HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

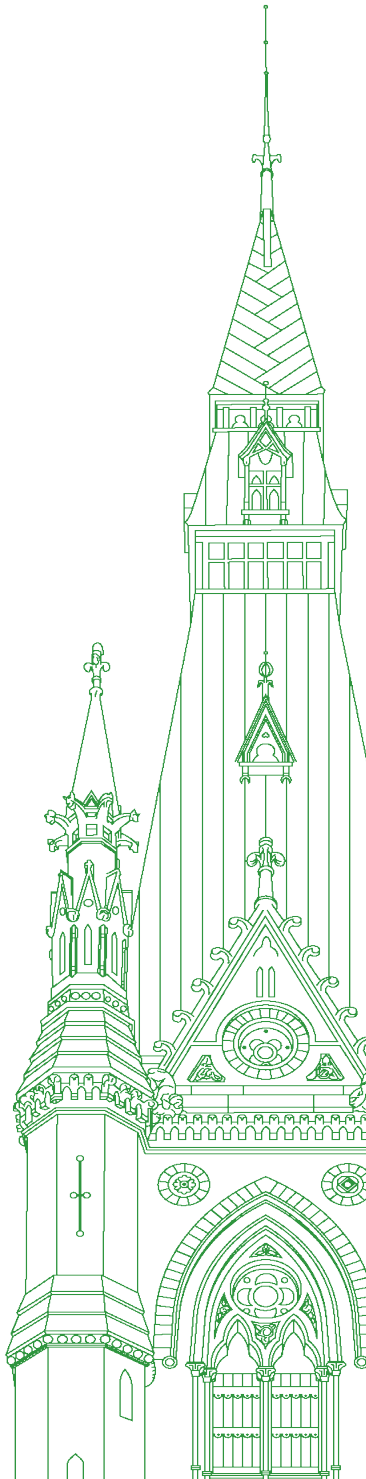
House of Commons Debates

Official Report

(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 267

Wednesday, December 13, 2023



Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, December 13, 2023

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

● (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

KHALSA AID CANADA

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every winter Khalsa Aid Canada has its winter drive in memory of Mata Gujri. She and the younger sons, or Chote Sahibzaade, of the 10th Sikh guru, Guru Gobind Singh, were made to suffer the elements during winter while in captivity.

In Canada, inflation and food insecurity disproportionately impact women and acutely impact our youth. One in three food bank users is a child. This year, in Victoria, Khalsa Aid Canada provided food aid to Rainbow Kitchen, The Mustard Seed Street Church and the UVic and Royal Roads University food banks; hot meals to Our Place shelter; and tents and winter items to the Justice Van Society and the Peer2Peer project. Khalsa Aid Canada also continued to make its annual donations to youth-focused organizations, such as Threshold Housing, Out of the Rain Youth Shelter and the Foundry clinic.

Women and children, especially in single-parent families, are struggling with the high cost of living. I thank Khalsa Aid Canada for all they do.

* * *

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker,

'Tis a week before Christmas, and it's time to state
That our PM is well past his best before date.
After eight years of his rule, it's time to say thanks
For doubling the number of folks using food banks.

After eight years, when our kids nestle snug in their beds,
They're just lucky there is still a roof over their heads,
For on cold winter nights, under snow and the stars,
Many citizens now have to sleep in their cars.

They can protest, of course, but only in small amounts
Lest, like the truckers, he freezes their bank accounts.
He will accuse them of hate based on faith or on race,
Which seems strange from a man caught three times wearing blackface.

He's so quick to say sorry for wrongs from long ago,
But not for when he elbowed Ruth Ellen Brosseau.
So let's quote back to the PM some words of his own:
“Sir, enough is enough. Now, go home and stay home.”

Here is what we would like Santa's elves to administer:
This Christmas, please bring us a brand new prime minister.

* * *

CANADA-SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 2023 marks the 60th anniversary of Canada's diplomatic relations with the Republic of Korea. Several days ago, the Korean national assembly adopted a special resolution celebrating this significant milestone. The resolution mentioned the immense contributions of Canadian veterans to the defence of democracy during the Korean War and acknowledged the deep economic, strategic and cultural ties that bind our nations together.

As such, Mr. Speaker, I rise to echo the same sentiments in this House. Today and every day, let us honour our shared history with this cherished ally and redouble our efforts to broaden and deepen our comprehensive partnership, while celebrating the enduring friendship that has flourished between our two nations.

As they say in Korean:

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

Stronger together.

[*Translation*]

FARMERS IN ABITIBI WEST

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to welcome three farmers from my riding to Parliament Hill: Éric Lafontaine, Alexandre Bégin and Mathieu Dumont. I salute the courage of all agricultural entrepreneurs, who just experienced one of the worst years ever from a climate perspective. Abitibi West farmers lived through a crop-damaging winter freeze, historic wildfires that required livestock evacuations and a catastrophic drought.

To raise awareness among the public and elected officials about the economic and psychological impact involved, Éric, Alexandre, Mathieu and Maxime Fontaine wrote the "Red Letter", which they will be delivering today to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. This letter was signed by 79 farm businesses in Abitibi West, many of them now forced to sell off some of their animals because of risk management programs ill-suited to climate change. We are talking about 30% of Abitibi West herds that have already been sold or that are currently for sale on the market to allow these farm businesses to survive.

I ask the minister to be generous and to commit now to ensuring the sustainability of farm businesses and of our agricultural sector.

* * *

FOOD BANKS IN VAUDREUIL—SOULANGES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my sincere gratitude to the dedicated individuals and organizations that support the Vaudreuil—Soulanges food banks. I want to thank them for their outstanding service to our community, especially during this holiday season.

The holidays are a time of joy and celebration for many, but they can also be challenging for those experiencing economic hardship. It is during these difficult times that food banks in Vaudreuil—Soulanges rise to the challenge.

I want to thank the teams at L'Actuel, Source d'Entraide, Meals on Wheels, Café de la Débrouille and Moisson Sud-Ouest.

● (1410)

[*English*]

To the dedicated teams and volunteers at Le Pont Bridging, Meals on Wheels and The Dream Centre, I express my sincere gratitude on behalf of all members of our community for their tireless work in extending a helping hand to those in need. Because of them, the holidays will be a little brighter for our neighbours, families and friends. For that, on behalf of this entire House, I say thanks.

* * *

CHRISTMAS THANKS

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as families across Canada anxiously anticipate Christmas Day, opening presents and having turkey, many families will not all be together.

Doctors, nurses and caregivers in our hospitals, long-term care homes and hospices will be taking care of our loved ones. Firefighters, police officers and first responders will be keeping our streets safe. Hydro workers will be working to keep the lights on our Christmas trees bright. Snowplow operators will work day and night to keep our roads clear and safe. Pilots, flight attendants and airport personnel will be working hard to get us to our destinations, so we can be with our families. Border security officers will work long shifts protecting our vast borders. Of course, our brave men and women in uniform, keeping Canadians safe both in Canada and around the globe, will sacrifice yet another Christmas with their families. The list goes on.

This Christmas, I ask Canadians to take a moment to thank those who serve so selflessly and who will miss their Christmas Day so we can be at ours.

Merry Christmas.

* * *

JEWISH STUDENTS ON CAMPUS

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the increase in anti-Jewish hate over the last two months is a danger to our country and its values, our democracy and our national security.

One of the most hostile places for Jews is on campus. Last week, a U.S. House committee heard from the presidents of Harvard, MIT and Penn State. All three were asked whether a call for the genocide of Jews would violate their code of conduct. None unambiguously said yes.

Today, some colleagues and I sent a letter to the 25 biggest Canadian universities asking how they are protecting their Jewish students. One thing we asked was whether a call for the genocide of Jews would violate their policies. I have also tabled a motion with the justice committee for us to undertake a study on anti-Semitism, with a focus on universities.

I hope colleagues will join me in wanting to tackle this issue quickly. The Jewish community cannot fight this alone. We need all MPs and Canadians on our side.

* * *

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we look to the new year, I rise in the House today to wish all the residents of my community of Mississauga—Erin Mills and all Canadians a very happy holiday season.

This is a time to reflect upon and reinforce Canadian values of hope, generosity and unity for everyone, especially during what can be a very difficult time for many in our communities. I also want to thank my team, who work diligently to support the residents of our riding and the work that I do on their behalf. We have worked hard this year for Canadians, and I know that we will continue to work harder for them in the new year.

I wish all the residents of my riding a very merry Christmas, happy holidays and all the very best in the new year.

* * *

KALAVRYTA ATTACK

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 80 years ago today, the village of Kalavryta in Greece fell victim to the cruelty of occupying German Nazi forces in World War II.

On December 13, 1943, the Nazis rounded up all males over the age of 12 for execution. They locked women and children in the village's school and lit it on fire, aiming to burn them alive. The women broke down the doors to find, sadly, their husbands and sons dead and their village in ashes. The widows were left to rebuild shattered lives. They displayed immense courage and determination as they worked to provide for their families and preserve their community.

The women of Kalavryta demonstrated the power of the human spirit in adversity and testified to the indomitable strength of women. Euthymia Vaya was the last widow of the massacre. She passed away in 2008, having immigrated to Canada with her daughter Georgia. Her courage and resilience allowed her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to thrive as proud Canadians.

As we reflect on this dark chapter in history, let us honour their memory. May the victims of the massacre of Kalavryta rest in peace.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ENLÈVE TON ÉTIQUETTE CAMPAIGN

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support the Enlève ton étiquette campaign at the Fondation du Centre jeunesse de l'Estrie. The purpose of this initiative is to raise awareness about the importance of removing the labels we put on others, especially on young people from the youth protection branch and young offenders. Our young people need to have self-confidence to achieve their goals and that is even more important if they have had a difficult start in life.

By proudly wearing this ribbon, I become a goodwill ambassador and I invite people to do the same. I met Alexandra Goulet, the foundation's new executive director. I congratulate her on this initiative. Alexandra, having herself benefited from the services of the youth protection branch, knows first-hand the importance of destigmatizing children that have been in the system.

I congratulate Alexandra and I wish this initiative continued success.

● (1415)

[*English*]

UKRAINE

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives support Ukraine. It was a Conservative government that was the first western country in the world to recognize an independent Ukraine. It was a Conservative government that negotiated the existing Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement. It was a Conservative government that commenced Operation Unifier. It was Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper who said to Vladimir Putin "get out of Ukraine."

On the other side, the Liberal government exported a gas turbine that has been used to pump Russian gas to fund Putin's war machine. It was the Liberal government that allowed Canadian detonators to end up in Russian mines, which are being used by the Russian army in this war. It was the Liberal government that decided to not provide war risk insurance, which prevents Canadian companies from investing in Ukraine.

Members should not listen to their Liberal disinformation. Conservatives unequivocally support Ukraine.

* * *

UKRAINE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the results of Operation Unifier are why Ukraine has been able to fight for the last 658 days against Russia's genocidal war.

After Russia annexed Crimea and began the war in Donbas in 2014, the Liberals and NDP on multiple occasions voted against Operation Unifier, voted against Operation Reassurance, voted against the first shipments of military aid to Ukraine and voted against hundreds of millions of dollars in assistance to Ukraine. In 2016, the Liberal government's first foreign policy act was to cancel the provision of RADARSAT images for Ukraine to appease Russia.

Since 2018, Conservatives have called on Canada to send lethal defensive aid to Ukraine when it could have acted as a deterrent against Russia, but the NDP-Liberal government refused until the hot war began. Its members even called me a warmonger for it in early 2022.

Conservatives negotiated the first Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement, and when we form government, we would negotiate a better one that does not include a carbon tax. Conservatives will always stand with Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini.

Statements by Members

LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet they still voted against the Ukraine-Canada trade agreement.

We all remember the voting marathon last week. While the Conservative leader was wining and dining at a high-end fundraiser, his Conservative MPs here were served a cold unhappy meal. The Conservative leader may want Canadians to only order off the value menu, but we know they deserve the whole Big Mac meal.

Canadians have seen the MAGA politics value menu the Conservative leader has to offer, and they are not “lovin' it”, but “lettuce” be serious. Canadians know it would be a “McNightmare” if that leader were to take charge.

* * *

CHRISTMAS

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker,

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the nation,
Liberal numbers were tanking, to the PM's frustration.

The Speaker was restless, with nightmares in bed,
While partisan videos danced through his head.

As secular snowflakes made their Grinch-like dissent,
The Bloc says that Christmas is not a religious event.

While the two Greens tried hard to make themselves heard,
If co-leaders don't work, maybe try a third.

When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
The Conservative leader bringing burgers, no beer.

With his little red apple, who votes through the nights,
I knew in a moment, this guy really bites.

More rapid than reindeer, his chops he laid bare,
Revealing his taxpayer-funded oral health care.

Public dental for all is the NPD's dream.
We'd have pharmacare too if the Grits weren't so mean.

And one final wish for this season of light:
Happy holidays to all, and to all a good bite.

* * *

● (1420)

[*Translation*]

ACADIAN REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Acadian Remembrance Day reminds us that, in December 1758, three ships crowded with Acadian deportees sank, causing the deaths of 850 of them. It was the deadliest chapter of what was called the Great Upheaval, which led the Acadian population to spread across North America.

For a long time in our history, and until fairly recently, the Acadian distinctiveness was intolerable to the eyes of English colonialists. They did everything in their power to try to keep Acadians in the minority or even assimilate them, but that did not work. The Acadian identity survived to restore itself into a dynamic diaspora that continues to grow and thrive. However, the traumatic experience of those who survived those deportees lost at sea, the victims of a vile, unquestionable attempt to eradicate Acadians, will always be a painful wound.

Today, Acadia remembers, and so does Quebec.

* * *

[*English*]

CARBON TAX

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Liberal-NDP government, Canadians are financially spent. Instead of common-sense tax cuts to help struggling families, in his fall economic statement, the Prime Minister doubled down on his massive increase to the carbon tax, which is driving up the cost of groceries, heating and gas.

When the wallets of Canadian families were raided bare by this government's carbon tax, it was the Conservatives who heard the calls for help. It was the Conservatives who introduced Bill C-234 to deliver carbon relief on farmers and the people they feed.

The legislation was duly passed in the House with the support of every party except the government. Then, right before Christmas, the Prime Minister called in favours from his functionaries in the other place and lobbied his Liberal-appointed and anointed senators to cut the legislation.

Now that it is back in the House, our Prime Minister needs to put his zeal for carbon tax aside; listen to Canadians who feel troubled, broken and betrayed this Christmas season; rein in his ideologues in cabinet; and pass Bill C-234.

* * *

CHRISTMAS

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker,

'Twas the week before Christmas and I must admit,
Thirty hours was a long time to sit.

But Liberals prevailed on behalf of the masses,
While Tories stepped back and sat on their hands.

On the other side we witness a continuing saga.
Diefenbaker's party looks much more like MAGA.

I know they have been challenged by a leader's swinging door,
But they think they have struck gold with leader number four.

They gave him a makeover with etiquette classes,
Pumped up his chest and took off his glasses,

But no matter the issue they put on the docket,
We still persevere with the Dippers in our pocket.

This marriage of convenience might seem like a rental,
But because of this deal, Canadians got dental.

In that glorious moment, I looked up and saw
Not a lick of support from the Bloc Québécois.

But now it is time to return to our ridings
And share with our friends the best Christmas tidings.

Mr. Speaker, I know you will hate to see us go.
If you think of us over Christmas, please do not send us a video.

● (1425)

The Speaker: That is very good advice.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost of the debt for Canadian families. He said that the government was going to go into debt so that Canadians would not have to. However, today, we learned that Canadian families are now spending more on interest on their own debt than ever before in the history of the country. They are spending more than what American families were during the 2008 financial crisis.

Will the Prime Minister finally reverse the inflationary policies and taxes that are driving families into debt and forcing them to give more to bankers and spend less on groceries?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader continues to rise in the House to talk about austerity.

Last week, we saw the true nature of the Conservative Party's austerity. The Conservatives voted against help for dairy, egg and poultry farmers in Quebec. They voted against funding for the Plains of Abraham. They voted against help for people in the Magdalen Islands following hurricane Fiona. What is worse, the member for Mégantic—L'Érable voted against funding for the rail bypass in Lac-Mégantic. That is truly shameful, and Quebeckers will never forget it.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is yet another example. The Prime Minister has had eight years to build that bypass, but has not even begun to do so. That is so typical of this Prime Minister, who makes announcements and spends loads of money but produces zero results. The same goes for affordability. He spent $87 billion on housing affordability, but that just doubled the cost. According to the Bank of Canada, the cost of housing is the worst it has been in 41 years.

Will the Prime Minister finally reverse his inflationary policies, which have doubled the cost of housing for Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservative leader was out partying last week, all Canadians got was an order of cold McNuggets. The only thing his 30-hour, $2-million tantrum achieved was show Canadians the true colours of the Conservative Party of Canada. When it was time to support our veterans, how did the Conservatives vote? They voted against it. When it was time to support our farmers, how did they

vote? They voted against it. When it was time to ensure services to first nations, how did they vote? They voted against it.

Everyone can see who they really are.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for eight years, the Prime Minister and NDP-Liberal government have not been worth the cost. He said that he was taking on all this debt so that Canadians would not have to. Now we learn that Canadians are spending more on household debt interest than at any time in Canadian history, more than the American families were during the 2008 financial crisis, which almost brought down the global economy.

Will the Prime Minister reverse the inflationary, high-tax policies that have indebted Canadians and driven up their interest rates?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the audacity of the Conservative leader knows no bounds. Just last week, he voted against a national school food program, and now he rises to talk about affordability. Let us be clear. The Conservative leader has no long-term vision for this country, with or without the glasses.

It takes more than a couple of bags of McDonald's to feed Canadians. That is why we are going to continue to step up and be there with investments for Canadians, while he talks about cuts and austerity, and then goes and votes for cuts and austerity.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians cannot even afford to feed themselves a couple of bags of McDonald's after eight years of the Prime Minister taxing their food.

Speaking of food, do members know the only problem with his school food framework? It does not fund any food. It funds politicians to talk with bureaucrats who talk with lobbyists about establishing a conversation towards consulting. It funds bureaucracy and not families.

Speaking of one way he can make food more affordable for everyone, including our kids, will he pass Bill C-234, the commonsense Conservative bill to take the tax off?

● (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we have seen exactly why, whatever his justifications, they have chosen to vote against initiatives to help Canadians. Whether it was dental supports for the hundreds of thousands of kids that we have already brought in, or more supports for seniors, they chose to vote against them months ago. They are continuing to step up to vote against the programs that matter.

While they seem to not care about climate change, and want to sit back and watch the world burn, they are going to watch Canadians' food sources burn as well.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the Prime Minister who is burning a hole in the pockets of Canadians.

We voted against his plan to quadruple the carbon tax, a tax on heat, gas and groceries.

When I raised the issue of the cost of $100,000 for one farm in my riding, which will rise to $400,000, I asked the Prime Minister if he would call the family and tell them how they are going to pay the tax. He said he would reach out to them and have a conversation about how they are going to pay a $400,000 carbon tax bill.

Can the Prime Minister tell the House what he told that family about how they are going to come up with 400 grand in more taxes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the price on pollution is a key part of actually making things more affordable for the long term for Canadians by pushing and encouraging innovation.

Indeed, our departments reached out to the farm family of the very successful large mushroom farm in the member opposite's riding to talk about the programs we have that can move them off their dependence on fossil fuels.

We know there is work to do and we know there are investments to make, but that is how we fight climate change and build a better future. We have a plan to fight climate change. Conservatives have no plan because they do not even recognize that climate change is real.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the UN, Canada voted in favour of a ceasefire in Gaza. I wholeheartedly commend the Canadian government's wisdom in choosing to join a major international movement.

That said, an important nuance needs to be made. This is not a rejection of Israel's right to defend itself. This is not an endorsement of Hamas, but an indignant response to the loss of human life.

To foster peace here at home as well, can the Prime Minister ensure that legislation will be amended to criminalize hate speech and incitement to violence, even under the guise of religion?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the impact of the crisis, the war and the violence in the Middle East is being felt around the world, particularly in Canada, a country whose strength lies in the diversity of its people from different backgrounds, who are now grappling with anguish, anger and fear, all at the same time.

That is why we are working so hard to fight anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. We are doing everything we can to bring people together during these difficult times, so that people remember who we are and our values as Canadians.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my call to the Prime Minister is this: Let us end 2023 with dignity.

If everyone here in the House were to unanimously vote for peace, including peace in our own streets, and if everyone were to eliminate hate speech under the guise of religion, then everyone would win. Our streets would be safer, and we would all have a clearer conscience.

Will the Prime Minister accept my suggestion?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend and thank the leader of the Bloc Québécois for his approach and his desire to see less violence and division in our country. That is a desire that we all share and that we will continue to work on.

However, we recognize that this is a delicate and difficult situation, particularly when it raises issues of freedom of speech and freedom of conscience.

Unfortunately, there is no simple solution. The only thing we can do is to work hard and make an effort to bring people together. That is exactly what we are going to do.

* * *

● (1435)

HOUSING

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the number of forced evictions reported in Quebec continues to rise at an alarming rate. Where are these people going to live? Over two million affordable housing units have been lost because of the Liberals and the Conservatives.

Just last week, the Conservatives voted to scrap all funding for social and affordable housing. The government says it wants to draw inspiration from certain measures Canada took in wartime.

Where has this war effort to fight the housing crisis been over the past eight years?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we said that we would use every tool at our disposal to make housing more affordable, we meant it.

This week, Minister Fraser announced that we will be bringing back a concept established in wartime and holding consultations to create a home design catalogue that will speed up home construction.

This initiative is one of our bold, innovative ideas to modernize and accelerate home construction in Canada. It is another example of how the federal government can take the lead to ensure that all Canadians have a place to call home.

The Speaker: Before we continue with oral question period, I would like to remind the Prime Minister and members that they must not refer to other members by their family name. They must use their title or the name of their riding.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people in Halifax are having to live in fishing tents this winter because of the lack of affordable homes.

Just last week, the cut-and-gut Conservatives voted no to funding community housing, and the out-of-touch Liberals keep delaying critical funding to build affordable homes. The housing minister says he wants to draw inspiration from what Canada did in wartime to fix the housing crisis. A catalogue is not going to cut it.

Part of the effort involves a national rent control initiative. Will the Prime Minister bring forward rent control to curb sky-high rent?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have shown a consistent willingness and desire to work with the provinces in areas of their jurisdiction, in co-operative ways, and we are going to continue to, including on the issue of rent control.

However, there is not just one way to approach the housing crisis; it is something we are doing on many fronts. It is not just the catalogue; indeed, we are building more apartments and co-ops by removing the GST on construction, and we are eliminating barriers to get more homes built faster by working directly with cities. We are helping Canadians save up for a home with the first home savings account.

I know there is more to do, and we are going to continue to work with all governments to take bold action to tackle housing affordability.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did not answer my question about the Carleton Mushroom Farms, which faces a $400,000 carbon tax bill when the Prime Minister is done quadrupling the tax.

When we spoke about this on November 29, he said that he looked forward to hearing about the sustainable practices that the farm has put in place. I can tell him that I helped the farm actually get natural gas in order to power some of its operations, which is a lower-emitting form of energy. However, they are still going to face a massive tax increase.

How would the Prime Minister advise the farm to pay it: by raising prices on Canadians or by shutting down production and bringing in more foreign food?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for farms across this country that are shifting towards natural gas and lower-emitting ways of heating and using their various machinery, we have put in place significant programs to help them with that.

That is something we are going to continue to do, because it is part of our plan to both fight climate change and build a net-zero economy of the future. We have a plan. The Conservative Party of Canada has no plan to fight climate change. Indeed, it thinks we should be backing off on all the things we are doing instead of continuing to fight climate change and grow a strong economy.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is backing off the things he is doing. Ironically, he is the one who brought in a temporary pause because his caucus was revolting regarding home heating oil.

However, my question was about the Medeiros's Carleton Mushroom Farms. The Prime Minister claims he has government programs to help farmers use more natural gas, at the same time as he is quadrupling the tax on natural gas, which is perhaps the reason why Canada ranks 58th out of 64 when it comes to climate index performance. The Prime Minister does not have a climate plan; he has a tax plan.

How will the Prime Minister advise the Medeiros farm to pay the $400,000 bill he is sending it?

● (1440)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that climate change is a reality. We recognize that we need to help families and businesses across this country reduce their emissions and continue to prosper and grow in a world where the cost of inaction on climate change is increasingly exponentially.

That is why we have put in place programs to support farms, programs to support Canadians and, indeed, to get off home heating oil, for example, and transition to heat pumps. These are things that we are doing as part of our plan. The Conservatives have no plan.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our plan is to bring home production, back to Canadian farms.

The Prime Minister's plan raises the carbon tax on a greenhouse in my riding, which means that its produce is more expensive in the village of Manotick than a Mexican tomato is in the village of Manotick, sending a price signal for consumers to buy the tomato that had to be transported by truck and train, burning fossil fuels, right across the continent.

Why does the Prime Minister not axe the tax so we can bring down the cost of farm production and bring home more clean, green Canadian produce?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the price on pollution is simple: Activities that cause pollution cost a bit more. However, most Canadians get more money back than what they pay, with cheques being sent to Canadians every few months. Big industry pays more than the regular Canadian pays because industry pollutes more, and, as a result, industries have an incentive to reduce their pollution. The ideologically driven MAGA Conservatives are calling for pollution to be free again and for the government to take those regular cheques to Canadians away from them.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everything the Prime Minister just said is factually wrong. First, industry does not pay the carbon tax; it has a carbon tax carve-out. As for his claim that people get more back in rebates, the Carleton Mushroom Farms owner will pay $100,000 this year, rising to $400,000 over the carbon tax increase the Prime Minister proposes, and he is sending them tiny rebate cheques to their household mailbox.

Is the Prime Minister committing today that he is going to send a $400,000 rebate to this family farm?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are there to support families, but multi-million-dollar farms that are successful will continue to be encouraged to look for ways to use their machinery and to heat their produce in ways that are lower emitting. That is what fighting climate change is all about. It is encouraging successful farms, like the Medeiros family farm, to continue to be successful but to do so in ways that reduce their emissions. We know it cannot ever be free to pollute again, despite what the Conservative Party wants.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, ironically, it is almost free for Mexican producers. They have a tiny little carbon tax that is not even comparable to the $400,000 tax bill that the Prime Minister is proposing.

What he is saying is that there should be a price signal for Canadians to buy more expensive, polluting foreign food while we, with the fifth-biggest supply of arable land on Planet Earth, shut our farmers down. How does that make any sense?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more than just about anyone else in this country, farmers understand how important it is to protect the land for future generations and to pass on the bounty to their children and grandchildren of a great, important job that feeds the rest of us. That is why farmers are so focused on the future, and that is why we are there to support them with a plan and investments that help them reduce their emissions while they continue to put food on all our tables. We have a plan for that. The Conservatives refuse to even admit that there needs to be work done to reduce emissions. That is not the way to build a future, not in Carleton and not anywhere—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister stated correctly that farmers are working hard to protect the environment, which is why it is so strange that he wants to punish them with a tax that, on one farm alone, costs $100,000 and will rise to $400,000 for the crime of using the only sources of energy that are available to that farm.

I will ask the same question I have asked the Prime Minister now about a half a dozen times: When he finally gets around to talking to Carleton Mushroom Farms' owner, how will he advise them to pay their forthcoming $400,000 carbon tax bill? Will it be by raising prices on Canadians or by cutting back and bringing in more dirty foreign food?

● (1445)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 97% of farm fuel emissions are exempt from the price on pollution. The average farm across this country pays a little less than $1,000 on natural gas emissions through the price on pollution. Therefore, one can only imagine how much natural gas this successful mushroom farm must be using for their cost of the price on pollution to be that large. We will happily work with the farmer to switch toward a lower-emitting approach to doing their business well and protecting future generations.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government needed a feel-good announcement after its disastrous performance in the fall. Wanting to please its centralizing NDP allies, it chose dental care, a health care service that already exists in Quebec. It chose an area of jurisdiction that falls to Quebec and the provinces. It chose to interfere instead of support. It chose encroachment instead of collaboration.

How does the Prime Minister justify making a half-baked announcement on dental care before reaching an agreement with Quebec?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recently launched an historic program that will provide dental care to children under 12 across the country. We have now extended the program to seniors across the country. We are ensuring that seniors do not have to choose between taking care of their teeth and paying their bills.

We will continue to work with the provinces and territories, including Quebec, to ensure that Canadians who need it can have access to proper dental care without having to worry about the bill and to improve the oral health of all Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the 1970s, dental care for young people has been covered by Quebec's health insurance plan, or RAMQ. The Quebec government was open to an agreement to improve the plan. All of the transferred funds would have been used for dental care. The Liberals knew that, but they win more votes by diving head first into Quebec's areas of jurisdiction than by transferring money.

Quebec has the expertise, but the Liberals and the NDP chose Sun Life Canada. Why choose a private company over the RAMQ?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are having very good conversations with our counterparts in Quebec, as we always do, about how we are going to help Quebeckers and provide them with the care and services they need. We are here to work with them, and we are going to continue those discussions with the Quebec government, not with the second opposition party in the House of Commons in Ottawa.

* * *

[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night at committee, the hand-picked Liberal chair of the Prime Minister's billion-dollar green slush fund was exposed as having new staff at the fund to round up $10 million for her project, which had been deemed ineligible. Then she literally ran out of the committee, shutting off the cameras, because she did not want to answer any more questions.

The NDP-Liberal government failed to protect taxpayers from embezzlers and swindlers to the tune of $150 million. After eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. When will Canadians get back their missing millions?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Innovation has already accepted the resignation of the CEO and chair. When allegations are made and issues arise, it is both appropriate and necessary for there to be a review of the matter. Those investigations and reviews are currently under way. We look forward to the results of those investigations.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, it is going to be more in depth than the whitewashed investigation that the Prime Minister and his minister put forward.

They are under investigation by the Auditor General, there are two Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner investigations and their board chair, his hand-picked chair, resigned in disgrace along with the CEO. The Prime Minister was handing out millions after his minister knew that his insiders had their hand in the cookie jar, taking 150 million taxpayer dollars.

The Prime Minister is not worth the cost after eight years and his NDP-Liberal government could not be more out of touch. Who got rich and where did the missing millions go?

● (1450)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are making cheap political points. The Conservative Party of Canada cannot take yes for an answer.

The independent officers of Parliament are investigating. A third party review of the allegations is under way. We are committed to ensuring organizations that receive federal funding adhere to the highest standards of governance.

When it comes to fighting climate change and drawing in investments from around the world, we have a plan and we have a focus on doing it in the right ways to grow the economy and support Canadians. The Conservatives have no plan whatsoever. All they can do is try to play partisan political games.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry has been for 35 months the minister on this file, and the Prime Minister's hand-picked chair of the green slush fund admitted last night that she tried to get $2.2 million in taxpayer money funnelled to the Verschuren Centre vanity project from the fund she chairs. Then she got the employees of the slush fund to get another $10 million for the Verschuren Centre vanity project from Liberal ministers. She took the money and ran. Verschuren claimed this was being an entrepreneur; we are calling it grifting.

Why did the Prime Minister let his green slush fund chair abuse the taxpayer for personal gain?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister has already addressed this question and investigations are under way.

The work we are doing on fighting climate change is already cutting pollution while building a strong and competitive economy. While we work to advance our ambitious climate action, the Conservative Party has no plan because fighting climate change simply does not matter to it. The Conservative leader is turning his back on future generations on both the environment and the economy by refusing to commit to Canada's targets, like his mentor Stephen Harper did when he withdrew from the Kyoto accord.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Prime Minister, his Liberal cronies keep lining their pockets. The $1-billion Liberal green fund scandal has been confirmed in scathing testimony by a brave whistle-blower.

Do members recall the Loto-Québec ad “Bye bye boss”, where a lottery winner quits his job with pockets full of cash? The former president of the board of the Liberal green fund, appointed by this Prime Minister, did just that when she literally ran away in the middle of her testimony, her pockets full of $10 million in subsidies that she paid to herself.

When will the Prime Minister demand a refund of Canadians' money?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister has already addressed this issue and an investigation is under way.

When it comes to the environment, we are about to surpass the Harper government's 2030 target. The most recent greenhouse gas emissions forecasts show that Canada is on track to meet our government's 2030 climate target, a new, ambitious and achievable target. Our plan is working.

The Conservative Party leader's platform encourages emissions and benefits no one but large corporations that keep parroting the same slogans as him and that have been hurting us for decades.

* * *

[*English*]

HOUSING

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, adequate housing for indigenous peoples has been neglected by Conservatives and Liberals. Thanks to the NDP, a for indigenous, by indigenous housing strategy will now help first nations, Métis and Inuit find adequate homes away from their home communities. However, there is still work do. Territorial governments like Nunavut are still waiting on the government to deliver funding for homes for their residents.

Why are the Liberals always delaying critical funding for housing in the territories?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have demonstrated time and time again how committed we are to addressing housing gaps in indigenous communities swiftly, effectively and in equal partnership. Since 2016, we have supported the construction and renovation of over 30,000 homes in first nations communities. We launched the $4-billion urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy despite the Conservative Party voting to cut this essential funding.

We will continue working with partners to codevelop and implement community-based housing solutions.

* * *

● (1455)

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Edmonton families are making tough choices this winter: put food on the table or buy Christmas presents for their kids. Who is stealing Christmas this year? Is it Scrooge? Is it the Grinch? No, it is the Liberal-Conservative corporate coalition. They have let their grocery CEO friends jack up prices to make record profits while Canadians turn to food banks for Christmas dinner.

Why is the government okay with letting grocery CEOs ruin the holidays for Edmonton families this winter?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have taken real actions to hold grocery CEOs to account with more competition, because more competition means lower prices, more choice and more innovative products and services for Canadians.

Our affordability legislation will empower the Competition Bureau to hold grocers accountable and prioritize consumers' interests. The fall economic statement proposes further amendments to the Competition Act to crack down on predatory pricing and better respond to anti-competitive mergers and more.

We are ensuring that Canadians have more competitive options, and we are limiting excess profits by corporations at the expense of Canadians.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian veterans have fought for our country and deserve all the respect in the world. Our government has invested over $11 billion in new services and supports for veterans since 2016 and will always support those who have served to promote and defend Canadian values, both at home and in so-called faraway foreign lands.

Can the Prime Minister update this House on what measures this government has taken to support our veterans?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Charlottetown for his advocacy and leadership on the veterans affairs committee.

One of the very first things we did when we formed government was reverse the damaging Conservative cuts to veterans services. Veterans remember when that party cut programs, fired 1,000 veteran support staff and closed nine veterans offices, all in an attempt to nickel-and-dime veterans to balance the budget for an election.

We saw last week that nothing has changed when the Conservatives voted to cut funding for our armed forces, and even worse, they voted last week to cut support for homeless veterans. Canadian veterans know they cannot trust the Conservative leader.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the Prime Minister who said veterans were asking for more than he could give. He sued them in court after he said he never would. He has caused the homelessness that he just talked about, and he spends the money on more bureaucracy instead of on our veterans.

He asked how much Carleton Mushroom Farms is spending on gas. He said it is spending too much. I have its bill records here. In November alone, it was $11,866, pro-rated to about $100,000 a year, which he wants to quadruple to $400,000 a year.

Once again, should the farm raise prices on consumers or cut production so polluting foreign farms get the business?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the average farm in Canada pays far less, around 1%, than what that very successful farm is paying. The reality is that 97% of farm fuel emissions are already exempt from the price on pollution. That is why we are continuing to move forward with programs and supports to encourage farms across the country, particularly very successful farms, to look at ways to reduce their emissions as they move forward into a net-zero future.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is his attitude now. Do we remember when he called small businesses wealthy tax cheats? Now he accuses Carleton Mushroom Farms of being too successful, and therefore it needs to pay higher taxes.

He clearly has no idea about our food supply chain, because, of course, grains have to be dried and the fuels for drying are now taxed. Barns have to be heated. Heating those barns is now taxed. There is a common-sense Conservative bill to axe the tax on those farmers to lower the price of food.

If he does not believe that this tax costs farmers, will he sit down with the Medeiros' Carleton Mushroom Farms and inspect its bill personally?

● (1500)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government reached out and will continue to reach out to a range of farmers across the country who want to reduce their emissions, who are concerned about climate change, who want to preserve our land for future generations and who understand, unlike the MAGA Conservatives, that there is no choice anymore between protecting the environment and growing the economy.

While the Conservatives want to take us back to the Stone Age, we are going to continue to invest in supporting farms, supporting businesses and supporting Canadians, while we reduce our pollution, reduce our emissions and build a stronger future for everyone.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he has missed all his targets, except for the one year when Canadians were locked down. His own environment commissioner says he will come nowhere near meeting his 2030 targets, and now Canada ranks 58 out of 64 on the climate change performance index.

His tax is not working, nor does he seem to understand how food arrives. Food does not come from the grocery store. The average farmer in Canada has to spend $150,000 on his carbon tax for barns and drying, and that all has to go to consumers.

Will he pass our common-sense bill to axe the tax on food?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we took office eight years ago, Canada had no plan to reach even the Harper government's very modest environmental targets. We not only have surpassed the Harper targets but have put in place new ambitious targets that we are very much on track to meeting.

We have decreased our emissions over the past two years faster than any other G7 country, and we will continue to lead the way on demonstrating that we cannot have a plan for the future of the economy if we do not have a plan to fight climate change. That is what we are doing. That is what they are not.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is wrong on the facts. Under the previous Conservative government, we actually reduced emissions while growing the economy. We did it through technology and not taxes.

By the way, I said earlier that Canada ranked 58th out of 64. There is a new publication of the ranking and Canada is now 62nd out of 67. In fact, we have fallen. The higher the tax, the worse the ranking.

Will the Prime Minister finally get rid of his tax plan and come up with an environment plan?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are on track to surpass the Harper government's 2030 target and the latest emissions projections show Canada is on track to achieving our government's new, ambitious and achievable 2030 climate goal.

Our plan is working. We are seeing companies around the world invest in Canada. We were the third-largest country in terms of foreign direct investment in the world earlier this year because people are noticing Canada's leadership on fighting against climate change, but that party continues to vote against measures to support our farmers, measures to invest in a cleaner economy and measures to protect Canadians and their economy from the challenges of the future.

We will be there for Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are two solitudes in our approach to asylum seekers.

On one side, Quebec is taking in half of Canada's asylum seekers. We do not hesitate to do so. We first deliver services at our own expense and then we ask the federal government to reimburse the $460-million bill. We take care of the people first and then we deal with the money.

On the other side, the federal government offers no services. When it comes time to pay, it tells us that it is not an ATM. Lucky thing Quebeckers do not take the same approach toward asylum seekers.

Will the Prime Minister contribute his share and reimburse Quebeckers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year, we provide hundreds of millions of dollars to Quebec to help with the integration of newcomers. This includes money for francization.

Our immigration program will continue to strengthen the immigration system and extend the benefits of immigration to communities in Quebec and across the country. Immigration is essential for helping businesses, finding the workers they need and continuing to grow the economy.

We will always work closely with the Government of Quebec, whether on immigration, housing or the economy.

● (1505)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, asylum seekers are a federal responsibility.

Instead of repeating that Ottawa is not an ATM, it is time for the federal government to stop treating Quebeckers like a credit card. The entire cost of services for asylum seekers is being foisted on us. Now the bill is due, and the Prime Minister has to pay it. True to form, however, he is running away. He does not like paying his debts. We know him, and he does not like doing that. We will not give up.

Will the Prime Minister take responsibility for asylum seekers, show some respect and reimburse Quebec?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been sending hundreds of millions of dollars to Quebec for years to help it take in asylum seekers.

We recognize how generous Quebeckers have been and how much they have been there for asylum seekers. Yes, we will continue to be there to help. Canada is a welcoming country, but also a country that must ensure that everyone is properly protected when people arrive, even asylum seekers.

Yes, we will continue to work with Quebec. We will continue to be there to support asylum seekers because it is the right thing to do.

* * *

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost of housing. According to the Bank of Canada, housing is the least affordable it has been in 41 years. He has doubled the price of rent across the country.

Now, renting a single room in a shared apartment costs more than it did for the entire apartment when the Prime Minister first took office. Evictions in Quebec have increased by 132%. That is the main cause of homelessness.

Will the Prime Minister finally reverse the policies that create bloated bureaucracy and drive up inflation, both of which cause homelessness in Quebec?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader has made his thinking clear by stating that the federal government should get out of the business of building affordable housing. However, we will not follow his irresponsible advice.

Perhaps that is why last week his party voted against funding to build 71,000 new apartments. It also voted against more than 15,000 new homes for our most vulnerable.

As the team showed last week, we will not allow the Conservatives' partisan games to undermine our efforts to provide housing for all.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all those apartments have one thing in common: They do not exist. These are just more promises.

Eight years ago, the Prime Minister promised to spend $87 billion on affordable housing. As a result, rents and mortgage payments doubled. Now, evictions have increased by 132% in Quebec. The main cause of homelessness is evictions after eight years of this Prime Minister.

When will he recognize that creating bloated bureaucracy and driving up inflation do not help with housing?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Conservative Party voted against 71,000 new apartments. They voted against 15,000 affordable housing units. Now their excuse is to say that since the housing does not yet exist, they can vote against it. Come on. They clearly do not understand that it is a government's responsibility to invest for a better future, to solve problems.

He just wants to increase anxiety. He does not want to come up with solutions for Canadians. On this side of the House, we will stand up for Canadians despite the Conservatives, who oppose all these measures.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is doing the same thing he has done for eight years. He spent $87 billion on housing affordability to double housing costs. We have fewer homes per capita than we did when he took office, the fewest homes of any country in the G7. He doubled the rent, doubled mortgage payments and doubled the needed down payment to the point where the Bank of Canada reports this week that Canada has the worst housing affordability in 41 years, and rentals.ca reveals that it is now more expensive to rent one room in a shared apartment than it was eight years ago to rent the entire apartment for oneself.

When will he realize that ballooning inflation and the bureaucracy does not build homes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when will the leader of the official opposition understand that voting against the construction of 71,000 new homes through the apartment construction loan program is not going to help anyone and that voting against the construction of 12,000 new affordable homes through the rapid housing initiative will not help Canadians.

He chose to play partisan games last week in trying to shut down this House through a MAGA-inspired approach while we continue to stand up for Canadians and deliver on the things they need. While they play partisan games, we will continue to fight for Canadians.

* * *

● (1510)

[*Translation*]

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tourism industry exists in all regions of the country and is also the second-largest employer in rural areas. Forty per cent of tourism jobs are in rural areas.

Can the Prime Minister tell the House how the government is supporting the millions of workers in the tourism industry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sudbury for her excellent question and hard work.

Last week, the Conservative Party voted against programs to support Canadians and turned its back on the two million workers in the tourism industry. The Conservatives voted against funding to support the growth of tourism in Canada. Workers in that industry deserve better. Unlike the Conservatives, who only support workers in their ad campaigns, we, on this side of the House, will continue to support workers in the tourism industry.

* * *

[*English*]

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Maclean's magazine reports, “Two jobs, no money: How mortgage rates have pushed one Toronto father to the brink”. Two years into their mortgage, their biweekly payments have reached $2,268, now paying more than $5,000 a month to live in a 900-square foot townhouse, and $3,500 of that goes to interest.

All of his spending programs have doubled the cost of housing and, according to the Bank of Nova Scotia, have boosted interest rates another 2%.

Will he realize the damage he is doing in causing Canadians unsupportable, unsustainable mortgage payments?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the challenges Canadians are facing, and on this side of the House, we have chosen to invest to support them: to create new affordable housing, to create new apartments.

As much as the Leader of the Opposition loves to rise in this House to talk about Canadians' suffering, he will not rise in this House to support solutions to Canadians' challenges. He rose in the House to vote against 71,000 new rental homes through the apartment construction loan program. He rose in this House to vote against 12,000 new affordable homes through the rapid housing initiative. He likes to instrumentalize Canadians. He will not solve for them.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I voted against an approach that has spent $87 billion on affordable housing, to double the cost of housing. He thinks that if he is expensive, he is excused for his failures. Failing is bad. Failing expensively is even worse.

Our common-sense plan would require cities to permit 15% more housing, as a condition of getting their financing. Give them bonuses if they beat the target, link the dollars they get for transit to requirements for apartments around them and sell off 6,000 federal buildings and thousands of acres of federal land to build.

Why can he not get behind that common-sense plan?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, inflation has gone up, interest rates have gone up, food prices have gone up, energy prices have gone up, all linked to the ongoing war that Russia is waging in Ukraine. We recognize that on this side of the House and we are acting, not just to bring down prices here at home, but to stand with Ukraine in our fight against Russia. Unfortunately, the leader of the official opposition, who referred to Ukraine as a far away land refuses to stand up to deliver for Ukraine.

On this side of the House, we will always be there for Ukraine.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is not there for Ukraine. He is there for himself. When Conservatives demanded that the government provide lethal weapons, before Putin's invasion when they most needed them, he said no. When Conservatives kicked Putin out of the G8 and made it the G7, he said no. What he said yes to was to give Putin an exported, big, powerful turbine to pump his gas and fill his war chest, and to export detonators used for Russian mines that blow up Ukrainians. That is not being there for Ukrainians.

We will stand for Ukrainians and for Canadians.

● (1515)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to find ourselves in an argument about which side of the House is more supportive of Ukraine because one of the strengths that Canada has had on the world stage these past difficult two years is that we have said there is no debate around support for Ukraine in Canada, like there is in other countries where MAGA-inspired far-right movements are undermining support for Ukraine.

The Conservative Party of Canada has an opportunity to reverse its position in opposing the Ukraine free trade deal that Zelenskyy is asking for. Will they vote in favour of Ukraine free trade?

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has been clear as to where we stand on the war in Ukraine. We understand that the Ukrainian people are not just fighting for their own freedom and survival, but are also fighting for us, and that we need to be fighting for them.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to ask the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan to wait his turn to ask a question.

I will also ask the member for Provencher to keep it down so we can have the question asked.

The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre, from the top, please.

● (1520)

Mr. Yvan Baker: Mr. Speaker, it is clear where the government stands on Ukraine. We understand that the Ukrainian people are not only fighting for their own freedom and survival, but are also fighting for us, and that we need to be fighting for them.

It is also clear where Conservative MPs stand. Their leader has never advocated military, financial or humanitarian support for Ukraine. They voted against the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. Yesterday, the leader of the Conservative Party dismissively referred to Ukraine as a faraway foreign land. Under this leader, the Conservative—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I notice that members will wait until I have actually recognized a member to then start heckling again. If members are going to be allowed to heckle, then may I please have a way to identify them before they heckle? Please do not lean back to try to cover your face from other members so the Speaker cannot hear.

Please allow the member for Etobicoke Centre to finish so we can all get back to the business of doing the people's work.

The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre, from the top, I regret.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Mr. Speaker, the government has been clear as to where we stand on the war in Ukraine. We know that the Ukrainian people are not only fighting for their own freedom and survival, but are also fighting for us, and that we need to be fighting for them.

It is also clear now where Conservative MPs stand. Their leader has never advocated more military, financial or humanitarian support for Ukraine. They voted against the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. Yesterday, the leader of the Conservative Party referred dismissively to Ukraine as a faraway foreign land. Under this leader, the Conservative Party has abandoned Ukraine.

Could the Prime Minister please reassure Canadians that the government will stand with the Ukrainian people until they win?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we see how much the Conservatives hate it when we talk about Ukraine.

I thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for his leadership in supporting Ukraine.

The Conservatives, yet again, showed Ukrainians and all Canadians who they really are. When it came time to support military aid to Ukraine, they voted against. When it came time to support Operation Unifier, they voted against. When it came to the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement, twice they voted against.

While the Conservative leader is busy taking talking points from Fox News and Donald Trump, on this side of the House, we support Ukraine.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, even though small businesses are dealing with a cost of living crisis, the Liberals are forcing them to pay back the Canada emergency business account loan within the next few weeks or risk losing up to $20,000. While the Liberals put small businesses in jeopardy, they are handing out $21.6 billion to their rich consultant friends. Reducing this out-of-control outsourcing by just 4% more would cover the costs of extending the CEBA.

Instead of choosing rich CEOs and highly paid consultants, will the Liberals support small businesses by extending the CEBA by just one year?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the pandemic, we stepped up with unprecedented supports for small businesses. We were there to support them. We were there to invest in them. We were there to support Canadian workers, Canadian families and Canadian seniors. We were there with supports that saw us through the pandemic with fewer deaths and a stronger economy than most of our peers.

The fact is that we were there to help Canadians through the pandemic, and we are going to continue to support small businesses in many different ways. However, the pandemic is over its acute phase. We will continue to be there to support people, but pandemic supports needed to end.

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, despite climate negotiations being captured by fossil fuel interests, countries just agreed at COP28 to transition away from fossil fuels. Nonetheless, back at home, the government continues to do the opposite, wasting over $1,200 on behalf of each and every Canadian taxpayer to expand the TMX pipeline, and increasing oil production to record levels.

Why is it that the PM cannot find the money to ensure that we end legislated poverty for people with disabilities, but has tens of billions of dollars for a leaky pipeline?

● (1525)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada demonstrated, yet again, its leadership on the world stage with ambitious leadership in putting a cap on emissions from the oil and gas sector, recognizing that we do need to get to a net-zero economy. We need to support all our industries, including our energy industry, in moving towards that.

We will be there to support workers in the energy industry as we focus on decarbonization. We will be there to support businesses across this country as they shift to lower-emitting technologies. We understand the process it takes; we will accompany Canadians every step of the way, and we will get to net zero.

* * *

APPOINTMENT OF CLERK

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion. I move:

> That the motion on the Order Paper in the name of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons related to the appointment of Eric Janse as Clerk of the House of Commons, pursuant to Standing Order 111.1(1), be deemed adopted.

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

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

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

(Motion agreed to)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Three times today, the leader of the official opposition made reference to a document that was tabled at COP28. That document, entitled, Climate Change Performance Index, gives the—

Some hon. members: No.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I am sure that if you reflect on what took place over question period, and the amount of decorum, and this is something that is really important—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I will just ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to please quote the standing order so the Speaker can hear.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, a member of Ukrainian heritage, the member for Etobicoke Centre, on several occasions tried to get his question across—

The Speaker: I am just wondering whether the hon. parliamentary secretary would like to quote the standing order that he is referring to, so I could listen.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is Standing Order 18, in reference to decorum. A member of Ukrainian heritage, the member for Etobicoke Centre, on several occasions attempted to get his question across.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, as I am right now, he was being shouted down as opposed to being allowed to be heard. We believe, Mr. Speaker, that you should look at those questions and report back, because we are starting to see the MAGA right from the Conservative Party in—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order on the issue of decorum under Standing Order 18. The entire time I, a person of Ukrainian heritage, was giving my S. O. 31, I was heckled and yelled at by the Liberals.

When the member for Etobicoke Centre got up, he actually misinformed the House when he said that we were opposed to Ukraine. Actually, the Liberals voted against all the measures we took as a government, as Conservatives. The Liberals voted consecutively, in 2014 and 2015, against measures to support Ukraine, including Operation Unifier and Operation Reassurance.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1530)

The Speaker: Colleagues, we are now moving into issues of debate.

The hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk, on a point of order.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I am sure if you seek it, you will find that Bill C-234 would lower the cost—

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I am further contributing to the point of order raised by the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman in regard to Standing Order 18 and decorum. I just wanted to point out for the member that there were only 34 Liberals here when, he claims, all these votes occurred. I would like to know whether the member wants to say which Liberals voted that way.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

PROTECTING YOUNG PERSONS FROM EXPOSURE TO PORNOGRAPHY ACT

The House resumed from December 11 consideration of the motion that Bill S-210, An Act to restrict young persons' online access to sexually explicit material, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: It being 3:31 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded on the motion at second reading stage of Bill S-210 under Private Members' Business.

Call in the members.

● (1545)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 609)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Angus
Ashton
Bachrach
Baldinelli
Barrett
Barsalou-Duval
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blaikie
Blanchette-Joncas
Block
Bradford
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings
Carrie
Chambers
Chong
Cooper
Davidson
d'Entremont
Desilets
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Fillmore
Fortin
Garon
Gaudreau
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Green
Hoback
Idlout
Johns
Julian
Khanna
Kmiec
Aitchison
Allison
Arnold
Atwin
Bains
Barlow
Barron
Beaulieu
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchet
Blaney
Boulerice
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Collins (Victoria)
Dalton
DeBellefeuille
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri
Findlay
Gallant
Garrison
Gazan
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hallan
Hughes
Jeneroux
Jones
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lake
Lantsman
Lawrence
Lemire
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lloyd
MacGregor
Majumdar
Masse
Mazier
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McPherson
Mendès
Moore
Morrice
Morrissey
Muys
Normandin
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Scheer
Schmale
Shields
Simard
Singh
Soroka
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Therrien
Tochor
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson
Zimmer– — 189
Kurek
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Larouche
Lehoux
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lightbound
Lobb
Maguire
Martel
Mathyssen
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McGuinty
McLean
Melillo
Michaud
Morantz
Morrison
Motz
Nater
Patzer
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Scarpaleggia
Schiefke
Seeback
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Small
Sousa
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Thériault
Thomas
Tolmie
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zarrillo

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arya
Battiste
Bendayan
Bibeau
Blair
Boissonnault
Carr
Chagger
Champagne
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Coteau
Damoff
Dhillon
Dong
Alghabra
Anand
Arseneault
Baker
Beech
Bennett
Bittle
Blois
Brière
Casey
Chahal
Chatel
Chiang
Cormier
Dabrusin
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin

Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Gerretsen
Gould	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Joly	Jowhari
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Khera
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	May (Cambridge)
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
Miao	Murray
Naqvi	Ng
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Sarai
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara	St-Onge
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thompson
Trudeau	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Virani
Weiler	Wilkinson
Yip	Zahid
Zuberi– — 133	

PAIRED

Members

Deltell	Guilbeault– — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

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

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During the vote call in the House on a very important vote to protect young people from pornography, the member for Pontiac rose to vote in favour and then rose to vote against. I would like you to verify that she did indeed vote and I hope she voted in favour.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier for raising that question.

Upon further verification with the table officers, I can assure the member that the vote was recorded only once.

Private Members' Business

CANADIAN AVIATION REGULATIONS

The House resumed from December 12 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 96, under Private Members' Business.

● (1600)

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

(Division No. 610)

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	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings	Carr
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gainey
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid

Speaker's Ruling

Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Lapointe
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lemire
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathyssen
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Michaud
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Sajjan
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Schiefke
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Virani
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Larouche
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Miao
Morrice
Murray
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski
Rayes
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Sousa
St-Onge
Tassi
Thériault
Thompson
Trudel
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Villemure
Vuong
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi– — 212

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Berthold
Block
Brock
Caputo
Chambers
Cooper
Davidson
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Généreux
Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Bezan
Bragdon
Calkins
Carrie
Chong
Dalton
d'Entremont
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri
Gallant
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Maguire
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Rood
Schmale
Shields
Small
Steinley
Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Khanna
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Majumdar
Mazier
McLean
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Patzer
Perkins
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Seeback
Shipley
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vidal
Viersen
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer– — 112

PAIRED

Members

Deltell
Guilbeault– — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 27 minutes.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill, with amendments, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill C-234, an act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act.

Copies of the amendments are available at the table.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

AWARDING OF CONTRACT TO BOEING—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on December 1, 2023, by the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot regarding allegedly misleading information shared by the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

In his intervention, the member alleged that the House had been misled about the process to replace the Aurora aircraft. The member noted that, when the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement were asked about this matter in the House on November 24 and 28, 2023, they both answered that the decision to award a sole-source contract to Boeing had not yet been made. Yet, according to the member, a newspaper article published on November 29 revealed that the government knew by then that the contract had been awarded. In the member's view, the government's answers were knowingly inaccurate and effectively misled the House.

[*English*]

However, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader explained that the responses from the minister and the parliamentary secretary were accurate at the time they were provided, as the government's final decision was not made until the evening of November 28. Given the circumstances, he concluded that the House could not have been misled and that there are no grounds to find a prima facie question of privilege.

The House is therefore faced with two versions of events. One is based on an article published in a newspaper. The other was provided by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader; this version indicates that, based on the sequence of events, no misleading information was provided.

In cases such as this, the Chair's role is strictly limited to determining whether a member deliberately misled the House during the proceedings.

[*Translation*]

In order to find a prima facie question of privilege, three criteria must be met. These criteria are set out in numerous decisions issued by previous Speakers, including one delivered by my predecessor on May 11, 2021, on page 7022 of the Debates, and I quote:

> First, the statement must effectively be misleading or manifestly contradictory; second, the author of the statement must know, in making the statement, that it is false; third, the member intended to mislead the House.

[*English*]

As members can tell, the threshold for showing that the House was deliberately misled is very high. This is because the consequences of such allegations can be quite serious.

Accordingly, the Chair carefully reviewed the statements the minister and the parliamentary secretary made during Oral Questions.

[*Translation*]

The Chair understands how important it is for members to receive the most reliable and accurate information possible in order to carry out their duties. However, the Chair could not find evidence that the minister and the parliamentary secretary contradicted themselves or intended to hide information or mislead the House.

As a consequence and in keeping with the many precedents on such matters, I cannot in this case find a prima facie question of privilege.

I thank all members for their attention.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1605)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) and in accordance with the enhanced transparency requirements relating to new free trade agreements introduced in the policy on tabling of treaties in Parliament in 2020, I am pleased to notify the House of Commons of the government's intent to initiate negotiations for a Canada-Ecuador free trade agreement. The Government of Canada intends to commence negotiations with Ecuador no earlier than 90 days from the date of this notice.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on its 145th assembly and related meetings in Kigali, Rwanda, from October 11 to 15, 2022.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following reports: the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the second part of the 2023 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, PACE, in Strasbourg, France, from April 24 to 28; the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region in Washington, D.C., U.S.A., from April 25 to 26; the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation im the extraordinary meeting of the Standing Committee for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Reykjavik, Iceland, on May 15; and the report of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the third part of the 2023 ordinary session of PACE in Strasbourg, France, from June 19 to 23.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, five reports: the report of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group on the Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference in Wichita, Kansas, from July 10 to 13, 2022; the report of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group on the Council of State Governments East's 61st annual meeting, in Manchester, New Hampshire, from August 14 to 17, 2022; the report of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group's on its bilateral visit with the United States Senate in Washington, D.C., from May 15 to 16; the report of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group's on the annual meeting of the Western Governors' Association in Boulder, Colorado, from June 26 to 28; and finally, the report of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group on the Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference in Detroit, Michigan, from July 9 to 12.

While I am on my feet, I want to thank the members for this work. In many instances, these meetings took place during members' vacation time. I want to thank them for attending to this most important relationship. I also want to acknowledge and thank senators Klobuchar and Crapo for their generous and warm welcome to our delegation while in Washington.

* * *

● (1610)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, the hon. member for Avalon, I will present the following two reports.

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 12th report, entitled "Ecosystem Impacts and Management of Pinniped Populations". For the folks at home, pinnipeds are sea lions.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report, entitled "Foreign Ownership and Corporate Concentration of Fishing Licences and Quota".

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

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table the Conservative supplementary report on ecosystem impacts and management of pinniped populations. The report was completed because Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans believe that the main report does not represent the urgency required to deal with the management of pinnipeds fast enough to save fish stocks on all three of Canada's coasts. Witnesses at this study, the mackerel study and the science study all stressed that paying lip service to pinniped predation, as the Liberals have over the last eight years, is simply not enough.

We call on the government to commit to an education campaign to raise awareness of the ecological disaster that has occurred as a result of the imbalance caused by exploding seal and sea lion populations in Canada's coastal regions. This report also calls on the federal government to start lobbying in conjunction with its awareness campaign to gain access to international markets and promote pinniped products to help feed the millions of malnourished as part of Canada's foreign aid program.

The committee heard it loud and clear. The time for action is now.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservative members on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans submitted our supplementary report to this study on foreign ownership and corporate concentration of fishing licences and quota because Canada's fisheries are shared common resources owned by the citizens of Canada.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and her department are mandated to manage and conserve Canada's fisheries for the sustained benefit and prosperity of Canadians, not foreign entities. In the committee study, we learned how the government is severely failing to protect Canadian harvesters who have been forced to pay for the government's failure.

Laws and regulations on the east coast are not being enforced, leaving harvesters vulnerable to exploitation that should have and could have been shut down and eliminated years ago. On the west coast, the government has failed to even establish laws and regulations to protect harvesters and fisheries from foreign ownership and corporate concentration. The committee delivered recommendations to the government in 2019, but the government has failed to deliver on those recommendations.

Conservatives hear Canadian harvesters on all coasts and see the threats they are facing. We will continue to fight to ensure that Canadians can access and earn prosperity from the shared resources of Canada's fisheries.

CANADA-PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA RELATIONSHIP

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as chair of the committee, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth interim report of the Special Committee on the Canada-People's Republic of China Relationship, entitled "The Exposure Of Canadian Investment Funds to Human Rights Violations in the People's Republic Of China".

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

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on International Trade, entitled "Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade: Some Canadian Perspectives".

I want to thank the members of the committee, as well as the committee clerk and the analysts, for their hard work.

● (1615)

[*English*]

RAIL PASSENGER PRIORITY ACT

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-371, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act (passenger rail service).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today, as the NDP's transport critic, to table the rail passenger priority act.

As many in this chamber know, Canada lags behind much of the world when it comes to passenger rail. One of the key reasons for that is because passenger trains in Canada frequently have to pull off and make way for freight trains. This results in poor on-time performance.

This bill would amend the Canada Transportation Act to give passenger trains in Canada priority on the tracks, just as federal law does in the United States and as was recently recommended by the CEO of VIA Rail.

Canada has the opportunity to seize the full potential of safe, convenient, climate-friendly passenger rail in this country.

On Sunday, I will be setting out, by train, across our beautiful country, to speak with passengers and communities about how the rail passenger priority act is an important part of that endeavour.

Merry Christmas.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, presented on Tuesday, June 13, be concurred in.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder, if you canvass the room, whether there would be unanimous consent to allow some of us to present petitions that we have waiting for weeks to present. We have been faced with a series of motions for concurrence and other delays. I have citizens who have been asking me to present this petition and wondering why I have not been able to.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there consent?

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, just on a similar point of order, the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs has requested that I table this petition today.

I am going to ask if you could canvass the House and allow some of us to table petitions on behalf of the volunteer firefighters who put their lives at risk to protect everybody in our communities, especially in rural Canada.

I am hoping that you will get unanimous consent, so that we could table these petitions on behalf of these wonderful volunteers who sacrifice their time and energy for all of us.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, maybe it would be helpful for members to say that there are concurrence motions, which go for a maximum of three hours, and then there is an opportunity for petitions. If this debate concludes, there will be an opportunity for petitions. I know that there was an opportunity for petitions yesterday. Members have other ways they can table petitions. I hope that if we do not spend too much time on points of order, there will actually be an opportunity to get into petitions later in the day.

We will see if the NDP actually puts up speakers on the concurrence motion. That will impact the timeline as well.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my disappointment that I am unable to rise today to table a petition on behalf of several chambers of commerce in northwest B.C. and hundreds of small businesses across Canada, concerning the CEBA loans and partial loan forgiveness. This is something supported by the Canadian Federation for Independent Business and many other organizations. It is disappointing that, so late in the session, I am not able to table such an important petition.

● (1620)

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if we could seek the House's unanimous consent. It sounds like there are three petitions that are particularly timely, one from the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, one from the member for Courtenay—Alberni and one from the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

I wonder if the House might consent to hear those three particularly timely petitions.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, respectfully, my understanding of the rules is that if we proceed to petitions, we are no longer in motions. Maybe there should be a discussion among House leaders about how to ensure we do not lose where we are in motions. We are in motions right now. We need to discuss this motion.

The Deputy Speaker: I will go to the House leader for the NDP in a second, but if it is the will of the House to hear three petitions, we can hear those three petitions and then go back to the motion as it is predetermined here.

All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion, please say nay.

An hon. member: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. House leader for the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, as you well know, allowing exceptional certain petitions in a timely manner to be presented is something that we do routinely. It is a courtesy that we offer to members of the House. We have a concurrence debate that has been moved. There is no doubt about that, but I would ask for unanimous consent to allow the member for Courtenay—Alberni to table the petition that he has referenced and that the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs has asked him to present today.

The Deputy Speaker: You are suggesting maybe just doing the one for Courtenay—Alberni?

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I am already hearing no, so we are not going to revisit this.

I would suggest to the hon. members that they can be tabled. They will be dated today as they were introduced into the House of Commons.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time that my colleagues have allowed me to discuss the study from the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, entitled "Grocery Affordability: Examining Rising Food Costs In Canada".

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, who has done a great deal of work on this subject specifically and certainly on the importance of the grocery code of conduct, for example, to try to address food affordability issues for Canadian consumers.

I feel it is important to discuss this study here today because of some information that has come out most recently regarding food inflation and food costs for Canadians. When we completed this study in June this past spring, there was some pretty difficult information for Canadian consumers to hear on the increasing costs and increasing questions and concerns around affordability for Canadians and their inability to feed their families. However, that has become even more acute with the information that has come out recently regarding Canada's food price report, which came out last week. It revealed that, in 2024, Canadian families will pay $700 more for groceries than they did the previous year. Even the work we did on this initial study last spring is now almost out of date and obsolete, as food prices have continued to rise. We see now that food inflation will go up again next year between 5% and 7% depending on the commodity we are purchasing.

As part of this study, we were waiting for an additional report from Dalhousie University and Dr. Sylvain Charlebois. The executive summary on the results of his study says that he and Dalhousie University have forecast that inflationary pressures and uncompetitive policies, like the carbon tax, on growing, processing and transporting food will increase the cost of wholesale food by 34% on average for all food categories by 2025.Thirty-four per cent is the increase in food costs that Canadian consumers are going to be facing over the next two years. This comes at a time when we have about two million Canadians relying on a food bank every single month, and when one in five Canadians is skipping meals because they cannot afford to put food on the table.

However, I think the stats we heard in this study are even more concerning. As part of this study, we had testimony from Daily Bread Food Bank and Second Harvest. Their testimony was that, due to the dire situation, according to their figures, "food banks and other food-related programs across Canada served [5.1 million] people per month last year". I know we are talking about two million Canadians relying on a food bank every single month, but when we include other food insecurity programs, like Second Harvest, that number goes to more than five million Canadians who are using a food security program or charity like a food bank every single month. Now, as a result of the additional information we have been provided, we are going to see higher food prices, up to maybe 34%.

Again, from testimony from the Daily Bread Food Bank and Second Harvest, they are expecting the number of people using food banks and other food-related charities to climb to 8.2 million Canadians, which is roughly a 60% increase. Can members imagine that, because of inflationary policies and policies like the carbon tax, in Canada, where we have the ability to not only feed our own residents but help feed the world, we could have more than eight million Canadians relying on a regular basis on food banks and food charities to be able to feed their families? I find it to be unfathomable that in Canada we would be seeing those types of numbers. I hope everybody in the House will see those numbers as absolutely shocking.

The Conservatives put forward a number of recommendations last June that we asked the government to follow-up on to try to address some of these concerning trends we are seeing. I would like to mention a couple of the recommendations we put forward that I thought were quite specific and would go a great way in addressing this crisis we are facing.

● (1625)

Recommendation 1 said, "That the Government of Canada remove the carbon tax that is applied to all food inputs and production including all farm fuels and other...aspects of the food supply system." Recommendation 2 was that the Government of Canada complete an economic assessment on the impact of the carbon tax and the clean fuel standard, carbon tax 2, and how this increase will affect the cost of food production, the price of food and the entire food supply chain. Recommendation 3 said, "That the Government of Canada immediately reverse its policy on front-of-package labelling."

There is only one thing we missed, which I think we would have added as a fourth recommendation had we known about it at the time. We now know the Liberal government is putting a ban on plastic food packaging, particularly for fresh fruit and vegetables, which will add an additional $8 billion to food costs. I want to really stress this point to everyone in the House and anyone who may be watching. This plastics ban is not the single-use plastics ban that the government has now been forced to reverse as a result of the decision at the court because it is unconstitutional. This is another ban on plastics.

I want Canadians to picture this. As a result of this plastics ban on fresh fruit and vegetables, Canadians will be unable to purchase products they rely on, essential products they purchase every day, such as prepackaged salads, cucumbers and bananas. Many of these products are transported to Canada from outside of our country. We do not grow bananas in our climate. We have not quite gotten there with greenhouses. Because of these plastic packaging rules, companies outside of Canada will not upend their systems to meet an incomprehensible rule that they do not want to meet and cannot meet. Canadians will be going to the grocery stores and seeing empty grocery store shelves because we will no longer be able to import these products.

The secondary concern, as a result of front-of-pack labelling and this plastics ban adding another $14 billion in costs on the food industry, is that Canadians are going to see skyrocketing food prices. We see the stats from Dr. Sylvain Charlebois on the carbon tax and other policies driving up food costs by 34%, and now we will add on other layers of bureaucracy. It is nonsensical and not based on science. The fresh produce industry cannot meet this deadline being imposed on it.

At the same time, the Liberal loyalists in the Senate did everything they could to kill Bill C-234, which would save Canadian farmers $1 billion by 2030 on the carbon tax. We heard the Prime Minister in question period today basically questioning the carbon tax bills that farmers are sending us every single day. He said he does not think they are being forthright on what their carbon tax numbers are; he thinks they are too high. He should go out to every farm in Canada that is spending tens of thousands of dollars a month on carbon taxes to heat and cool barns, dry grains and operate family farms. These are the real-life consequences of the government's policies on carbon taxes and the impact they are having on everyday Canadians' ability to feed their families.

I thought it was very important that we have an opportunity to address the study we tabled last June and try to update some of the numbers in the study that have now become obsolete as a result of the new data that has become available. Food prices are not only going up 5% to 7%. As a result of the data and the studies that have been done and as a result of the Liberals' carbon tax and other punitive policies, such as front-of-pack labelling and the ban on P2 plastics, Canadians are going to find it much more difficult to feed themselves, and millions more Canadians are going to be relying on food banks and charities.

After eight years, the Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost.

● (1630)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member for Foothills indicate that the price on pollution is going to increase the cost of groceries by 34% over the next two years. Can he explain how he can substantiate that?

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear. While I always appreciate the hon. member trying to put his own spin on things, what I said was that this is as a result of a study by Dr. Sylvain Charlebois of Dalhousie University. These are not numbers I am picking out of the sky.

I will try to find the quote for the hon. member for Winnipeg North. It must drive him crazy to find out that there are numbers and we make decisions based on data. Dr. Sylvain Charlebois has forecast that inflationary pressures and uncompetitive policies, like the carbon tax, on growing, processing and transporting food will increase the cost of wholesale food by 34% on average for all food categories by 2025.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the chance to speak about agriculture in the House. I am a bit disappointed because I was hoping to speak to Bill C-58 today.

My hon. colleague will know, given that he serves on the committee with me, that we are revisiting this issue. We recently had four of the five grocery CEOs appear before our committee. Of course, in particular, Mr. Galen Weston tends to stand out. He is the one the media seems to be interested in.

What I found interesting when Mr. Weston appeared before our committee is that he did not seem to be aware of how many of his employees are accessing a food bank in order to get by. This is a man who commands a benefits package worth about 431 times that of his average employee.

The point I really want to get to is that Mr. Weston's company, Loblaws, is one of the two holdouts on joining a grocery code of conduct. I want my hon. colleague to explain this to members of the House. If we have Walmart and Loblaws step out of the grocery code of conduct, what is that going to do for the remaining players? What does he think the federal government, in partnership with the provinces, should do as a next step? Does he believe that it is time to start enforcing a mandatory code as a result?

● (1635)

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is correct. I was disappointed to see how the grocery CEOs were approaching the grocery code of conduct. We are now seeing Loblaws and Walmart pull out. The grocery code of conduct, in its voluntary mandate right now, likely will not move ahead unless all five main grocery retailers sign on to it. These grocery retailers need to start to take this seriously.

I think Canadians need to understand that the fees and fines these retailers are burdening suppliers, producers and processors with across Canada are driving up food costs and making life unaffordable for Canadian farmers. When we have 44% of produce growers in Canada operating at a loss, that is unsustainable. A lot of that has to fall at the feet of those retailers, which are not doing their fair share.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's speech and his comments recognizing the huge impact this has had on the agriculture industry, which is the backbone of my riding. So many of my agriculture producers are being challenged, whether because of a port strike in Vancouver, the restrictions, the worries about a possible port strike in Montreal and the huge costs that are being put on our farmers, which increase their costs.

As the member knows, increasing their costs and transportation costs is going to eventually increase costs to consumers. Ultimately, that is going to put more people into food banks. I wonder if the member would expand on that.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I am very thankful to my colleague, who has always been a strong advocate for Canadian farmers and certainly his constituents in Saskatchewan.

This is why I find the comments of the Prime Minister today in question period so offensive. He said that farmers are not telling the truth about the cost of the carbon tax and said that 97% of their carbon taxes are covered. That is completely false.

Unlike most any other industry, Canadian farmers pay the carbon tax over and over again, from the rail lines when they transport their grain to the trucking companies when they move their cattle to the shipping companies when they are moving other commodities and buying fertilizer, fuel or feed. They pay it every single time, and those prices and increased costs are passed directly on to consumers.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here today to talk about grocery affordability and examining rising food costs in Canada. The agriculture committee submitted this report in June after a fairly lengthy study.

This is a topic that has been near and dear to my heart for many years. I come from a produce background. Having a family farm and a produce business feeding Canadians is something that my family has prided ourselves on for our entire lives. It has been our livelihood. Making sure we can sell an affordable product to Canadians so Canadian families can go to the grocery store and afford to buy healthy, nutritious food at a reasonable cost is something that all farm producers want in this country.

Unfortunately, we are in a time right now when we are not seeing that. Families are struggling. I hear this on a daily basis. They are struggling to afford the basic necessities, to heat their homes, to pay their mortgages and to afford food.

Recently, I talked to someone from my community who runs one of the food banks. I asked him how things have been and if he has noticed an increase in demand for food. He said that they are so busy that he has not even had the time to sit down to look at the numbers. The food just keeps coming and people are showing up at the door for food. He said he hears from folks that they just need to get food for one month or one week, and that they will be okay in a couple of weeks, they just a bit of food right now. He said he tells people they can visit the food bank as long as they need to. He does not want them putting money on their credit cards and racking up credit card bills to eat. They can go to the food bank as long as they need to and pay off their bills. The food bank will be there to support them to make sure they can feed their families and kids.

That, to me, was very striking. Never in my lifetime have I imagined, living in Canada, that I would see people suffering so badly that they could not afford food to feed their families, especially when I know Canada produces some of the best in the world and we have access to fresh food here like we have never before.

One of the things making it more expensive for farmers to produce their food is the carbon tax. That was talked about in this report. I look at all the steps that are taken along the journey at my farm, in particular, speaking from experience, and when the cost of fuel increases, it impacts the cost of doing business. It is not just on the fuel we use to bring the goods from the field into the warehouse, from the warehouse into the packing plant and then from the packing plant to food distribution centres, it is all along the supply chain.

Packaging is one area where I have noticed an increase over the years, especially during COVID. People tried to get packaging for their goods to sell to consumers, consumers were eating more at home instead of at restaurants, and when the buying habits of consumers changed, it put a big demand on grocery stores and producers to make sure they could keep getting the goods to grocery stores. The cost of packaging increased partially not only because of the increased cost due to the carbon tax in getting the packaging and all the steps it takes to make the packaging, but also because of demand for the packaging.

The reason I bring up the cost of packaging is that we have recently seen that the government has a new plastics ban proposed, not the first one that was struck down by the Supreme Court, but the second plastics packaging ban. One of the recommendations in this report was, “ensuring [the government's] plastic reduction requirements are attainable by extending the implementation timeline for a single-use plastics ban and working with retailers to ensure that commercially viable alternatives to plastics, in particular for packaging designed to extend the shelf-life of food and limit food waste, will be available in the needed quantities.”

● (1640)

I would like to take a moment to educate those who may be watching at home right now. This proposed plastics ban for the fruit and vegetable industry is new. It is not the single-use plastics ban. What consumers need to know is that two-thirds of the fresh produce we eat and consume in this country is imported from other countries. While we have a great area in Leamington where we grow a lot of vegetables in greenhouses, and every year we are seeing more and more greenhouse vegetable production come on line, we are still reliant on most of our food coming as imports from other countries.

The average person does not realize, before food ever hits their grocery store shelves, it has been on a ship coming from somewhere across the world. Whether it is food from South America, South Africa or other parts of Africa, and a lot comes from South America, it sits in refrigerated containers on ships going across the ocean to get to Canada. Then it has to be unloaded at a port and put on a truck. Those trucks come from the United States, and sometimes they came through Montreal or B.C., but for the most part, they come through the U.S. A lot of it comes into Toronto at the Ontario Food Terminal.

To keep vegetables and fruit fresh for their journey, and it can be weeks on end before they ever see a grocery store shelf, they need to be in packaging that is resilient and that will hold up the quality of the produce.

Produce is mostly water. It is just a fact of life. Fruit and vegetables are mostly water. I do not know the exact percentage, but it is about 90% or so. If we are trying to ship water in the form of fruits and vegetables and trying to keep it fresh to get it onto the grocery store shelves, it needs to be in something that is durable to preserve that freshness and quality.

The number one consumed product in the world is bananas, and they have to be shipped in plastic to stop them from ripening on route so that we can ripen them once they get into the country. If this new plastics ban goes ahead, we will not see bananas on the shelves anymore. In fact, in the U.S. people have said, and some suppliers have said, that if the plastics ban on produce goes forth in Canada, we will not be seeing things on shelves such as bagged salads and all the premade things, such as precut veggies and precut fruit.

We are not going to see berries in clamshells. Grapes come in bags. Some potatoes come in plastic bags. It is for a reason, which is to keep it fresh in our home so we have time to consume it before it goes bad. If this ban were to go through, we would see huge amounts of food waste, which would increase greenhouse gas emissions. We would see up to 50% food waste, and the greenhouse gas emissions from food waste would double.

This would also have a catastrophic impact on our food security in this country. We are not just talking about affordability for Canadians. We are now talking about food security because of the NDP-Liberal government's own policies, which are creating this scenario.

I also want to touch on the carbon tax. I have some folks in my riding who have written to me recently to talk about those increases to the cost of their production that they are not able to recoup. They are grain farmers, and one grain farmer reached out to tell me that their gas bill last month for drying their corn was $39,000. That was just for one month. The carbon tax portion of that was $10,000 for one month, and that farmer will never be able to recoup that $10,000. They will not be able to put it back into their business to innovate and make sure they are doing what they can to help the environment.

I have a chicken farmer in my riding who gave me his gas bills for the whole year. He is paying $15,000 in carbon taxes this year just to heat one barn.

The government's own policies, whether the new plastics ban or the carbon tax, are creating unaffordable food for Canadians, and the government should be doing more to make sure that Canadians can afford to feed themselves by changing its policies and axing the carbon tax. Canadians know that Conservatives would axe the carbon tax. We would make life more affordable for Canadians because, after eight years of this Prime Minister, he is just not worth the cost.

● (1645)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member knows how long Europe has gone without bananas because Europe does not allow things to be shipped in when wrapped in plastic, or if they are shipped in wrapped in plastic, there is a penalty to be paid.

I also wonder if she has heard of the Nabob Coffee Company way out my way in British Columbia. The coffee pods look like they have a plastic ring inside a plastic bag, but that plastic is actually made from vegetable matter, and it is entirely compostable, so that works. Could she comment on that?

Ms. Lianne Rood: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is a great one. The answer is that, at this point, there is no commercially viable option to the plastic packaging available right now. It is a global supply chain. It is not just Canada that we are working with. We are working with the globe. As I said, we import two-thirds of our fresh food in this country from other countries.

If there were a commercially viable option at this time, I am sure that retailers and farmers, anybody who needs to package produce, would be using it. Because we are a global supply chain, and because we rely on two-thirds of our food to be imported, it means those countries that we import from also have to be on board with this.

If there were an alternative that was globally available at a good cost, because we do not want to do things that are going to increase the cost for Canadians, I know that farmers and the industry would be working very hard to be able to find that alternative. We heard that from the grocers themselves, as well. We are looking for alternatives. They are just not there yet. Once they are, I am sure that the industry will make sure to do all it can to implement them.

● (1650)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague will be aware that, earlier this week, Dr. Jim Stanford was one of our witnesses. He provided our committee with a brief that derives its information from publicly available data. On page five of that brief he noted that, from the beginning of 2021 to the spring of 2022, "the world price of oil tripled" from $40 a barrel to $120 a barrel and that, in that period, "the jump in the price of oil [which was] driven by a combination of geopolitics and speculation...increased fossil fuel prices by 30 times as much as the $10 carbon price increase in the same period." We also know from previous briefs that, in the last three years, oil and gas companies have seen their net profits go up by over 1,000%.

Why, when Conservatives are talking about the carbon tax, do they conveniently ignore these facts and ignore their very real role in driving up food price inflation? One cannot argue with the facts. This is clear data that is available for all members, and oil profits have had a huge impact on world food prices, far more than the carbon tax has. Will my colleague acknowledge that?

Ms. Lianne Rood: Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy working with my colleague at the agriculture committee. We worked really hard together on the code of conduct, which I did not get a chance to talk about yet.

For the last several years, I have been a huge supporter of getting a code of conduct in place. This week, we heard that Loblaw and Walmart have no intention at this point in signing the code that is before them right now, but we have all the other retailers on board. The code of conduct is going to make it easier and better for farmers and suppliers, who generally face steep fines and fees that they have to pay just for the privilege of selling their goods on grocery store shelves. That also contributes to higher grocery prices, when farmers have to find a way to recoup the costs in the form of the fees and fines they pay to retailers for selling their goods.

I hope we can see the grocery code of conduct ratified and see all parties sign onto it to make sure we can treat our farmers and our suppliers fairly so they can continue to supply nutritious food to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. Unfortunately, she has just failed to answer the question. My NDP colleague asked her about the oil and gas companies' exorbitant, astronomical, skyrocketing profits, which are having a very significant impact on the cost of groceries.

I would like my colleague to talk about oil and gas profits. I hope she heard the question.

[*English*]

Ms. Lianne Rood: Mr. Speaker, I always find it a pleasure to work with my hon. colleague as well.

The reality is that the government policies are increasing food costs. Part of it is the carbon tax. Families already cannot afford food right now, and they are going to have to pay another $700 to feed their families next year.

Conservatives believe that families should be able to keep more money in their pockets. We will axe the carbon tax to help them have more affordable food.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Beauce, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Indigenous Affairs; the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Climate Change.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the past, it is always a pleasure to be able to rise and address the House.

Obviously, what is taking place today is no surprise whatsoever. It is interesting that, on Monday, I was standing up and actually being critical of the Conservative Party. It is hard to believe, but I was critical because Conservatives had brought in a concurrence report to talk about Afghanistan and foreign affairs.

By doing that particular concurrence report, they prevented government legislation from being debated. Interestingly enough, the legislation that they prevented from being debated, which members could have stood up and talked about, was Bill C-56, the affordability legislation. Every word that the Conservative Party has actually said already this afternoon could have been said during that debate.

That is why I argued back then, as I will today, that the Conservative Party is very much out of touch with the realities of what Canadians are actually facing. They are more concerned about how to cater to the extreme right.

We hear the term "MAGA Conservatives". I would suggest that, more and more, it is becoming something that all Canadians should be very much aware of. It is creeping out, coming from the south. It is that Donald Trump, "make America great again" theme, and the catering to the far-right there that is coming up—

● (1655)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Simcoe—Grey is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Terry Dowdall: Mr. Speaker, I have just been listening here. I do not really see a whole lot of relevance in what is being said. Once again, it is kind of ridiculous, what we are hearing.

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to make sure that we do not get too many points of order; when people are talking about the points of order they bring up, they should actually quote that great book we are given when we first get here.

I will also say that we are speaking to a concurrence report.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if the member takes the time to actually read the report that was brought forward in the form of a concurrence motion, he will find out that it is about affordability. That is, in fact, how I started my comments. I was talking about the issue of affordability in Bill C-56, the affordability act, and how that legislation was being filibustered by the Conservatives through a concurrence motion. The reason for this is that the Conservatives do not care about the issues of the day that Canadians are concerned about. Then I started to explain it.

Maybe members on the other side do not all fully understand it because they are following the lead that is coming from the leader of the Conservative Party's office and that House leadership team over there. Canadians have a right to know that the pattern we are witnessing in terms of the behaviour, the issues that are being brought up and the manner in which they are being brought up definitely deal with the issue of MAGA politics. The member across the way might disagree. Maybe he should talk to his leader, and his leader can explain exactly what the Conservative agenda really is.

When we think of affordability, let us think in terms of what the member for Foothills said. He tries to give an impression about the cost of food and inflation. He cites a report and says there would be a 34% increase in the next couple of years. Then he tries to say that this is a report that he was kind of quoting from.

I will tell members what the Conservatives are very, very good at, which is the same thing that Donald Trump is very good at: sending out information that is misleading. I am very kind when I say that. I could think of a lot of other words to use, so I am being generous. Let me suggest the reason. Let us think about it: The member is trying to plant the seeds of fear that the price on pollution is costing huge amounts of money toward the issue of food inflation.

Some of the members across the way actually believe the leader of the Conservative Party. I understand there is an obligation to listen to the leader because, after all, he is their leader. However, that does not mean they have to believe everything he says. I do not want to get into personalities, but it is like a snake oil salesperson. Let us think about this. Let us think in terms of—

● (1700)

The Deputy Speaker: I have a point of order from the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, it is well known in this place that we do not refer to hon. members as snake oil salesmen or other negative things. All members here, if they are going to debate, should debate and use either a member's title or the name of their riding. I just do not think it is parliamentary language, and the member should maybe dwell upon our rules a bit more.

The Deputy Speaker: The Speaker was clear in his report that we should be referring to one another by our proper titles, which are, of course, our riding names.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the other day, I could not believe the number of times the Conservatives stood on points of order. I think they almost doubled the length of my speech because of the number of interruptions. Why were they interrupting then? It was because I was telling people following the debates how the Conservatives were voting; they took offence to my saying they do not support Ukraine and constantly vote against supporting it. They were up, one after another, saying that I cannot tell Canadians how they voted.

The point is that, as sensitive as the Conservative members might be in the House, their leader is sending very misleading messages. I will use the specific example that has already been brought up by a number of members today. Conservatives talk about the price on pollution. It does not matter how many times I say this, they ignore the facts and the reality. I will state the facts, something that they cannot deny.

I go to the University of Winnipeg and sit in classrooms for introduction courses or second-year programs, as well as high schools in the north end of Winnipeg, and speak with the students. I do not know if there is a Conservative member who has the courage to sit beside me and have that discussion, but I would talk about the facts and see what the member has to say.

Here is a fact: The price on pollution also provides a rebate, and 80% of Canadians or more get more money back than they pay. The Conservatives either do not understand it or are misleading Canadians. When the leader of the Conservative Party travels the country and says he is going to get rid of the price on pollution, what he does not say is that he is also going to be getting rid of the rebate. This would hurt average Canadians in the middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it, the people who need it the most. That is the money he would take away. That is the reality.

However, it does not prevent the leader of the Conservative Party from touring the country and telling people that, if he gets rid of the price on pollution, life is going to be more affordable for Canadians. That is just not true. Like Donald Trump, he will say things that are not true. It is that very real MAGA-right element that the Conservative Party of Canada is courting in a big way; it is prepared to sacrifice sound public policy in order to capture that base of support.

At the end of the day, it is unfortunate, because people are concerned about our environment, unlike the Conservatives, who still, in good part, deny climate issues are real. They do not believe in climate change, at least not publicly, in their public policies. They talk about making life more affordable by getting rid of the price on pollution. I will remind them what the Governor of the Bank of Canada said. We all remember the governor. He is the individual who runs the Bank of Canada and the one the leader of the Conservative Party wanted to fire. Then there was an issue on which he kind of agreed with the Governor of the Bank of Canada, so he has watered down that position.

The member for Abbotsford was told not to tell the leader what to say, that type of thing. There was some sort of demotion, but I will not go into that. That is all internal Conservative politics.

● (1705)

However, I can tell members that the Conservative Party of Canada today seems to be a little more sympathetic to the Bank of Canada.

One Conservative member tries to give the impression of a 30%-plus increase—

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: It is 34%.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is 34%, as has been corrected by the member opposite.

However, as the Conservatives want to give that bit of false information, what does the Governor of the Bank of Canada say? We are talking about a decimal point, which is 0.15% of 1%. In my books, that makes the Conservative Party an absolute joke. It makes no sense whatsoever for the Conservative Party to try to tell Canadians that by cutting out the price on pollution life is going to be more affordable for Canadians. The MAGA right might believe that, and they will be talking about it at great length over the Christmas break until we come back. The Conservatives are going to continue that spin as if the price on pollution is what is driving up inflation, but nothing could be further from the truth. One would think that would change their behaviour, but one should not bank on it. The Conservatives will not, because they are more concerned about that simple phrase so that they can put it on a bumper sticker. It is unfortunate, because it is sound public policy, and we can think of the consequence of it.

When the Conservatives are talking about affordability, we can think in terms of what is impacting the price of our groceries. One of the major factors is what is taking place in the world; for example, the war in Europe. Russia has invaded Ukraine. There was a time when every member of Parliament stood as one in recognizing that we had to be there for Ukraine. We saw the world, in good part, recognize the importance of Ukraine solidarity. However, we have witnessed the MAGA Conservatives, over the last number of weeks, adopt a position that they do not support the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement. Members can think about that for a moment.

We have had so many trade agreements, 35 or 40 trade agreements, and no prime minister or government in Canada has signed more trade agreements than this current Prime Minister, and it was nice that the Conservative Party supported every one of them. Even when they were in government, the Conservatives brought in trade agreements. Why? It is because they realized that they are in Canada's best interest. They provide more marketplaces and more competition, and more competition means better prices. However, the very first time I have witnessed the Conservative Party vote against a trade agreement was on the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement. I do not understand how they can justify that sort of position. It is not going to make life more affordable here in Canada. So, when members opposite talk about affordability, how do they justify their MAGA behaviour dealing with the Ukraine-Canada trade agreement?

Now, the Conservatives are out there again trying to spread all sorts of information. They are saying "Well, we support Ukraine". We see members stand up on S.O. 31s saying how they support Ukraine. Well, if they support Ukraine, they would be supporting more affordable grocery prices, especially in the long run. Why did they vote against the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement? Why did they vote, not once, not twice but at least on three separate occasions during the line-by-line breakdown of expenses for the government to actually spend money on?

● (1710)

On three occasions, the Conservatives intentionally voted that money down, yet they say they support Ukraine. Actions speak louder than words. I would encourage my Conservative friends opposite to reflect on the flip-flop they made on the price on pollution. They say the price on pollution is going to make life more unaffordable. We know that is not true, but that is what they say. In the last federal election they did not say that. In the last federal election, they were in support of a price on pollution, but they took a flip-flop and now they do not support a price on pollution. It is marginal. We are talking a fraction point in terms of the impact on the inflation rate of groceries.

I would like to see them take what I would classify as an honourable flip-flop. An honourable flip-flop would be to recognize that the MAGA right is wrong and get behind Ukraine, and get behind the government, the Liberals and the New Democrats. The New Democrats rarely vote for trade agreements, but even they see the benefits of this trade agreement. The Bloc and the Greens do too. The Conservatives are the only political entity voting against it. They are the only political entity that voted against the line-by-line expenditures. That has more of an impact on long-term grocery prices than the price on pollution idea.

I would encourage the Conservatives, over the next number of weeks as they go and talk to their constituents, to reconsider the way they have been behaving inside the House. They should look at the benefits of the legislation and budgetary measures the government is taking that will make life more affordable and start voting for some of those initiatives, such as the dental plan that we just announced that is going to help literally millions of Canadians; the grocery rebate that was given by the government that helped nine or 11 million Canadians; and the child care program that we made at $10 a day, a truly national program. By the way, that is a program that they called a slush fund in the last federal election.

These are the types of actions that, if the Conservative Party would abandon the MAGA right, we would have better public policy that would be in the best interests of Canadians and that would make life more affordable. This is a government that will continue, day in and day out, to look at ways to ensure that life is as affordable as it possibly can be by using good, sound government policy. We would look to the opposition, particularly the Conservative Party, to recognize those facts. There is nothing wrong with supporting the types of initiatives that the government is bringing forward to provide the breaks Canadians want.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite certainly has tried to summon every boogeyman he can think of.

Canadians are seeing in their pocketbooks that they cannot afford to buy groceries and they cannot afford to pay their heating bills. They are seeing the carbon tax line. I get calls to my office all the time about it. I am sure that the member opposite is getting the same kinds of calls from people who are concerned about the increasing cost of groceries and the increasing cost of the carbon tax on everything.

Is he not receiving those calls?

● (1715)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member heard that the Governor of the Bank of Canada says that the price on pollution, or the carbon tax which is what the Conservatives like to put on bumper stickers, actually is going to cost 0.15%. That is 0.15 of 1%. That is a far cry from what the Conservative Party of Canada is trying to spread throughout the country, which is exceptionally misleading.

Canadians want a government that actually has a climate plan. Unlike the Conservative Party of Canada, most Canadians recognize that climate change is real. There is an expectation of leadership. They are seeing it with this government in terms of a number of policy points that we have annunciated in order to be able to ensure a higher sense of affordability.

If we want to talk about inflation rates overall, I will get to that point in my next question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague realizes that the dog and pony show put on by his colleague, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, counted for absolutely nothing. I do not know whether he is following the work of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, but we heard again this week from the CEO of Metro. I salute him and thank him for his candour. He frankly admitted to us that he had told the minister that the major grocery chains would continue to do what they always do, which is to try to give their customers the best prices, and that they would not change their practices at all.

He also told us that he had committed to signing the code of conduct the minister had asked them to sign, but he did not believe that the code of conduct would change prices. Other grocers, including the CEO of Loblaws, told us that they had no interest whatsoever in signing the code of conduct. I am therefore calling into question the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry's media event.

I would like the parliamentary secretary to comment on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is not just the Government of Canada. I know of other provincial jurisdictions. I can attest it is the people of Canada who are exceptionally upset with the big five grocery companies. There is an expectation that we all try to do something to hold them to account. That is why, whether it was the Prime Minister or the minister of industry calling them to Ottawa, we are being a voice for 40 million Canadians and letting them know that things like a grocery code of conduct are really important to all of us. There will be a price to pay. I hope we will see a whole lot more respect, and more importantly, more action from the big five grocery chains. Under no circumstances would I ever suggest the minister or the Prime Minister not do what they have been doing in trying to hold those corporations to account.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, why are we having this concurrence debate? We know why. It is because the Conservatives do not want us to be debating anti-scab legislation. They say they are here for workers; they are not here for workers. They moved this concurrence motion so we could not talk about protecting workers' rights. That is exactly why we are having this concurrence debate.

While we are here, let us talk about food prices. I come from a coastal community, and as the Speaker knows coming from a coastal community himself, people rely on local fisheries. Wild salmon, for example, where I live is critical to food security.

When it comes to going to the grocery store, it is pretty sad when Galen Weston earns 431 times what his employees earn, when we see corporate taxes under the Conservatives and Liberals go from 28% to 15% and that there are employees for these companies going to the food bank.

Will my colleague's party consider revisiting the corporate tax rate or is it going to continue the corporate welfare that is going on while employees are going to the food bank?

● (1720)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member raised two issues and I want to address the first issue. I have had the opportunity to speak on the anti-scab legislation. We have heard now for I do not know how long Conservative Party members say their party is one to support the workers, and they have not been able to clearly demonstrate that.

Today we were not supposed to be debating this concurrence report. The debate today was supposed to be about anti-scab legislation, again very much a progressive piece of legislation that we made a promise about in the last election. It was part of the Liberal Party's election platform to bring in anti-scab legislation. What we are witnessing is the Conservative Party using legislative tactics again, and I do not know how many times it has happened, in order to frustrate the legislative agenda. I do not think there has been an opposition party that has used it as much as this opposition party.

Whether it is the issue of affordability, the issue of workers or so many other things the government continues to be focused on for Canadians, the Conservative Party of Canada is more focused on being a destructive force here on the floor of the House of Commons and playing party politics more so than what is good, sound public policy.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are close to 60 countries in the world that have a price on pollution: Canada; the whole European Union, 27 countries; Denmark; Japan; Korea; Mexico; New Zealand; Norway; Singapore; Sweden; the U.K.; many more; and Ukraine—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I am being heckled because I did not recognize someone. I just want to say that the hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville had stood up before the hon. member came to visit us. I am just going to say that.

The hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville has the floor, from the top, please.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, again, there are close to 60 countries in the world that have a price on pollution. We are talking, of course, about Canada; Denmark; the whole European Union, 27 countries; Japan; Korea; Mexico; New Zealand; Norway; South Africa; Singapore; Sweden; and the U.K., and I could say many more, including Ukraine. Of course, we have trade agreements with many of these countries. We have had long-standing trade agreements. We have voted in the House, as Liberals, for a free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine.

Would the Conservatives, in their reckless and risky way, put many of our trade agreements around the world in jeopardy?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, one of the countries that the member missed is the United States, where there are many states that actually have a price on pollution. I suspect that it is only going to be a question of time before the United States will, in fact, have a price on pollution, because, as I say, there are many states that currently do.

What is really important for us to recognize is that the price on pollution makes a lot of sense, as countries around the world are adopting it, including the European Union. That is one of the reasons why Ukraine has had it since 2011. One has to ask the question, why does the Conservative Party continuously vote against Ukraine, specifically the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement? It is totally amazing.

There is only one answer and that answer is that it is the MAGA right of the United States that is creeping into Canada via the office of the leader of the official opposition, who wants to be the golden boy of advertising and misleading, the Donald Trump of the north, as one of my colleagues would say.

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I am tabling the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1945, 1950, 1953 to 1955, 1943, 1944, 1946 to 1949, 1951, 1952 and 1956.

● (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as I usually do, I want to bring the debate back to the subject we were asked to address, namely a report from the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

However, that does not mean that I disagree with the comments that have been made to the effect that the Conservative Party has been engaged in systematic and ongoing obstruction while claiming to be working for the common good. It is rather ironic. Meanwhile, we have a government that says all the right things and is great at photo ops and PR, but produces very little in the way of results. That is also rather ironic. Then we have the NDP lackeys, who always vote with the government, no matter what is proposed. That paints a picture of the situation.

However, we are here to talk about substance, so that is what I am going to do.

We conducted a study on the price of food at the grocery chains. This allows me to add a clarification to the question I asked the parliamentary secretary earlier. I told him that the show put on by his Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry did nothing but create media attention in an effort to get a boost in the polls, although this was also a failure. We have done the study. We already received the CEOs of the major grocery stores at committee, and we got a taste of their total lack of concern. We have already seen how little they seemed to care about what we asked of them.

I have said this before in the House and I will say it again. When we received the five CEOs of the grocery stores, they did not want to disclose their profits, which are astronomical and have only increased over previous years, despite everything they might tell us. They said they could not give us the numbers for competition reasons. I asked them whether they would give those numbers to the Competition Bureau, which would keep them confidential. There is a serious study to be done. All five grocers promised me they would do that.

When I received the Competition Bureau's report, I noticed that, in the first few pages, the bureau lamented the fact that the companies had failed to provide their figures. How honest and transparent. I commend all the big grocers for that.

I am asking for those numbers again in committee because the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry has asked us to redo the work, so that we can be part of the show he is putting on to try to convince people that we are working on the price of groceries and that it is going to produce results. I am missing two, but those people all told me that they had submitted their figures. At the end of the study, we will probably still have five CEOs who promised me they would provide their numbers, the Competition Bureau saying it did not get them, and the same five CEOs telling me that they did provide them. That is the power that the government has over grocery prices.

The problem goes deeper than that. These are private companies. The problem is related to competition. The situation we are in is due to an oligopoly where five companies control 80% of the market. They claim they do not talk to each other, which is doubtful. Since they cannot be accused of anything without proof, we have to believe them. That said, they must watch each other because, after COVID-19, on the same day, they all cancelled the bonus pay they were giving their employees. If they are not talking to each other, they are closely watching each other. When we look at pricing, we can see that their prices are very similar. That is the problem.

We also have an oligopoly situation in the oil and gas industry. Our Conservative friends speak out against the carbon tax. I understand that this has consequences for their Canadian operations. However, beyond that, these companies' exorbitant profits are on the rise. It is funny, because I do not hear any Conservative members speak out against that. I hear my NDP colleagues criticizing the big grocers for their profits. I understand that, and I do not disagree. They really are astronomical. Why do we not hear the Conservatives talk about profits? When we talk about the price of gas, when we talk about people in the regions who need to use more gas, why do the Conservatives stay mum on that? I would like the Conservatives to tell me about that.

Earlier, we put the question to my esteemed colleague on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. We asked her the question twice, and twice, not just once, we did not get an answer. I see colleagues I know well. If any of them would like to answer my question, I invite them to do so. I would be delighted.

● (1730)

What we need is transparency, control and competition. We have asked for information on how prices are set. We have asked that more flexibility be given to indigenous communities in the north, where the cost of food is appallingly high compared to other regions. Measures could be taken to prevent food waste. For example, expiration dates could be reviewed. When I visited a yogurt factory and told the production manager that if the expiration date is November 3, I throw my yogurt away on November 4, he kind of laughed at me. There is nothing scientific about it; it is a legal protection that companies give themselves. Perhaps they could ease off a bit.

We also need to find a way to redistribute surplus food. Some farmers have written to tell me that after their machinery finishes up in their market garden fields, some produce remains behind. Some great initiatives are under way, like the Maski Récolte project in my riding of Berthier—Maskinongé. Volunteers go into the fields and harvest what remains. However, this is not common practice across the territory. Why could we not, as a government, reimburse farmers for the cost of harvesting this food in their fields, provided they donate it to food banks? I think the effort might be worthwhile. Why should farmers have to pay to share this surplus food when they already work long hours with little or no support, and get ignored?

My colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue was with farmers from his region today who came to meet with the minister to explain the region's situation, the lack of support and lack of programs for farmers. The members of our agricultural community are not being supported; they are being left to endure terrible conditions. Then people wonder why the cost of food is rising. It all follows logically. Can we take care of our people and use our heads?

We talked about plastics. We are in favour of protecting the environment and removing plastics, but it has to be done intelligently. It is like deciding to ban a pesticide. First, we have to know what the industry plans to replace it with and what impact that will have. Will the solution be worse than the pesticide being banned? Governments sometimes tend to bring in populist measures, especially when one pesticide name becomes more popular than another. These same governments accuse other political parties of being populist. Let me be clear. I am not saying that they are wrong when they accuse other political parties of being populist. What I am saying is that we must not get caught up in that. Let us be smart.

Do members know what the report recommended? It recommended that the government reimburse the farmers who paid 35% tax on Russian fertilizer. That never happened and never will because they are incapable of doing it. They do not know who paid what. It is too complicated. They are just leaving the tax there. Canada is the only G7 country to do that. Everyone wants to help Ukraine, but can we be smart about it? The Russians are laughing at us and this is having no impact. Our farmers are paying the tax and we are unable to give them their money back. They were told not to worry about it, that the government was going to create a nice investment program for farm climate action and that the money would be put in there. The farmers were supposed to be happy about paying for a program. It it ridiculous. Then, people say that food is expensive. There are some unparliamentary words that come to mind, but with great restraint, I will refrain from uttering them.

What is more—and this is what I want to denounce most loudly and clearly—the program addressed the liquidity issue. The government often talks about agriculture, but we cannot forget the agri-food industry, all the processing. A lot has been mechanized, industry plays a big part, and there is a chronic shortage of workers. The government does not help much, if at all. It is extremely complex. The report recommends making it easier for small businesses to access liquidity to stay afloat. All the government does now is lend them money from time to time; there is no direct support. However, there is a very simple show of support that could have been offered. In fact, I would like to hear my Conservative colleagues talk more often about deferring repayment of the emergency business account loan.

● (1735)

I have not heard my friends talk about that for a long time. It seems to me that it is a logical, concrete measure. According to all of their speeches, it should be part of the picture. Why do they not support us in pressuring the government to ask for another year, especially for the agricultural sector?

I am sure it is the same for them, but many small producers have come to see me to say that they are unable to pay back the loan and they need a break. In response, the government says it will give them 18 more days, after which they will have to take out a loan at the current interest rate of 7%, 8% or 9% to pay it back. Otherwise, the government, which is so generous, will turn the $20,000 subsidy into a loan and finance it at 5%. My, is that not generous?

I may look a bit frustrated, but it seems to me that I keep repeating the same things over and over. A whip staffer told me that I had to come to the House because we were going to talk about a farming report. I have read the recommendations and it appears to be the same report we talked about last week.

As members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, we work hard and diligently. We come up with recommendations that make sense. Then, six months or one year later, we realize that our recommendations were not followed. Another situation comes up, and the same recommendation applies, so we make it again. We have been making a lot of the same recommendations for four years. I have been here for four years and we have been making these recommendations for four years. Can we make them happen? Can we get moving on this?

We have mentioned liquidity in small businesses. What is happening with the Canada emergency business account is unacceptable, disgusting, even shocking. That members of the government are willing to see our small businesses, our SMEs, including restaurants, flounder and go bankrupt, is scandalous. The government is so intent on recovering $40,000 that it is going to end up with nothing once these businesses are bankrupt. Congratulations, what a success story.

For four years now, the recommendations have been calling for an investment fund to expand infrastructure and modernize agri-food processing. When we look at the supply chain, we see that there is not enough investment in technology and infrastructure for businesses in Canada and Quebec. When governments refuse to invest over and over again, sooner or later, after 25 years, it becomes much more profitable for a company to shut down and start a new one. Where will the new one be located? Maple Leaf is a very good example. That company moved to the U.S. Are we going to wait for more of that?

Can something constructive be done? It does not have to cost the government a lot of money, but we have to make investments easier for businesses.

We talked about giving the Competition Bureau more authority to compel reluctant grocery store CEOs to hand over figures they were unwilling to provide, for example. When the bureau analyzes mergers, it has to stop rubber-stamping everything. At the moment, companies are allowed a market concentration of 30% to 35%. That means that three companies can control everything. That is still an oligopoly. The grocery industry has seen a series of acquisitions and mergers since the 1980s. It all happened at once. Oddly enough, no one, not a single political leader, had the foresight to say that the market would become too concentrated and that the big companies might fix prices. Members of government are only realizing this now, when five companies control 80% of the market. Then they call in the big CEOs and tell them that they will have to advertise discounts in their flyers, thinking the general public will swallow it. I hope that Canadians will not be fooled into accepting that.

We also need to look at why there are only five companies. What are the obstacles? There are anti-competitive practices. For example, a grocery store has space in a shopping mall and demands that there be no other grocery stores in that mall. This needs to be illegal. Sometimes, grocery stores move, but the former landlord is still stuck for five years not being able lease space to another grocery store. Then we are surprised that there is no competition.

It is the same with the labour shortage. How long has this been an issue? The government has had its head in the sand. Then it says there is a labour shortage, panics and wonders what to do. Actually, the Liberal government is not even doing that. They see that there is a labour shortage, but they figure that they can wait a while and it will pass. They simply close their eyes and wait. Weeks go by, and things do not get any better on their own. Then the government tries to do something.

● (1740)

We must take action for the people and be serious about managing the situation. That is my message. Of course, I am sending it out to our Conservative colleagues, who are enjoying blocking everything for the sake of blocking everything, so they can say that the government does not work and then think they look brilliant, as a result. My message is also for the Liberal government. I am asking them to show they have vision and to listen to the opposition's proposals. I would also tell my friends at the NDP to stop voting for just anything on the expectation they will get a few goodies. We must all act together for the common good.

This is not the first time I say this in the House, but an election should last a month and a half. During the four years in between, not two years or 18 months, we should all work together for the common good. To demonstrate that, I will stop four minutes before the end of my time. I hope that my colleague from the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food will be grateful, even though I did not leave him much time. He needs to realize that this is huge, because I never have enough time.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, can the hon. member comment on the fact that a business, such as a trucking company that moves food, pays a price on pollution or a carbon tax but gets a rebate, and as an input cost, it also gets to deduct that from the amount it earns as a company? Does that not, in the member's opinion, really negate the argument that somehow a price on pollution is behind high food prices today?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, as I do every time I am given this great opportunity, I want to say that Quebec is less familiar with the carbon tax because that is not how we do things. We participate in the carbon exchange with California.

However, according to the numbers I have seen, the carbon tax is responsible for 0.15% of the inflation we are currently experiencing. Most of the inflation that we are seeing right now is caused by big businesses that are operating within an oligopoly and that are making exorbitant profits. That includes grocery stores, but also, and especially, oil companies. Of course, there is also the international context.

If the government is collecting money, then I think it is also important to invest that money and to make it available to improve our technologies. The point of these taxes is not to make money or drive up the cost of living. It is to improve our environmental performance.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which was passionate as usual. He is an excellent collaborator at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Indeed, last spring, the five big players in the food sector appeared before the committee, which had produced a report. The Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry thought it was a good idea to invite them back. We got the same answers.

On Monday, when the CEO of Metro, Mr. La Flèche, was at the committee, something happened that I found interesting and I wonder if my colleague noticed it. My colleagues from Quebec say that the carbon tax does not apply in Quebec; we could debate that at length because it applies indirectly. I asked the CEO if the carbon tax had any repercussions across Canada and if it had any major repercussions on the food sector and he said yes.

I would like to know if my colleague took note of Mr. La Flèche's answer.

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I will begin by saying that I am very pleased that my colleague from Beauce answered the call I sent out to him during my speech. I appreciate it.

I will explain something to him. In Quebec, we participate in the carbon exchange with California, and agricultural producers are currently at $471 million in costs. Farms in Quebec are exempt from buying carbon credits. However, they are impacted when they buy fuel from Quebec distributors. That is part of the carbon exchange and it will go on, even if the rest of Canada cancels its carbon tax.

There is something I do not understand. It is unfortunate that this cannot be a five-minute discussion, because we would really be able to have some fun. I would like to ask my colleague from Beauce why he is defending the idea of scrapping the tax in the rest of Canada, which would put Quebec at a disadvantage, rather than speaking for Quebec. Why does he not talk about the need to extend the loan payment deadline for our small businesses? There are many small businesses in Beauce. I am sure he is concerned about what I am talking about. Can we give them some breathing room and some liquidity? That is just one example.

● (1745)

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I do enjoy working with my fellow colleague on the agriculture committee. He will be familiar, from the multiple times that we have heard from grocery executives, that they are often talking about how they work in a low-margin industry. I think they present a slightly misleading argument. First of all, it should be pointed out that, in the last three years, their margins have doubled. If we look at it today, yes, when they are operating with a margin that is between 3% and 3.5%, it may look small. However, what people have to realize is that, when their gross revenues continue to climb, even though that margin may seem static, of course their profits will continue to rise as a result.

I just wonder if my colleague can add a bit more to that because I have noticed a bit of defensiveness from the grocery CEOs and not enough attention is being paid to the fact that we do just have five companies controlling 80% of the market. Perhaps the member has some ideas on how we can try to turn that number around so that there is a bit more flexibility and competition there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my NDP colleague. Indeed, we do very good work together on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

As I mentioned earlier in my speech, what we are experiencing right now is quite ironic. People come to committee and tell us that they are not taking in any more money than they used to and that their profit margin is only 2%, yet when we look at the figures, we see that profit margins have skyrocketed. When we ask for details, they tell us it is because of the pharmaceuticals section. I would like to know what the percentage increase in profits is for the pharmaceuticals section.

When committees conduct studies, they take them seriously. We call in all the stakeholders, unlike the minister who did not bring in everyone. He invited a few big companies, like Nestlé, and some CEOs. He did not invite agricultural producers or people from SMEs in the agri-food industry. He could not have had all the information. It is important to mention that. When we bring these people in, we realize that there can be a major imbalance in negotiations. A small grower can be told by a big grocer that he has to lower his price; otherwise, no one will buy from him. The small producer knows what that means: He is not going to be able to sell his product, especially if it is perishable. His hands are tied.

I think that the government has a duty to poke its nose in and see what is going on. That is why the committee's report talked about having a sort of price-fixing observatory to see what is going on. A code of conduct is one way to regulate relations among the various players. We need to shine some light on the huge profits being made. Capitalism is a system that works, but not without regulation. Unbridled capitalism is not something we want. Although we seem to be gradually moving in that direction, I do not think it is what we want.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, throughout the conversation, we have taken a look at our farmers and the huge operating cost increases we have seen. They have increased 21.2% in just 2022 alone, which is a huge increase, and that cost gets filtered down to people. I would be interested to hear from the member.

I have heard from many people in my farming community, particularly now at Christmas. We are sitting here at Christmas time and families are creating Christmas goodies for their families. Over the years, people used to put butter in their Christmas goodies. Now they are using margarine. Part of that was the cost. Part of it was also with respect to possible issues with the product. Ultimately, the costs have continued. Now we see with margarine, a lot of it made with canola oil, the price has increased. I talked with a constituent just yesterday on the aspect of increased costs.

I am interested to know how the member sees where that cost continually gets increased when moved from different products. The product being produced for our consumers is being belittled such that there is a huge impact on Canadians, and the huge taxes are being put upon them.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, that is a very interesting question. As I was saying earlier, we have to have another look at how we support farmers and have a serious review of the insurance programs.

These programs were designed 20 or 25 years ago in a context where we had a bad year every six or seven years. These days, we have three bad years in a row and we do not know what next year will bring. The people from Abitibi that we received today talked to us about forest fires, drought, spring frost and a host of factors that we can no longer predict. He have to help them.

Before I finish, I will share a statistic. In Quebec, 44% of our farmers have another job because they do not earn enough income on the farm. That is not normal.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to be standing up today to speak to this, but I want to express that there is a little part of me that is also disappointed. I am always in favour of discussing the great work that happens at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, but it needs to be said that, today, we were supposed to be debating Bill C-58, which I think is quite an important landmark piece of legislation. It is something that my party proudly supports. That bill is designed, of course, to make sure that collective bargaining is not going to be undermined by the use of scab or replacement labour. However, the Conservatives decided to move a concurrence debate on yet another committee report.

When we look at the Conservatives' history with labour relations, we can understand why they do not want to speak about Bill C-58. When they were in government under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, they were not afraid to use back-to-work legislation. Indeed, when two Conservative members started speaking on Bill C-58 at second reading, they did not touch on the substance of the bill. I do not think they had anything to contribute. I do not even know if they actually support the bill. A party that is trying to rebrand itself as the party of workers now does not want to debate a bill that is protecting organized labour and the collective bargaining rights of workers. I will let Canadians make their own judgment on what that is all about.

Turning to the report that we are discussing today, the grocery affordability report from the agriculture committee, I am proud to say that this report issued from a motion that I brought at committee. I want to thank all members of that committee for granting a unanimous vote; I think they were feeling the political and public pressure of the moment from Canadians from coast to coast to coast, who had been feeling the pinch over the last two years on the spiralling, out-of-control grocery prices. We know these prices have been going up higher and faster than the general rate of inflation.

As a part of this, we have had the opportunity to question the grocery CEOs. We had them as a part of the original study, which we are doing now. The agriculture committee is now revisiting this issue, and we have had a chance to reinterview the CEOs. When we talked to the grocery executives, whether it was Michael Medline or Mr. Weston of Loblaws—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will interrupt the hon. member for a moment.

[*Translation*]

There is a lot of noise in the room.

The member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford may continue his intervention.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, when we were questioning the witnesses, whether it was Michael Medline, or Galen Weston of Loblaws, it became quite clear that these CEOs occupy a different universe from everyday people. They breathe a rarified air. They command very impressive salaries. In Galen Weston's case, I think his take-home pay is about 431 times that of his workers.

They are quite defensive. They will say their margins are pretty small if we compare them to those in other industries, yet if we look at the data, their margins have doubled over the last three years. Here is the thing: Their gross revenues have been going up, so even if margins remain static, as they have for a little while now, they are still going to result in record profits. We can see it when we compare quarterly earnings from one year to the next.

The reason this is such an emotional issue for Canadians is that the products these CEOs are selling are essential for life. These are not just any products, like those at a hardware store; this is food that people need to bring home to keep their families alive. They also sell pharmaceutical products, which are also essential. Why we are seeing anger in the Canadian public is that, for two to three years now, families in my riding and right across this country have been having to make do with less and having to make hard choices. They are the ones bearing the burden, and all the while, corporate profits are reaching record levels.

There is an imbalance right now in Canada, a country where corporate profits are reaching record levels but everyone else is suffering. I am sorry to say this, but I do not see enough action coming out of the present Liberal government, and we know where Conservatives stand with their corporate friends. When presented with evidence showing oil and gas profits and their gargantuan effect on food prices, the Conservatives will just keep saying, "carbon tax, carbon tax, carbon tax", when that is minuscule compared to what corporate profits are doing in this sector. If they do not want to argue with facts, that is fine; they want to live in a different reality.

I want to say that I am proud to be a member of a party that drove this issue to committee. I am proud it is being discussed in the House. I will conclude by saying that I will not stop fighting for the ordinary people in my riding and making sure that we expose corporate profits and their role in driving inflation in Canada.

● (1755)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings on the motion at this time.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 66(1), the debate on the motion is transferred under Government Orders.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

PUBLIC SECTOR INTEGRITY ACT

The House resumed from October 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-290, An Act to amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Conflict of Interest Act, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak briefly to Bill C-290.

This is an important piece of legislation that would amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, which gives federal public sector employees and others a secure and confidential process for disclosing serious wrongdoings in the workplace, as well as protection from acts and reprisal.

The bill proposes to expand the protections of the PSDPA to additional categories of public servants, permit that a protected disclosure be made to any superior, and add a duty to provide support to whistle-blowers, as well as repeal sections of the act that prevent overlap with other recourse mechanisms and provisions that set the standards of seriousness of wrongdoing. The bill is in line with some of the recommendations from the 2017 Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates' reports for legislative reforms regarding whistleblowing in the public sector. It is a bill that the government is very glad to see and is supportive of. We, as the government, believe that public servants who disclose serious wrongdoings must be protected.

The Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act helps to ensure an ethical workplace culture and supports the integrity of the public federal sector. Canada's whistle-blowing law is one component of the recourse mechanism for public servants that covers harassment, discrimination, labour grievances and privacy complaints. Soon, we will launch a comprehensive review of the act to strengthen protections for public servants who disclose wrongdoing. Its task force will include academic experts, union representatives and senior—

● (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order.

The interpreters are telling us that there is a phone near the microphone that is vibrating. Perhaps my colleague could put it on the chair to stop the vibration.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member has done so.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I was just wrapping up, Madam Speaker, saying that although we look forward to a comprehensive review of the act in due course, we certainly are supportive of this particular bill and look forward to the Senate moving on this quickly so the legislation will pass into law.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in this House on behalf of the constituents of Calgary Midnapore in my role as shadow minister for the Treasury Board for His Majesty's loyal opposition.

Before I begin, I would like to send a special wish to my husband James, who is currently in the hospital awaiting surgery. I am not sure if he is watching this, but I am certainly thinking of him and looking forward to seeing him at the end of this week, as well as my son Edward. I thank my mother, my sister and my niece as well for taking such good care of my son at this time.

Bill C-290 is a private member's bill that was put forward this year. This bill would amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act to strengthen the current whistle-blower protections for public servants; expand the definition of the term “wrongdoing”; broaden what is considered a supervisor so that public servants can make a protected disclosure to any superior within their organization; remove the requirement that a protective disclosure must be in good faith; and ensure that a whistle-blower will be protected as long as they reasonably believe what they are disclosing is true.

It would expand the Auditor General's mandate to receive disclosures of wrongdoing from within the Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner; remove the requirement that investigations by the Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner cannot overlap with investigations under other laws; extend protections to former public servants, government contractors and all those involved in a disclosure; give supervisors a duty to protect and provide support to public servants involved in disclosures; allow for a remedy to be provided to a whistle-blower if a reprisal is taken; and extend the deadline to file a reprisal complaint from 60 days to one year.

It would expand the annual report requirements, including the number of disclosures made by wrongdoing, the duration of all open cases and cases closed during the fiscal year; the distribution of cases by region and the distribution of cases by federal departments and agencies; increase the fines for reprisals against a whistle-blower from $10,000 to $200,000 for indictable offences and $5,000 to $100,000 for summary convictions; and require the act to be reviewed by Parliament every five years.

This legislation was introduced under former prime minister Harper in response to the Liberal sponsorship scandal. Ironically, we find ourselves again, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP coalition, with a significant number of scandals. The most recent was a whistle-blower alleging the Minister of Industry's office softened the STDC report in a cover-up. This is another example where the government attempted to cover up a whistle-blower rather than support a whistle-blower, as former prime minister Harper so bravely did in his first piece of legislation.

In 2017, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates conducted a review of the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act and published a report, and many of the recommendations made in the report are included in this bill. That is, no doubt, a positive thing. The question is: Why did the government not take it upon itself to adjust this legislation prior to a private member bringing a private member's bill forward? It is a valuable question.

When this legislation was finally brought forward, the government operations and estimates committee spent hours going through this bill. The major point of the committee going through this bill was due to an attempt by the current Liberal-NDP coalition to water down this bill and provide no protection to whistle-blowers, as is evidenced in the example I just gave of the industry minister. It is very disappointing and not surprising.

It was expected that the government would implement the recommendations in the 2017 report, but it did not make it a priority to do so. It did what it is really good at. It created a task force, someone to review this legislation and consult with. It is the government's forte to have consultations and gather groups together to review things, with no result.

● (1805)

On December 7, it was the one-year anniversary of the government introducing this task force, which was supposed to review whistle-blower legislation. One year later, there is nothing to show for it. I was in the lobby right outside these chambers when the then president of the treasury board started this process. A year later, there is simply nothing to show for it.

I am very proud of the history that the official opposition has of protecting whistle-blowers in the public service. In addition to the legislation that was brought forward by the Harper government, we also included, with our 2019 and 2021 election platforms, the promise to continue this legislation and to provide more stringent protection for whistle-blowers. Our party has been consistent in supporting increased whistle-blower protections as the policy issues arise.

As I said, this government has a history of scandal. It has a history of cover-ups. It has a history of inaction. After creating task force consultations, it wants to just kick things down the line, push things down the line and avoid responsibility. It is unfortunate, but we actually see this beyond this whistle-blowing legislation, Bill C-290, is in front of us today. It did it today with the private member's bill that was in front of us on child pornography, on protecting our children, protecting the next generation.

Liberals turned their backs. They did not support that legislation as well. This is absolutely in line with the government, to turn its back, to kick things down the line. It would be absolutely impossible for me to stand up here and not mention this as well, which is the most evident display of this. In the greatest conflict in the world right now, through turning its back on a long-standing defender of democracy, through not standing to bring a peaceful end of this conflict and the destruction of Hamas, it is willing to turn its back on not only an entire nation but also, essentially, the entire world order. The things that will come to pass in the Middle East are only, once again, a delay of the things that will soon arrive, that are arriving in other places in the world.

We see this with this current government and what it is doing with world conflict, with the child pornography PMB that was in front of us today, and also with the Bill C-290 legislation.

This government now has the opportunity to do the responsible thing and not only get this legislation through the House but also go one step further to complete the findings of that task force. I hope the President of the Treasury Board will deliver. She has not delivered on finding that puny $15 billion, hardly a drop in the bucket relative to our current deficit and our debt. I do not hold a lot of hope, frankly, that she will come through for whistle-blowers.

It is unfortunate that she was not there for the testimony throughout the government operations committee, which was heartbreaking. It was absolutely terrible to see the things that our public servants have been going through.

Our party was the party of supporting whistle-blowers at that time. We continue to be the party of workers all across Canada, standing up for them in both the public and private realms.

I truly hope that it is within the heart of this government, at this special time of year, at Christmastime, at Hanukkah, at Kwanzaa, to find the responsibility to better handle the crises of the world, our future generation and the concerns of whistle-blowers.

● (1810)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege and honour to rise to speak to Bill C-290, an act to amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, at third reading. First, I want to give a huge shout-out to my colleague from Mirabel for tabling this bill and taking leadership on this. I also want to thank my colleague and friend from Beauport—Limoilou, who worked really closely with me and our team of New Democrats because we both care and really are passionate about protecting workers' rights.

I want to talk about those workers. These are brave Canadians and Quebeckers who report wrongdoing or crimes in their workplace and often experience consequences like losing their income, health and happiness and all for speaking the truth. All Canadian and Quebec workers should be able to feel safe when they are reporting workplace crimes and negligence.

We know Canada has some of the worst whistle-blower laws in the world, tied with Lebanon. The Conservatives like to pat themselves on the back and say that they care about whistle-blowers, but it is Liberals and Conservatives who have teamed up over decades to make sure that whistle-blowers do not get the chance to protect our society and government.

It was actually the current leader of the Conservative Party who last brought in legislation when he was in government. The experts say that he did not make things better; he made it even harder for whistle-blowers. He made it even worse. The Conservatives say they are for workers, but what did they do today? They moved a concurrence motion so that we could not talk about anti-scab legislation. The Conservatives are not here for workers.

Liberals and Conservatives teamed up to defeat numerous amendments that would actually strengthen protections for whistle-blowers in this bill. They voted against many amendments to Bill C-290. We talk about the coalition. Let us talk about the coalition of Liberals and Conservatives who are fighting workers, muting workers and stonewalling workers from doing the right thing and being able to have the opportunity to protect Canadians and Quebeckers. It is not surprising for the Liberals and their rich friends who are not worried about whistle-blowing. The leader of the Conservative Party and the Conservatives will always prop up their big bosses and not workers. We know that. They have a track record. We have receipts. We are keeping receipts. Canadians and Quebeckers need stronger whistle-blower protection, so that there is more transparency and accountability of government and the public service.

As New Democrats, we are committed to protecting the rights and safety of all workers. That is why we are pushing to make sure Canadians and Quebeckers have the strongest whistle-blower protections possible. I want to talk about the importance of strong whistle-blower laws. Because of how weak our protections for whistle-blowers are, less wrongdoing will get reported and stopped. Protecting whistle-blowers is necessary to protect Canadians' and Quebeckers' lives and security.

Whistle-blower reports protect Canada's global reputation and relationships, so this is important. Luc Sabourin reported that superiors at Passport Canada were destroying foreign passports and logging that they returned them to the foreign embassies. He endured eight years of harassment and abuse, including hand sanitizer in his coffee and threats to his children's safety. Before losing his career in 2016 and almost losing his life, he had the courage to show up at our committee and to fight to protect the future of all workers. He is a hero and the reprisal has been significant, and the impact and damage to his life have been significant. I want to thank Luc for the courage to have shared his story; and my colleague from the Bloc who brought Luc to committee and worked with Luc.

As I said, whistle-blower reports save lives. In 1996, Michèle Brill-Edwards also lost her career after she reported that big pharma was influencing the drug-approval process here in Canada, endangering Canadian lives.

We brought forward amendments that were defeated. Our first amendment that we brought forward was to allow whistle-blowers to go to the public or media in specific situations where, for example, the commissioner is not dealing with the complaint or decides not to do anything to stop the wrongdoing. Liberals and Conservatives teamed up in their coalition to oppose this. Therefore, now whistle-blowers are at a huge risk if they expose wrongdoing to the Canadian public.

The second amendment was interim relief, which would have protected whistle-blowers from punishments like termination as soon as they reported wrongdoing. Instead, we are allowing punishments to happen to them and then spending years investigating whether they were indeed punished. The coalition defeated it.

● (1815)

The third one is the reverse onus. Right now, the whistle-blower has to prove reprisal. I will give an example: If they were fired, they have to prove that it was because they reported wrongdoing, which is virtually impossible. This amendment would have forced their superiors to prove that there was a real reason to fire them. In other jurisdictions, this change brings the chances of success from as low as one in 500 to as high as one in three, which would make sense. Those would be strong whistle-blower laws. What happened? The coalition of Liberals and Conservatives teamed up to defeat the amendment.

Again, these are critical amendments. Some things we brought forward as New Democrats were passed. I am grateful that the coalition did not fight these and that we actually got them through, working closely with our Bloc colleagues, who were fabulous on this bill.

The first one is that we improved whistle-blowers' access to the tribunal. This is critical, because the commissioner has been acting as a gatekeeper, preventing workers from accessing the tribunal. In the tribunal's 16 years of operation, the commissioner has only referred nine cases to it. That is insane. It is a terrible track record for Canada and right there, as I said, with Lebanon. There needs to be access to both options, because the commissioner sometimes decides not to even investigate a complaint. It is unbelievable.

The second amendment we brought forward and that passed, as we were glad to see, would create a survey metric to measure whistle-blowers' satisfaction with the process, how supported and protected they felt, etc. We have been looking at the effectiveness of these laws with no input from the whistle-blowers they were supposed to protect. Now they have a voice. Again, I want to go back to my colleague from Mirabel and thank him for that.

The third amendment we were able to get through was adding psychological damage from harassment as a form of reprisal that whistle-blowers are protected from. That is absolutely critical. These are Canadians and Quebeckers who are standing up and fighting for the best services to deliver to their communities.

I am going to finish with one area that is not covered, which is subcontractors. I will give an example: At the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, we found out through the ArriveCAN scandal that there were companies that received a contract, Coradix and Dalian, and they subcontracted to a company called GCStrategies, which then subcontracted to a company called Botler. However, they are not protected. Even though they are delivering services under a government contract through the Canada Border Services Agency, they are absolutely not protected. This is just unbelievable.

Both Dalian and Coradix took a commission of between 15% and 30%, and GCStrategies took a commission of 15% to 30%. None of them had expertise in what they needed. These are headhunters. It is like the worst pyramid scheme, in terms of outsourcing, that is happening with Canadian taxpayers' dollars and the layering of commissions.

For Botler, the reprisal was significant for Ritika Dutt and Amir Morv. It is unbelievable, the punishment they took for standing up for Canadian taxpayers, for whistle-blowing, and the treatment they have been under. The government is continuing to fail them for continuing to tell the truth. It is continuing to allow these contractors, who are suspended from the Canada Border Services Agency, to have contracts with other federal departments, even though they are under investigation by the RCMP. We can talk about how failed and miserable the situation is.

We are taking a step forward to fix how the coalition of the Conservatives and Liberals teamed up to mute whistle-blowers. Again, it is because of my colleague from Mirabel, who used his slot. He was high in the order of precedence, and he took this on to stand up for human rights. New Democrats stand with the Bloc, and we worked really hard on this. I am glad it is moving forward.

Let us hope for a better future. Let us hope we can address the concerns that are not addressed in this bill and continue to work together. Workers deserve it. We owe it to them.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased and proud to rise here today at the end of the third reading of Bill C-290 so that this bill can go to Senate, where we hope it will be studied and passed quickly so we can protect our public servants.

Public servants are the people who apply the rules and policies while ensuring that the federal services machine remains in good working order. Public servants are the first to notice when the rules and policies are not properly enforced, when they are asked to do things in a way that is not right or when people are doing things they should not be doing. They are the first to witness anything that could go wrong.

When a public servant witnesses such behaviour, it is important that they be able to report it without fear for their personal, social and professional life, as well as that of their family. I will come back to that. We have information that has led us to believe that, despite the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, some public servants have kept quiet and others have been threatened. My colleague talked about this in his speech. With that in mind, my colleague from Mirabel decided to take the bull by the horns and say that we could not let this go.

There is no small wrongdoing. Wrongdoing is wrongdoing. Whether it is big, small or mid-sized, it is wrongdoing, period. Each time there is wrongdoing, taxpayers' money is misused. Each time someone blows the whistle and, in the end, a public servant gets rebuffed, harassed or intimidated, there is a loss of expertise and loyalty. That loyalty must be protected. That is why my colleague from Mirabel introduced Bill C-290.

This bill needs to be passed. We need to protect our public servants, those who are the most loyal, who want things to run smoothly, who want taxpayers' money to be used appropriately. However, what we have been seeing is that some public servants are being harassed and intimidated. I am talking about those who dare to speak up. Some have even had threats made against their families. Some have been told that they will not get a pension. Some of these threats have been carried out. People have been forced to retire early, and their pension was frozen for months or even years. That is not how an employer should treat its employees. If any private sector employer did something like that, they would very quickly end up in court.

Our role is to protect public servants and the public. By protecting whistle-blowers in the public service, we are protecting the public by extension. That is what this bill does. Does it go far enough? No, it does not. There are issues regarding royal assent, among others. Some provisions were weakened by committee amendments. That is unfortunate because, rather than becoming a leader, an exemplary employer, Canada is hardly making any headway with this bill.

People will say I am gullible. Perhaps I am naive, but I had hope. I believed the member for Hull—Aylmer when he said that the government was going to introduce a bill that would complement and strengthen ours, so that Canada would become a leader in protecting public servants who disclose wrongdoing. That bill was to be tabled before the end of the year.

● (1820)

Here we are, basically at the end of the year. I have yet to see a bill that would strengthen ours. That said, I am a bit gullible. I will remain positive. I will remain optimistic that the government is going to introduce a bill that will strengthen the one that my colleague from Mirabel introduced and that was studied in committee, in order to really protect public servants.

The process of amending the bill was not easy, but it was extremely rewarding from a personal learning perspective. Amendments were tabled that narrowed the scope of the bill. Some of these amendments had to be introduced because my colleague from Mirabel's bill required royal assent. We do not run the government and we never will. In case this comes as a surprise to anyone, that will never happen. Certain amendments had to be introduced to avoid royal assent, which was an issue, apparently.

I think the biggest disagreement we had in committee was on the bill's coming into force date. The government wanted to delay that indefinitely. We said the law needed to apply as soon as there was royal assent. If we delay its implementation indefinitely, as with other bills where the government said it would come into force 18 months after royal assent, we would end up with a bill that might never come into force because there will be an election or something, when we want the measure to be implemented as soon as possible.

There is not a government in the world that would not benefit from having legislation that protects public servants who disclose wrongdoing. Every government should have strong legislation on the matter. This protects people who are loyal and it ensures that there is no corruption, no wrongdoing, no reprehensible or illegal act within the public service, which is why it needs to be exemplary. The government, too, needs to set the best example possible for other employers. That is why it is important to have strong legislation. I hope that the Liberal government, or any other government, will realize how important this is and will introduce legislation that will be even stronger than the one we have here.

When we met with people about this bill, we were asked why the Bloc Québécois was introducing such a bill. They said that the Bloc Québécois is separatist, but it wants to protect Canadian public servants. It does, but there are Quebeckers working in the Canadian public service. It is important that we protect our shared values. They acknowledged that that was true, that the Bloc Québécois is used to being David fighting Goliath.

Bill C-290 is a David and Goliath bill. The Senate is another Goliath. I sincerely hope that the members of the Senate will do what was done in committee and come together to pass a private member's bill for the benefit of the entire public service and, ultimately, taxpayers' money.

● (1825)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the transparency-loving residents of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to speak to Bill C-290, an act to amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act.

It has been fascinating to hear members from the NDP-Liberal government speak to this legislation. The Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act is a direct result of Liberal corruption.

Whistle-blower protection was a cornerstone of the Conservative Federal Accountability Act. It was the first substantive bill introduced by the Harper government following over a decade of Liberal corruption that reached its climax with the sponsorship scandal. The Chrétien Liberals had given millions of dollars to well-connected companies to do little actual work other than to funnel the cash back to Liberal Party coffers.

Canadians had grown tired of the arrogant, corrupt Liberals and demanded a change. Despite losing the election, the NDP and remaining Liberals refused to listen to Canadians. That is why the socialist coalition voted against our accountability act and whistle-blower protection.

I saw the bow-tied banker from Ajax join with the failed punk rocker from Timmins—James Bay voting against whistle-blower protection. As different as those two members may appear, they share the same inverted belief that people should serve the government instead of government serving the people.

Now, if Canadians have any doubt of this NDP-Liberal government's contempt for whistle-blowers, just look at its track record. One of the first acts this government did was to redirect a shipbuilding contract to its friends. When multiple people shared that information, what did this Prime Minister do? He called Vice-Admiral Norman a criminal and said the admiral would face the courts. Mark Norman spoke truth to power and paid a heavy price. I know he thinks this Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

When another whistle-blower leaked the story of Jody Wilson-Raybould being pressured to direct a prosecution, this Prime Minister called the report fake news. He then fired Wilson-Raybould and Jane Philpott and kicked them out of caucus to boot. This government is so repulsed by truth and accountability, it attacked the people the whistle-blowers tried to protect.

Then there are the multiple whistle-blowers who tried to do the right thing at the Sustainable Development Technology Corporation. They followed the procedures. They reported it to the deputy minister. The deputy minister even compared it to the Liberal sponsorship scandal. That same deputy said his minister would blow a gasket upon learning the damning information, except nothing happened. No gaskets were blown. No executives were fired. No board members were sacked. There were rampant conflicts of interest and comparisons to the sponsorship scandal. Yet, it was not until the whistle-blowers went to The Globe and Mail that anything happened.

Swap out the words “sustainable development” with “foreign interference”, and we see a similar story. If not for the CSIS whistle-blower, Canadians would still be in the dark about the extent of Communist interference. Our Conservative Party was attacked in the last two elections. The government knew it and covered it up. The Liberals had just spent the last eight years pushing conspiracy theories about Russia to smear Conservatives, so the last thing they needed were credible reports they had received assistance from Communists who control China. If not for the CSIS whistle-blower, there would not be a public inquiry into foreign interference.

Given the recent partisan comments by the judge and her selection of intervenors, we may still not actually have an actual public inquiry. Even the hand-picked special rapporteur actually confirmed that many of the CSIS leaks were accurate. He confirmed that the member for Don Valley North did engage in secret meetings with the Communist consulate in Toronto and did discuss the two Michaels. That member would still be sitting in the Liberal caucus were it not for the whistle-blower.

Yet, this Prime Minister sent his national security adviser out to speak to reporters just to let them know that this government is actively hunting for this whistle-blower. NSA Thomas actually said the whistle-blower would be caught and punished. The Liberal government is declaring a whistle-blower guilty without a trial again. It is as though it has learned nothing from Vice-Admiral Norman and his persecution. That is why we must pass this bill.

The NPD-Liberal government will continue to ignore lessons unless we update the legislation. After eight years of Liberal corruption, whistle-blower protection must become stronger. The Liberals claim this is unnecessary, because they budgeted $2 million for a special task force that is supposed to review a committee report from six years ago. They can save taxpayers $2 million and just support the legislation.

● (1830)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Mirabel for his right of reply.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have always found you to be very charming, with your bright smile. I am feeling charmed today, but it is not because of you. It is because after hours of debate, after voting, testimony and amendments at committee, it is very moving to stand before you and my colleagues, who have worked with me for this last hour of debate on Bill C-290 and on whistle-blower protection.

Today, the House of Commons is at a crossroads. I will not go over the bill's history or its content once again. My colleagues did a great job—

● (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. There seems to be a problem with the interpretation.

The problem seems to be resolved, so the hon. member for Mirabel may continue his speech.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I was saying that we have reached a crossroads with this bill. All of the parties worked on it. It is a bit of a sliding scale. As we know, our interests diverge. Today, however, we have a good bill. This is obviously a first step, but everything starts with a first step.

I would like to take this opportunity to do what I did during my previous speeches on Bill C-290. Once again, I call on all the parties to work together, because absolutely nothing could be less partisan than protecting whistle-blowers, transparency and integrity. Absolutely nothing should be less partisan than that.

I would add that today, we finally have a serious opportunity to send a message of hope to all federal public servants watching us today. They contact us, and we know that they are watching us. We want to tell them that their integrity and safety matter. I am speaking to them directly. Their safety, integrity, career, life and family matter. That is the profound message conveyed by this bill.

Now, there are some people I would like to thank directly. I would like to thank whistle-blower Julie Dion and whistle-blower Luc Sabourin, both former public servants at the Canada Border Services Agency. They are courageous people with a sense of public service right down to their core. They paid dearly in order to stand up for transparency. I would like to thank whistle-blower Joanna Gualtieri, a former public servant—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I must interrupt the hon. member.

[*English*]

We have a point of order from the hon. member for Calgary Heritage.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar: Madam Speaker, I rise to inquire about Private Members' Business. It ends at 6:57 p.m. today, as I understand, but there are no questions and comments. Perhaps the hon. member could come back tomorrow for questions and comments.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There are no questions and comments.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean is also rising on a point of order.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I think the reason some people are raising points of order is because the hon. member for Mirabel has been black-listed by the hon. member for Carleton. His Conservative Party cronies want to play games.

Let us allow my colleague to finish. It is a great bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member asked whether the hon. member for Mirabel could come back tomorrow to answer questions, because he would not have time to answer them today. However, there is no question period. That is all there is to it.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach has a point of order.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I am very interested in the member for Mirabel's comments. I have seen the Conservatives several times attempt to shutdown debate in this place and censor members.

If you could, please ensure that we have a lively debate and that the member has a full speech without interruption from the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There is no question that the hon. member for Mirabel will have his full time.

We have another point of order, from the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

An hon. member: They're doing it again.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, asking to make sure we have interpretation is the right of every member of Parliament. I take offence to what that member said.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): No, that was not the issue.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Mirabel.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I will refrain from rising on a point of order myself, but I will use the time I have left to thank Joanna Gualtieri, whistle-blower, former foreign affairs official and pioneer in this field in Canada. I would also like to thank Pamela Forward, president of Whistleblowing Canada; David Hutton, co-founder of the Whistleblowing International Network; Tom Devine, of the Government Accountability Project in Washington and Ian Bron, of the Centre for Free Expression, a former whistle-blower. This is clearly getting a lot of support.

I would of course like to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates for their work. In particular, I want to mention the members for Courtenay—Alberni and Edmonton West. The latter has been championing this cause for a long time.

I also want to thank my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou. If ever there was a caring, competent and understanding person to do this work in committee, it is her. As my colleague clearly demonstrated in committee, the current legislation discourages whistle-blowers. There is a breach of trust. Rather than encouraging whistle-blowers to speak out, we are discouraging them. These people are acting in the public interest, in the interest of Canadians, Quebeckers and taxpayers. We are seeing it here in the House. We saw it a few minutes ago. Certain types of conduct are eroding people's confidence in our institutions. Whistle-blowers counterbalance that.

I will use the minute I have left to wish all of my colleagues from all parties a happy holiday season. I want to take a moment to say happy holidays to my constituents in Saint-Placide, Kanesatake, Oka, Pointe-Calumet, Saint-Joseph-du-Lac and Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac, as well as those in the north in Saint-Colomban and those in the east in Saint-Anne-des-Plaines. I want to wish a merry Christmas to everyone who lives in Mirabel, around the airport, and to you, Madam Speaker.

● (1840)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the hon. member for his kind wishes, and I wish him the same in return.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

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

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, if we could have a recorded division, I would be very grateful.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 98, a recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, January 31, 2024, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise this evening to take part in my first adjournment debate in the House.

I am speaking tonight to follow up on a question I asked the Prime Minister about Bill C-234 and, more importantly, the embarrassing way it was handled in the Senate. For some unknown reason, it was the Minister of Transport who rose to answer me and, frankly, I was not pleased with the response.

Bill C-234 is a common-sense Conservative bill that would remove the carbon tax on propane and natural gas used for drying grain and heating buildings, to give farmers a chance to survive this government's crippling carbon tax and take the first step toward reducing the cost of food in our country.

In his response, the Minister of Transport said that I was misleading Canadians. He used the same tired arguments he always does, such as the idea that the carbon tax does not apply in or affect Quebec.

In my opinion, and in the opinion of anyone with an iota of common sense, the carbon tax obviously affects Quebec, directly and indirectly. Quebeckers will certainly be affected at the pump when the second carbon tax adds 17¢ per litre to the cost of gasoline.

When Quebec farmers import their propane from Ontario or other parts of the country, the carbon tax applies to them. I have invoices from pork and chicken producers in my riding to prove it, but the government refuses to look at them.

In other cases, the carbon tax applies indirectly, for example, when Quebeckers import any other domestic goods shipped by truck across the country into our province. The higher prices are getting passed on to us because, contrary to what the Bloc-Liberal coalition believes, Quebec is not self-sufficient.

Bill C-234 is extremely important. At the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, we have heard testimony from countless farmers from every part of the country. Every one of them agrees that this bill should be passed as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister decided to pressure the Liberal senators he himself appointed to gut Bill C-234 at the Senate and then send it back to the House. They managed to remove the clause on barn heating and reduce the sunset clause from eight years to three years at the Senate. Bill C-234 will be sent back to the House with these amendments. It will no longer have an impact on the price of food, which was the original purpose of the bill.

As we have heard many times, there is currently no other viable alternative for drying grain or heating buildings. That is why the Conservatives agreed to the eight-year sunset clause in the initial bill.

The questions I have for the government are the following. Does the government think that the carbon tax affects Quebec, either directly or indirectly? When the Senate's new amendments are debated here in the House, will the government do the right thing and delete these two amendments that have completely gutted Bill C-234, so that it can be adopted as it was the last time, by the vast majority—

● (1845)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate.

[*English*]

As we know, Bill C-234 would remove farmers' obligation to pay a price for the greenhouse gas emissions they generate when they use propane and natural gas for farming activities, including to dry grain.

The government, of course, appreciates that farming is critical to our country. Of course, we must safeguard our ability to feed our citizens and many more around the world. However, Canada already has a host of programs to support and assist farmers. For example, we have supply management systems for milk, eggs, chicken and maple products. We have insurance programs for crops, and we have trade protections. In addition, we have financing programs for farms and farm equipment, and we have laws to prevent the seizure of farming assets.

[*Translation*]

The reality is that we are facing a climate crisis and we need to act now to mitigate a more serious situation.

[*English*]

Unfortunately, climate change already threatens farming operations, biodiversity and the health and well-being of so many individuals in Canada and around the world. As we all know, Canada can suffer deeply from the catastrophic consequences of the climate crisis. Just in the last few months, we have had to deal with historic wildfires, floods and storms. Canada simply cannot afford to not take decisive actions to fight climate change. In 2018, damages to Canadian farms resulting from severe weather reached $2 billion, the fourth-highest cost on record. For Alberta crop farmers, we must not forget about 2019, the “harvest from hell”. The Western Producer noted then that the estimated total value of unharvested crops in Alberta, due to the severe weather events, was $778 million. Clearly, not acting on climate change now would not help our farmers at all.

[*Translation*]

Experts tell us that the best way to tackle the climate crisis is through carbon pricing. That is what we are doing here in Canada.

[*English*]

Putting a price on greenhouse gas emissions is a logical way to induce behavioural changes that will lead to widespread reductions in emissions. When it comes to farming, the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act contains specific provisions to support Canadian farmers. In fact, most fuel used on farms is already relieved from the fuel charge, which would otherwise apply.

Furthermore, recognizing that many farmers use natural gas and propane in their operations, the government already implemented a refundable tax credit for farmers in provinces that are subject to the fuel charge, starting for the 2021-22 fuel charge year. The three-year-long exemption proposed in Bill C-234, as amended by the Senate, would eliminate an incentive to promptly adopt clean technologies that would undoubtedly emerge during that period.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Madam Speaker, I appreciate what my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, said about the impacts of climate change. I completely agree with her on that. I was a farmer for more than 40 years.

However, I want people to understand the impacts of the tax on the cost of farm production. It is increasing the very high cost for chicken farmers, for example. We know that when baby chicks arrive at the chicken coop, the heating needs to be set quite high.

We are told that it is not true that the tax has an impact. Just this past Monday, we asked the president of Metro, Mr. La Flèche, whether the price of the carbon tax and propane, among others, had direct impacts—

● (1850)

[*English*]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, climate change is causing wildfires, natural disasters and other extreme weather events to become more frequent and more severe. The effects are widespread and devastating for communities across Canada. Of course, that has a price that our farmers will have to endure.

The impact of climate change on farming is terrible. We simply cannot afford not to fight the climate crisis. The Parliamentary Budget Officer agrees that the impact on a hundred dollars of groceries is significantly higher considering the impacts of climate change.

The reality is simple. Bill C-234 would delay much-needed programs while farmers should start transitioning toward greener technologies. I have seen first-hand the damage that is caused, with the loss of infrastructure and housing, specifically in indigenous communities, which are at the front lines of this. We cannot go backward. We have to keep moving forward.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, on November 24, I reminded the government that access to clean drinking water is a human right. More specifically, to facilitate access to potable water by first nations, I asked when the government will provide appropriate funding and technical resources to train and certify first nations people to become water infrastructure operators in their home communities. In terms of that goal, I also asked if the Minister of Indigenous Services could confirm that indigenous operators will be paid at a level that eliminates the wage gaps with operators in non-indigenous communities.

It is 2023; Canada is a G7 country, and the government is still trying to claim that it deeply cares about first nations. First nations people must be empowered with the training, the skills and the jobs to provide their own communities with qualified personnel and clean water. Before the parliamentary secretary regurgitates their government talking points on the new bill, Bill C-61, let us take a few moments to examine this alleged legislative miracle.

In spite of the government's recent announcements, it is clear that it has been unable to provide access to potable water for all first nations. The CBC reported that Chief Chris Moonias of the Neskantaga First Nation, a community that has been under a 28-year boil water advisory, did not even get an opportunity to consult with respect to the bill. Given the bill's far-reaching goals, it is odd that a first nation under a boil water advisory for almost three decades had no prior knowledge of or input on Bill C-61.

I will save the parliamentary secretary some time in waxing poetic about Bill C-61. I will note that the bill touches on supporting first nations to be involved with developing and operating water infrastructure in their communities. Again, hopefully this would be at a salary that eliminates the wage gap with non-indigenous operators. Therefore, yes, Bill C-61 seeks relief for first nations water problems, one day. However, when it would occur is debatable.

Let us be clear: Bill C-61 is not the product of the government's concern for first nations. The government was compelled to introduce the bill because of an $8-billion drinking water class action settlement for first nations. Bill C-61 contains $1.5 billion to compensate first nations and their communities that were deprived of clean drinking water for at least one year between November 1995 and March 2024, along with $6 billion for construction and maintenance of water infrastructure. It is in this water infrastructure development that my initial question resides. I hope the new legislation will indeed provide more clean water access to first nations communities and that the salary gap between indigenous and non-indigenous operators will be finally resolved.

I recognize that the government lifted 143 first nations boil water advisories since 2015. However, there are still 28 advisories in 26 first nations communities. That too must end.

Therefore, I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary yet again: When will the government provide appropriate funding and technical resources to train and certify first nations people to become water infrastructure operators in their home communities? Will indigenous operators be paid at a level that eliminates the wage gap, yes or no?

● (1855)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think there will be lots of good things for the member to hear in my comments this evening. I would like to acknowledge that we are standing on the unceded traditional territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin people.

I want to start by emphasizing that Indigenous Services Canada is working in full partnership with first nations communities to support sustainable first nations-led approaches to ensure that on-reserve water systems are safe. Whether it is water, health, housing or infrastructure, first nations communities must have the tools to decide for themselves.

That is why Indigenous Services Canada and first nations are working to transfer the care and control of water and waste water services to first nation bodies. Service transfer, in partnership with first nations, not only leads to better outcomes, but it is critical to supporting indigenous self-determination. It is the basis of our work on access to safe drinking water.

Since 2015, the federal government has committed over $5.6 billion to first nations to build, repair, and support effective management and maintenance of water systems in first nations communities. By 2025-26, the federal government will have increased, by almost 400%, the annual funding it provides to support the operations and maintenance of water and waste water systems on a permanent basis.

First nations have lifted 143 long-term drinking water advisories and prevented 265 short-term advisories from becoming long-term, with support from Indigenous Services Canada.

This week, Bill C-61, the first nations clean water act, was introduced. It would affirm the inherent right of first nations to self-government. It would also ensure that first nations have more tools necessary to protect source water, and to maintain drinking water and waste water infrastructure in a self-determined way. It would hold the federal government accountable to continued funding investments in water infrastructure. It would also lead to the application of minimum standards for clean drinking water in every first nation and lay the groundwork for the creation of a first nations-led water institution to support those communities.

As the member's question acknowledges, water operators are key to ensuring communities have access to clean and safe drinking water and reliable infrastructure. The federal government supports first nations to recruit, train, certify and retain qualified water system operators in their communities, while also improving or maintaining water infrastructure to ensure longer life cycles for water assets.

However, as the member suggests, there is a wage gap. The department conducted an analysis using 2016 census data comparing on-reserve and off-reserve water and waste water operator salaries, and found a 42% wage gap. Recent investments in operations and maintenance funding will enable first nations, who determine the salary levels of their water operators, to support improved operator retention through wage increases and/or other support measures.

Across the country, water operators are using innovation to improve access to clean and safe drinking water, advocate for source water protection and water conservation, as well as train and mentor the next generation of water operators.

Six years ago, Indigenous Services Canada established the National First Nations Water Leadership Award to recognize leadership in and outstanding dedication to the advancement of clean and safe drinking water in first nation communities. I would like to end with an acknowledgement of the 2023 award recipient, Warren Brown, who operates 13 drinking water systems and has led work to lift six long-term drinking water advisories.

When wildfires threatened Lytton first nation in 2021, Warren Brown was essential in protecting his community's water supply by staying behind to ensure the water treatment plant remained up and running as others evacuated to safety. He wanted to do everything he could to ensure his community had safe and clean drinking water to come home to. Not only did he save the water systems in his own community, but he also helped the village of Lytton and continues to lead conversations about best practices for water services in other communities.

It is through remarkable first nations leadership such as this, with support from federal funding and policies, that we will ensure all first nations communities have access to clean and safe drinking water.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, I want to begin by reiterating to the parliamentary secretary the indigenous services minister's own admission that, “For decades, First Nations did not receive the same amount of money as a community of that size to provide clean water in terms of operating dollars, maintenance dollars, training dollars,” and I fully agree with that. That discrepancy must end once and for all. I look forward to a day when every existing water advisory is lifted in first nation communities that still have them.

Until then, I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary if the government could assist me in obtaining ground water maps for the Grand River watershed and provide them at no cost to the Six Nations of the Grand River.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the concern of the member. Everyone should have access to clean and safe drinking water, and waste water operators are a critical part of making this a reality.

Indigenous Services Canada continues to actively support building operator capacity to ensure first nations communities have access to sustainable drinking water. Annually, the department spends approximately $24 million to support first nations water and waste water operating training. It also supports innovative solutions to improve the retention, recruitment and capacity building of water and waste water operators working on-reserve.

For example, last year, the department launched a call for proposals to identify innovative capacity-building measures to support water and waste water operators on-reserve. There were 32 projects funded, which included training workshops for operators and managers, community outreach and awareness raising, internship programs, source water protection planning, youth education and outreach and the development of a variety of training materials.

On the specific piece the member just mention in his rebuttal, we will certainly look into that. I will have to get back to him.

● (1900)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I am glad to be back again tonight, this time to raise the alarm on the need for the government, not only to replenish but also to expand the greener homes grant program.

I would like to start with where I expect the parliamentary secretary and I agree, which is that this is a critical program. Launched in May 2021, it provides up to $5,000 in grants to homeowners for specific upgrades, starting with a home energy evaluation, then completing a retrofit and then a post-retrofit evaluation. These evaluations are done by charities in the green communities Canada network, like REEP Green Solutions in the Waterloo region.

These incentives are kind of like the climate action no-brainer. They save homeowners money, they reduce emissions, they create good green jobs in completing the retrofits and they actually pay for themselves, returning $2 to $5 for every dollar invested through increased revenue from taxation. They have begun to work. In 2020, homeowners across the country completed almost 32,000 retrofits and once the program was launched that went up to almost 112,000.

This is where the issues begin. First of all, the program itself only planned to do 700,000 retrofits, far too slowly, over seven years. At this slow pace it would take more than a century to retrofit the more than 11 million homes in Canada that require retrofits. Worse still, in its current form, the program only saw greenhouse gas reduction increases from 22% before the program existed to 26% afterward.

Worse still, and the reason I asked about this in question period a few weeks ago, is that the CBC is reporting that the program is running out of money three years too early. Organizations like REEP have been here before, three times in the past, having to wind down popular energy efficiency incentive programs like the greener homes grant program.

Here is what we need and what I am going to continue to advocate for. First, we need sustained, predictable funding for retrofits, a clear continuation of the greener homes grant program, which the government could do by putting funds in place in budget 2024. Second, we need the program to keep up with inflation. The greener homes grant program is modelled after a similar program that was put in place by the Harper government called ecoENERGY back in 2007. It also provided $5,000 with, of course, huge differences between then and now when it comes to the cost of completing retrofits. Third, and most importantly, we need to see a boost to the program for deep retrofits to get at least 50% energy savings through insulation, thermal efficiencies of one's home through electrifying and I know there is an excellent program in place for heat pumps, for example, and then possibly adding solar on top.

In other jurisdictions, for example in Ireland and Germany, grants can be up to $50,000. The green budget coalition, lucky for us, has already priced it out. It would be $20 billion over five years to do it. Where could we possibly find that money? I put forward a motion that prices out what we could generate just by having a windfall profit tax on the oil and gas companies that are gouging us at the pumps. It is just over the exact same amount. It is $4 billion a year. $4.2 billion, in fact, just by applying the Canada recovery dividend to big oil.

My question to the parliamentary secretary is this. Will the government, first of all, commit to continuing the greener homes grant program? Will the government expand it to focus on deep energy—

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question that was brought forward by my friend from Kitchener Centre.

If we are going to be talking about things like the greener homes grant, I think that, first of all, we should give a shout-out to how successful it has been and how wonderful it is that we have seen so many Canadians who are interested in this program. It has been a tremendous success, so it is good to see that as one part of what we are doing to reduce emissions from buildings.

It is not the only one and, as the member opposite mentioned, we also have the oil to heat pump program, which, in fact, just recently, was expanded. That is a really important program because it is going to help people, particularly people with lower incomes, to transition their form of energy away from oil, which is not only worse for the environment but is also much more expensive for them on a day-to-day basis and has more variables in its cost. They are able to then have, effectively, free heat pumps as part of this program, where provinces are actually working with us and setting up bilateral agreements.

I think we should also talk about some of the other programs that our government has worked on to help with reducing emissions from buildings. In fact, the built environment across our country is the third-largest source of emissions in our country. It is a really important piece to tackle. In my home city of Toronto, the largest source of emissions is, in fact, our buildings. It is a bit of a surprise sometimes when I say that.

We are working with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, FCM. It has a green municipal fund that is supporting municipalities to do retrofits to buildings. For example, in Toronto, there was a tower renewal project that was recently funded that is actually going to be helping the buildings of people with lower income, so that those buildings can be retrofitted. It helps with affordability for the people who live in those homes but it also is reducing emissions at the same time. It is a win-win.

There are other programs, as well, that have been funded through the FCM, to help people to get larger loans to make retrofits in Toronto. There was one of those programs through the FCM just recently.

We also have programs that have been helping people in cities to retrofit community centres and other buildings through our infrastructure department.

We can take many different steps at the same time. The built environment is very large and it is a large source of our emissions. I think it is important that we look at the totality of all of the programs that we are doing, because it is a commitment for us to take these actions.

● (1905)

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I am a bit concerned. The parliamentary secretary spent so much time talking about other programs this government has in place. It concerns me that I am not hearing a commitment to continue the bare minimum.

Home energy retrofits need to be incentivized by the federal government. Even the Conservatives were doing it about 20 years ago. We need to see this government commit to continue the greener homes grant program, so that homeowners can count on this funding, to continue to do really critical work to retrofit their homes.

If Liberals are looking to be climate leaders, they should recapitalize it at a rate that would actually allow for deep energy retrofits that return more back to our economy than folks would spend.

Are they going to do it?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, we have already supported hundreds of thousands of Canadians across our country in their retrofits, through the greener home grants. It is supporting affordability. It is supporting these retrofits.

As with all government programs, there is an allotted investment to support Canadians. There has been significant interest in the program, which is amazing. I want to also highlight, as we have this program, that the program officials continue to welcome new applications. They will continue to do so while the funding is on the table. The program is still there. It is still accepting applications and we are very committed to all of the programs across the suite that support reducing emissions from our built environment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:08 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Wednesday, December 13, 2023

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS