Stellantis, will employ 1,600 workers from South Korea, not Canada, at the \$15-billion subsidized battery plant. Every mom on a minimum wage, every couple struggling to pay their mortgage and every union assembly line worker will each pay \$1,000 in taxes to subsidize these foreign workers.

After eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Will the Prime Minister ensure that all jobs at the Stellantis plant go to Canadian paycheques, not foreign workers?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from the Conservatives. They have done nothing for the people of Windsor. They have done nothing for the workers. They have certainly done nothing for the auto sector.

One thing that we have done is maximize opportunities for Canadians. Let me give the member some news. The CEO of the company just confirmed that there will be 2,500 Canadian workers at the plant and up to 2,300 to build the plant.

This is what I call working for Canadians.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister should take a lesson from just about anyone willing to give it, and I will tell members why.

The unemployment rate in Windsor is 7%. They are bringing in 1,600 workers from Korea. This plant is going to cost \$1,000 per Canadian family. Every unemployed union worker in Windsor could have these jobs. Instead, these incompetent, arrogant Liberals are giving the jobs to 1,600 Koreans.

Will the minister promise right now that the jobs will go to hard-working Canadians, not workers from any other country, including Korea?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that Canadians are shocked to hear the member again repeating falsehoods. Canadians know not to trust the Conservatives when it comes to jobs, when it comes to growth, when it comes to the auto sector.

Let me repeat, so that he can write down the numbers: 2,500 jobs at the plant and up to 2,300 to build the plant. That is what the CEO said. That is what we are going to do. We are going to build opportunity for Canadians.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, leaders, parliamentarians and senior military personnel from the world's democracies gathered in my hometown of Halifax

Oral Questions

for the 15th annual Halifax International Security Forum. We came together for meaningful discussions on international security, defence, the role of women in peacekeeping, the threats of climate change and so much more.

Could the Minister of National Defence share with this House the important work that was done over the past several days in Halifax?

• (1515)

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Halifax for his terrific hospitality.

Indeed, last weekend, we welcomed world leaders and a terrific contingent of Canadian parliamentarians to the largest defence conference of democracies to the Halifax International Security Forum. This was not only a shining moment for Canada, but it was also a great day for the city of Halifax, because I had the opportunity to announce \$26 million to establish the NATO defence innovation accelerator and \$188 million for a new training centre for CFB Halifax, Canada's largest military base.

It was a terrific weekend for Canada's national defence and for the great city of Halifax.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the window to address runaway climate change is rapidly closing, and as the environment commissioner clearly laid out, far too many of the Liberal government's climate strategies are falling far short of what is required. Now we have learned that the greener homes program, the federal fund that allows homeowners to retrofit their homes and install heat pumps, is already running out of money.

Will the minister commit to not only renewing this program's funding, but also fixing it so it finally works for low-income homeowners?

Government Orders

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly, enhancing building efficiency is extremely important in the fight against climate change and in the appropriate utilization of our natural resources. We put into place a number of programs, including the oil and heat pump program, but also the green buildings program, which actually provides a \$5,000 grant to Canadians to improve the energy efficiency of their home. The number one implementation is heat pumps. We sourced money for that program. It has been enormously popular. We will continue to receive applications, and of course we are going to look, as with every program, at the results and what we will do to supplement those things on a go-forward basis.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's leading humanitarian aid agencies have united together to call for a ceasefire in Gaza. People in Nanaimo—Ladysmith are demanding action from the federal government.

All hostages need to be released and a ceasefire declared so that no more children are killed, but the Prime Minister does not seem to recognize the killing of over 13,000 innocent civilians and more than 1.7 million displaced is an atrocity and it must end now.

I will ask again. When will the Prime Minister call for a ceasefire?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we saw horrific scenes on October 7, when Hamas attacked innocent Israelis. Of course, we also know Gaza is one of the worst places on earth to live in right now, so we need to make sure all civilians are protected. We need to make sure as well that humanitarian aid can be sent to Gaza.

We are seeing right now there are negotiations happening between Israel and Hamas, brokered by Qatar. We look forward to seeing all hostages released and humanitarian aid allowed into Gaza.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In my question today, I asked the minister whether there were going to be 1,600 workers from Korea. On his way into the House of Commons, he was asked that question and he said, "I'm not surprised" that there would be a "transfer of knowledge" as "no one has done batteries in North America before." Therefore, he is admitting there will be those workers and then accusing me of misinformation. He should withdraw—

The Speaker: Order, please. I would like to thank the member for Dufferin—Caledon for raising this point. It has skated over into a point of debate. I encourage the member to pose questions on this at the appropriate time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1520)

[Translation]

CANADA-UKRAINE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

The House resumed from November 20, 2023, consideration of the motion that Bill C-57, An Act to implement the 2023 Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Ukraine, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: It being 3:20 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-57.

Call in the members.

● (1530)

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

*(Division No. 450)***YEAS**

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
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
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Gaheer
Gainey	Garon
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gill	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner

Government Orders

Holland	Hughes	Davidson	Deltell
Hussen	Hutchings	d'Entremont	Doherty
Iacono	Idlout	Dowdall	Dreeshen
Ien	Jaczek	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Johns	Joly	Epp	Falk (Provencher)
Jones	Jowhari	Ferri	Findlay
Julian	Kayabaga	Gallant	Généreux
Kelloway	Khera	Genius	Gladu
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk	Godin	Goodridge
Kwan	Lalonde	Gourde	Gray
Lambropoulos	Lametti	Hallan	Hoback
Lamoureux	Lapointe	Jeneroux	Kelly
Larouche	Lattanzio	Khanna	Kitchen
Lauzon	LeBlanc	Kmiec	Kram
Lebouthillier	Lemire	Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Lightbound	Long	Kusie	Lake
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Lawrence	Lehoux
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)	Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada	Lloyd	Lobb
Masse	Mathysen	Maguire	Majumdar
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Martel	Mazier
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinity	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Melillo	Moore
McLeod	McPherson	Motz	Muys
Mendès	Miao	Nater	Patzer
Miller	Morrice	Paul-Hus	Perkins
Morrissey	Murray	Poilievre	Redekopp
Naqvi	Ng	Reid	Richards
Noormohamed	Normandin	Roberts	Rood
O'Connell	Oliphant	Ruff	Scheer
O'Regan	Pauzé	Schmale	Seeback
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon	Shields	Shiple
Powlowski	Qualtrough	Small	Soroka
Rayes	Robillard	Steinley	Stewart
Rodriguez	Rogers	Strahl	Stubbs
Romanado	Rota	Thomas	Tochor
Sahota	Sajjan	Tolmie	Uppal
Saks	Samson	Van Popta	Vecchio
Sarai	Savard-Tremblay	Vidal	Vien
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe	Viersen	Vis
Serré	Sgro	Wagantall	Warkentin
Shanahan	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Waugh	Webber
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard	Williams	Williamson
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh	Zimmer— 109	
Sorbara	Sousa		
Ste-Marie	St-Onge		
Sudds	Tassi		
Taylor Roy	Thériault		
Therrien	Thompson		
Trudeau	Trudel		
Turnbull	Valdez		
Van Bynen	van Koeverden		
Vandal	Vandenbeld		
Vignola	Villemure		
Virani	Vuong		
Weiler	Wilkinson		
Yip	Zahid		
Zarrillo— 205			

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chong
Cooper	Dalton

PAIRED

Members

Fry	Housefather
Khalid	Lantsman
Mendicino	Michaud
Morantz	Morrison
Perron	Rempel Garner
Sarai	Sheehan— 12

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on International Trade.

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

Government Orders

● (1535)

ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-52, An Act to enact the Air Transportation Accountability Act and to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Canada Marine Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Today, I stand to discuss Bill C-52, a piece of legislation that, at its core, aims to address the complexities and inefficiencies plaguing our air transportation system. This bill, introduced in the final hours of the spring session, came on the heels of what can only be described as a disastrous period for Canadian air travel: a summer and a Christmas season marked by unprecedented disruptions and dissatisfaction among air travellers.

While the introduction of Bill C-52 appears to be a step toward rectifying these issues, we must critically assess whether this legislation as it currently stands truly holds the potential to bring about meaningful change. The bill proposes to set service standards for entities within the air travel sector and enforce stricter regulations. However, it is important that we look at the details of this bill, or the lack thereof.

It is clear that the government is attempting to show action, yet we have to ask ourselves this: Is this action substantial, or is it merely a facade? The backlog of complaints at the Canadian Transportation Agency, or CTA for short, is a glaring issue, ballooning to over 60,000 complaints, with passengers waiting over 18 months for resolutions. This bill, however, would not address this critical problem. It would fail to set explicit service standards for the CTA, leaving thousands of Canadians without a timely solution to their grievances. Moreover, the manner in which industry service standards would be defined raises concerns. The bill would leave much of this to future regulations and consultations, which could potentially result in standards that favour the industry and the Liberal government rather than passengers. The lack of clarity about which entities would be covered by this bill and the exclusion of key players such as the Canada Border Services Agency only add to the uncertainty.

The power that the bill would vest in the minister and cabinet to develop future regulations is troubling. It suggests a hesitance to take decisive action now and, instead, a preference to leave critical decisions for later. This approach does not inspire confidence that the issues at hand would be resolved promptly or effectively by the current Liberal government. We must question whether Bill C-52 would be the robust solution that Canadian air travellers desperately need.

The introduction of Bill C-52 serves as a response to the air travel blunders under the current Liberal government, but the contents of the bill lead to more questions than answers. First, let us consider the backdrop against which this bill has been presented.

We witnessed not just one, but two travel seasons of chaos. Passengers across the country faced cancellations, delays and a cus-

tomer service nightmare. The response is this bill, which seems more focused on regulatory processes than on delivering immediate relief to the Canadian traveller. While the bill proposes standards for services and operations in our airports, these standards are left undefined, to be shaped by future regulations. This vagueness would do little to instill confidence in a swift resolution to the problems at hand. The bill gives the impression of action; however, in reality, it would defer the most critical decisions, leaving travellers uncertain about when and how improvements would materialize.

The issue of the backlog in complaint resolution is particularly shocking. Thousands of Canadians are currently stranded in a bureaucratic limbo, awaiting responses to their grievances. Bill C-52 offers no concrete solution to expedite these processes. The situation is unacceptable, and it is a glaring omission in a bill that proposes to enhance transparency and accountability in our transportation system.

Furthermore, the bill's approach to addressing the broader aspects of air travel, such as the inclusion of diversity, reporting and climate change action plans, while noble in intent, seems to detract from the urgency of solving the immediate operational challenges. It is important to note the irony in the Liberal government's demanding action plans on climate change from airport authorities, when its own strategy has been riddled with inconsistencies and shortcomings, such as the recent exemption from the carbon tax for Atlantic Canadians.

● (1540)

When we turn to the specifics of the bill's provisions on service standards, we find ourselves confronting ambiguity once again. The absence of clear, defined standards raises concerns about the effectiveness of any future regulations. How can we ensure that the standards, once set, would genuinely benefit passengers, not just the industry?

Another point of contention is the bill's exclusion of certain key entities, notably the Canada Border Services Agency. The role of the CBSA in the smooth functioning of our airports is undeniable, and its exclusion from the scope of this bill is both puzzling and concerning. The extensive powers granted to the minister and cabinet to develop future regulations also merit scrutiny.

While it is understandable that a degree of flexibility is necessary in regulatory matters, the extent of discretion afforded here is worrisome. It suggests a reluctance to establish firm, decisive policies within the legislation itself. Instead, a wait-and-see approach that delegates critical decisions to future regulatory processes is opted for.

Government Orders

In light of these issues, the characterization of Bill C-52 as a toothless piece of legislation is not without merit. The bill seems to lack the specific actionable provisions needed to address the immediate challenges facing our air transportation system. The Canadian public deserves more than just a promise of future regulations. Canadians need tangible, impactful changes now.

As we proceed with this discussion, it is vital that we focus on what truly matters: the experience and rights of Canadian air travellers. Our evaluation of this bill must be grounded in a commitment to ensuring that their needs are met, their rights are protected and their voices are heard.

As we discuss Bill C-52 today, we must recognize that while legislative intent is a starting point, tangible outcomes are what truly matter. Having endured significant disruptions in air travel, the Canadian public deserves more than just promises for future action. It needs immediate effective solutions that address the core issues impacting travel experiences.

Conservatives remain committed to advocating for a robust, responsive air travel system that upholds the rights and needs of passengers. We believe in a framework that holds all federally regulated entities accountable, ensuring that they bear the financial responsibility for delays or cancellations. This includes airlines, airports and several other federally regulated organizations and entities involved in the air transportation sector.

While Bill C-52 takes a step toward addressing some aspects of our air transportation system, it falls short in delivering the comprehensive reform needed. Its lack of specific service standards, exclusion of key entities and overreliance on future regulations leave much to be desired.

As representatives of the Canadian people, it is our duty to ensure that any legislation passed by the House truly serves the best interests of our nation. We will continue to push for a more definitive and effective approach to resolving the challenges in our air transportation system. We owe it to the Canadian public to get that right.

I look forward to taking questions in response to my comments on this bill.

• (1545)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, we take Bill C-52 at second reading. In its title, the bill refers to passenger transportation, but it only applies, as we know, to air travel and some marine travel. Passenger rail continually gets neglected in this country.

Now that we are at second reading, would my hon. colleague agree that, in committee, we could specifically get at the question of aircraft and jet noise, as well as how it affects constituencies across this country?

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Speaker, I think a lot of things can definitely be improved upon in this bill once it goes to committee. That is the biggest challenge. We have so much uncertainty and ambiguity within this bill; once again, it is the Liberal government's attempt to make it look like it is doing something, when it is actually accomplishing nothing in the end. It is not really protecting the rights

and freedoms of any traveller, regardless of whether it is air, train or whatever mode of transportation. We definitely need to reassess this when it comes to committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are making things fairly difficult to understand. They say there are some positive things within the legislation, yet they are going to vote against it going to committee. That is what they are signalling. It is much like the vote we just had on the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement—

The Deputy Speaker: I hate to interrupt the hon. member, but we are having an interpretation problem.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, there are problems with the member's microphone, which are preventing the interpretation into French. The microphone is too close and is causing interference. We have to consider the interpreters' health.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask the hon. member to make sure to keep his earpiece as far away from the microphone as he can.

The hon. parliamentary secretary. I will allow him to start from scratch.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the question is with respect to the Conservative Party and its approach to legislation.

Today, the debate is on legislation that is obviously going to help Canadian travellers. Conservatives say they support certain aspects in it, but they are voting against it. They do not want it to go to committee, it would appear. It is much like the vote we just had, and they voted against the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement. It is unbelievable. Why? They say they have some problems with it, yet on the other hand, they say they are international trade supporters.

My question for the Conservatives today is this. Why are they not consistent with respect to their votes on issues here on the floor of the House of Commons? They seem to be very reckless.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that the hon. member for Winnipeg North sure does talk a great game about how great the Liberal government is doing. However, even he has said it appears we are going to be making it better for air transportation passengers, but is it truly? No. That is the problem.

We gave the response that, yes, we would support the bill, in concept, because it could potentially help air transportation passengers, but that is the problem. It only looks like it is going to do it; it is not actually going to accomplish it. It is only going to come back with more regulations. What a surprise. That is the problem with our air transportation system already. It is highly burdened with over-regulation. We do not need more. We need short, clear, concise situations where passengers would know their rights, and the people who would be doing it would be upholding them.

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• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the Bloc Qu b cois has pointed out, Bill C-52 gives the Minister of Transport a lot of freedom to proceed by regulation. That is raising many concerns among stakeholder organizations. As lawmakers, it allows us less control in performing our opposition role or in monitoring whether what is there is good, while giving the Minister of Transport too much power to introduce measures.

Will this really permit the creation of an advisory committee on the issue of noise in communities located near airports? Are the airports really going to prepare a plan to limit pollution? If the minister proceeds by regulation and if we have less power as lawmakers, we will not be able to properly carry out our opposition role.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about these drawbacks.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has brought up very good points. There is a lot of ambiguity with this, because we do not know how much power the minister would grant himself or herself, nor what kinds of rules or regulations would need to be followed.

Also, is it going to truly protect not only the rights of air passengers but also the rights of the public, as she mentioned, with respect to noise pollution on the ground?

There is so much in the bill that needs to be addressed at committee, and I look forward to it being sent back to committee as quickly as possible.

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

Today, I rise to speak to the government's legislation, Bill C-52, enhancing transparency and accountability in the transportation system act. The bill was initially introduced by the former minister of transport. Bill C-52 has far-reaching implications for Canada's transportation system, and as the official opposition, it is our duty to ensure it will truly meet the serious and ongoing concerns many Canadians have within the transportation sector.

The bill proposes to set publicly reported service standards for private sector companies and government agencies responsible for air travel at Canada's airports almost exclusively through regulations, which would be created by the minister and the cabinet.

Furthermore, it proposes to require airport authorities to formalize noise consultation processes and environmental standards, and to publish information on their directors and senior management. Finally, Bill C-52 aims to amend the Canada Marine Act regarding the setting of fees by Canadian port authorities.

First and foremost, the timing of the bill's introduction raises concerns. Bill C-52 was presented on June 20, just one day before the House recessed for the summer. That raises questions about the government's motivations and intentions. It is essential to consider

whether the timing was chosen to deflect attention from previous travel-related crises and to create an impression of swift action.

Between the summers of 2022 and 2023, Canadian travellers faced a disastrous travel season with numerous flight cancellations and unacceptable delays. Previous to that was the disastrous mismanagement of passports that affected travellers, but that is a whole other issue. In particular, the Christmas travel season last year brought further chaos and frustration in airports. Those events highlighted the need for significant improvements in our transportation system.

However, the Liberals are focusing on announcements and consultations rather than delivering tangible results for Canadian travellers. What is their solution? It is to empower themselves further.

One of the most pressing issues within our transportation system is the backlog of complaints with the Canadian Transportation Agency, the CTA. This backlog has grown by 3,000 complaints per month and has resulted in a staggering 60,000 complaints now waiting to be adjudicated.

That backlog represents thousands of Canadian passengers who had their travel experiences disrupted or delayed, or had some form of service situation, and all those people are awaiting resolutions. Those passengers have been unable to resolve their compensation claims with airlines, and they have now been asked to wait over 18 months to have their complaints considered by the Canadian Transportation Agency.

This adds insult to injury and prolongs what could be serious problems. People are out-of-pocket, and airlines are not being held accountable for mismanagement and poor service.

Most recently, we heard damning reports of Air Canada's and WestJet's treatment of passengers with disabilities. For Air Canada, in one case in May, two employees, instead of being trained on the proper equipment, attempted to physically lift a passenger but ended up dropping him. In another report, a woman's ventilator was disconnected and a lift fell on her head. A man was forced to physically drag himself off a flight in Vancouver. Air Canada admitted it had violated federal accessibility regulations.

We heard that those passengers got notice, forgiveness and, hopefully, amends to which they are entitled, and Air Canada said it would be looking to ensure proper compliance. I am looking forward to ensuring that Air Canada's CEO will be appearing before the human resources committee I serve on, as we have called for him to testify and to explain to Canadians exactly how this airline intends to comply.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

The latest example was from WestJet where a paralympian was forced to lift herself up the stairs to the plane. It was reported that she commented that she was frustrated and humiliated, and there was a ramp within 50 metres.

All those situations are disturbing, disappointing and unacceptable for persons with disabilities to have gone through. Unfortunately, Bill C-52, which we are debating here today, does not provide solutions to eliminate the complaints backlog or set specific service standards within accountability mechanisms.

• (1555)

Federally regulated entities involved in air travel must also be held accountable for delays or cancellations. They include airlines, airports, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, Nav Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency. However, this legislation falls short of those expectations.

While the bill addresses some aspects of accountability and transparency, it fails to hold all relevant entities responsible for ensuring smooth and reliable air travel. A comprehensive approach to accountability should encompass all stakeholders involved in the travel experience. One of the significant concerns with Bill C-52 is the concentration of power in the hands of the minister and the cabinet to develop regulations in the future.

While regulatory flexibility can be useful, this bill does not include concrete improvements in legislation. We see this often with the Liberal government, where so much is left to regulation, which leads to uncertainty and lack of transparency. We saw this with the Internet censorship bill, Bill C-11, and with the disability benefits bill. Instead, this legislation relies on promises of future regulations, which raise concerns about vagueness and the potential for arbitrary decision-making. It is not even a band-aid. It is an IOU for a band-aid.

In a matter as critical as transportation where there is essential service provided, and the comfort and convenience of the Canadian people are at stake, it is crucial that regulations are well defined and not left to the discretion of the government and the minister of the day. The lack of this clear direction with specific remedies in this bill to address the long-standing problems in our transportation system is a significant shortcoming. While the bill aspires to enhance transparency and accountability in the transportation system, it fails to deliver. It fails to provide the concrete solutions to the issues that have been plaguing the system for years. As for the results and who will be held accountable, there are no answers in this legislation.

We need legislation that not only identifies problems but also provides tangible solutions. It is our responsibility as legislators to ensure that any legislation passed is effective and beneficial to the Canadian people. Bill C-52, as it stands, is lacking.

• (1600)

The Speaker: I apologize for interrupting the member for Kelowna—Lake Country in the middle of her speech.

It being four o'clock, pursuant to an order made Thursday, November 9, I now invite the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to make a statement.

[*English*]

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2023 fall economic statement.

Our government was elected on a promise to deliver for the middle class, and our economic plan is focused on building an economy that works for everyone, with good jobs that people can count on.

[*Translation*]

Major investments in public transit, in EV battery factories and in new energy projects are not just red ink in our fiscal statement. They are truly investments—decades-long investments—in the economic growth which creates middle-class jobs, raises incomes and makes middle-class communities more prosperous.

[*English*]

Like the transcontinental railway a century ago, these are foundational investments that only governments can make. We believe in Canada and we believe in the incredible possibility of Canada's future. That is why we are making the investments that Canada needs in order to make that bright future a reality.

Affordable early learning and child care is, likewise, an investment in our social infrastructure, and it is also transformative economic policy. It gives children the best possible start in life and saves middle-class families thousands of dollars a year while also supporting record women's employment, thus helping to address the labour shortages which contributed to inflation. When I announced our plan to build a Canada-wide system of affordable early learning and child care, some people were skeptical, and justifiably so. After all, it was a promise that had been made and broken for five decades. However, today, just two and a half years after we launched our plan, it is working. Child care fees are down by at least 50% across Canada. In six provinces and territories, we have already brought child care costs down to just \$10 a day. We are on track to deliver outstanding nurturing care for \$10 a day everywhere in Canada by 2026.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

The women of Quebec are the ones who showed us the way in terms of affordable child care. Our plan supports the creation of 30,000 new spaces to make child care even more accessible throughout *la belle province*.

• (1605)

[English]

Enhancements to Canada's social safety net, ranging from the Canada child benefit to the Canada workers benefit and the Canada pension plan, are about driving down inequality, raising incomes and ensuring, by design, not by trickle-down, that everyone can truly share in our country's prosperity. With investments in our economy, our communities and a new generation of middle-class careers, we have focused relentlessly on ensuring that government investments deliver real economic opportunities for all Canadians. That is our economic plan.

[Translation]

Think about how far we have come. Right after a decade of austerity under the Conservatives, our government has lifted nearly 2.3 million Canadians out of poverty. Inflation is coming down, wages are going up, and private sector economists now expect Canada to avoid the postpandemic recession that many had predicted.

[English]

Thanks to our economic plan, Canada is today a global investment destination of choice. In the first half of this year, Canada received the third most foreign direct investment of any country in the entire world. That was more investment per capita than any of our G7 allies, more than the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, France or Japan. The IMF projects that Canada will likewise see the strongest economic growth in the G7 next year.

What does all of this mean for people? It means that our economy is creating great jobs for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. I am so glad to be able to say that over a million more Canadians are employed today than before the pandemic.

We all have more work to do, but our economic plan is working.

[Translation]

Now, I do not want to deny the reality that many Canadians are facing today. I absolutely understand that after three difficult years—with a global pandemic, global inflation, and global interest rate hikes—Canadians are worn out, frustrated and feeling the squeeze.

What Canadians deserve today is for us to address the very real pain that so many are feeling—with a hopeful and achievable vision for our country's future. That is my priority. That is our government's priority, and that is the priority of our fall economic statement.

[English]

The foundation of our fall economic statement is our responsible fiscal plan. In the face of global inflation, the government has reduced the deficit faster than any other country in the G7 has. With

inflation down from 8.1% last year to just 3.1% today, we are taking care not to feed inflation, by carefully targeting new investments towards the priorities of Canadians today and towards the future growth that makes our finances sustainable.

Canada maintains both the lowest deficit and the lowest debt-to-GDP ratios in the G7. With a new reduction in public service spending, the fall economic statement builds on the \$15 billion in refocused spending that I announced in the spring. We are ensuring that Canada's finances remain sustainable, because that is how we will be able to continue investing in Canadians for years to come.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Built upon our responsible fiscal plan, our fall economic statement has two objectives. The first is to continue to support the middle class at a time when some prices are still high and mortgage renewals are looming.

That is why we are making generational changes to competition law in Canada.

This historic step includes cracking down on predatory pricing and other tactics that big corporations use to raise costs for Canadians. Competition law may sound esoteric, but it is not. This is new, significant, concrete action that will help stabilize prices and provide more choice for Canadians.

We are cracking down on the junk fees that Canadians are saddled with every day, and an investigation will soon be launched into the international roaming charges that drive up Canadians' phone bills. We are lifting the GST and HST on counselling and psychotherapy services so that Canadians can receive the support they need. We are extending employment insurance to parents who adopt, and we are introducing a new leave for federally regulated workers who are grieving from miscarriages, because every family, no matter how it comes together, needs time to bond, and every parent should have time to heal from the painful loss of a pregnancy.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

To protect Canadians who are struggling with their mortgage payments at a time of higher interest rates, today I am announcing the new Canadian mortgage charter, which details the tailored mortgage relief that Canadians need and can expect from their banks if they are in financial difficulty. Our goal is to help Canadians through an incredibly challenging time by making sure they have the support they need in order to afford their mortgages and keep their homes when renewing at a time of higher interest rates. We are committed to taking further action if necessary.

Our second objective is equally urgent. For generations, Canada has been a country where, if one worked hard, went to school, found a good job and squirrelled some money away, there would be a home that one could afford. For generations, that promise was kept, but today, for a generation that ranges from new high school graduates to couples in their thirties making six-figure salaries, that is a promise which is under threat. Keeping the promise demands a great national effort, and that is an effort the government is stepping up to lead.

Building on the significant action we have already taken, including this fall alone, I am today announcing new measures through our economic plan to build thousands upon thousands of new homes across the country, and to build them faster. We are unlocking billions of dollars in new financing, which is money that will go towards supporting the construction of new homes for Canadians. We are supporting non-profit, co-op and public housing providers. We will be helping to cut the red tape that prevents construction workers from moving across the country to build homes, and we will be bringing to Canada more of the skilled trades workers that our construction sector needs.

- (1615)

We will be cracking down on short-term rentals listed on sights such as Airbnb and Vrbo, which are keeping far too many homes off the market in communities and cities right across the country. That is going to make a real difference to Canadians, and that is just what we are doing today.

We are also making it easier for more than 250,000 Canadians, and counting, to buy their first home with the new tax-free first home savings account. The federal government owns more land than anyone else in Canada, and we are going to build more homes on it. We are lifting the GST on new rental construction to make it more affordable for builders to build so they can build more homes faster. We are repairing and building hundreds of thousands of new homes, and we are financing the construction of tens of thousands more.

We have banned foreign investment in Canadian housing, and we are ensuring that property flippers pay their fair share. We are making it more affordable for families to construct secondary suites, and we have signed agreements with cities across the country to slash the red tape that is preventing homes from being built in the first place. In exchange, we are providing them with new funding to build more than 100,000 new homes faster because our country needs more homes, and we need them fast.

[Translation]

We must build homes in our biggest cities and our smallest towns. We must build detached family homes and secondary suites. We must build co-op housing and rental apartments. It will take all of us—the federal government and the provinces, cities and towns, the private sector and non-profits right across this great country—working together in common cause. Our government is doing our part, and we are approaching this task with the purpose, drive, and intensity it deserves. We will keep working day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year to build the homes that Canadians need, and expect, and deserve.

At the heart of the promise of Canada is the conviction that, no matter who you are, no matter what you look like or who you love or where you were born, every day represents a new opportunity. If people work hard, they can share in the remarkable possibilities of our remarkable country, with a good career that pays them well, and with a home they can afford.

- (1620)

[English]

Building a Canada that delivers on the promise of the greatest country in the world will be our government's work for these next two years and beyond.

Canada is not and never has been broken. We are the imperfect and remarkable creation of generations of Canadians who did their part to build a better country in good times and in tough times, calloused hand by calloused hand. There are generations of Canadians who fought fear and cynicism with hope and hard work, generations of Canadians who fought day after day to keep Canada moving forward, and generations of Canadians who believed, just as I do today, that in our magnificent country, better is always possible.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with its \$20 billion in costly new spending, this update can be summed up very simply: prices up, rent up, debt up, taxes up and time is up. Common-sense Conservatives will vote non-confidence on this disgusting scheme.

[Translation]

After eight years in power, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Today, he is adding another \$20 billion to inflation, which will put more pressure on interest rates. He is also proposing to raise taxes on the backs of the middle class. That is why the common-sense Conservatives will be voting against it.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

A year ago, the finance minister told the House she would have the budget balanced by the year 2028. In that time, she has announced \$100 billion of additional debt, above and beyond having doubled that debt in the first place. This debt is already being paid by Canadians with the worst inflation in 40 years and with interest rates that risk a mortgage meltdown on the \$900 billion in mortgages that will renew over the next three years. That is two-thirds of mortgages, and the IMF is saying that, of all 40 OECD countries, Canada is the most at risk of a mortgage crisis.

Her solution now is another \$20 billion of inflationary spending. This is after the Governor of the Bank of Canada has said that deficits are adding two full percentage points to mortgage rates on the backs of Canadians. Finally, today, the government goes ahead with a plan to quadruple the carbon tax, quadruple—

● (1625)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I may be under a mistaken impression. I thought we were in the question and comment period, but perhaps we are in speeches. I wonder if you could provide some guidance to the leader of the Conservative Party.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member from Elmwood—Transcona. We are in a period of questions and comments. There are 10 minutes for questions and comments, and I am hoping that the hon. Leader of the Opposition will come to his question so that we have an equal amount of time for the Minister of Finance to respond. Also, I know there are finance critics from each of the parties who would like to ask questions and make comments.

I hope the hon. Leader of the Opposition comes to his question soon.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, we can always count on the NDP to betray their constituents and come to the rescue of the tax-and-spend Liberals. Here they go again.

My question, not just on behalf of the common-sense Conservatives, but on behalf of the countless people who are losing their homes, who are lined up at food banks and who are living through the worst economy since the Great Depression, is this: Exactly how much will it cost the average family when the Liberal government goes ahead with its plan to quadruple the carbon tax? How much will it cost?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, let us start by setting the record straight. Canada has the lowest debt and the lowest deficit in the G7, and we have had the fastest rate of fiscal consolidation. One does not need to ask me about our fiscally responsible track record. Members can talk to the ratings agencies because they have reaffirmed our AAA rating.

The question we all need to be asking the Conservatives is why they are so passionately opposed to the investments Canadians need. Why are they opposed to early learning and child care, which is working, and which is making life more affordable for Canadians while expanding our labour force at a time when we desperately need it?

Why are they so opposed to building more homes faster for Canadians? Why have they said it is “disgusting” to be investing in building more rental homes? Is it disgusting for us to be cracking down on Airbnb? Why are they so opposed to our essential investments in the industrial transformation Canada needs?

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the measures that the Bloc Québécois called for and wanted to see in this economic statement had one thing in common: the word “urgent”.

We asked for more money for seniors who are suffering because of the rising cost of living. We asked for a one-year extension for CEBA repayment. Unfortunately, all we got for the 200,000 SMEs that are in crisis and asking for a one-year extension is a single page out of 130. That is next to nothing.

We asked for money for businesses and seniors, as well as for people experiencing homelessness. We asked for an emergency fund for people who are preparing to spend winter on the streets.

I have one question for the Minister of Finance. What is her definition of the word “urgent”? Clearly it is not the same as ours.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, I am going to say what I think is urgent.

I think it is urgent to build housing in Quebec and across Canada. That is why, in this fall economic statement, we are investing \$16 billion in housing construction. It is urgent, and that is why we are doing it now.

We also feel it is urgent to have an economic plan for the jobs of today and tomorrow. That is why we are investing in the green transition. We have made the biggest investment in the history of Quebec, according to Premier Legault, who was very proud to partner with us. We are investing in the needs of today and the jobs of today and tomorrow.

● (1630)

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned in her remarks that we are facing a housing crisis, certainly a significant housing shortage. She talked about how Canada has the lowest debt in the G7. She talked about how it has the lowest deficit in the G7.

The Governor of the Bank of Canada said that spending on housing would not be inflationary. She announced some measures today for social housing, but they do not start until 2025-26—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saskatoon—University is rising on a point of order.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Corey Tochor: Mr. Speaker, my point is order is that there is no question in this long, rambling, pointless speech.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would like to remind all members this is the period for questions and comments. The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona still has the floor.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, with the government saying that it is in a good fiscal position, and with the Bank of Canada saying that spending on housing is not inflationary, I question why the new investments for social housing have been put off to 2025.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona for his commitment to Canadians and for his hard work on housing.

We absolutely understand the urgency of investing in housing. We need to invest in housing today, and we need to have a plan to continue investing in housing going forward.

I am very pleased that our investments in housing right now include supporting the development of co-op housing and of lifting the GST from new co-op developments, along with providing new funding to get them built. As someone who has lived in a co-op, I can tell members that this is one of the best forms of affordable housing, and it creates great communities at the same time.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the finance minister recognizes we are in a climate crisis. At the same time, she needs to know that oil and gas companies are gouging Canadians at the pumps, as 47¢ of every dollar of inflation is from corporate profits.

Why would they not apply the Canada recovery dividend, which they already did to banks and life insurance, to big oil in the fall economic statement?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, we absolutely understand the urgency of climate action. That is why I am delighted that today we are publishing a timeline for our investment tax credits. They are so essential to Canada's green transition and our economic plan, which is creating jobs today and the jobs of tomorrow.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the past number of budgets, we have seen the federal government commit significant funding to support the people of Ukraine in their fight against Russia's genocidal invasion.

We just saw Conservative Party MPs vote against the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement, basically voting against support for Ukraine. Could the minister clarify what this government's position is on support for Ukraine?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition described our measures to build new homes for Canadians as “disgusting”. I will tell members what I would describe as disgusting: the failure of the official opposition to support the country fighting the world's fight right now for democracy and the rules-based international order. I am truly appalled.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Prime Minister, inflation is at a 40-year high. Work does not pay anymore, and the cost of housing has doubled. Crime, chaos, drugs and disorder are common on our streets. The Prime Minister is trying to divide Canadians and distract them from all his failures.

First, we must acknowledge the country that the Prime Minister inherited when he came to power. I will start with interest rates and the inflation rate.

These rates were low. Taxes were falling faster than at any time in our country's history. The budget was balanced. Crime had fallen 25%, so low that small-town folks often left their doors unlocked. Our borders were secure. Housing cost half what it does today. Take-home pay had risen 10% after inflation and taxes. The New York Times said that, for the first time, Canada's middle class was richer than America's, despite an unprecedented financial crisis in the U.S. as well as wars in Syria, Iraq and Ukraine. It is funny how, when Stephen Harper was around, those wars did not cause inflation in Canada.

Since the current Prime Minister came to power, prices have skyrocketed. Let us look at where we are now, eight years later.

After breaking 40-year records, inflation is once again too high. The economy is shrinking. Yes, the economy is shrinking even as the population is growing. Per capita GDP is smaller today than it was six years ago. For the first time in our history, we have seen the economy and per capita GDP shrink over a six-year period. According to the OECD, Canada's growth is projected to be dead last in the OECD, not just for the next six years, but for the next three decades.

Housing costs have more than doubled in eight years under this government, despite its promises to lower them. It now takes 25 years to save up enough money for a down payment in Toronto. Before this Prime Minister, it took that long to pay off an entire mortgage. Now, some families are having to stretch out the terms of their mortgages to 90 years. That means that a person may have to live to be 120 before their family is mortgage-free. In reality, the children and grandchildren are the ones who will have to pay off their parents' and grandparents' mortgages. Never before has this been seen in Canada, or anywhere else in the world, I imagine. Homes in Canada now cost over 50% more than homes in the United States.

That is the reality after eight years under this Prime Minister, who promised to make life more affordable. What are his solutions today?

Routine Proceedings

First, he wants to increase taxes on fuel, which will increase the cost of everything. Everything that is transported will cost more because of the carbon tax that the government just confirmed. It will increase the price of gas by 17¢ a litre, and by 20¢ a litre if we add the sales tax. This is a tax that the Bloc Québécois wants to radically increase on the backs of Quebeckers.

• (1640)

Furthermore, he is again promising to invest billions in housing construction. These are the same promises he has been making for eight years, but all they do is create more bureaucracy, not build homes.

Finally, he is adding \$20 billion in new spending that will cause inflation and interest rates to go up. Scotiabank has already said that two percentage points of the current interest rates are the direct result of the deficits, which the government is proposing to increase.

Let us talk about the debt. Next year, for the first time, we will be spending more on debt interest than on health care. More than \$50 billion will be spent on interest. That is more than will be sent to the provinces for our nurses and doctors. Bankers and investors in Manhattan will get the money, but our teachers, nurses and doctors will not. It makes no sense.

Fortunately, we have a common-sense plan. We have a plan to cap spending and cut waste in order to bring down inflation and interest rates. We will eliminate taxes to reduce the cost of living for every Canadian. We will cut taxes to make work pay once again. We will rebuild the Canadian dream, where work enables anyone, anywhere, to have a good life, to own a home and to live a peaceful life in their community.

In the next election, voters will have two choices. The first is to vote for a costly coalition that will take money from taxpayers, raise taxes and enable more crime. The second is to vote for the common-sense Conservatives, who will free people to earn more powerful paycheques that buy food, gas and homes in safe communities. That is the choice, and we will be the only common-sense choice for all Quebeckers and Canadians.

[English]

As we stand here today and witness the misery visible across this country, it is hard to forget how good things were only eight years ago when the Prime Minister took office. Let me review the hard facts.

Never before has a prime minister inherited a richer legacy. Inflation and interest rates were rock bottom, taxes were falling faster than at any time in Canadian history and the budget was balanced. It took 25 years to pay off a mortgage, not just to get a mortgage. Crime had fallen by 25%. It was so low that many small-town folks actually left their doors unlocked. Do members remember those good days when we could leave our doors unlocked? No one would do that today.

Our borders were secure, housing costs were half of what they are today and take-home pay had gone up 10% after tax and inflation. The New York Times had calculated that Canada's middle class was, for the first time ever, richer than America's middle

class. All of this was despite a once-in-a-lifetime financial crisis in the U.S. and wars in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and, yes, Ukraine. It is funny how those wars did not cause inflation when Prime Minister Harper was leading our economy. It is true that when the Prime Minister took office, Canada was rich, affordable and safe.

It is also true that the very wealthy had not done particularly well. In fact, their share of the economy had shrunk during the Harper years. Now the wealth concentrates among the very, very rich, and that is because inflationary policies always help the richest people. When government concentrates wealth in the hands of politicians and bureaucrats, it is given to the most politically influential people. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Now we are seeing the biggest gap ever between the rich and the poor. The Prime Minister promised to help the middle class, but he has demolished the middle class. That is the reality.

• (1645)

Inflation, after hitting 40-year highs, is back on the move. The economy is now shrinking. If we add in per capita terms, it is plummeting. In fact, the GDP per person is smaller than it was six years ago. This has never happened. Canada's growth is now projected to be the worst in the OECD between now and 2030, and the worst for the next four decades, according to the OECD. That is out of 40 countries.

It now takes 25 years to save up for a down payment in Toronto. It used to be that one could pay off a mortgage in that time. Since the Prime Minister has taken office, families have stretched out the terms of their mortgages to 90 years. Today the minister bragged that she is going to create a charter that will allow them to stretch out their mortgages longer so they can now have a 100-year mortgage. People are supposed to thank the government. What wonderful news. I imagine she will send it out in the mail so people can open their mailbox and find out that their great-great-grandchildren will still be paying off the mortgage on their home.

Canadian homes now cost 50% more than in the United States of America. In fact, one can now buy a 20-bedroom castle in Scotland for a lower price than a two bedroom in Kitchener. Vancouver is now the third most unaffordable housing market in the world when we compare median income to median house prices. It is worse than New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, and London, England. Even Singapore, a tiny island with 2,000 times more people per square kilometre than Canada, has more affordable housing. Toronto is rated by UBS to be the worst housing bubble in the world. If we had even imagined to say such a thing out loud eight years ago, people would have laughed. Today it is the reality and people are not laughing. They are actually crying.

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All of a sudden, after eight years, we should believe in the government's multi-billion dollar promise to build homes. The Liberals built fewer homes last year than were built in 1972, 50 years ago. That was at a time when our population was half of what it is today. We are building fewer homes now that we have 40 million people than we built when we had 22 million people.

It is no wonder we have this new phenomenon of middle-class working homeless people. We have never seen this before, but now we have nurses, electricians and carpenters living in parking lots, something they could not even imagine. In Halifax, Nova Scotia, the Speaker's province and ironically the province of the housing minister, there are 30 homeless encampments in one city. This would have been unimaginable. Now the Liberals expect us to believe that this time, they mean it, that their billions of dollars of new spending are going to change what the billions of dollars they spent over the last decade have caused, and that is the worst housing crisis in Canadian history, perhaps the worst in the world today.

The Prime Minister has doubled our national debt, adding more debt than all of the previous 22 prime ministers combined. He continually tells us that there are no consequences for that debt. The consequences are now becoming clear. Next year the government will spend more on dead interest than it does on health care. Instead of the money going to doctors and nurses, it will go to bankers and bondholders in Manhattan and in London, England. It is another transfer of wealth from the working class to the wealthiest people, from the working class to the smirking class.

We see the social breakdown this has brought in our communities with crime raging out of control. Shootings are up 101% across Canada over the last eight years. There have been 30,000 drug overdoses. Social breakdown is the obvious consequence of the economic breakdown the Prime Minister has caused.

What has he spent all of this on? He spent \$54 million on the ArriveCAN app, which we did not need, which did not work and could have been done in a weekend by a couple of IT workers. We know that because they did. A couple of IT workers, as a lark, bought a few boxes of pizza and a case of beer and redesigned the entire ArriveCAN app in a weekend. It did not cost them \$54 million. Maybe we should send that app to the Prime Minister and call it the "ResignCAN" app.

• (1650)

Then the Liberals blew a billion dollars on a so-called green fund. The top bureaucrats who were involved in it say that it is a money-for-nothing scheme with gross incompetence that reminds them of the sponsorship scandal. The chair of the fund gave \$200,000 of the money to her own company. Now, we find out that the \$15 billion they are giving to a single battery plant is going to pay for 1,600 foreign workers, who do not even have a place to live. There is a housing shortage in Windsor. The Prime Minister's solution is to spend precious tax dollars on paycheques for people on the other side of the world to come here temporarily, collect the money and take it back to South Korea. We all love South Korea, a great country, but there is no reason why Canadian taxpayers should be subsidizing South Koreans' paycheques. Canadian tax dollars should go exclusively to Canadian paycheques; that is common sense.

The Prime Minister, of course, wastes money through missed opportunities. We could develop our resources. For example, we could be breaking dependence on the world's dictators. Let us talk about this for a moment. Today, the Prime Minister's party shamefully voted to impose a carbon tax on the people of Ukraine. Its members voted to amend the existing Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement, which Conservatives negotiated, and which has been a success, to require that both countries have and promote carbon taxes. This is exactly the opposite of what the people of Ukraine need. They do not need a carbon tax when they are trying to fight and win a war. They need the ability to rebuild their economy, which takes energy. That is why Conservatives will oppose any imposition of a carbon tax there, here or anywhere around the world.

Do members know what else they did? They voted against an amendment that would allow Canadians to build the arms that would allow Ukraine to win the war. We proposed an amendment to the update of the agreement, which would have allowed Ukrainians to benefit from our incredible Canadian workers who produce munitions and equipment, and they voted no. Let us get this straight. They believe the best way to counter Putin is with a carbon tax. We believe the best way to do it is by breaking European dependence on his energy sector and by providing and selling great Canadian arms to win the war.

Canadians understand that the way to help a country rebuild is by selling technology for energy. We proposed as well that we would both provide civilian nuclear technology and sell our civilian-grade uranium from Saskatchewan to power nuclear plants that would give emissions-free electricity to Ukrainians, as they have to replace bombed-out electricity plants. The Prime Minister did not include that in his deal, because he does not want affordable energy. He does not want the jobs to come back to our resource sector. All he wanted was to try to save his carbon tax. That is just how desperate he is and, in fact, how sick he is, on this matter. We all know that he was desperate to save his carbon tax, but for him to use the people of Ukraine as a pawn in his scheme to save the carbon tax is a level of cynicism that we did not expect even from the Prime Minister.

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When I am prime minister, we will have a free trade agreement with Ukraine, and that agreement will not include a carbon tax. It will include the ability for us to provide clean Canadian nuclear energy and natural gas to have a strong energy superpower status for Canada and a secure Ukraine for the future, absolutely.

There are hypocritical members over there who pretended that they supported Ukraine, but who then supported the Prime Minister's signing off on a turbine to go from Montreal to Putin so he could power his natural gas pipeline and pump that gas into Europe to fund his war.

• (1655)

That is the Prime Minister's priority: to give Putin more money selling natural gas. Our priority and our common-sense plan turns dollars for dictators into paycheques for our people in this country.

I do not think this debate is going how the Liberals expected it to go. Their heads are all looking down and rightfully so. It will be a good moment for them to atone for the cynical approach they have taken on this and everything else and, frankly, for the misery that they have unleashed in this country. This is the worst time in Canada's history for the Canadian people and particularly for the middle class.

The good news is that we have a common-sense plan that would axe the tax to bring home lower prices, cap spending and cut waste to bring down inflation and interest rates, remove bureaucracy to build more homes so that once again people can afford to pay their rent and mortgages. This will be a country that works for the people who do the work, for the common people and for the common sense of the common people united for our common home, their home, my home, our home. Let us bring it home.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government's fall economic statement announces new measures in order to get more homes built faster. The leader of the Conservative Party has called that, and I quote, a disgusting scheme.

Why does the leader of the Conservative Party think that investments in the construction of 30,000 new rental apartments is disgusting? Why does the leader of the Conservative Party think that new federal investments for the construction of 7,000 new affordable homes is disgusting? The leader of the Conservative Party owes us and Canadians an explanation.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, those houses cannot be characterized with any adjective other than “non-existent”. They do not exist. The Liberals stand up day after day and list off the thousands of houses that they have not built. They have had eight years. It would be one thing if they were still promising to build homes in their first year, maybe their second year; okay, we will give them three years.

It has been eight years and the only thing they have accomplished on housing since promising to make it affordable is they have doubled the cost. They have doubled the rent, doubled mortgage payments, doubled the needed down payment for a home. Now we have \$900 billion of mortgages that are coming up for re-

newal. That is two-thirds of all mortgages. The IMF says we are the number one at risk of having a mortgage crisis.

It is disgusting to think of the families who did everything right and risk losing everything because of the irresponsible policies of this Prime Minister and his NDP government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we often hear the Conservatives bickering with the Liberals, but they are really one and the same.

The Liberals did not mention homelessness in the economic update, and nor did the Conservatives in their response. The Liberals are not talking about small businesses and are not helping them, since the government refuses to extend the repayment of the Canada emergency business account, or CEBA, loans by an additional year. The Conservatives never even mention it. The Liberals are doing nothing to help seniors. What are the Conservatives doing? They have nothing whatsoever to say about seniors.

The Liberals have given \$82 billion in assistance to oil companies. Will those folks over there talk about it and eliminate those subsidies? On the contrary, the Conservatives are lobbyists for the oil companies. The Liberals do not talk about housing at all. The Conservatives, meanwhile, decided to do something original. They decided to blame the municipalities and punish them if they ever find out that they are not building enough housing.

It is a party of slogans and catchphrases. They have no substance. It is six of one and a half dozen of the other.

• (1700)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the member is so angry. Give me a break. I cannot understand why he is upset, because his leader just said he is going to support the Liberals and keep them in power. I thought he was going to stand up and applaud all the great things the Liberals are doing, like increasing inflation, forcing interest rates to go up and drastically increasing the carbon tax. The Bloc Québécois wants this drastic increase and the Prime Minister agrees.

The Bloc agrees with the Liberals on everything except the country's capital. That is the only sticking point it has with the Liberals. Fortunately, Quebecers will be able to vote for a commonsense party, a party that will lower prices and give people bigger paycheques. That is what common sense is all about.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is not going to get out of the housing crisis we are in without significant investments in social and affordable housing, and the Liberals simply have not been building enough of that. We saw today that even the recapitalization of a program to build affordable housing is being put off until 2025.

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We never hear the leader of the Conservative Party talk about building new affordable and social housing. In fact, Canada is still losing way more affordable units than we are building. When he was housing minister, the government decided to cancel the operating agreements that made rents affordable in co-op and other forms of non-profit housing across the country. Will he finally start talking about the need to build more social and affordable housing in Canada to help address the crisis?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I have been talking about almost nothing but making housing affordable for the last three years. When the NDP and the Liberals and the entire establishment were dismissing me, I told the country we were headed for a housing crisis. Now everybody is playing catch-up.

Here is the problem for the NDP: The facts are that, when I was housing minister, one could rent the average one-bedroom for \$950. Now, under the NDP-Liberal government, it is almost \$2,000. One could buy an average home for a mortgage of \$1,400 a month. Now it is \$3,500 a month. The needed down payment for the average new home was \$20,000; now it is well over \$50,000.

The NDP has been in government now at least two years and supported the Prime Minister for long before that. Since they signed the coalition agreement, rent inflation has been at its worst in Canadian history. We do not need more bureaucracy. We need my common-sense plan to clear away the red tape and the gatekeepers to build millions of new homes Canadians can afford and allow them powerful paycheques to pay for them.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition tried to excuse himself and his caucus out of the way they voted earlier with respect to the Ukraine free trade agreement. I want to tell him that nobody believes him.

President Zelenskyy asked us to vote in favour of this. The Ukrainian Canadian Congress asked us to vote in favour of this. As a matter of fact, “international trade lawyer Larry Herman said that the Conservatives’ concern about reference to a carbon pricing makes them look ‘petty and hyperpartisan.’”

It is nothing more than a red herring. The reality is that MAGA Republican politics now lives and resides within the Conservative Party of Canada.

● (1705)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the hyperventilating member for Kingston and the Islands only proves my point with those falsehoods.

The Conservative Party initiated the original free trade agreement with Ukraine. We backed Ukraine against Crimea. We led the charge to kick Russia out of the G8, and that is why we now have the G7.

The Prime Minister has betrayed Ukraine. He signed off on an export permit for a turbine to go to Russia so Putin could pump gas and raise money to fund his war. He refused to sell natural gas from Canada, forcing Europeans to continue to fund that war; we want to defund Putin. He embarrassed the President of Ukraine by allowing a Nazi to be recognized on the floor of the House of Commons during the president's visit.

Now the Prime Minister betrays Ukraine while the country has a knife at its throat. He uses it as an occasion to try to bolster his carbon tax by putting in, for the first time in the history of trade, a carbon tax in a trade agreement. Ukrainians do not need a carbon tax. Canadians do not need a carbon tax. That is why my common-sense plan will stand up to dictators such as Putin, turn dollars for dictators into paycheques for our people and axe the tax for all.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really wanted to ask the Conservative leader this question. It is a very important question. We are dealing with a government that has forgotten what common sense means for all Canadians.

Can the Conservative leader tell us what common sense means to him and how a common-sense government will help Canadian families?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, common sense means getting rid of the carbon tax to lower the cost of living for all Canadians. Common sense means capping spending and getting rid of waste to balance the budget and lower inflation and the interest rates. Common sense means cutting taxes to make hard work pay off again.

That is what common sense is all about.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to remind the House that this is an economic statement. It is not a budget. As we know, a budget sets out the government's policies and presents the legislative, fiscal and budgetary measures required to implement them. An economic statement has a more modest purpose. It is supposed to present the evolution of the economic and fiscal situation since the last budget.

What this statement now tells us is that the deficit may change according to the government's forecasts, contrary to what the Parliamentary Budget Officer had calculated, which is worrisome. The statement outlines the government's response to these changes. There is not much there. For example, at the end of the summer, the Prime Minister asked the new President of the Treasury Board to cut \$15 billion from various departments in order to balance the budget. They promised to give us an outline by mid-October. That did not happen. We were expecting to see it in the economic statement, but all they are doing is putting things off again without any concrete targets. Another objective has been missed.

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What is the purpose of an economic statement? It is used to present the measures the government plans to take to deal with the emergencies that have cropped up since the last budget. There have been quite a few emergencies since the last budget. The economy has changed a great deal. There is a lot of struggling and difficulty. The economy is not doing well. Many people are affected by that. We were really expecting the minister to address the major emergencies that have come up since the last budget. Unfortunately, this is such a missed opportunity that we might wonder what the point is in having an economic statement. I will come back to that. There are several emergencies that we could have focused on that were simply not even mentioned in this statement.

I will give another example. The first chapter has to do with housing. While we are short on housing and social housing and the situation is desperate, we find out that there will be \$37 million in cuts this year. For next year, not one penny more will be added to what was already presented in Bill C-56 to get rid of the GST on social housing construction. We will have to wait two years to see the \$54 million and \$1 billion promised for subsequent years to tackle housing. Is that enough when we know that most of that \$1 billion is money that was already announced and not spent? It is unfortunate.

A few weeks ago, we presented our requests to the minister. What we asked the government to do in the economic statement was to respond to existing emergencies, the urgent situations that we are currently facing. Take, for example, homeless people. As we know, it is starting to get cold outside. This morning, the temperature was below zero. There are people who are sleeping in tents and in the streets. It is truly awful. We are asking the government to do what Quebec did in its fall economic statement and to allocate emergency funding to immediately address homelessness. We want to set up an emergency fund to help cities and municipalities support homeless people in their area and give them the resources they need to do so. There is nothing about that in the economic statement. This is a real emergency that we are dealing with, and yet we have here a government and a minister who are ignoring the real emergencies. There was no response to that request in the economic statement.

On the housing front—and I will come back to this in more detail later—we provided the minister with ideas of how to create an acquisition fund for non-profit organizations and set up an interest-free or very low-interest loan program to stimulate the construction of social and affordable rental housing. Our program could be easily implemented and rapidly deployed without costing the government a fortune. The main measure being announced here is that builders who want to develop a real estate project will be allowed, in partnership with their financial institution, to pay only the interest on the loan and will not have to repay the capital until the building is built and sold.

• (1710)

While this would improve liquidity somewhat, it is not really something that was asked for by the groups that we heard at the Standing Committee on Finance, for instance. At the end of the day, we do not think it will contribute to building additional housing. Let us just say that the impact of this remains to be seen, and we do not see it in this statement.

We know that seniors are in dire straits. With the current inflation rate and what was announced this morning, the consumer price index is not as high as what we have seen over the last few months and the last few quarters, but it is still above 3%. Low-income seniors and seniors in general are struggling, and we need to restore some measure of fairness.

The government decided to increase old age security for seniors aged 75 and over. However, since then, with my friend and colleague, the member for Shefford, who is our critic for the rights of seniors, we have been saying that fairness must be restored. The increase must start at age 65. People who are struggling need this support, which will not be enough to make up for the lack of indexing to inflation or to the average wage that the program originally offered. Still, it could give seniors a little breathing room in the current inflationary environment.

The repayment of CEBA loans is another urgent situation. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, or CFIB, chambers of commerce and many organizations representing SMEs are raising the alarm with elected officials in the House and with the government. They are asking that the deadline be extended by another year. These loans were granted during the pandemic, but after the pandemic, SMEs have had to deal with rising inflation and a difficult economic recovery. Many of them are falling further into debt. Now, the government is asking them to repay their loan or they will lose the grant portion.

According to the CFIB's numbers, approximately one in five SMEs could go bankrupt if the deadline is not extended. When we asked the minister about that, she said that it would cost too much. No serious studies were done to determine what it would cost the government, the economy as a whole and society if as many as one in five businesses went bankrupt as a result of this.

We in the Bloc Québécois are willing to bet that pushing the loan repayment deadline back one year would be much more profitable. It would strengthen the economy in the sense that it would prevent a lot of predictable bankruptcies. A few weeks ago, the *Journal de Montréal* published an assessment of the risk for each region. My riding, in the north of the Lanaudière region, was particularly at risk, given the minister's refusal to extend the deadline for repayment of CEBA loans by one year. That is very disappointing. We tried and tried to negotiate with the government. We could not get access to the studies it had used to make that decision because, as we understand it, there were no such studies.

In the end, the government chose to team up with its natural ally, when we could have come to an agreement in exchange for that condition, which would have greatly helped our SMEs. The government chose to turn its back on struggling SMEs. We can only conclude that the government's ally did not really care about that too much.

There are other emergencies. As I said, the purpose of the economic update is to respond to existing emergencies.

We can think of our media. Small, local and regional media, newspapers and radio stations are struggling. They are falling one after the other. The situation is catastrophic. Even the bigger media outlets are having a tough time. We do not even know if they are going to make it to Christmas or next summer. The situation is that dire. We saw the sad announcement of upcoming layoffs at Groupe TVA, with more than 500 employees affected. Even the biggest media outlets are struggling to overcome the crisis. We called for an emergency fund for the next few months at least, but that did not happen either.

• (1715)

Also, in order to resolve an inequity, we called for an end to fossil fuel subsidies. We are talking about tens of billions of dollars. That has not been done either, which is appalling.

Let us talk about other extremely important points. Since 2015, this government has been promising a complete overhaul of employment insurance. Once again, it has been postponed indefinitely. A year and a half ago, we were told that it was coming in the spring of 2022. After that, they said it would be no later than that fall. Now there is no mention of it, and nothing has been done. I naively wanted to believe the Liberals' promise. Let that be a lesson to me. Nothing has been done, and now they will not even dare talk about it. Shame on me for believing a Liberal promise.

When it comes to EI reform, a specific concern was also raised that once again has to do with the need to respond to emergencies. This summer, there were forest fires everywhere. That means that a lot of seasonal workers in the forestry industry were unable to accumulate enough hours to qualify for EI during the season because they could not work in the forest. We brought this to the minister's attention. This is an emergency and the government needs to be a bit flexible. The government needs to do something and to think about those workers, and yet there is nothing in the economic statement to address this emergency either.

We often asked questions in the House, and I personally drew the minister's attention to an issue that my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou has been working on. The government announced \$1 billion for a school breakfast program for children. The money was promised during the announcement, but it has yet to be delivered so that the program can be implemented. Inflation is high, and more and more children are going to school hungry. It is time for the government to pay out the money it announced. The government could have already dealt with this emergency, but this, too, was not urgent enough for the minister.

Many of my colleagues talked to me about regional infrastructure needs. Nothing more is being done. There is also the whole agriculture sector, which was hit by the flooding in some regions this summer. The produce and horticultural sectors are struggling. They are in serious trouble. Could existing programs have been adapted? The economic statement would have been the time to do that but, no, nothing was done. Once again, agriculture was not even mentioned in this statement.

There is a slightly technical detail that affects many artisanal businesses throughout our regions that could really change things. As we know, the government increased the excise tax on wine after Australian wine producers sued Canadian wine producers. Regula-

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tions on the matter are problematic. In legal texts, everything that is alcohol is called “wine”. The Bloc Québécois managed to get apple cider and mead exempted from the tax. That was a big win, and these producers are grateful.

Afterward we realized that if cider producers put a bit of pear in their drink, they have to pay the entirety of the tax. Producers of beverages made from maple alcohol also have to pay the entirety of the tax. As soon as there are a few small fruits in these drinks, producers have to pay the entire tax. It does not bother wine producers in Australia that we help our small artisans who produce these niche products. For two years we have been calling on the minister to settle this. I understand that she is busy, that she is dealing with many challenges, but at some point these are just formalities that need follow-up. This would only help better recognize the artisans without taking anything away from anyone, without frustrating anyone in Australia. It would be easy to do. This could have been implemented in the economic statement, but no, that was not done either and it is really disappointing and upsetting.

As I was saying, the government and the minister should have developed an economic statement to respond to the emergencies. I raised a few that have been brought forward by all of my colleagues here. It is not hard. How many of the emergencies we raised did the minister respond to? A big fat zero. I am referring here to a former minister I will talk about and quote. It was a former minister of Prime Minister Trudeau, the father of the actual Prime Minister. I definitely said “actual” and not “actuary”.

• (1720)

Speaking of actuaries, let me emphasize that the employment insurance fund surplus has doubled. Once again, workers have to pay to fill the government's coffers.

Let us come back to the urban affairs department. What is it? In the economic update, the government has chosen to create a new department, which my leader dubbed the “department of interference” because it deals with housing. It is interference, pure and simple. It is similar to what Pierre Elliott Trudeau did when he created a ministry of urban affairs. Its minister was Mr. Ouellet. That is why I am drawing attention to it.

This is a quote from a Library of Parliament research document:

Accordingly, in March 1971, Prime Minister Trudeau appointed a Minister of State for Urban Affairs, who took on responsibility not only for CMHC but also for a new Ministry of State for Urban Affairs (MSUA). Given the inescapable constitutional limitations [of interfering with provincial jurisdiction], this ministry had no program responsibilities...

Today, the government is bringing this department back. We can see where this is going. The Library of Parliament document continues as follows two paragraphs later:

This...eventually led to the downfall of Trudeau's intervention in federal-municipal relations.

A bit further on, it reads, and I quote:

In view of the Department's lack of credibility and the government's desire to cut expenditures, the MSUA was abolished on 31 March 1979.

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Is that what awaits us with the creation of the new department announced in this economic update? As my colleagues have said, that is definitely what we can expect.

Let us talk about some other aspects of the economic statement. Over the past few weeks, we have been seeing a squabble play out between the Liberal government and the Conservatives in the House. The Conservative Party is all about slogans and is always pointing out problems. The Conservatives made a suggestion on housing. What is it? It involves punishing the municipalities and the provinces. The Conservatives are saying that, if the municipalities do not build 15% more housing units, then the federal government should hold back infrastructure funding. For example, this year, housing starts in Quebec decreased by half. That means that, were the Conservative Party in power, it would have cut the province's infrastructure funding by half. They are real winners, as my colleague said.

The Liberal government's response to this proposal is to use it themselves. In the statement, it is clear that they are using the same approach. In other words, they are threatening the provinces and, indirectly, the municipalities. The statement says that if they do not build enough housing, transfers will be cut off. My goodness, does the Liberal government want to go back to the Stone Age, too? I wonder.

There is one good measure involving Airbnb. The government wants to bring it in line with municipal regulations. It is going to be difficult to enforce, but there is hope. I am not simply criticizing everything. That is a good measure. As I was saying about the \$15 billion in budget cuts, it was supposed to happen in October. However, the plan hatched by the government and the President of the Treasury Board is not even mentioned in the November statement. As I was also saying, we brought up a number of urgent matters, but none of them have been resolved here. There is no plan for dealing with the emergencies. Clearly, the Liberals do not understand what an emergency is.

I will say it again: Each and every one of the Bloc's demands and the urgent needs expressed by Quebecers has been ignored. Clearly, this government, this Prime Minister and the finance minister are confusing fiscal restraint with inaction when it comes to emergencies. It is all going to cost us more in the end.

Again, the purpose of an economic update is to take stock of the economic situation since the presentation of the budget and announce solutions for the emergencies we know about. This statement does not address the many changes and does not fix anything. This is such a missed opportunity that we wonder why the government even bothered.

● (1725)

Thanks to the Liberals, things will get worse before they hopefully get better.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are things definitely worthy of note in the fall economic statement.

For me, personally, I look at the issue of inflation. Canadians have been concerned about inflation. Even though inflation around the world is significantly higher than here in Canada, the Liberal government has been focused on that. From a high of just over 8% back in June 2022, today it was announced that it is at 3.1%. This shows the government is serious about dealing with the issue of inflation.

The member spent a great deal of time talking about housing. The fall statement reaffirms a solid commitment and new monies towards housing co-ops. We all talk about the importance of non-profit housing. Housing co-ops are an excellent way to support growing demands on housing. It is affordable housing that is different than apartments. In a housing co-op, people are residents and co-owners, compared to an apartment.

Apartments are also being beefed up with purpose-built rentals—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Joliette.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, inflation is affecting everyone, particularly the most vulnerable members of our society. It is really worrisome.

There is nothing in the fall economic statement to counter inflation. There is nothing to deal with it. The Liberals are just whistling past the graveyard.

The hon. member spoke about housing. Yes, the government should do more about housing. However, this year, it is making \$37 million in cuts to housing. We see that on page 31 of the English version of the economic statement. It shows \$37 million being subtracted. The member is talking about funding for co-operative housing. He does not need to explain to me or any member of the Bloc Québécois what co-operative housing is. There is plenty of it in Quebec. We believe in the co-op model. We are always telling the government to do more in the way of social housing, including co-operatives.

How much money is the government putting into housing co-operatives this year, in 2023-24? Zero dollars. However, the situation is urgent. How much money is the government putting into housing co-operatives next year, in 2024-25? Again, zero dollars. The situation is urgent. The situation was urgent this summer and last spring. We need to act now. Today, the government should not be making statements and commitments in principle about what it is going to do two, three, four, five or six years down the road. The situation is urgent now.

This government is truly out of touch with people's urgent needs.

● (1730)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP shares my colleague's disappointment about the Canada emergency business account. That was our position, and in letters and in conversations with the government, we repeatedly asked it to extend the deadline for repayment of the emergency account.

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What I do not understand is how the federal government can expect to receive more money by forcing companies to repay their loans when they are not currently in a position to do so. We know this will cause bankruptcies.

Would my colleague care to comment on that?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Standing Committee on Finance. We just spent the last week touring western Canada. We visited every region to hear from people. All the organizations, the chambers of commerce, the organizations representing SMEs are asking for the deadline to be extended by one year. It is the same in Quebec. We hear it everywhere.

When we speak with the ministers individually, most of them agree with this call. Most of them do not understand the Minister of Finance's reaction. That is what is throwing a wrench in the works. The Minister of Finance and senior civil servants are saying that it is going to be expensive.

We have been leading the charge for quite some time. We just want to be the voice of the SMEs we represent. We were ready to negotiate with the government. For example, if the government wants Bill C-56 to pass, in exchange, we would like the government to extend the deadline by a year. With all due respect, we wish the NDP had followed our lead. I hope they keep this example in mind so that, in future negotiations, they can ask for this in exchange. It would be a big win for SMEs. It would mean 20% fewer bankruptcies, according to figures from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. It would make a big difference.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, let me start by thanking my Bloc colleagues for their work on behalf of small and medium-sized businesses. It is so important for all MPs to stand up for SMEs, so, again, I thank them.

My question is about the fact that Parliament passed the Canada disability benefit almost six months ago. Yet again, there is nothing in this economic statement for people with disabilities across the country, including in Quebec, who continue to live in legislated poverty. Are the member for Joliette and the rest of the Bloc caucus as disappointed as I am about this omission?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that excellent question and his kind words. It is always a pleasure to see that we can collaborate in the House. The purpose of an economic statement is to respond to emergencies. The hon. member, whom I congratulate on his excellent French, just raised an urgent matter.

This measure was adopted six months ago and needs to be implemented. People living with a disability, especially in the inflationary context we are experiencing, need to receive the help that was promised. This has to be done and the economic statement was the place to implement this measure. The statement is there to respond to emergencies and this is another emergency that has been raised. The government had the opportunity to do this, but it did not take it. The government is disconnected from the public and does not respond to any emergency. The hon. member just raised another good example.

• (1735)

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, approximately 220,000 businesses are having cash flow problems that are preventing them from repaying the emergency loan. What I understood was that the government was unable to put a figure on the additional amount this would add to the budget. Personally, like many of my colleagues here, I believe that money paid to businesses that are struggling to survive is an investment.

I would like my colleague to comment on the calculations that seem to have been done, or not done, regarding the fact that if people are given extra time to repay their loans, there will be fewer bankruptcies and therefore more repayments. It may not even be an expense. I would like my colleague to comment on that.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my House leader for making this point again. This is basic economics. Are there any economists in the Liberal Party? Do they understand these notions? The government often gives the impression of nickel-and-diming, but by trying to save the grant part of the loan, it could cause so many bankruptcies and have such a wide-ranging impact that it could end up being more detrimental to society and the government's finances.

When we discuss this informally with ministers, most of them agree with us. The problem is with the Minister of Finance. In that regard, I want to highlight the great work by my colleague from Terrebonne, who wrote the finance minister to make her aware of this. She also reminded her that the Quebec National Assembly unanimously demanded a one-year extension of the loan repayment deadline on September 26, well before this November economic statement that the minister just presented.

Why are elected officials of all stripes in Quebec City asking for this? It is because they are just that little bit more connected to their community. They talk to their SMEs, they meet with them and they are worried about them. Like us, they are able to do the math and come to the conclusion that, even if the aim is to save a little money, there is a risk of losing a lot more in the end. Moreover, it will destabilize the economy. Really, the economic statement was the place for this kind of announcement. This is another missed opportunity, another disappointment. It is more proof that this government has grown out of touch, very out of touch, with the people and with SMEs.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and address the fall economic statement.

We have certainly heard a lot of things in the chamber today, including some rhetorical flights of partisan fancy, the kind we have come to expect from the Conservative leader, with some very well-rehearsed chanting by the Conservatives at the end. However, I would like to be a little more serious than that in my remarks, because I recognize that Canadians are going through a very difficult time.

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We have heard about it a lot. We have talked a lot about it in this chamber, and today was an opportunity for the government to show that it is not out of touch, to show that it is prepared to address the serious issues of our time with the sense of urgency that they deserve. I do not want to spoil anything for anyone, but I have to say it is a real disappointment. I am going to talk about some of the ways in which I think this is a very disappointing document. I will also have occasion to mention some of the things that I think the government has talked about here that are not bad things, but I think the overriding theme has to be one of disappointment.

What are the crises that we are facing?

Well, we are certainly facing a global climate crisis. That much is very clear for anyone who has been paying attention to the news. Unfortunately, one does not have to pay attention to the news if one's house is on fire to know how severe climate change is getting and the important personal and economic consequences that it is having for Canadians in addition to what it is doing to the environment.

We are facing a housing crisis. Again, we do not have to watch the news; we just have to walk out into our neighbourhood and odds are, no matter what neighbourhood one lives in, more and more neighbourhoods are finding that they have people, friends, neighbours and family members who have lived in those neighbourhoods their whole life who can no longer afford to live there. They do not know where to go. They are setting up camp in the park across the street, because they do not know where else to go, and they cannot afford to put a roof over their head.

These are the kinds of challenges we are facing as a country. It took a long time to get here. It took a long time to get here with respect to the climate crisis. My father mentioned the climate crisis in the parlance of the time in the early 1980s in this place and said that we needed to do things now. Members can imagine how cheap it would have been to address the climate crisis in the 1980s instead of waiting until now.

I also know that in the 1990s, when the Liberals cancelled the national housing strategy, the federal NDP caucus was talking about the crisis it would create in housing.

I cannot, from where I sit, pretend in this place that these are new problems or that it was the Conservative leader who, two years ago, foresaw the housing crisis. The NDP saw this coming in the 1990s. It is why we said that we needed to continue to invest in co-op housing. It is why we said that the federal government had to show up and continue building social housing.

We have been sounding the alarm for over 30 years that Canada was going to find itself in this situation. Why were we doing that? We did that because we knew we could not fix a housing crisis overnight. It is the kind of thing that needs continued, predictable investment year over year to continue to meet demand. Now we have found ourselves here in part because of the government that the Conservative leader was a part of, but not just that. It was the Liberal government in the 1990s and then the Harper government and now this government, which has had eight years to address this problem, but it has only gotten worse under the Liberals. These

problems have been a long time in the making, and Canadians are beginning to really feel the hurt.

What did we hear today from the finance minister? We heard from the finance minister that Canada has the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. We heard from the finance minister that rating agencies are renewing Canada's AAA credit rating. We heard from the finance minister that Canada has the lowest deficit in the G7. What did we hear about the Liberals' trumpeted new investment in housing? It is not coming until 2025.

How is it that Canada could be in the best fiscal position in the G7 and not afford to begin investing right now in the housing that we need for Canadians, for vulnerable Canadians for sure, who do not have the means to pay rent in this economy, for working Canadians who do not have the means to pay rent or afford a mortgage in this economy? Also, businesses are telling us that the major barrier they face to growing their business is that they cannot find a place to house their workers, that the people they would like to have come work for them do not have a place to live and so they cannot come to the community where their business is.

• (1740)

How can Canada have a Deputy Prime Minister and finance minister with the gall to get up and brag about Canada's fiscal position in comparison to everyone else in the world, but then say the cupboard is bare when it comes to addressing some of the most important crises of our time?

I am quite familiar with the announcements she made in respect of housing, like the replenishment of the co-investment fund, because I have stood in this very place and called for them. I have sat across the table from Liberals and demanded that they make investments in social housing. I did not demand that they make those investments in 2025. We demanded that they make them right now.

It is the same with the replenishment of the RCFI, the rental construction financing initiative, which is a mouthful. It just means low-interest loans for people who want to build housing, whether they are building market housing or non-profit housing. What we expect in the future and have been advocating for is for post-secondary institutions, such as universities and colleges, to have access to that funding. The folks who want to build housing for seniors should be able to access that funding too.

This low-interest financing should be made far more widely available so that it is not just a honeypot for developers but a place for proven organizations across Canada, including non-profit organizations building housing for the vulnerable, to access funding to ensure there will be more housing and housing on more accessible terms. It is a huge disappointment that it did not come now.

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These are not my words, but I talked about what the finance minister and the Deputy Prime Minister herself had to say, which was about Canada's strong fiscal position. The question still is, how do we pay for it? How would we find the money? We already have a deficit, albeit the lowest deficit in the G7. Well, a one-point increase in the corporate tax rate in Canada, which I would remind members was 28% in the year 2000 and is only 15% today, would generate over \$3 billion a year. The Liberals want to recapitalize the co-investment fund to the tune of \$1 billion and not start it for two years, but we could triple the recapitalization and do it every year in perpetuity with a 1% increase.

A 1% increase in the corporate tax rate is not a bad deal for corporations that say they cannot find enough workers to keep making money because there is no housing. Let us ask them to help build the housing that will help them grow their businesses while we employ Canadians and make sure they have roofs over their heads. That is a fair deal. What is not a fair deal is to cut the corporate tax rate from 28% in the year 2000 to 15% today and not allow Canadians to find a home. That is not fair. That is not good policy.

Let us not pretend that Canada cannot afford to move and move with urgency this year on significantly increasing the number of social and affordable housing builds the federal government is going to directly finance in whole or in part. It is simply not true, and it is irresponsible of the Liberals to cave to the demands of the Conservative Party and multinational corporations that do not care what happens to Canadian housing as long as they are able to pay bigger dividends to their shareholders and larger salaries to their CEOs. That is the real coalition in Parliament, and it has been in power for far too long.

How else could we pay for housing? We have heard reports this year about tens of billions of dollars being paid to consulting firms like KPMG and others. Why are we paying through the nose for high-priced consultants when we have some of the best civil servants in the world who can do the work we need them to do, instead of paying high-class consultants big profits to tell us how to cut taxes and put more people out of a home? That does not make a lot of sense.

We saw that the Liberals are quite prepared to spend money on scandals like ArriveCAN. Why can they not spend it on housing instead? It is because their friends are already housed and they are looking to make a buck. However, that is not a good excuse for Canadians who are living on the street and wondering not when Canada is going to do something unprecedented or when Canada is going to do something new, but when Canada is going to start doing what it did for decades following the Second World War. We must simply do it again. If Canadians in the 1950s could figure out how to build a home for everybody, surely in the 21st century, with all the wealth and prosperity that Canada has enjoyed over the last 70 years, we can figure out how to do it now.

• (1745)

That is just the deficiencies of what they have announced. Never mind the fact that when we look to B.C., there is an NDP government that has taken it upon itself to start a non-profit acquisition fund. Why do we need a non-profit acquisition fund? We need it

because, in Canada today, for every one unit of affordable housing we are building, we are losing 15. Why are we losing those units?

This comes back to the question that I had for the leader of the Conservative Party, which was why, when he was in cabinet, and in the time that he says he was minister of housing, the Harper government cut the operating grants to co-op housing and other non-profit organizations that run housing that made rents affordable. Why did they do that? The reason that we have lost hundreds of thousands of affordable units over the last number of years is that the operators could no longer afford to operate with the subsidized rent that they used to operate with. It is because the leader of the Conservative Party, when he sat at the cabinet table and was minister of housing, refused to renew the federal operating grants. Now what we have are companies that come in and buy those buildings because the current operators cannot afford to operate them anymore with the tenants who are there. The corporate landlords do not mind; they kick out the tenants, renovate the suites, jack up the rent and invite Canadians with higher salaries to come in to rent those spaces.

Therefore, who has the backs of the people who cannot afford to rent a luxury apartment in today's market? The NDP has their backs; that is for sure. What is becoming more and more apparent is that the current government, after eight years of trying, simply does not. Even if the Liberals had the good intentions, which one could reasonably call into question, the competence clearly is not there to deliver on a national housing strategy that could build enough units to ensure that the housing crisis does not stretch into my grandchildren's lifetime.

Part of that is just a fascination and a fixation with only market solutions, which is another thing that is shared between the Liberals and Conservatives in their coalition. As I said, there was a time when the Canadian government built a lot of units. It did not build all the units; Canada has always had mostly a market for housing. However, we used to build enough non-market housing that the people who could not afford to pay in the market could still get a home, and they were not sacrificing their food or their prescription drugs to try to get into a housing market that they could not really afford while paying for all the necessities of life. The issue is that we are not doing that anymore and we have to be doing it.

If only it were not for the actions of the leader of the Conservative Party and his government, or if the current government had made good on its promise to renew the operating grants. This is what I mean when I talk about the real coalition in the House of Commons. It is Tweedledee and Tweedledum. The one party says, when it is not in power, that what the other is doing is so bad, really terrible, and that it is going to fix it when it gets in. Then it gets in and, lo and behold, it carries on the policies of the previous government, so Canadians never know how to get a break. Tommy Douglas used to tell the story of Mouseland, which puts this point very well. I encourage anyone watching, when they are done listening to this speech, to look that up on YouTube or elsewhere, and it will pain them to see how very relevant that very old story truly is.

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We also think that it is high time the real estate investment trusts stopped getting the sweetheart tax deal they have had since the 1990s, because they have been part of the renovation problem as well.

When the Liberals indicate notionally in the fall economic statement that they are excited to get the Canada Infrastructure Bank involved, all we can do is cringe. The Infrastructure Bank has hardly delivered a successful project even where it has tried. Even within its mandate, it has struggled to deliver a project. Telling Canadians that it is good news that the Infrastructure Bank is getting involved is so out of touch that I do not even know where to begin. It raises an important spectre, which is the public infrastructure that is required in order to build more housing. Whether that is bigger sewer pipes, better waste water management or all the things that are needed in order to support a number of units, it raises the spectre that the current government is not interested in seeing municipalities own that infrastructure as they properly should, but is instead interested in using federal public dollars to finance the takeover of municipal infrastructure by private investors who are going to be interested in seeking a profit on that.

● (1750)

We know, from many examples of P3s across the country, that when one gets the private sector involved in what should be public infrastructure, one pays more to get less. That is by no means a hopeful thing for Canadians, who want to see the kind of infrastructure development we need to expand our housing stock. When we talk about municipalities and housing, I think this is important.

I was at breakfast with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities today. What are they talking about? They are talking about their very sincere and real desire to get more housing in their communities because it is a barrier to investment. They have businesses that want to invest, that want to build new facilities, but, as I said earlier, cannot do it because they know that there is not enough housing for the workforce that they want for their business.

Are these municipal politicians celebrating this? Are they shouting for joy and saying, “This is great. We are keeping the investment out by not having enough housing”? They are absolutely not.

It is strange that one should have to say such a thing, but with the leader of the Conservative Party spending so much time in here pretending that municipal politicians do not care about being able to get more housing in their communities or are not interested in attracting that investment to their communities, I think it is high time somebody set the record straight.

I can tell members that, for a community that is already so cash-strapped it cannot build enough housing to bring in the kind of investment that it wants to see their local economy prosper, slashing its resources is not going to help it build more units the next year. It is only going to compound the problem. It has got to be one of the dumbest ideas on offer in Canadian politics today.

We talk about investment and Canadian businesses, and there are a whole bunch of businesses that started up when the Canada greener homes initiative got started because they wanted to become the folks that do the evaluation of how well insulated a house is or they wanted to be the person who came in and installed the heat

pump or the person who helped Canadians save on their energy bills and reduce their emissions. We do not see in here a commitment to renew that program.

We do hear outside of this place that there are a lot of businesses that are concerned because they thought the Liberal government had a long-term commitment to reducing emissions. They thought it was not a gimmick. They should be forgiven for thinking that. It is not too late for the Liberals to do the right thing and commit to renewing this program, not only so that Canadians can continue to have access to the funds they need to renovate their homes, reduce our emissions and save money on their heating bill, but also to save the businesses that have invested, in good faith, in the skills and equipment they need to be the people to drive that forward.

What else could we do for businesses that is not done in this fall economic statement? An extension of the Canada emergency business account, the CEBA loans, for the repayable period would make a huge difference not only to those businesses that are in serious distress and are deserving of having that credit extended but also to the government that presumably would like to be paid again. I do not know how a government could think that forcing businesses that they have loans with into bankruptcy is a way to get the money back. Who would benefit?

Workers lose their jobs. Owners lose their business, and the government does not get the money. This is a win situation for nobody, and it is confounding that the government has not put that together. I think it owes us all a much better explanation.

Of course, when those workers are put out of a job, what are they going to need? They will need employment insurance. Where is the government on employment insurance? It is adopting another boutique change to the program that is good for the people that it affects. New Democrats have supported an adoption benefit under the EI program, but we want an adoption benefit under a new modernized EI program, the kind that the Liberals have been promising for over eight years now, so that the whole program serves workers better instead of just adding more things onto a system that the Liberals admit is broken. It does not make sense.

Better than employment insurance is a job. We have supported investments in battery manufacturing plants across the country, but now we hear that those jobs may not be for people already in Canada after all.

That is a serious problem because it speaks to the government not having done its due diligence with these companies in ensuring that they are going to be hiring Canadians who are looking for work to do these jobs.

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• (1755)

It also bears mentioning that a lot of those workers are not necessarily coming through the TFW program. They are coming under the auspices of labour mobility sections in trade agreements negotiated by Liberals and Conservatives alike, in this case, the South Korean trade agreement that was negotiated when the Harper government was in power and the Leader of the Opposition was at the cabinet table.

I want to mention the Canada disability benefit, because no folks in Canada are more hard hit by the current economic circumstances than are Canadians living with disabilities. They were promised a new benefit, and the government has not delivered.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been a parliamentarian for a good number of years, and during the early 1990s, I was the housing critic in the Province of Manitoba. At that point in time, the coalition was the NDP, the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives, who all said that the federal government had no role in housing. It was a sad time. It was a time when I debated, for the riding of Winnipeg North, against the NDP, saying, yes, it should have a role to play.

When the member talks about the lack of interest in housing, I can assure him that, in the last 50 or 60-plus years, no government has invested more money in housing than this government has in the last five years. In this fall economic statement, there is a tangible commitment, for example, for non-profit housing, including housing co-ops.

Would the member not acknowledge the fact that there is substantial money going toward non-profit housing co-ops in Canada in the fall economic statement?

• (1800)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to figure out how the Liberal government is so ineffective at delivering new housing. I think it may be that it is spending all its time thinking about Manitoba provincial politics in the early 1990s. I do not know. I was seven or eight at the time.

I would encourage Liberals to pay attention to the economy today. Yes, there has been a lot of fanfare and announcements, but I would say to the member for Winnipeg North that when they look at the details of the program, such as, for instance, the announcement made today that they will be out trumpeting, they should look at the details and the table. The table very clearly says this money is not coming for another two years. It should be now, and there should be more of it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we can agree today that the word urgent does not come to mind after this economic statement.

The situation for our local media is urgent. Last week in my riding I went to Sherbrooke, where the media were gathered and calling on the government to take action. There is nothing.

The homelessness situation is urgent. This week, Granby is organizing a forum on social housing. These people do not need to be

dumped on or for the government to interfere in their jurisdiction. They will come up with solutions. The government should have contributed its share of the effort for housing within its own jurisdiction.

The Canada emergency business account repayment situation is urgent. I am getting ready to go out with the Haute-Yamaska chamber of commerce and industry. The NDP said that it also wanted this measure to help our businesses get through next year to prevent 20% to 30% of bankruptcies.

The situation for seniors is also urgent. The NDP voted in favour of my Bill C-319, which called on the government to do something in this inflationary context where seniors on a fixed income are especially affected. They needed help. Every senior 65 and over should be getting a higher pension.

My NDP colleague supported my last two points. Where in the fiscal update are the CEBA repayment issue and the seniors issue, if the NDP managed to negotiate something with the government?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her private member's bill, which I was very happy to support.

I think it is pretty clear. There are plenty of things the NDP would like to see a federal government do that the Liberals are not prepared to do. We are asking them for things they are not prepared to do. Negotiation involves finding a way forward that enables us to get results for Canadians despite the fact that the Liberals are not prepared to do many of the things they should do. If the Bloc Qu b cois wants to try negotiating, that is up to the Bloc. I am very proud of the fact that, even though we cannot get everything we want, our negotiations can still produce results for Canadians.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Elmwood—Transcona, for his excellent analysis of the fall economic statement.

I want to be very clear in saying to the Liberals that I want them to turn their minds to page 31 of the fall economic statement. In terms of more financing for apartment construction, for 2023-24 and 2024-25, there is zero in both of those columns. In terms of building more affordable housing, there is zero in both columns. Then we turn to the co-op housing piece: For strengthening the co-operative housing development program, there is zero in both columns.

The big joke is that the Liberals actually announced \$309 million for co-ops. That was a promise back in 2022, which they have slow-walked and not delivered on. They are now announcing it as though it were new money, and it will not even roll out until 2024.

The other thing that is missing here is this: Why is the government not stopping corporate landlords from renovicting people, buying up low-cost housing and displacing people, by saying no to them?

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Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Vancouver East for all the excellent work that she does on the housing file.

There is no way that Canada can meet the deficit of affordable and social housing that we have if we are going to lose 15 for every one that we build. That is why it is imperative for the government to find a way to stop big corporations from acquiring buildings and kicking out the tenants. It could be done by a moratorium.

The way the government should have done it eight years ago was by renewing the operating grants. The fact that those operating grants were allowed to expire is what put so many affordable units back on the market. The Liberals promised to undo that measure of the Harper government, but they completely failed Canadians. We have seen hundreds of thousands of units pass from the hands of non-profit and co-op operators, who were offering affordable rents, to those of giant corporate landlords, which are more interested in paying big dividends to their shareholders.

We cannot continue like this. It is why we are seeing so many people on the streets in all our communities across the country. It has to stop, or the problem will continue to get worse and the tent cities will continue to grow.

The Conservative leader likes to talk about tent cities, but he does not like to talk about the things that have to be done in order to properly close them and make sure the people there have a place to go. The policies of the government he was a part of built those cities. It is going to take an NDP government to take them down in the right way.

• (1805)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really wanted to recognize that there was no spending in the housing budget for the next two years in those particular areas.

I am very concerned about the fact—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. When everybody gets an opportunity to ask a question, I am sure we will all stand up and ask questions.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the fact that, in this fall economic statement, the Liberals are talking about how the cost of health care next year will be exceeded by the debt payments made by the government. It will cost more to pay the debt down than it will for the health care that is being put forward. At the same time, the Liberals are increasing the revenues from employment insurance by about 30%.

Does my colleague have anything to say about that and, particularly, the concern about health care?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no question that the federal government has an even bigger role to play when it comes to funding health care. One of the best ways it could do that would be to establish a national pharmacare program.

This would reduce the amount that Canadians are already spending on prescription drugs. We know, and Conservatives like to remind us in other debates, that there is only one taxpayer. There is

only one taxpayer when it comes to pharmacare too. The fact is that those taxpayers are paying a lot more for prescription drugs, having 10 individual provincial pharmacare plans or having to pay premiums into a workplace plan, than they would under one national pharmacare plan.

The single best thing that the government could do to increase health services and save Canadians money at the same time would be to institute a national, universal, single-payer pharmacare system. It is why we are holding their feet to the fire on that and expect them to deliver.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the words from the member for Elmwood—Transcona on calling out the extent of the disappointment on housing time and again. We saw it again this afternoon. I give credit to the NDP on Bill C-56, which was able to negotiate a fix to ensure co-ops would have access to that really important measure.

When we see this happen time and time again, at what point is enough enough? At what point do we say that the juice is not worth the squeeze and that we need to make sure more gets done on housing, along with so many of the other challenges our country faces, and we need to make sure the government does better and more?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, Canada has been kicking the can down the road when it comes to addressing the need for social affordable housing and more market housing for far too long. We should not be kicking the can down the road any further.

We do not want to trade a Liberal government for a Conservative government and then a Conservative government for a Liberal government because that has been the problem. It is how we came to where we are now. We are going to take the time we need to talk to Canadians to let them know there is an option for a real NDP government that would do what it takes to build the housing Canadians need.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank all of my colleagues in the House. After reading this important fall economic statement, like many of my opposition colleagues, the member for Elmwood—Transcona in particular, I am disappointed. We have an opportunity to do important, urgent things, but it is being ignored, overlooked. Why? I do not understand it. As the other members have already said, we have the ability to do this. Our fiscal position would make it viable, but it is being ignored.

• (1810)

[English]

We are disappointed that there is not more in this fall economic statement on the urgent crises facing Canadians on health care, housing, affordability, and especially on the multiple ways in which the climate crisis is costing us. It is referenced in the fall economic statement that one reason food prices have gone up is from multiple climate events, which have caused crop failures, and that caused prices to go up. Putin's invasion of Ukraine has obviously caused energy prices to go up.

However, one key reason food prices have gone up is that climate events around the world are causing breadbaskets to produce less. Places that produced a lot of food are now producing less. There are ways we could have used this moment of fiscal restraint to improve our climate record.

This may be the last chance I have to speak at any length about the climate situation before I am no longer able to speak in this place. That is not because of a health issue, but we do not allow Zoom from foreign countries, and I cannot participate virtually from COP28, which will take place in Dubai from November 30 to December 12. It usually runs late so perhaps December 13.

This is a moment when the Government of Canada should really be looking in the mirror. I mean, usually we would stop with the G7, because Canada has the worst climate record of any country in the G7. However, the United Nations just released a report on the eve of COP28, which assessed the climate records and performances of every country on earth and the gap between rhetoric and action. Out of every country on earth, not just the G7, Canada is maintaining the horrific record of being the worst. On the gap in the United Nations' "Emissions Gap Report 2023", Canada has a 27% gap between promises and reality. The next worst is the United States with a 19% gap, then South Korea with an 18% gap and the U.K. with an 11% gap. All the countries of the developing world, known in UN parlance as the G20, have a 4% gap.

What do these gaps amount to? The Paris commitments that we took in 2015, which are legally binding commitments, were not to any particular target of $x\%$ reductions against x year, because the incoming Liberals in 2015 kept in place the Harper target from May 2015. It was a weak target, but it was not replaced until 2022, so there were seven years of the same weak target. The Liberals are not close to hitting the previous Conservative government's weak target.

We often say in this place that Canada has never hit a single target it has put forward on climate, but I will be more specific: We have never gotten the direction right. When we say we missed the target, it is like we were on a dartboard with the typical bull's eye effort and, "Oh darn, we were close". If we were firing darts, the bartender had better duck, because we have never gotten the direction right. When we promise that our emissions will go down, they go up.

What we are shooting for in the Paris Agreement is hanging on to global civilization. There was an opportunity in the eighties and nineties, which my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona talked about, when his dad was in this place, the very Hon. Bill Blaikie,

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who was the environment critic for the NDP in the eighties when I first knew him. He talked about global warming and what we had to do to avoid losing our glaciers and avoid warming temperatures around the world. We had a chance to avoid all those things. We no longer have the chance to say that we can avoid the climate crisis.

Our addiction to fossil fuels and our greed are driving those in big oil, who say they know science but do not want to talk about it because all they care about is delivering profit to shareholders. That is not good law. In Canada, the law requires that corporations think of other things and that directors of corporations consider all stakeholders. By the way, future generations should count for something, but we have, in the last number of decades, lost the opportunities we once had to avoid climate change and global warming altogether because of greed, the addiction to fossil fuels and a commitment to developing them and continuing to shovel money to the wealthiest in the world. The billionaire class has a priority that we do not understand when compared to our own children and grandchildren.

Right now we had an opportunity to pay attention to this report from the United Nations on the eve of COP28 and reflect any of its urgency in this economic statement. We lost that chance too. I am always torn between anger and grief. How do I talk to my kids about this anymore? How many of our kids do not want to have kids because of what they see in this world? The opportunity was there for the Minister of Finance to cut costs.

• (1815)

[Translation]

We need to take a "green scissors" approach. We need to cut costs and save the billions of dollars that are currently shared among fossil fuel companies and no one else.

This fall economic statement talks about responsible fiscal management, yet, at the same time, the government continues to pour billions of dollars into fossil fuels through funding and subsidies. Why not stop the \$31-billion Trans Mountain pipeline project, which flies in the face of indigenous rights and impacts the future of our children and our own grandchildren?

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We could cut costs and have more money for the things the government says it cares about: affordable housing, reducing costs for Canadians and cutting the costs of forest fires from one side of the country to the other. I noted a reference in the fall economic statement at page 6, which looks at what has happened to global economic activity and the contracting of the Canadian economy. It says, “part of this decline was tied to temporary factors, including a record-breaking wildfire season”. I do not think that is so temporary.

We have not hit a new normal. Some people are attempting to use that language. We are experiencing precursors of what will only get worse. As I started to talk about, our commitment in the Paris Agreement for all countries all over the earth was to avoid going above a 2°C global average temperature increase and try to hold to 1.5°C. This latest report from the United Nations says we are on track to over 3°C.

These are not political commitments. These are moral commitments based on the science that says if we do not act now, the window closes on our kids having a livable world. Many colleagues in this place talk about their fear of what the Conservatives would do after the next election. I have certainly heard from people a lot about that. It is so extreme that people are prepared to ignore the fact that those who are responsible for condemning our kids to an unlivable world are sitting on this side of the House in the Liberal caucus. We cannot ignore the reality that it has been on their watch, with the people who claim to be climate leaders. The Liberals should thank the Conservatives for the only thing that makes the Liberals look good, for every time that the Conservatives have stood up to say that they do not want any carbon pricing.

A better argument could be made. We could do things other than carbon pricing to reduce emissions. As I said, we could start cancelling billions of dollars to fossil fuel companies. We could put in place what the hon. member for Kitchener Centre has put forward in Motion No. 92, an excess profits tax on the obscene profits and war profiteering of big oil. We could do that, but we cannot continue to ignore it.

I know there are many Conservative members of Parliament who care about the climate crisis and their own kids. They want to be able to stand up and talk about that, but it is not the current brand. I know there are many NDP members who would also want to cancel the TMX pipeline, but then they would get in trouble with Rachel Notley. This is an insanity that we are in right now.

I want to say that there are some things in the fall economic statement that are good, and it is about time. I am grateful that, at least, they are finally cracking down on Airbnb and the profiteering on short-term rentals that takes affordable housing out of our markets. I am glad to finally see that it takes the GST and HST off of mental health services, particularly for therapists and for going to talk to a psychotherapist or to a counsellor. I cannot believe it has taken so long. Astonishingly, that is it for measures for public health in this fall economic statement.

Again, the Green Party has consistently, in every platform over many elections, called for a national pharmacare plan, not filling in

the gaps for people who do not have access to drugs. We are the only country in the world with universal health care in which coverage of pharmaceutical drugs is not automatically included. If we did that, as we know from the Hoskins study or the report that came out of a number of major universities called “Pharmacare 2020”, it would save us billions of dollars each year in the health care system. That is not mentioned either.

When we look at what is here, there are many good words about caring about affordable housing and co-operatives, as well as co-op housing as a way of going forward. However, we have tent cities springing up all over the place in this country. Greens believe that it takes the kind of concerted effort that takes place after a major disaster, when people are living rough. What does one do? What did we do as a country? Can we remember? It was a long time ago when the Halifax explosion occurred. I know the hon. member will remember the stories of that time. Obviously, he was not there then, but within months of that explosion, the Government of Canada and the Government of Nova Scotia built housing for thousands of people because it was an emergency.

Now is an emergency, and I hope that we will see better. The Minister of Finance ended her speech by saying that “better is always possible.” Better is possible but not very likely, unless we raise holy hell about the crises we face.

• (1820)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the first time I get the chance to say, “Welcome back to the House” to my friend and colleague. It is good to see her happy and healthy and standing in the House of Commons. The House of Commons is so much better with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands here; I have to say that. It is great to be in a conversation where we talk about how we fight climate change and not whether we fight climate change, and I know we can always count on the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for that insight, perspective and strong advocacy.

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I am glad the member spoke about co-op housing. I am never shy about the fact I am a proud co-op kid. My family grew up at the Chautauqua co-op, and my mom still lives there. My mom also runs co-ops and has been building co-ops, and she texted me today after some remarks yesterday in the House of Commons, to say to keep talking about co-ops because we need to keep investing in them. I was so thrilled to see an additional \$309 million for co-operative housing. This is a non-market solution to a market-based problem, and it is so critical that we invest where we can and that we build long-term affordability into the housing system. I am thrilled there is additional money in there. With respect to affordability, we know that climate change presents an existential threat not just to our species but also to affordability. The number one reason food costs are up is climate change.

I am glad to see the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands back and healthy in this place. I thank her for her advocacy. If she wants to share any insights on co-ops in Saanich—Gulf Islands or anywhere in Victoria, I am happy to listen.

• (1825)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the kind words of my colleague from Milton. At the time that I had a stroke, a number of members of this place sent me nice notes and prayed, and I appreciate that a lot.

With respect to co-ops, we had a commitment to \$1.5 billion in budget 2023, and that money has not started to be spent yet, if I get that right. We do have new money announced in the fall economic statement, but why have we not moved things faster? The model of co-op housing is a perfect model. CMHC used to build a lot of co-op housing. Why are we not building co-op housing as fast as we possibly can? Why are we still allowing real estate investment trusts to keep housing as a place for speculators to make money? We need to have homes where, as much as possible, we are making sure people are not investing in a speculative way such that homes for people to live in are used as a mechanism for corporations to increase their profits. I do not know where I am going with this, but sometimes I think of how we could just deal with the word “greed” by changing one letter, getting rid of the “d” and adding an “n”. We need to have policies that are designed for people who care about each other more than they care about the expanding wealth of the top 1% or .01%, whose wealth keeps growing while the lowest-income people struggle.

I was so disappointed that the fall economic statement does not provide for school lunch programs or school breakfast programs. The people in low-income communities need to know that if their kid goes to school hungry, somebody will give them something to eat before they start trying to learn.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to welcome back our colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands. I am pleased to see her back on her feet and looking strong. That is what we want.

This economic statement shows that the Liberal government is moving closer to the centre. It has even introduced certain measures that were proposed by the Conservative Party. Meanwhile, the Liberal Party is forgetting a very important concept: equality for all.

More importantly, it is ignoring environmental issues, which affect us all equally. The impact of climate change has been felt everywhere, especially in Quebec with this summer's forest fires. My colleague mentioned a number of issues. If she could have chosen one issue to be included in the economic statement and addressed quickly, what would it have been?

Ms. Elizabeth May: There are a few issues, Mr. Speaker, but since I have to pick one, I have to say that I am surprised to find no mention in this fall economic statement of the need to allocate more funds to the Canada greener homes grant, which is a program designed to make each home more energy efficient with the help of each homeowner. It is bizarre, because considering the recent announcements on carbon pricing and home heating costs, it is clear that this program is urgently needed, but most of the money has already been spent. The coffers are empty. We need a program that will allow every homeowner to green their home by making it more energy efficient, but no such program can be found in this economic statement.

• (1830)

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the story of northern Ontario is that we gave away the gold, the timber and the hydro, but the greatest resource we gave away, year after year, was the talent of our young people. That is why the investment in education was so fundamental.

We saw the destruction of Laurentian University through the exploitation of the CCAA and the destruction of the Franco-Ontarian programs, the indigenous programs and the midwifery program for northern women. New Democrats said we had to deal with it. We called for an emergency debate in the House. New Democrats brought forward legislation to call for the loopholes to be closed and to protect public institutions.

Finally, we are seeing the Liberals recognizing that there is a problem with the exploitation of the CCAA against post-secondary institutions. They have not included in their fall economic statement the need to protect all public institutions so that we do not have Danielle Smith, Premier Moe or Doug Ford putting hospitals and other institutions under CCAA to strip them, destroy them and take them apart.

Is my colleague willing to work with the New Democrats? We are going to fight to ensure that what happened at Laurentian University is never done again to a public university or any kind of public institution. Public investment will remain, and opportunities will remain in this age of privatization and corporate backroom deals.

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Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I would be honoured. The Greens commit here and now to work with the NDP to make sure that public institutions, such as Laurentian University, never face the threats of insolvency and bankruptcy, and the scandalously bad management, that left students high and dry. I remember that debate. I remember so well what was done. Finally, we see something in this fall economic statement to end that kind of practice of predatory bankruptcies.

Let us keep working to keep what is public, public. Common sense is a good thing, and it sounds great, but let us return to common decency.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, one element of my colleague's speech that I really appreciated was the framing that this is not as simple as what we choose to spend or not. It is also about what we should be cutting, including subsidies to oil and gas, for example, to the tune of \$22 billion. What could we invest in if we were not wasting funds there?

I would like to hear more on the calls tonight to ensure we end legislative poverty for people with disabilities. The government has promised this many times over, but has yet to show any commitment in dollars for the Canada disability benefit. Could she share her reflections on that?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to my colleague from Kitchener Centre for his consistent hard work to make the disability benefit real. He has been working tirelessly to get the Liberal government to keep its promise in this area.

We also had a promise from the Liberals, in I cannot remember how many campaigns, but starting in 2015, that they were going to get rid of subsidies to fossil fuels. Instead, they have expanded a number of them. They have promised to deliver this benefit to people who are disproportionately living in poverty or people who are living with disabilities. It is time to get that disability benefit. It is time to see it. I honestly cannot believe that it is not in the fall economic statement. Let us see it ASAP. Let us get it delivered to the people who need it most.

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to thank everyone for their interventions this evening.

[*Translation*]

It being 6:35 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 9, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:35 p.m.)

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