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CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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(Hansard)

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Friday, September 20, 2024

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, September 20, 2024

The House met at 10:00 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

STRENGTHENING THE PORT SYSTEM AND RAILWAY SAFETY IN CANADA ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-33, an Act to amend the Customs Act, the Railway Safety Act, the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992, the Marine Transportation Security Act, the Canada Transportation Act and the Canada Marine Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

• (1005)
[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are 127 motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-33. Motions Nos. 1 to 127 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 127 to the House.

[*English*]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting the short title.

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting Clause 2.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting Clause 3.

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting Clause 4.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting Clause 5.

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That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting Clause 6.

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That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting Clause 7.

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That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting Clause 8.

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That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting Clause 119.
Motion No. 120

That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting Clause 120.

● (1020)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP), seconded by the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, moved:

That Bill C-33, in Clause 120, be amended

(a) by replacing lines 24 and 25 on page 80 with the following:

“(1.1) Regulations made under paragraph (1)(a) must provide for the prohibition of the loading and unloading of”

b) by replacing line 6 on page 81 with the following:

“December 31, 2025.”

(c) by deleting lines 7 to 14 on page 81.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP) moved:

That Bill C-33, in Clause 120, be amended

(a) by replacing lines 24 and 25 on page 80 with the following:

“(1.1) Regulations made under paragraph (1)(a) must provide for the prohibition of the loading and unloading of”

(b) by replacing, in the English version, line 27 on page 80 with the following:

“(1.2) In making regulations referred to in subsection (1.1), the”

(c) by replacing line 3 on page 81 with the following:

“(1.3) Regulations referred to in subsection (1.1) must pro-”

(d) by deleting lines 7 to 14 on page 81.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC) moved:

Motion No. 123

That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting Clause 121.

Motion No. 124

That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting Clause 122.

Motion No. 125

Government Orders

That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting Clause 123.

Motion No. 126

That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting Clause 124.

Motion No. 127

That Bill C-33 be amended by deleting Clause 125.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise and to have numerous amendments in my name. I am proud to be working hard on behalf of the people of Northumberland—Peterborough South.

As some may know, I am the newly minted shadow minister for transportation for our side. I was on the finance committee, and we spent a lot of our time studying the economy. I even did so in my career before that. I just want to put things in context in terms of where the Canadian economy currently is. I will relate that back to transportation and to the bill; I hope we will have an understanding of why Conservatives, and really all right-thinking folks, cannot support the legislation in good conscience.

Let us wind back the clock to April 30, 2014. The New York Times put out the article “Life in Canada, Home of the World’s Most Affluent Middle Class”. Does that not seem long ago? It was when Canadians could afford housing, when there were available and affordable rents, when food was at a reasonable cost, when the dream of Canada seemed as alive as ever and when the promise of Canada was shining perhaps brighter than ever in Canada’s history.

We then heard from a Liberal candidate at the time who said that better was always possible. That is true, but we found out that, in this case, better was certainly not the result. We have seen this both empirically and subjectively. We have seen that GDP per capita, which is perhaps the best measure of the standard of living for Canadians, has flatlined. Over the last decade, the standard of living, or the GDP per capita, has seen zero growth.

We will hear from members of the opposition who say that this is because we are stuck in a bad world economy. We have had the pandemic and other events; there is no way we could have possibly done better. However, that is just simply not true. We can compare those numbers to other benchmarks. One easy benchmark for us is that of the United States of America, which is geographically quite close and shares many things in common with Canada.

During that same time, in the United States, the GDP per capita grew by nearly 19%. The GDP per capita is, in many ways, a substitute or an equivalent measure of our standard of living. We know, in contrasting and comparing it to peer nations, that Canada has done exceedingly poorly and that we are on a trajectory that leads us down a very dark path.

Let us also compare the case historically. Perhaps there have been other times when we have had these challenges and emerged on the other side brighter. Maybe we were paying this price for a reason. Unfortunately, the damning truth is that our GDP per capita has not grown this little since the Great Depression. We had decades and decades of going through tumultuous world events and recessions. We have never seen a standard of living flatline or, in real terms, decline as we have under the Liberal government.

We have talked about where the Canadian economy, over the last nine years, ranks in history. We have benchmarked it now with the United States of America. Let us look at them both. Back in 1984,

the Canadian economy was producing 88% of the value generated by a U.S. worker per hour. By 2022, that collapsed to 71%. It is actually quite well known why this is. The problem has been diagnosed by many, including the deputy of the Bank of Canada, Carolyn Rogers. She said that we are in a productivity crisis and that this is a “break glass” moment for the Canadian economy.

• (1025)

That is after nine years of a complete lack of care for productivity, which not only underlines our GDP per capita but also, more importantly, powers our economy and our standard of living. We have professionals, non-partisan and arguably non-biased economists, saying from coast to coast that the Liberal government has led us to this productivity decline and, therefore, the flatlining of the standard of living. Of course, those who are wealthy have not done too poorly, but those in the middle class have suffered. I see it in my riding every day. We see individuals who used to donate to food banks and are now clients of food banks. Two million Canadians are going to food banks every day.

One key factor of any economy, something that has provided a real lift throughout history, is transportation. In fact, there is perhaps no better example than Canada and the construction of our railway. Transportation can power and transform an economy. It can take an economy from one that is lagging to one that is succeeding. What is the record, after nine years, of the Liberal government? We have seen inaction and incompetence, probably in equal parts. What happens is that, in an economy, there are factories and people producing things. However, that matters very little if we cannot get those products and services to market. Unfortunately, that continues to be a tremendous challenge here in Canada. We see almost constant work stoppages because of the Liberal government’s failure to effectively manage ports, airports and other transport sectors. We see its inability to get major projects built to get our valuable resources to market.

As if it were not enough to have legislation that has acted to prevent growth and kneecap our own economy, such as the no-pipeline bills and other legislation, we have now decided to bring in legislation that promotes bureaucracy over productivity. Over the last hundred years, if we have any doubt, we have seen the impact of bureaucracy on productivity. We have an absolute slam dunk case. I have no doubt that, in 20 or 50 years’ time there will be people studying this decade. They will look at this in history and say that we had a country with an amazing economy. The New York Times said that we were the most affluent middle class in the world, but in just 10 short years, we saw a government actively work against its own people to develop our economy and increase productivity.

Government Orders

Let us talk a bit about Bill C-33 specifically. I am always a big fan of listening to experts, as opposed to politicians. Thus, I want to read into the record some quotes from individuals, folks who are actually on the ground. These are the boots, not the suits, who are talking about it.

The CEO of the Association of Canadian Port Authorities said:

The concern for the smaller ports really was in the heavy reporting that's associated with the bill. It'll be a question mark on whether this will be a lot of new work that's required or if it's a repackaging of material that's already being provided.

One of our larger ports actually said they'd have to hire [multiple] full-time people. This was going to cost them [hundreds of thousands of] dollars a year.

This is one of a million productivity cuts that are slowing down our economy.

I want to read one more thing here from the executive vice-president of the Trois-Rivières Port Authority. He states, "Bill C-33 and its extension, Bill C-52, restrict the Trois-Rivières Port Authority's ability to fulfill the mission entrusted to it by the Canada Marine Act."

We see over and over again that the Liberal government is standing in the way of Canadians realizing their dreams and of the Canadian economy realizing its potential.

• (1030)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech as he talked a bit about productivity. He also complained on behalf of the port authority, saying that it has to spend the money. Could the member explain to the House how we can improve productivity in Canada without businesses' actually making investments in the tools and technologies that are required to improve productivity?

To improve productivity, we first have to focus on removing low-wage workers so businesses can either train the existing workforce to be more productive or invest in tools and technologies to improve productivity. Could the member explain how businesses can improve productivity without investing?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, one of the reasons behind Canada's productivity is that Canada has been among the worst when it comes to developed countries' attracting capital.

We absolutely need capital, but the only way we are going to get more capital and increase productivity is to have a carbon tax election.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague to tell us about one of the proposed amendments, the one aimed at systematically appointing port authorities that represent workers to boards of directors.

I would like to know where he stands on this specific amendment.

• (1035)

[*English*]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, of course Conservatives will continue to stand up for workers.

What I am troubled by, though, with the legislation is that it could lead to the loss of hundreds of good-paying union jobs. Common-sense Conservatives will stand up for union workers by growing the economy and making sure that the private sector and private unions expand.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South on his new position. I know he is a passionate supporter of Via Rail and passenger rail improvement in this country. We hope to work together on that.

However, I support Bill C-33. I would ask the member to consider that the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority is massively inefficient, that the anchorages that it sends to sit for free parking in the waters of the Salish Sea, in my riding, sit there doing no economic good at all. It is because the service of moving goods by rail is so inefficient that prairie grain farmers cannot get their grain shipped out on time. They end up having one hole filled, and then the freighter is sent to sit someplace.

Everyone loses. Prairie grain farmers lose, workers lose and the environment loses. The bill before us offers some improvements. Would the member consider supporting the bill so we could improve the economic efficiency of the port of Vancouver?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I look forward to working with the member going forward.

I am certainly not here to say that our ports and our railway infrastructure are not in need of improvement, because I think I have been on the public record saying that they are. It is my position and the position of our party, though, that the bill would have a net negative impact on productivity.

Perhaps in the future we can work with the member to improve our infrastructure to increase productivity and help people.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I come from those prairies where that grain is grown and needs to be shipped. We are very landlocked, and the ports are incredibly important to us.

Everyone who runs a small business or any kind of agriculture business, anything in our province that needs the ports, is looking at the bill and saying it would be new reporting requirements, increased red tape and regulatory burdens, and new advisory committees. This is not how we run something efficiently, by adding more of these issues that would actually decrease the efficiency and competitiveness of our ports.

I would just like a quick comment from the member.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, that is a tough but fair question.

Government Orders

I will just quickly end with a quote by Ronald Reagan, who said that if government sees something move, it taxes it; if it keeps moving, it regulates it; and if it dies, it subsidizes it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise this morning to speak to Bill C-33. I would like to begin by thanking my dear colleague, the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, for supporting my amendments this morning.

[*English*]

I am very pleased to finally be standing at report stage of the bill. I will recount Bill C-33's history briefly, but it has not been brief. The bill came forward for first reading in November 2022, so we are coming up on two years. We have to get the bill passed and through the Senate before an election occurs.

I want to thank the previous minister of transportation, who did the heavy lifting on this, the member of Parliament for Mississauga Centre. In the summer of 2023, it shifted to being the member for Honoré-Mercier, and yesterday it shifted to being the hon. member for Oakville.

The bill is critical legislation. It deals with rail safety and with issues relating to our ports. There are many sections to it, and obviously it deals with such substantially different issues.

[*Translation*]

This bill has to do with rail safety and the Canada Marine Act. It also has to do with anchorage, which is a key issue for my riding.

• (1040)

[*English*]

There are a lot of issues bundled up in the legislation, and I want to specifically, of course, address my own amendments. However, before I get into that, I really do want to salute the work of members on all sides of this place, particularly with respect to contributions from New Democratic members of the committee and from the Bloc Québécois members, for major improvements in the bill, following support from some Liberals on the committee and Green Party amendments at committee to improve the legislation.

For instance, some of my amendments that were accepted would make part of the fundamental purpose of the Marine Act to also respect the environment and indigenous rights. These are important elements because the system that is used out of ports along the B.C. coast significantly impacts indigenous rights and significantly impacts the environment, but the impacts have never been recognized before.

Some of the things that would be done here, and which are terribly important, are to try to improve the efficiency of ports along the B.C. coast. It would not be extra paperwork and extra regulation. It is trying to make sure that our ports operate efficiently in the interests of everyone from prairie grain farmers to first nations, indigenous peoples including Coast Salish peoples up and down the B.C. coast, particularly on southern Vancouver Island.

They have been negatively impacted by the failure of the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority to ever consult first nations about the

appropriation of their lands, their territories and particularly their traditional rights in the waters of the Salish Sea, which have been completely ignored for a very long time. Therefore, initially at first reading in November 2022, I was pleased and excited to see it and glad we finally had some improved legislation.

I will that say one of the things I am encouraged about, which came forward with the legislation and with some amendments, is that the minister of transport, if they have reasonable grounds to believe that a vessel is a threat or poses a direct or indirect risk to the security of marine transportation or to the health of persons involved, would now be able to direct the vessel to proceed to a different place.

Why does this matter so much? For members who are not coastal and who have not heard this really quite horrific situation, I will explain the inefficiencies, particularly in shipping goods in bulk. Container ship containers basically have computerized systems and bar codes along the side. When they come into the port authority, whether it is a port up and down the coast, Prince Rupert or Vancouver, the containers are read quickly and moved to the right place. They tend to be shipped out quickly.

The difficulty comes with shipping of goods in bulk, primarily coal, metallurgical and thermal; and different categories of grain, whether barley or durum, the wheat and barley that show up at ports. They do not get shipped efficiently, and then they have to be loaded into freighters that can have three or four different holds.

What happens, and I am sure prairie farmers who are watching today will know that this is the case, is that CN Rail and CP Rail seem to be surprised every year by something called fall, and by the grain harvest, and they do not have the cars lined up to ship the grain efficiently to ports where it is going to go to other countries to make sure farmers can recoup their costs and other countries can buy our grain.

What happens is that one hold of a freighter gets loaded. The Port of Vancouver then says that there is no room for it in that port and to go sit up sit up near Galiano Island for a while, or near Pender Island or Gabriola Island. That is fine. They are told to just sit there and cool their jets. They get free parking there. There is no benefit to the local community at all. They just drop anchor and destroy the benthic organisms below. They make a lot of noise and contribute to the threatened status of the southern resident killer whales.

There are a number of things that the bill would do that would be improvements. One is to allow the minister of transport to redirect where ships are sitting, and I put it to my friends on the Conservative side of the House to think about this, because they want accountability. Why is it that our harbour authorities are so unaccountable, do not talk to local communities and do not have to care about it? They are a law unto themselves. The bill would begin to represent the concerns of indigenous peoples and communities up and down our coast.

Government Orders

I really want to get to my amendment before I run out of time. The amendment is to do something that was promised by the Liberal Party in the 2021 election campaign, which is to ban the export of thermal coal. Thermal coal, unlike metallurgical coal, is being shipped to other countries for the purpose of burning it, releasing greenhouse gases for electricity.

More galling than the export of thermal coal is that the thermal coal being shipped out of the port of Vancouver is coming from the United States. It comes up on rail cars. It contributes to coal dust through communities like Tsawwassen. It contributes to immediate negative health impacts. Why is it coming up from the U.S.? It is because the United States, up and down the west coast, has banned the export of thermal coal for climate reasons.

U.S. coal is being shipped up to Canada to be moved to our ports, and it slows down the efficiency of the ports because it is a bulk export with the same problem of getting it into different holds of different vessels to ship to another country. Meanwhile, the United States and the states up and down its west coast will not do this anymore.

There is the burden of a climate impact that is negative, a negative impact on the survival of our southern resident killer whales and an affront to indigenous rights, and all of this is contributing to the inefficiency of the port of Vancouver. There is an amendment to the bill that did get through committee at clause-by-clause, but it would not take effect until the year 2030.

My amendment tries to align the interests of existing and previous government promises in all these areas: climate action, protection of endangered species and respect of indigenous rights. In one fell swoop, the amendment would bring the banning of thermal coal up to 2025 instead of being postponed to 2030, and the current language is quite permissive in that regard.

Again, there are more aspects of Bill C-33 than I can cover in a short speech at this moment of finally getting to report stage, but I want to ask all members to consider how important it is to get to the bill finally, considering that clause-by-clause took place in December 2023. Here we are in September 2024. Let us get the amendments passed; I urge colleagues.

I would be very grateful for support for the amendment that I am bringing forward today on behalf of the Green Party to accelerate the banning of thermal coal from Canada. Metallurgical coal would still be going through our ports, but not the specific coal that, as I said, the U.S. states have already taken action on for climate reasons alone and that they will not ship.

Let us make sure Canada stops shipping thermal coal overseas. At the same time, let us take significant action to reduce the amount of noise driving our southern resident killer whales to extinction, and respect indigenous rights. I thank the W_SÁNEC Leadership Council for its work on this issue. I thank the citizen groups up and down southern Vancouver Island that track the freighters, and I urge all colleagues to expeditiously pass key amendments for the environment and approve Bill C-33 at report stage and then at third reading.

• (1045)

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member and I do share something that is very near and dear to both our hearts, which is that the jurisdictions we represent are very strategic within Canada's overall supply chains and trade corridors, such as the Asia-Pacific. In my neck of the woods, it is the Niagara ports trade corridor along the St. Lawrence Seaway.

How does the member see Bill C-33 contributing to the overall Canadian economy with respect to the supply chains that are identified, the capacity needed within those supply chains, and with that, the creation of fluidity, primarily in our very strategic areas? Does the member see the bill contributing to giving the country a better and more strengthened economy?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question, and he is right. We have exchanged conversations that, I would say, border on rants about how it feels to be in a community where a harbour authority really seems to lack accountability or caring concern, which affects the economy as well as the communities.

As a modern industrialized country with a significant value added to our economy from exports, our harbours have to be more efficient. They have to operate with accountability to their stakeholder groups that surround them, which include, as I said, people who want to ship goods. Prairie farmers, in particular, have been up in arms, and I have met with many of them about how inefficient it is and how unprepared CN Rail and Canadian Pacific are every single year.

By the way, the full name for Canadian Pacific recently has become Canadian Pacific Kansas City. CN Rail's biggest shareholder is Bill Gates. I am wondering how much these shippers of the key parts of our supply chains are really devoted to Canada, since they are owned and privatized elsewhere.

I would say that this bill would contribute to economic improvements by making our ports more efficient.

• (1050)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her talk on transportation, particularly on the port of Vancouver.

The member talked about supply chain disruptions in shipping grain from the Prairies to the port and off to overseas. One of those disruptions is the inability of the Port of Vancouver to load grain on rainy days, which we have quite a few of in Vancouver. Of all the supply chain problems, that seems like one that is looking for a solution. I wonder if the hon. member has a comment about that.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I thank my friend for Langley—Aldergrove. Obviously, he knows whereof he speaks.

Government Orders

There are quite a lot of impediments to the efficient loading of grain, even when we get the grain to port, even when there is actually a freighter there with holds ready to take it away. I do support the longshoremen's union. I know that it has negotiated in its collective agreements a number of restrictions on the way in which, for safety reasons, grain is loaded when it rains. However, I have to say that I think there are better solutions in the current state of affairs. We should be able to load grain efficiently, even when it rains, which is not a rare event at the port of Vancouver.

I sympathize with the member's question, but I do not think I have time to comment further.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my Green Party colleague for her very interesting speech. It is clear that she knows a lot about this file, even though she is not a member of the committee. I tip my hat to her. I would like to ask her a quick question about the amendment she is defending, because that is why she rose to speak.

Why is the amendment stipulating that we will stop exporting coal as of 2025 important? Also, why is it important that the Liberals and the NDP not give in to pressure from the Conservatives, who always oppose anything that could have a positive impact on the climate?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madame Speaker, I would like to say a big thank you to my dear colleague, the member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, one of the opposition members who has made a very big effort to improve this bill to protect the environment.

It is absolutely essential that we take quick action long before the 2030 target. We must stop exporting coal via our ports. This increases delays for other products and goods. We must do this immediately.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise here today to speak to Bill C-33 at report stage. It has gone through committee and is going toward third reading. This is an act that would amend a number of other acts, and I will not list them all, but it is essentially a bill that would update and improve the safety, security and efficiency of our rail and marine transportation systems. I am also happy to report that the NDP will be supporting the bill because it is clearly needed, and it has been needed for a long time, as the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands mentioned.

This bill represents the effort to strengthen the efficiency, resilience, security and safety of Canada's supply chains, which is a subject often talked about here. We have studied it at the international trade committee, and we are increasingly aware of the issues. The bill would provide some steps toward solving those problems.

The bill stems from the government's Railway Safety Act review, the port modernization review and the 2022 supply chain task force final report. The bill is also intended to provide the foundation for a forthcoming national supply chain strategy.

I would like to thank the wonderful member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, who is the NDP transport critic and has been a real champion for improving the safety, security and efficiency of our transportation networks. He even took the train across Canada last year to get back to his riding in northern B.C. and shipped his canoe on the same train. He actually uses his canoe to visit constituents along the Skeena River.

Why will we support this bill? We note that many of the changes it would make to existing legislation are highly driven by corporate interests. This bill falls short on addressing the concerns of municipalities, indigenous communities and workers, and does not implement the recommendations made by the national supply chain task force report or the standing committee on transportation's recommendations on railway safety. I think those would be two obvious things to reference in the legislation, but they are ignored.

When we talk about safety and security of our railways, ports and shipping, we are talking directly about the safety of workers, who are the people who actually move the people and products that are essential to our supply chain. This bill is a missed opportunity on several fronts. Rail workers and communities have been calling for improvements to rail safety, many of which were recommended in a June 2022 report by the Standing Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Communities. This bill is silent on the recommendations from that report, and it was tabled two years ago.

Similarly, port congestion during the pandemic raised serious concerns regarding ships using anchorages in the Salish Sea near communities in ecologically sensitive areas. This was going on, I must admit, prior to the pandemic. The wonderful Sheila Malcolmson, the then MP for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, brought this up repeatedly, just as the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands did. This is something that needs to be fixed. The bill goes part of the way there, but not far enough. The NDP managed to pass amendments to reduce anchorage times in these areas, but were not able to pass amendments to improve rail safety, which is the topic the bill is supposed to be about.

When it comes to strengthening port governance, workers deserve a seat at the table. It is important that new requirements for consultation and reporting reflect the capacities of both large and small ports. It is also critical that these new requirements are more than corporate window dressing, that they are rigorous enough to deliver true, transparent accountability to communities, workers, first nations and the environment. The NDP passed amendments giving workers representation on port authority boards; expanding advisory committees for surrounding communities, municipalities and first nations; and creating different requirements around financial reporting for small and large ports to address capacity issues.

The government needs to go further to address corporate capture in Canada's supply chain, particularly in the rail sector. Multi-billion dollar corporations still operate with little federal oversight. The Auditor General has raised serious concerns over the years about the government's reliance on safety management systems as the main safeguard for workers and communities. Better transparency, stronger federal rules and more rigorous enforcement are needed more than ever.

• (1055)

I want to run through some of the NDP amendments to the bill that were adopted at committee. The amendments would require labour representation on the board of directors of port authorities, something that will go a long way in making things smoother with labour relations in our ports.

We studied the Vancouver port strike at the international trade committee, and people forget that we have had a very long period of peace with labour in the Vancouver port. The last strike was in 1969, so things have been working fairly well. Most of the time, if there is a disruption, it is a lockout, as we saw in the rail dispute recently. It is the corporations that are causing those problems.

Another amendment—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will stop the hon. member there, given it is time for Statements by Members. The hon. member will have the opportunity to finish his speech the next time the bill is before the House.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[English]

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Milton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, thanks to the CBC/Radio-Canada, Canadians enjoyed open and equitable access to countless hours of amazing sport from the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games. Canadians cheered on our incredible athletes as they won medals, broke records and pushed the limits of human performance.

The role the CBC plays as a public broadcaster in connecting Canadians to the Olympic and Paralympic Games is absolutely vital. The CBC provides accessibility to ensure that everyone from urban centres to remote communities can share in the excitement of the games equally. For decades, the CBC has brought the Olympics and Paralympics right into our living rooms and now right onto our devices.

Scott Russell, the king of Canadian sports broadcasting, has been our host through these moments of triumph and heartache for over 40 years and an astonishing 17 summer and winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. This summer, Scott announced that Paris would be his final games as a broadcaster. As he signed off with an emotional farewell, Scott shared that he has had the time of his life. Because of Scott's work, we have had the time of our lives too.

Statements by Members

The Canadian government, all Canadian athletes and Canadian sports fans thank Scott. We love the king.

* * *

AMISH COMMUNITY

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am proud to represent a rural riding that includes many in the Amish community. The Amish do not use electricity, phones or the Internet. They are pacifists, they do not vote and many are dual Canadian-U.S. citizens.

In April 2021, I first asked the Liberal government how it was communicating border restrictions and requirements to Canadians like the Amish. I followed this up in February, September and November 2022, both here in the House and in written questions, as I started getting reports that the community was facing fines in excess of \$250,000 for failure to use the ArriveCAN app, to get the right COVID test or to quarantine. The government finally responded in January 2023 that it did not inform the Amish of the rules before they arrived at the border. Now the community is facing approximately \$300,000 in fines and collection agencies have taken liens out against many of the Amish properties.

Was it the Liberal government's intent to discriminate against this community? If not, will it now rectify the situation and give the Amish their farms and lives back?

* * *

DARRYL HARDING

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Scarborough—Agincourt recently lost a beloved community member. Darryl Harding dedicated over 30 years to coaching baseball at Wishing Well Park. His contribution to the Scarborough community and to the game of baseball was inspiring and his positive impact on youth will be felt for years to come.

Darryl's work with the Wexford Agincourt Baseball League was a remarkable example of dedication and commitment to community. In recognition of his volunteering over 1,200 hours to youth baseball each year, Darryl was chosen by the Toronto Blue Jays as a seat 21 honouree.

My condolences go out to Darryl's children and the local baseball community. He will truly be missed.

* * *

JOHN DOUGLAS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, on July 12, Port Alberni lost a champion with the sudden passing of its city councillor, former mayor and community activist John Douglas.

Statements by Members

Before settling in Port Alberni, John worked as a paramedic in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside on the front lines of the toxic drug crisis. He moved to Port Alberni in 2004 and served another eight years as a paramedic before running for public office. On behalf of the city, he worked closely with first nations in tourism management and economic development and was a forceful advocate for social planning, mental health and addictions, food distribution and housing solutions for the Alberni Valley. He worked with the Port Alberni Shelter Society, advocating for change in the way addiction treatment is conducted, and a park is named for him in the community.

John loved Port Alberni and promoted its potential wherever he went in this world. On behalf of all members, I offer my condolences to John's wife Donna and family. He was a true champion of Port Alberni and will not be forgotten.

Rest in peace, my friend.

* * *

MILITARY FAMILY APPRECIATION DAY

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today marks Military Family Appreciation Day, a day dedicated to recognizing and honouring the sacrifices and unwavering strength of our military families, the backbone of our Canadian Armed Forces. Their dedication and love are fundamental to the success of our service members, enabling them to carry out their vital missions. They sometimes feel overlooked, which is why, in the defence policy update, the government made a commitment to ensure that members and their families are cared for, have additional support and resources available, and can live in comfort as they serve Canada.

I thank the family members of all of our Canadian Armed Forces members from coast to coast to coast, including those in my riding of Orléans, families like Major Gabriel Rousseau, his wife Nadia and their two young children, Victor and Camille, for all they do.

* * *

• (1105)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the Prime Minister, our warships are rusting out, our fighter jets are worn out, this army has been hollowed out and we are so short of soldiers, sailors and aircrew that our troops are burnt out.

We found out last week that the Prime Minister spent almost \$35 million on new sleeping bags for our troops, but nobody checked to see if they were suitable for arctic conditions. Our troops, while training with our U.S. allies in Alaska, had to resort to using old sleeping bags from the 1960s. The Liberal government is literally leaving our troops out in the cold.

With the Liberals, when it comes to our military, it is just failure after failure. From their failure to procure light armoured utility vehicles, to our troops in Europe having to buy their own helmets, vests and food, the Liberal government cannot be trusted to keep our troops or Canadians safe.

If the Liberals cannot get the little things right, how can anyone trust them to get the big things, like submarines bought on time and on budget, right? Our future common-sense Conservative government will stand up for our military heroes and ensure they are properly equipped to do their important work to protect Canada.

* * *

GURU NANAK DIVERSITY VILLAGE

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Surrey has one of the fastest-growing populations in the Lower Mainland, and with that, the number of seniors is set to rise over the next 25 years. I am honoured to share with members information about the groundbreaking of the new Guru Nanak diversity village seniors facility opened by the PICS Society of British Columbia.

Behind this much-needed community project is the progressive vision of the late Charanpal Gill; the CEO of PICS, Satbir Chima; and the countless staff, board members, donors and volunteers of the organization. This village will have 125 beds housed within a three-storey building. This long-term care facility will offer South Asian seniors high-quality and culturally sensitive care and companionship.

This is a visionary project and I cannot wait to welcome seniors to their new home.

* * *

2SLGBTQI+ COMMUNITY

Ms. Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I attended several Canadian pride celebrations this summer as part of my role as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, and I heard appreciation for the government's initiatives to advance equality, such as the first 2SLGBTQI+ action plan and the entrepreneurship fund. Also, I heard people are terrified of losing the progress that has been made, particularly when Conservative premiers are turning health care and family decisions into political issues, targeting gender-diverse kids and making them feel unwanted, unworthy and at risk of harm. Look where that rage farming leads. Here on Parliament Hill today we have a crowd galvanizing hatred and fear of queer youth.

Pride started as a protest. When we celebrate the rainbow at festivals across the country, we are also protesting the intolerance and hatred that are rising in Canada. The pride community needs the current government more than ever and I am proud that it will continue to stand with them, champion equality and deliver programs that advance equity.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals have found a way to expand their coalition, this time by convincing the Bloc Québécois to join them so that the Prime Minister can stay in power.

What is the Bloc Québécois good for? There is more spending than ever, more public servants than ever, more scandals than ever, and all on Quebec's dime. The Prime Minister is not going to keep his promise to the Bloc Québécois leader. They will gain absolutely nothing for Quebecers, except another year of increased national debt. The Bloc had the chance to work with the future Conservative government and negotiate for Quebecers on the woodland caribou issue. They must be the worst negotiators in history.

Only a Conservative government can solve all the problems caused by this coalition. Canadians will remember what the Bloc Québécois and the NDP did to our country. Do they not understand that all Canadians, including Quebecers, want an election now?

* * *

[English]

TONY WHITFORD

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Tony Whitford, a great northerner who passed away earlier this week. Tony's dedication to public service knew no bounds. He served with distinction in many roles, as an MLA, minister, Speaker, sergeant-at-arms, deputy commissioner and commissioner.

I had the honour of serving with Tony in the 14th legislative assembly in the Northwest Territories. As a rookie MLA at the time, I learned a great deal from him. He was also a dedicated volunteer, spending countless hours supporting local charitable efforts and worthy causes in the north.

Tony was a friend to all who knew him and he will be dearly missed. We offer our condolences to his family and his loved ones. *Mahsi cho.*

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● (1110)

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. Why is that? Two years ago, when the NDP leader could not beat the Liberal Prime Minister, he joined him. Their cozy coalition has led to higher taxes, higher food prices and skyrocketing crime.

Recently, the NDP leader said he was ending the partnership, but it was all a charade. He said the Liberal government is the worst ever and claimed it should not be re-elected. Despite his theatrics, the NDP leader once again confirmed yesterday that he still stands with the Liberal Prime Minister.

The NDP leader speaks of it being “the people's time”. I agree. Let us let the people decide who is right and call a carbon tax election now. Canadians can choose the continually costly coalition of the NDP-Liberal government, which means ever-higher taxes, less money for gas, groceries and housing, and more crime in our communities, or Canadians can choose a new government led by our common-sense Conservative leader, who has a plan to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

* * *

MEMBER FOR KINGSTON AND THE ISLANDS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal member for Kingston and the Islands, a pathetic Twitter troll, has admitted guilt to spreading disinformation. This disinformation was part of a dirty and deliberate attempt to smear the reputation of a fellow Canadian, to change the channel on the absolute rot and corruption that defines nine years of the Liberal government. Only when legal action was taken and the member was exposed for spreading this vile disinformation did he fall to his knees and apologize. Everyone knows the apology is fake. The member's actions are part of a broader campaign of smears and deception by a rotten, corrupt government willing to do and say anything to cling to power. The people of Kingston deserve so much better than that member, and Canadians deserve so much better than nine years of the corrupt Liberal government.

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[Translation]

CIBC RUN FOR THE CURE

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as part of the CIBC Run for the Cure, I will be attending this evening's gala organized by CIBC Laval team employees to support breast cancer research.

The funds raised will improve the quality of life of people affected by this disease and give them emotional support. I wish everyone with breast cancer courage and a speedy recovery. I salute their resilience and especially my dear sister Nina, as well as Daniela Lemmetti and Amber Leclerc, who will share their experiences this evening with participants.

I sincerely thank the event's organizers, including Ihab Zaid, Rosa Trunzo, Angelina Iannizzi and Nick Colasurdo.

The race will take place on Sunday, October 6. There is still time to register or support the cause.

*Oral Questions**[English]***FILIPINO CANADIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS**

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, the third annual Filipino Canadian National Congress leadership convention is happening in Winnipeg tomorrow. Over 200 community and business leaders representing a diverse cross-section of Filipino Canadians will be in attendance, and the theme for this year's convention is "Strengthening Communities from Coast to Coast to Coast".

Port Moody—Coquitlam is fortunate to have amazing Filipino community leader Treenee Lopez, the founder and chair of Global Pinoy Diaspora Canada, and Megin Alvarez, whose friendship and commitment to community building I appreciate and admire.

Congratulations to all the attendees at this year's national congress, from me and my colleague from Winnipeg Centre. We, along with NDP MP-elect Leila Dance, look forward to attending the conference, and we want to thank the leadership of the Filipino Canadian National Congress for inviting us.

* * *

*[Translation]***FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF FERMONT**

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, the town of Fermont is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

The name Fermont naturally evokes its mountain of iron ore, its immense open-pit mines and its mythical wall. Personally, I also think of its pioneers, who are now watching their children and grandchildren grow up in Fermont, where the warmth of humanity is matched only by the love that the people of Fermont have for their community, even if it is in the north, above the 53rd parallel.

The people of Fermont are supportive, generous, entrepreneurial and innovative, and they make the town what it is: a great place to live, where neighbours have become friends, weaving a tight-knit community to support one another. All of this is heightened by the beauty of the northern lights dancing over the waves of black spruce that blow in the mighty winds on cloudless evenings. That is Fermont.

Until I can join them to celebrate in person—hopefully very soon—I wish my dear friends in Fermont a happy 50th anniversary, one that is as festive and warm as they are.

* * *

● (1115)

*[English]***LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA**

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. The sell-out NDP leader has sold out workers, families and seniors. He skyrocketed food costs. He put his pension ahead of the people, ahead of two million lined up at food banks, ahead of one in four about to lose primary care. He told Manitobans that he is done with his costly coalition. Yesterday,

he teamed up with the Bloc to prop up the incompetent government. How demure and how mindful.

Canadians do not need bigger corrupt coalitions. They have no confidence in the NDP-Liberals. They need a carbon tax election, where they can decide between four more years of crushing NDP-Liberal carbon taxes or a common-sense Conservative government that will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Let us bring it home.

* * *

SCARBOROUGH CENTRE

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it was a busy summer in Scarborough. Our annual community barbecue at Thomson Memorial Park saw thousands enjoying burgers, samosas and other treats. We also held an ice cream social, and I attended many great community events from Canada Day to events celebrating the many great cultures that call Scarborough home.

At community events, and as I knocked on doors this summer, Scarborough residents told me that they are still finding it difficult to make ends meet. They are worried about the cost of groceries and rent. They are worried that programs that are helping them, such as the Canada child benefit, national child care and the new Canada dental plan, would be cut by the Conservatives to pay for tax cuts for the rich. As we resume our work in Ottawa, I will be fighting to deliver more help for those working hard to join the middle class and against Conservative cuts that will cost working people money.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[Translation]***GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY**

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years, it has been a tough first week back in Parliament for the Prime Minister: His party suffered a second defeat in a Liberal stronghold, he lost his Quebec lieutenant and another MP from his caucus as a result, and then he saw the NDP leader tear up their agreement one day only to glue it back together after the byelections.

I think the best of the bad news for him is the even larger coalition with the "Liberal Bloc" leader to save his ailing minority government.

How can this Liberal government still have the confidence of parliamentarians and Canadians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what a good idea to ask a question on September 20, the day the Canada child benefit payment is made, a day when, in his riding, families are receiving, on average, a nearly \$650 non-taxable payment. There are nearly 8,000 families in my colleague's riding.

Unfortunately, it is always the same old story. The Conservative Party wants to cut everything, including the Canada child benefit, according to the member's leader.

Does my colleague agree with the idea of cutting help for families in his riding?

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, the “Liberal Bloc” is the most centralizing, spend-happy, divisive Liberal government, one that has increased the cost of living and the price of food and doubled the cost of housing. Even the Quebec premier is imploring the “Liberal Bloc” to do its job of representing Quebec and to vote against keeping this bad government in power.

Will the Liberal ministers and members from Quebec recognize that, if the Bloc Québécois cannot do its job for Quebec, they should do it themselves, as Quebec's elected representatives, and vote in favour of the motion of non-confidence in this Prime Minister or follow the example of the member for Honoré-Mercier and become independent?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it takes an incredible amount of cynicism for people to tie their political fortunes to the failure of the Canadian economy, as the Conservatives are doing.

The Conservative Leader once argued that there would be perpetual inflation unless we adopted his austerity agenda. We held our ground and now inflation is back down to a historic low of 2%.

Does he really believe all the nonsense that comes out of his mouth? Does everything boil down to politics for them?

• (1120)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have just heard the proof that a bad Liberal government for Quebec is a bad Liberal government for Quebeckers.

No matter how hard the “Liberal Bloc” tries to justify itself, it has no reason to support this minority Liberal government other than feeding its leader's ego.

When will the “Liberal Bloc” Prime Minister allow Quebeckers to vote for a common-sense government that will work for the interests of all Quebeckers, axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madame Speaker, my colleague spoke about feeding his Conservative leader's ego. The Conservative leader had a brilliant idea about two days ago, when he said that helping children go to school in the morning on a full stomach is all about feeding bureaucracy. He said that helping children who have no food to fill their bellies before learning is simply about feeding bureaucracy.

Are we talking about feeding the Conservative leader's ego or feeding the children in his riding?

[English]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. However, it was the leader of the NDP who was out trick-or-treating a bit early. He was tricking Canadians into thinking he was going to end his Liberal coalition, and his treat was his pension. As a result of that, more and more Canadians are facing the carbon tax, and we have nine million Canadians who are facing food insecurity.

Will the NDP-Liberal government end its tricks and call a carbon tax election so it is Canadians who have the treat?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is pretty rich for the Conservatives to be talking about pensions as they are actively committed to cancelling Canadians' pensions, while their pensions and the leader of the Conservatives' pension are worth more than \$2 million.

As always, the three-word slogans coming from the Conservatives do not make sense. They are not even true. Inflation is down. Interest rates are down. Gas prices are way down. According to the Canadian Climate Institute, thanks to our environmental policies, emissions are down too. Despite this good news, the Conservatives do not want to cheer for the Canadian economy or Canadians. They want bad news to tread on us.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, the real news is the number of Canadians facing food insecurity is up 111%, that is 25% of Canadian families who cannot afford to put food on the table.

Let that sink in. How is that even possible? That is the stark reality Canadians are facing as a result of the Liberal-NDP costly carbon tax driving up costs on farmers, truckers and food production.

The Liberal-NDP government has already said it does not work for the people, it works for the Prime Minister. Will the NDP-Liberal government put Canadians first and call a carbon tax election?

Oral Questions

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, time and again in this House, the Conservatives cite food bank line-ups and food insecurity to try to signal that they care about Canadians, while every day they stand up in this House, cheer on bad news and really root for the failure of our economy in Canada.

Inflation is down to the Bank of Canada's target rate of 2%. That is good news for all Canadians. That affects food prices in this country. Our government has put forward a grocery rebate, a GST rebate, immediate support and a national school food program. The Conservatives voted against feeding children—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

* * *

[Translation]

SENIORS

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, we need to talk about the precarious financial situation retirees are facing.

I would like to begin by reminding the Liberals that seniors are listening to us and they expect their elected representatives to stop playing politics when it comes to their living conditions. The fact that seniors aged 65 to 74 receive 10% less in old age security benefits than older seniors simply cannot be justified, given that they face the same cost of living. There is no way to justify creating two classes of seniors. There is no way to justify financial discrimination based on age.

Will the government put an end to that, or will it have to justify itself in an election?

• (1125)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to mention three things.

First, we increased assistance for seniors aged 75 and up. As my colleague may know, even if it is not from personal experience, when people age, their needs increase and their income goes down. They find it more difficult to work and have to pay more for medication, housing and transportation.

Second, we have always said that we will continue to be there for the seniors in my riding and across the country.

Third, I have some good news. As of July 22, 8,000 seniors in the riding of Saint-Jean had enrolled in the new Canadian dental care plan. It is extraordinary that 8,000 new seniors—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Liberals are masters of their own destiny. They can stop creating two classes of retirees by increasing old age security for seniors 65 to 74, or they can keep answering with platitudes or not answering at all. They are going to suffer the consequences. Let us be clear, the Bloc Québécois has no intention of giving up on this. The

government, who has \$34 billion to spend on a pipeline out west, is quite capable of supporting seniors 65 to 74.

Will it support all seniors 65 and over or will it suffer the consequences come election time?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our colleague talks about platitudes. It is not a platitude to say that, as of July 22, 8,022 seniors in her riding were able to get affordable and accessible dental care.

Many of them had waited for years for dental care, dentures, exams and cleanings because they are so expensive. Many of them, unfortunately, waited far too long. Indeed, the longer a person waits, the more expensive and painful it is to treat.

The good news is that in her riding, 8,000 seniors now have access to dental care. Several thousand more have not signed up yet.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, indigenous peoples represent 20% of unhoused people in Canada.

The CEO of Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services states only 0.2% of all funding to end homelessness is going to indigenous peoples. This means thousands will be living out in the cold this winter because of the Liberals and the Conservatives who voted against any funding for indigenous housing.

When will the Liberals end their genocidal policies, stop breaking their promises and ensure indigenous peoples have places to call home?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are taking action to address the tremendous lack of safe, affordable housing and housing supports for indigenous peoples in urban, rural and northern communities.

Conservatives are pulling from the same old “Ottawa knows best” approach. Since 2016, we have taken a different approach, working closely with partners to determine the scope and scale of housing needs on reserve.

In our efforts to help close the gap, we have increased our funding for on-reserve housing by over 1,100%. We are supporting the construction, renovation and retrofit of over 36,000 homes in first nations communities and are co-developing a 10-year housing and infrastructure strategy. We will not stop.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): It is really disappointing, Madam Speaker, to see the Liberals stand up when they know they have had less than 0.2% spending on indigenous housing needs.

Today, rental vacancy rates in St. John's bottomed out at 1.5%. That means that even when doing everything right, people still cannot find an affordable place to live. This housing disaster is happening because Liberals and Conservatives gave a million affordable rental homes to corporate landlords. Now the people of St. John's and everywhere in Canada are paying the price.

Why are the Liberals, just like the Conservatives, not protecting Canadians from greedy corporate landlords?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): It is very true, Madam Speaker, that rent is too expensive in this country, but what is incumbent on all federal parties, including the NDP, is to put forward a plan. The Conservatives do not have a plan, but neither does the NDP.

What is our plan to help on rent? We have waived the GST on the construction of apartments for lower-income and middle-class families and individuals. We have put forward an acquisition fund to help not-for-profits purchase housing facilities to keep rent affordable. We have invested in co-op housing, with the single largest investment in the past 30 years. Where is the NDP on these issues?

* * *

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. The coalition just got bigger after the NDP leader's fake stunt of ripping up his agreement. Now the NDP-Liberal government has new partners in the Bloc. These coalition partners support being part of a government that hiked taxes, ballooned food costs, doubled housing costs and unleashed crime and chaos in our once safe streets.

When will Canadians have a carbon tax election so they can decide between the costly coalition government and common-sense Conservatives?

● (1130)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, while the member opposite brought up crime and chaos in the streets, let us talk about what the member for St. Albert—Edmonton was doing in Ottawa streets just this past week. He was having cocktails and flirting with fascists who interrupted a Terry Fox memorial.

The Conservatives are spending more time with those who are flying Russian flags on Parliament Hill than being concerned about Canadians' safety.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that if they do not have the floor, they should not be speaking. There were quite a few of them doing that. They should listen to the answer whether they like it or not.

Oral Questions

The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, in Kelowna, recently someone broke into a home and stabbed a woman. This was a violent, random crime, so for the member to talk about discounting crime and chaos in our communities, shame on her.

Canadians cannot afford this costly coalition that taxes our food, punishes our work, takes our money, doubles our housing costs and unleashes crime and chaos in our communities. Common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

When will we have a carbon tax election?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again we see the Conservatives purporting to support feminism and be against violence against women, yet what we know is that a vast majority of women are subjected to gun violence. What do the Conservatives do? They are silent. They take on the talking point of the gun lobby over Canadian women who are saying that we need to keep our communities safe and get restricted weapons that are meant for the battlefield off our streets.

Why are the Conservatives not standing up for Canadian women?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I want to remind members to please be respectful. If they had an opportunity to ask a question, they should take the opportunity to listen to the answer.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Tell her that. Tell her to be respectful.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member for St. Albert—Edmonton is out of order. I would ask him to hold himself back from all these outbursts.

The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week the NDP leader, in a performance, ripped up the agreement with the Liberals, saying they will never, ever get back together. However, here we are in the first week of Parliament, and at the first opportunity, the NDP is propping up the Liberal government.

No one can keep up with this “they will or will not” saga, so I have a simple question for the parties on the other side: Will they or will they not?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since the question is not directed at us, I will take the opportunity on this Military Family Appreciation Day to recognize the sacrifices and the service of the families of the Canadian Armed Forces members who keep us safe here in Canada and around the world.

I know that many Canadian Forces members are currently deployed to Latvia and that they are proudly and bravely participating in Operation Reassurance.

I therefore want to thank all members of the Canadian Forces and their families for their commitment.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. According to Statistics Canada, after nine years of the Liberal government, 111% more Canadians are dealing with food insecurity. That is four million more Canadians who will have trouble feeding themselves tonight.

What will it take for this cowardly coalition of the NDP and Bloc to finally stand up with the Conservatives and defeat the tired, corrupt Liberal government?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, cynical politicians, like the Conservatives, have tied their political fortunes to the failure of the Canadian economy. Good economic news for Canadians is actually bad news for the Conservatives. They have told us time and again that there would be perpetual inflation unless we adopted their austerity agenda. Inflation is at an historic low. It is at 2%, which is exactly the target rate set by the Bank of Canada.

Are the Conservatives really being honest when they speak in this House, or are they just gaslighting Canadians?

* * *

● (1135)

[Translation]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois leader is letting the Liberals know that he is going to keep them in power, thereby relinquishing his bargaining power, especially when it comes to the order issued by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. The Premier of Quebec is asking the Parti Québécois to bring its big brother in Ottawa back to its senses. If the Bloc Québécois leader wants to make himself useful, he should support our motion to bring down this incompetent, spendthrift, centralist government.

As for the Liberals, are they ready to side with Saguenay communities and drop their order against forestry workers?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague's question is directed at the leader of the Bloc Québécois, so the leader of the Bloc Québécois will have to answer.

However, I am going to give her some very useful information. In her riding, as of July 22, 16,452 seniors had received their member card under the new Canadian dental care plan.

The problem is that his Conservative leader said on the radio in Quebec City just a few weeks ago that the Canadian dental care plan does not exist and that it is not worth applying for a member card. Does she believe her Conservative leader, or does she believe the 16,452 seniors who received their member cards?

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is without a doubt the worst negotiator when it comes to defending Quebec's interests. The Bloc is kowtowing to the Liberals by telling them that they have nothing to worry about because they will not trigger an election. How much leeway does that leave the Bloc for negotiating? None at all. The Bloc could not even convince this government to stand up for the communities in Saguenay that are threatened by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change's heartless order.

Will this spendthrift, centralizing government support our demand to scrap its order that is killing jobs in Saguenay?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again, the member is asking questions to the leader of the Bloc Québécois. I do not know why she is looking at this side of the House.

In any case, she did not answer my question. Will she call her insulting Conservative leader to order? Yesterday, again, he spent the day hurling insults. Quebeckers are not like that.

Will she call her Conservative leader to order and also ask him to recognize that the Canadian dental care program, which is helping 16,452 seniors in her riding, really exists?

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, the federal government is withholding funding from organizations that support seniors. It is disgraceful that Ottawa is holding up funding for the age well at home program because of its dispute with Quebec. The Liberals know full well that they are interfering in Quebec's jurisdictions by holding seniors hostage. They know full well that Quebec has its own strategy for home support services, which was well received.

When will they stop playing politics on the backs of seniors and transfer money to Quebec?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know how important it is to help seniors, especially after the pandemic. The good news is that 12 out of the 22 projects in Quebec have been approved. Now there are 10 left. All the Government of Quebec has to do is press the “M-30 button” and the money will flow to the community organizations in her riding and many other ridings. Once it is done, the community organizations in Quebec that serve seniors will receive the money they need the next day.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Liberals know full well that they have no right to bypass the Government of Quebec or make decisions in its place. They are exploiting community organizations' anger in order to interfere in Quebec's jurisdictions. They are making Quebec out to be the villain when Ottawa is the one holding up the funding by refusing to transfer it. This entire controversy could be settled in five minutes if the Liberals had seniors' interests at heart, but instead the deadlock has been dragging on for months.

When will the Liberals stop holding seniors hostage?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am a bit surprised. We just heard that supporting seniors should not be the Canadian government's job and that members of the House should not be helping seniors in their ridings. All that seems rather strange and surprising to me in a discussion about helping seniors.

All members of the House have a responsibility to help seniors. In this case, it is very easy. People need to call their MNA and get them to ask the Government of Quebec to grant approval under M-30 and deliver funds to organizations that need funding from the Canadian government.

* * *

• (1140)

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, two years ago, the NDP leader sold out workers when he signed on to the costly coalition that raised taxes, increased food costs and doubled the cost of housing. Two weeks ago, he tore up the agreement, he said. However, this was just a cheap political stunt to avoid losing a safe NDP seat in a Winnipeg by-election.

After nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and now time is up. Will the Prime Minister call a carbon tax election now, yes or no?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, while the Conservative Party is so focused on slogans and bumper stickers, we in government will continue to be focused on the real concerns that Canadians have, like dealing with issues of inflation, which, by the way, is at 2% today; supporting our seniors; supporting our children; looking at how we can build a stronger and healthier middle class; and building a stronger and healthier Canadian economy. That is what we are focused on, while the Conservatives are focused on idiotic ideas.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are focused on axing the tax. The Prime Minister plans to quadruple the carbon tax, which has already made life unaffordable for working Canadians, and the NDP leader agrees with him. He has already voted for the carbon tax 24 times, no matter how much it hurts working people. The NDP leader will say or do anything to save himself, proving that he is not worth the cost.

Canadians are fed up. They are ready for a common-sense Conservative government to axe the tax. Will the Prime Minister call a carbon tax election, yes or no?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives will never let the truth or good news get in the way of their shameless exploitation of the challenges that Canadians are facing these days, and their three-word slogans are not solutions, are not policies and are childish. They are also fake news.

Inflation is down, interest rates are down and gas prices are down, and thanks to our environmental policies, emissions are down too. It is disappointing that the Conservatives' spirits are down with all this good news. It is clear that all they really want is negative news to blame us for.

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GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, just a few short weeks ago, the NDP leader, in a desperate attempt to stave off an imminent Conservative victory in a once-safe seat, told Canadians that he would no longer support the Liberal government. Fast-forward two weeks and the great magician has performed a reappearing act, resurrecting his coalition with the Liberals. Canadians did not give the NDP-Liberal government a mandate.

Taxes are up, food is up, crime is up and now time is up. When will the Liberal government finally give Canadians a choice and call a carbon tax election?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, again, what we see is that the Conservative Party, the far-right MAGA party, is being led by a leader who does nothing but spread negative news. He goes around every region of the country saying that Canada is broken. Well, I have news for him: Canada is the best country in the world to live in and call home.

We will continue to be focused on making conditions better for all Canadians. That is something we are prepared to do, whether it is through a budgetary measure or a legislative measure, because we care about Canadians.

Oral Questions

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government may claim it cares about Canadians, but Canadians across this country have told us loud and clear that they do not care for the Liberal government. If it cannot even win seats in downtown Toronto and downtown Montreal, how much longer can the Liberals hold on?

Canadians did not give them a mandate for exploding food prices. They did not give them a mandate for doubling housing prices. They did not give them a mandate to triple crime rates across this country. Canadians have been clear. They do not want a tripling of the carbon tax. They do not want 61¢ a litre for the carbon tax.

When will the NDP-Liberal government finally give Canadians a choice and call a carbon tax election?

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Conservative rhetoric is up, Conservative nonsense is up, rhyming is certainly up and Canadians are getting fed up. My intention is to do what I have always done: keep my head down and work on the issues with my colleagues. They can keep working on bumper-sticker slogans all day long.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, under the Liberals, Food Bank Ontario has reported an eight-year high in food bank usage. The report suggests cited the lack of a social safety net as a cause for this crisis. I know the sore-losing leader of the Conservative Party is only concerned with protecting his rich friends and that people will get poorer under his watch, so my question is for the Liberals. Will they listen to award-winning economists and support my bill, Bill C-223, to put in place a framework for a guaranteed livable basic income, so people can afford to eat?

• (1145)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that through some crude political calculus, the NDP has compromised a progressive agenda for Canadians and abandoned the great work that we were doing together on programs like dental care, pharmacare and a national school food program, all of which strengthen the social safety net in this country. We have offered on grocery prices, with elevated inflation, a grocery rebate; 50% reduction in child care fees; and a grocery code of conduct. We have gotten comprehensive reforms to the Competition Act in this country. These are both short-term and long-term measures that are making a difference for Canadians every single day.

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NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, this summer barges along the Mackenzie River were cancelled due to low water levels after a prolonged drought, stranding residents without shipments of supplies. North-

erners have made it very clear that they need an all-weather road along the Mackenzie to keep a lifeline to their communities. Both the Liberals and the Conservatives are ignoring these calls.

Will the Liberals fund the construction of a road connecting communities in the Sahtu, or will they keep denying northerners the infrastructure that they need?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that climate change is real. We know that in the north the climate is warming four times the rate of the rest of Canada, and that is something we need to address. We are doing it with our northern partners, including the Premier of Northwest Territories, whom I met about three weeks ago. We had great discussions on the Mackenzie highway, and that is going to come up in the future.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this week across Canada we are celebrating National Legion Week. Legions significantly contribute to the well-being of veterans and ensure that Canadians remember the sacrifices they have made. In my riding, Stoney Creek Legion Battlefield Branch 622 is led by Stewart Jones, who is a powerhouse of support for veterans. His leadership is truly inspiring, and we are deeply grateful.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs share with this House how our government has been there to support legions and their incredible community contributions?

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are over 1,350 Legion branches across Canada, including Whalley Legion Branch 229 in my hometown of Surrey. Their members represent one of the largest volunteer bases in this country. We set up the veteran organizations emergency support fund during the pandemic so that they could safely keep their doors open. We have been proud to support legions to improve infrastructure, make accessibility upgrades and deliver many New Horizons for Seniors projects.

I want to thank the member for highlighting the legions' impact in the community, and I hope members will join us in thanking legions for all they do to build a stronger Canada.

*Oral Questions***CARBON PRICING**

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of these NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. Two years ago, the NDP leader sold out workers and signed a costly coalition deal with the Liberal Prime Minister. That deal hiked taxes, ballooned food costs, doubled housing prices and unleashed crime and chaos on our once-safe streets.

Will the Prime Minister finally call a carbon tax election so Canadians can choose between the costly coalition or common-sense Conservatives, who will axe the carbon tax?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am quite concerned about where the Conservatives are getting many of their ideas these days, because records show that the Conservative leader got his advice on how to help Canadians struggling with the cost of living from a Loblaw's lobbyist. He gets his advice on Ukraine from Elon Musk and Tucker Carlson. He has courted support from misogynists and far-right hate groups, and these are the advisers that I think Canadians should be afraid of.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is just too bad that, for this Prime Minister, the only buddy he cares about is the one he has in the NDP and its leader, who voted 24 times to hike the carbon tax.

Over the summer, while door-knocking from Calgary to British Columbia to Ontario, everywhere I went, I clearly heard the same thing: Canadians are fed up with the skyrocketing cost of food, gas and housing. From food to housing, they are sick of paying for the NDP-Liberal coalition's failures, and Canadians deserve more.

Why will the Prime Minister and his NDP backers not let Canadians have their say in a carbon tax election right now?

• (1150)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it was interesting, this summer, to see our athletes compete at the Olympics. When our gymnasts at the Olympics stick a landing, all of us cheer. I think we should do the same this week with the Bank of Canada and the Government of Canada sticking the economic landing of inflation coming down to 2%, which is the Bank of Canada's target rate. Only the Conservative Party in this House did not cheer for Canada's economy, just like, this summer, when they could not bear it when our athletes did well at the Olympics, winning gold medals. They did not cheer. They are never cheering for Canada's success.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of this NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. The NDP leader's publicity stunt got some airtime, but when it comes to voting against the government, which he said was finished, he caves. Carbon tax already costs the trucking industry \$2 billion. Now, with this quadrupling, it will be expensive for our trucking industry to survive.

Will they listen to Canadians and call a carbon tax election now so that common-sense Conservatives can axe the tax now?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again, these Conservatives will never let the truth get in the way of their exploitation of the real challenges that Canadians are facing. They do not want to acknowledge the fact that, in Canada, inflation is down to the target rate of 2%. Interest rates are down, gas prices are down and emissions are down.

However, we have heard it from the Conservatives over and over again. They will never cheer for the Canadian economy. This summer, when we were all cheering on our Canadian athletes, I barely heard a squeak from the Conservative side. In fact, the Conservative leader never even tweeted once about the Paralympics. That is really disgusting. We should all be on the side of Canada.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of these NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. Despite the NDP leader's video claiming to tear up his support for the Liberals, the two parties continue to make life less affordable for Canadians. They have promised to quadruple the carbon tax to 61¢ per litre.

Why does the Prime Minister not call a carbon tax election so that Canadians can decide if they want to continue to pay his carbon tax?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, inflation is down, interest rates are down, car theft is down, gas prices are down, emissions are down and all Conservatives can do is frown.

I just do not understand why we do not have a team Canada approach. The Canadian economy is getting better; things are getting better. Why do Conservatives not try to work with us and make things better? That is the kind of House of Commons I want to be in.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, we need to talk about Amira Elghawaby. The Prime Minister's special representative on Islamophobia has given herself a broad mandate. Now she wants to tell universities which professors to hire, based on religious criteria that fly in the face of the principle of secularism. She even wants to dictate the kind of training they will get from the universities. This is obviously not a good idea, nor is it any of her business.

On Tuesday, the Quebec National Assembly once again unanimously called for her resignation. However, she refuses to resign.

When will the Prime Minister finally force her out?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as my colleague may know, I worked in academia for a long time. Quebec universities are known across Canada and around the world for the remarkable level of expertise they have achieved.

I have every confidence in the ability of Quebec universities to make the right decisions. They make them based on their employees' skills, but also based on diversity, which is important to have in a country as large and diverse as the one we are lucky to live in, Canada.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, Ms. Elghawaby's mandate is supposed to be to build bridges, but all she does is create wedges and sow division. She epitomizes the excessive multiculturalism promoted by Canadian parties. She is proof positive that having an adviser fixated on the interests of a single community and blind to the others has serious consequences for both government and social cohesion.

Ms. Elghawaby is doing more than just demonstrating that she is not the right person for the job. She is demonstrating that the position itself must be eliminated.

When will the government finally put an end to this experiment?

• (1155)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if there is one thing that is easy to do, it is to engage in divisive politics. Dividing Canadians and Quebecers is very simple. It can be done quite easily.

What is harder and more important is bringing people together. All of us in this House have the responsibility and the opportunity to unite, whether we are Quebecers of one origin or another, white or Black, male or female, with whatever religious beliefs we may hold. All Quebecers are equal before the law. We all have the right to thrive in dignity and trust.

[English]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine long years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. Two weeks ago, the NDP leader made a big spectacle of tearing up the costly coalition agreement with the Liberals, but he now says that the NDP will vote to keep them in power. What is the truth? It is all a stunt to trick voters. British Columbians are struggling and want a change and an election.

Will the Liberals axe the tax or call a carbon tax election today?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, do we know what else British Columbians care about? Their workers care about unions. Yesterday, in front of the parliamentary committee that is responsible for labour issues, we heard what the Conservatives' position on unions actually is. They would allow for unions to be starved of membership dues that are vital for their functioning. That means unions would not, among other things, be able to collectively bargain on behalf of their members. On the one hand, they talk about workers. We scratch the surface and we find a party that is the same old thing. They do not care about Canadian workers.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. Even after their breakup, the leader of the NDP is keeping the Prime Minister in power. What a surprise. That means quadrupling the carbon tax to 61¢ a litre, driving more Canadians to food banks, grinding our economy to a halt and killing hundreds of thousands of jobs. That means he is punishing hard-working Canadians just to keep his pension.

When will the Prime Minister do the right thing and call a carbon tax election?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is pretty rich for the Conservatives to stand up in the House when they introduced legislation when they were in government to raise the retirement age to 67 and gut Canadians' pensions. We are the party that reformed CPP and brought forward more senior supports. We are working to ensure that Canadians' pensions are strong.

I have to mention that the member from British Columbia stands in the House all the time to rail against carbon pricing. He was part of the Liberal government in British Columbia that brought forward Canada's first-ever carbon tax, a successful measure that has lowered emissions in British Columbia for over a decade. The hypocrisy.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Bloc-Liberal coalition is costing Quebeckers and Canadians more and more. It voted in favour of \$500 billion in inflationary and centralizing spending. Honestly, what is the point of the “Liberal Bloc”?

It leads to more spending than ever, more scandals than ever and an additional 100,000 public servants. It leads to more bureaucracy, paid for with Quebeckers' money. What is the Bloc Québécois good for? It is good for the Prime Minister and his government. Only a Conservative government can fix this disaster.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for? Will he call an election now?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague should know that Quebeckers have already experienced Conservative austerity. They said no to that. They know very well that when we invest in them, when we help them with programs, particularly for the most vulnerable, including seniors, we are helping them get through difficult times like those we experienced during the pandemic.

My colleague is well aware that our investments in Canadians did not stop inflation from coming back down to a normal level of 2% today.

Quebeckers wanted nothing to do with the Conservatives' austerity before, and they still do not.

* * *

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that families across the country are struggling with the cost of living, including in my riding, Châteauguay—Lacolle, which will soon be called Châteauguay—Les Jardins-de-Napierville.

The Canada child benefit is a source of support for families in my riding. Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development inform the House about the impact this important benefit has had on Canadian families?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Canada child benefit is making a real difference in the lives of more than four million Canadian families. They can receive up to \$7,787 per child under six and \$6,570 per child aged six through 17.

This tax-free benefit increased in July to help families keep up with the cost of raising kids. This represents up to \$350 more than last year. The payments went out today, but the Conservatives would slash this program and leave families to struggle.

• (1200)

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up, with jaw-dropping news about carbon tax Carney. His investment firm owns the second-largest mortgage insurer in Canada, and the Liberals changed the rules to allow for larger and longer mortgages, meaning higher interest payments and more money in carbon tax Carney's pocket.

His company's stock shoots to six-month highs, and he tells the Prime Minister to raise the carbon tax on Canadians. Is that supposed to be a good deal for Canada?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, we do see the value in consulting experts from across Canada.

Let us talk about where the Conservatives have been getting their advice lately. The leader of the Conservative Party gets his advice on how to help Canadians with the rising cost of food from a Loblaw lobbyist. The Conservatives also get their advice from Elon Musk and Tucker Carlson.

The Conservatives get their advice from misogynists and far-right hate groups, and I think Canadians should be very concerned.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is a new conflict of interest every single day with carbon tax Carney. His buddy, the CEO of Telesat, got \$2.14 billion in a cheque from the government for what other companies said they could do for half the cost. His investment firm is in discussions with the Liberal government for 10 billion taxpayer dollars, and as I just said, his investment firm is going to be cashing in with six-month stock price highs after changes to mortgage rules.

Is it any wonder that the Liberal Prime Minister, twice found guilty of breaking ethics laws himself, is trying to shield carbon tax Carney from Canada's conflict of interest regime?

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, sadly, what else is up? It is character assassination. It is unacceptable to come into this chamber and time after time go after individuals' character. It undermines the integrity of this institution and Canadians are fed up. I would have thought the member of all people would have learned that lesson some time ago, but apparently I was wrong.

Oral Questions

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. Carbon tax Carney's appointment as the de facto finance minister is more of the same boondoggle the government is famous for. Almost immediately, a \$10-billion contribution to one of the companies he serves on was announced, shovelling an extra \$200 million per year to Brookfield and carbon tax Carney shoving more money into his own pockets.

Why did the Prime Minister exempt his de facto finance minister from conflict of interest rules?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when will the Conservatives stop betting against the success of Canadians? Canada's growth is projected to beat that of all our peers: the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and I could go on. However, the Conservatives have hitched their political and electoral fortunes on the failure of the Canadian economy. The truth is that we are making the economic pie larger and larger so that every Canadian can get a larger slice. When will the Conservatives stop betting against the success of Canadians?

* * *

SPORT

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this summer, millions of Canadians tuned into CBC and Radio-Canada to cheer on team Canada at the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games in Paris. Canadian athletes set new records and made us all proud.

Scarborough is home to many athletes who train at the Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre, but it is also an important community hub for activities and events. We are proud of our local heroes, such as Scarborough's Josh Liendo, who became the first Black Canadian swimmer to win an Olympic medal.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity let the House know how we are supporting athletes so they can keep representing Canada with pride and excellence?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians were proud to celebrate the exceptional performances of team Canada athletes this summer as they won a record number of medals and inspired the next generation of Olympic athletes.

Through budget 2024, our Liberal government boosted the athlete assistance program that supports Canadian athletes. The carding checks directly support over 1,800 athletes across more than 94 sports.

We are also investing more broadly in participation, not just for future sports stars, but also to support physical and mental health and the strength of our communities through the power of sport, physical activity and recreation. Our community sport for all initiative has brought sport to over one million Canadians so they can try new sports and activities, because when Canadians are moving, our whole country wins.

• (1205)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, communities in my riding have been waiting for the plan for open-net fish farms. It was supposed to be released in June. The Liberals instead announced that they would be announcing a plan later. The Liberals have spent years delaying a real job strategy for all of those who will be impacted. Coastal communities must not be left behind.

Will the Liberals stop the delay and ensure the plan delivers necessary funds to support impacted first nations and coastal communities?

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is committed to protecting wild Pacific salmon and will implement a ban on open-net pen salmon aquaculture in British Columbia by 2029. Fisheries and Oceans Canada is working to ensure that the draft transition plan for salmon aquaculture is measured and indeed responsible.

It is important to take the time necessary to get the draft transition plan right, given its importance to British Columbians. Work on the draft transition plan is under way and will be released in the coming weeks.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, Khaled Barakat is a member of Samidoun and a leader of designated terrorist group Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine. Barakat was banned from entering the EU, and Germany banned Samidoun outright, yet in Canada, Barakat is free to spew hatred. At one rally, he said Canada should condemn the killing of terrorist leaders and that he hopes for Israel's destruction.

Will the Liberal government take action to have Barakat arrested for hate propaganda and list Samidoun as a terrorist organization, or will it continue to be a doormat?

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in no way, shape or form is hate speech or the support of terrorism allowed in our country. We are deeply concerned about these statements. We are looking into the situation in this matter. We take the member opposite's question seriously and are here to promote a Canada that is united together, that confronts discrimination and that is in harmony.

*Routine Proceedings**[Translation]*

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): As mentioned in the Speaker's statement of Monday, September 16, the volume for earpieces will now be reset. Members using their earpiece at this time will have to readjust the volume. I thank members for paying particular attention to the sound level.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

*[English]***INFORMATION COMMISSIONER**

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 94(2) of the Access to Information Act and subsection 72(2) of the Privacy Act, the reports of the Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada on the administration of these acts for the fiscal year ending March 31.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), these reports are deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

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*[English]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE****PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be amended as follows: Mr. Turnbull (Whitby) for Mr. Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation).

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. parliamentary secretary's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

[English]

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

(Motion agreed to)

• (1210)

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I move that the 31st report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, presented to the House on Tuesday, November 7, 2023, be concurred in.

It is indeed an honour to rise in the House today to move concurrence on the report. Why is this important? Why should we be debating this motion?

This report refers to the Auditor General's report on chronic homelessness. It is truly a damning report on the state of the government's actions to address this issue in Canada. Why does this matter? Why does a report such as this matter to Canadians in my riding of Perth—Wellington and in ridings across the country?

It matters because those experiencing homelessness in our community are real people. They are family members, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, mums and dads, friends and, in some cases, co-workers. Those experiencing homelessness have been let down by the Liberal government.

I want to provide a bit of local context in my riding of Perth—Wellington. Many members, many colleagues in our official opposition, spent the summer speaking and interacting with local families, stakeholders and municipalities about what they were seeing on the ground in each and every one of our communities.

I had the great pleasure to speak with stakeholders that are making significant efforts to address homelessness and the challenges in our community, such as the United Way of Perth-Huron. I spoke with folks at the local community food centre; I enjoy stopping by because I always feel as though I am walking into a giant kitchen and chatting with people around a giant kitchen table. I spoke to a couple of folks who were there enjoying the community meals; they could not afford the skyrocketing rents that they see in our communities.

Unfortunately, this is happening across the country, not only in large urban centres but also in small-town and rural communities, such as those in Perth—Wellington. Two short years ago, it would have been unthinkable that there would be encampments in such a place as Stratford or Listowel in North Perth. However, here in 2024, after nine years of the government, we see encampments in these small-town, rural communities.

This summer, I was able to speak with family members whose loved ones could not find a place to live, who lacked the supportive housing that was necessary for them to be able to excel and to survive in our communities. I spoke with service providers who talked about the long wait-lists to access the services they provide.

I spoke with those who provide food for those in need, and they are experiencing the challenge. At the same time as demand is up for their services, the ability of those in our community to give is down. It is down because money is tight and because it is a challenge to make ends meet. Unfortunately, there is a lot more month left at the end of the paycheque. That is the challenge we are facing in communities across this country.

I also engage regularly with municipalities that are ready and willing to do their part but, unfortunately, are not finding a partner in the government. I want to give one example, and that is the housing accelerator fund. Not a single community in Perth—Wellington received a cent from the housing accelerator fund, nor did most small-town and rural communities across this country.

Routine Proceedings

One of the reasons for this is that small rural communities, such as the township of Mapleton, were considered large urban municipalities. Small-town, rural and farming communities with populations slightly over 10,000 were being lumped in with large urban municipalities, having to compete for funds against the Mississaugas, the Torontos, the Ottawas and the Hamiltons of the world.

• (1215)

These small-town, rural communities are desperate to do the work necessary to make sure that everyone has a roof over their head, but the challenge is that they are not eligible for these programs, because the government is making it impossible to access funds like large rural municipalities.

Someone else who knows about these challenges is the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka, with whom I will be splitting my time. As the shadow minister for housing, he came to Perth—Wellington this summer and spoke with key stakeholders about the efforts that we can make together to address the challenges of those experiencing homelessness. Unfortunately, the Minister of Housing is asleep at the switch and is not putting in the efforts necessary to build the homes, so everyone has a place to call home.

Now that I have given the local context showing why this is important, I want to address the report itself: the Auditor General's fifth report addressing chronic homelessness in Canada. As I said, this is truly a damning report. The Auditor General found this: "Overall, Infrastructure Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation did not know whether their efforts improved housing outcomes for people experiencing homelessness or chronic homelessness and for other vulnerable groups." The government claimed to be investing, but it has no clue what is happening on the ground.

What is more, the Auditor General went on to say, "the department did not know whether chronic homelessness and homelessness had increased or decreased since 2019 as a result of this investment." Finally, the report found, "Despite being the lead for the National Housing Strategy and overseeing the majority of its funding, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation took the position that it was not directly accountable for addressing chronic homelessness. Infrastructure Canada was also of the view that while it contributed to reducing chronic homelessness, it was not solely [responsible] for achieving the strategy's target of reducing chronic homelessness."

We have federal departments and agencies claiming to be making investments to address the significant challenges of chronic homelessness and those experiencing homelessness in Canada, yet they have no clue what is happening.

In committee, Conservatives pressured the department to give us answers, and it took a second meeting. Finally, the deputy minister of Infrastructure Canada, Kelly Gillis, stated that the department had recently reported a 12% increase in homelessness in Canada. That is an increase for a government claiming that it will cut chronic homelessness in half by 2027. They are already starting with a 12% increase in this year, according to Infrastructure Canada.

However, if we look at the PBO's report from earlier this year, May 22, it states, "Since 2018, the number of homeless people has

increased by 20%." The PBO goes on to write, "the number of chronically homeless people...increased by 38% relative to 2018." When we ought to see an effort to decrease chronic homelessness, the government has overseen a 38% increase in chronic homelessness since 2018. This is unacceptable to the families and loved ones across this country who are experiencing homelessness and losing hope that they will ever find a place to call home, a place with four walls, a safe place in a safe community.

This is unacceptable. The Auditor General has confirmed this, as has the report from the public accounts committee. Action that the government promised to take has not happened, and that is why we are moving concurrence in this debate today.

• (1220)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do not want to hide from the reality that homelessness exists. We know it exists, which is why we are committed to working with many different stakeholders to improve that issue.

The question I have for the member opposite is on this so-called interest that the Conservatives have taken on an issue that they did not have even just a few years ago. In fact, the current leader of the Conservative Party today was the minister of housing, and homelessness existed back then too.

Can the member cite one tangible example of a proactive measure that his leader took on the issue of homelessness when he was the minister of housing?

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear: Under the former Conservative government, taxes were at their lowest point since John Diefenbaker was prime minister, and housing was actually affordable. One could afford to buy a home in a safe community. In places such as my community, we have seen homes more than double in price in the short nine years that the Liberal government has been in power. From the time when people had good homes and good salaries to be able to afford them, it has gone to a place where one cannot even afford to put a roof over one's head. In places such as Stratford and Listowel, which are small, rural communities, a small one-bedroom apartment is now over \$2,000 a month; it is unaffordable.

Under our future Conservative government, we will do what is necessary to build homes, reduce red tape, speed up processes and remove those who are blocking the ability to build homes. That is our commitment, and that is what a Conservative government under our leader, the member for Carleton, will actually achieve.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the first recommendations in the report is to develop a work plan to accelerate the availability of national shelters to address homelessness. However, I will tell the member how this plays out on Vancouver Island.

Routine Proceedings

In Parksville, the only community of over 10,000 people, the mayor fought B.C. Housing, which was going to build a shelter in the community. Now the mayor is running for the Conservative nomination. They went to court and blocked the shelter, which is what they do. They are doing it in Port Coquitlam too.

Conservatives come here and say one thing, but when they are governing, they actually do another thing.

What they did in Parksville is absolutely against human rights. It is a violation of human rights. What the Conservatives want is for the problem to just go away. They want the homeless people to just go away.

Can my colleague address why Conservatives block shelters in places where people are living on the streets?

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, it seems that the member for Courtenay—Alberni may have a concern with his provincial NDP government in British Columbia, if it is not doing the work necessary to make sure that those who are unable to find housing can access the services that might be available.

Let me be very clear about what a Conservative government would do: Conservatives will ensure that the municipal gatekeepers are removed so that more housing can get built in all communities across our country. We will work with municipal partners so that housing can be built.

Municipalities are ready and willing to do the work, but the challenge is that, too often, they are not being supported by the government, especially when we look at issues such as the rapid housing initiative and the national housing strategy, which do not support small towns and rural communities in this country.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): Before we continue, I would like to remind hon. members how the House works. Only one person at a time is allowed to speak. In the meantime, other members must listen and wait until they are recognized before speaking.

We have time for a 30-second question. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member did not answer my question. Can he indicate one thing that his current leader did as minister of housing to help address homelessness specifically?

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, very simply, we kept the economic climate strong so that folks could build homes and could buy affordable homes in safe communities. This is something we do not see today under the Liberal government.

• (1225)

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Perth—Wellington mentioned that I had a chance to visit his constituency over the course of the summer for a couple of days. It was a great honour to meet the folks in his community who are working hard to address homelessness and affordability. Of course, it is shocking to see the number of home-

less encampments that exist not just in big cities but also in smaller communities like those he represents. I will say that it is not like they were surprised to see him; he is an active, engaged leader in his communities and is well known for compassionate leadership, so I thank him for it.

I also thank him for moving a motion to concur in the report, because it is, of course, in many ways the issue of the day. The Auditor General tabled the report on November 5, 2022.

I have said before, and I am sure it is the position of everybody in the chamber, that Canada cannot reach its full potential until everyone has a safe, warm bed to sleep in at night. No human can reach their full potential unless they have a safe, secure bed to sleep in at night. In a country as rich as Canada, this cannot just be a dream. It should not be something we just work toward. We have to do better than that. It must be an achievable reality. As hon. members of the House, we see the most vulnerable all the time. We see them as we walk up the steps to Parliament Hill. This is avoidable.

Yesterday in this place we had a historic vote where the House unanimously declared that Canada is in a housing crisis that requires urgent action by the federal government to end homelessness. This is not hyperbole; there is a crisis. The unfortunate reality for too many Canadians is that the numbers prove that we are in a crisis. Since 2018, the number of homeless people in Canada has increased by 20%. The number of chronically homeless people has increased by 38% relative to 2018. This is what the Auditor General examined in the report: chronic homelessness and the Liberal government's failure to do anything to change it.

Chronic homelessness is long-term homelessness, meaning that someone was without a bed to sleep in for 180 days or more last year. What did the Auditor General have to say about chronic homelessness and the Liberal government's effort to do anything about it? On page 7, the report says that Infrastructure Canada, ESDC and the CMHC had no idea whether their efforts improved housing outcomes for people experiencing homelessness or chronic homelessness for other vulnerable groups. They did not know.

Page 8 of the report says that Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, as the lead on the national housing strategy, which we all remember was announced with great fanfare in 2017, spent about \$4.5 billion of a \$9-billion commitment, "but did not know who was benefiting from its initiatives." CMHC also took the position that it was not directly accountable for addressing chronic homelessness.

Routine Proceedings

In simple terms, Canada's Auditor General concluded that the Liberal government does not know whether the programs for which it announced billions of dollars of spending aimed at reducing chronic homelessness made any difference at all. What is worse is that CMHC, Infrastructure Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada were all of the opinion that not one of them was actually in charge or the lead on the file. They all pointed at each other saying that it must be the other as it was not them.

We can be clear. We know who is in charge; it is the Prime Minister. It is clear that he has failed Canadians when it comes to homelessness. Perhaps the most damning part of the report is that when the Liberal government was faced with the rise in homelessness as a result of its policies, it firmed up that it did not even think it was in charge. It said that there is a housing crisis. It is more than that; it is a crisis in leadership. It is an absence of leadership.

Again, in the Auditor General's report we learn that Infrastructure Canada spent \$1.63 billion on reducing homelessness as part of its Reaching Home program, yet the audit found that the department did not know whether homelessness had actually increased or decreased during that time. Canadians must know what the Liberals and the gatekeepers do not seem to know: Homelessness is up under their watch, and we see it everywhere.

● (1230)

The Homelessness Services Association of B.C. found that 4,821 people identified as homeless in the Vancouver area this year, compared to 3,634 in 2020. That is a 32% increase, the highest spike between consecutive counts since reporting began in 2005. In 2023, the nationally coordinated point-in-time count in Nanaimo showed that the number of people experiencing homelessness has been steadily increasing, and since 2016 it has almost tripled.

According to the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia, the number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in the Halifax Regional Municipality jumped from 119 in August 2019 to 879 in August 2024. That is an increase of a whopping 639%.

In Toronto and the GTA, as of May 5, there were 256 encampments on City of Toronto property. The latest Parks, Forestry and Recreation numbers from March 15, 2024, show that there were a total of 202 encampments recorded at 72 separate locations across the city. In 2023, there were 82 encampments at 24 sites.

It is not just the big cities. In northern Ontario, according to the "Report Card on Homelessness for 2023", there were 237 people experiencing homelessness in Greater Sudbury, a jump of 164 people since 2022. According to that same report card, the number of encampments in Greater Sudbury jumped from 25 at the end of 2022 to 113 at the end of 2023. There are approximately 359 people on the by-names list of individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness in the city of Timmins.

In Kelowna, there were a record number of deaths among the city's homeless in 2022. Between 2015 and 2020, the annual average number of deaths among homeless people was 143. In comparison, the annual average between 2021 and 2022 was 305.

These are damning statistics, but the reality of the people behind them is far more painful. They are not just numbers. They are human beings who our system has completely and abjectly failed.

When I was mayor of Huntsville, there was a housing crisis brewing already. We had done all kinds of things as a municipality, but in Parry Sound—Muskoka oftentimes homelessness is hidden. People are couch surfing or sleeping in vans. I will give the example of Lions Lookout, a beautiful spot in Huntsville where occasionally we would see a van parked overnight because somebody was staying there. Today, this happens with a lot more frequency; it is all of the time, and not just one van but multiple vans. Rental vacancy rates in Huntsville, Bracebridge, Gravenhurst and Parry Sound have been under 1% for almost a decade.

The government talks about affordable housing and homelessness, but after nine years, the situation is demonstrably worse. More than 235,000 people in Canada are estimated to be homeless, in core housing need. We are talking about people who are actually homeless. As to those who are not visibly homeless, there could be between 450,000 and 900,000 people.

All of this exists within the context of the government's national housing strategy, an \$80-billion plan that was supposed to be life-changing and transformational, the Prime Minister said. We have seen the transformation. We have seen Canadians' lives change, and it is quite clearly not for the better.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a former mayor, the hon. member has a unique perspective. Two things have traditionally contributed to homelessness. One is mental health issues. Provinces across the country, including my home province of British Columbia, did nobody a service years ago when they shut down institutions that would look after the homeless. Provinces put them on the street promising there would be the services they need, but they did not materialize. That still exists. The other piece is the hard, cruel fact that the free-enterprise system is leaving people behind. People are using homes as investments, buying them up to make money off of them. Rents are going up.

These are all things that provinces and cities should manage. I am wondering what role provinces and cities should be taking.

● (1235)

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, I have said many times in the House that one of the biggest impediments to getting homes built is, in fact, cities, provinces and a federal government that tax the life out of homebuilding. Of the cost of every new home built in this country, 33% is government.

Routine Proceedings

Nobody makes more money on housing than government, so the NDP, the Liberals and all their lefty friends can continue to demonize private sector investment in housing, but we need \$3 trillion of investment in housing in this country, and governments are going to make a fortune from it if we do not reduce the cost and get them out of the way. That is the real problem: We need to get governments out of the way, reduce the cost and get this country building again.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will tell the House what it is like in Parksville, British Columbia, where we had a Conservative mayor. He accelerated development permits. We built more development in Parksville than at any other time in history and probably more than any other community on Vancouver Island. However, rents did not come down; they actually went up.

What we need and what Canadians need is affordable non-market housing to go hand in hand with the private sector. That is not happening with Conservative mayors. They are not addressing the root problem.

Like I said earlier, the same mayor fought BC Housing, which wanted to build a shelter in that community to make sure that people who were living on the street had their basic needs met. They actually went to court and stopped it. It is one of the only communities in this country with over 10,000 people that has no shelter. The same Conservative mayor is running for the nomination for the Conservative Party, so we know exactly what we are going to get when Conservatives lead at the local government level, the provincial level or the federal level.

Maybe my colleague can explain why Conservative mayors are blocking shelters and why they are not building non-market housing.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, I can confirm for my hon. colleague that when I was on municipal council and before I was the mayor of Huntsville, I co-chaired the development of a women's shelter and helped get a men's shelter built. I did all kinds of work on affordable housing, and I did not block housing. In fact, I was the mayor and was the chair of the planning committee that made things happen. We approved developments, and everywhere we had to, I stood up to the NIMBYs to make sure we could get things built in our community. That is what we need across this country.

The member can talk about Conservatives' not caring about people, but we are the only party that actually has a plan to deliver real results. It is not a lot of talk, a lot of photo ops or billions of dollars that produce no results. Conservatives want to deliver real results for Canadians, and we are not interested in just talking points.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I know that as a mayor, the hon. member suffered significant impacts in his community from climate events. I wonder whether he can give us a glimmer of hope that there will be a Conservative plan for what we do about the threat of the climate crisis.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, members have heard our leader talk about the Conservative plan to hold local gatekeepers to account. Part of what he talks about is making sure that any transit infrastructure investments made by a federal government led by the

Conservative party would in fact be held until there are results on the ground and we actually rezone properly and increase the density around transit.

This is good for the budget, good for the climate, good for the planet and good for the communities. These are the kinds of things that are practical realities that would help reduce climate change and get homes built.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought I would take this opportunity to highlight a few points that are absolutely relevant to the type of debate we are having here today and why we are having a debate on an issue that the Conservatives actually selected.

First and foremost, the issue of homelessness is one with which the government of the day has been seized for a good period of time now. As strong as the will is from the Prime Minister, cabinet and my colleagues as a collective to push this file forward, one of the things that we need to recognize is that the federal government cannot do it alone. It requires a high sense of co-operation from a wide spectrum of stakeholders. This is not a new issue to us, but apparently it is a relatively new issue to the Conservative Party of Canada.

The question I asked the member for Perth—Wellington was, in all sincerity, about why the Conservatives have chosen to raise this issue today, given that they have not demonstrated any interest in the subject matter itself. I asked the member to give one example of something that the leader of the Conservative Party had done when he was minister of housing. When we talk about the housing issues, Canadians and individuals following this debate, whether today, yesterday or going into the next election, need to know that the individual who was an absolute disaster on the housing file is today's leader of the Conservative Party.

I posed a question to the member for Perth—Wellington, who, no doubt, would have done his homework in presenting the motion that he presented today, asking him to give me one example of what the leader of the Conservative Party did when he was the minister of housing to deal with the issue of homelessness. What did he say? He said that taxes were low. That was the response about the minister of housing responsible for the development of any form of national housing, including dealing with the issue of homelessness.

The member could have given another example because, in fairness, the former minister did actually build six houses when he was the minister of housing. I know it is not an impressive number. There might have been some that was left over from a previous minister. I do not know for sure. However, I do know that, on the issue of housing and homelessness, the leader of the Conservative Party was found wanting, and that is to put it nicely and in parliamentary language.

Routine Proceedings

Today, the member for Perth—Wellington has been instructed by the leader's office to continue to filibuster. The member for Perth—Wellington has been the one chosen to bring forward this report, for which there was a 20-page response from the minister dealing with the report that provides all sorts of details. However, the Conservative Party, in its hunger for power, in its thirst to do nothing but focus on trying to gain power and ignore the needs of Canadians, has decided once again to use a particular issue to justify filibustering to prevent legislation from passing in the House of Commons.

This is our first week back. We just had summer. We all met with constituents. What do our constituents want? They want members of Parliament to be working together to receive good, tangible results for Canadians. They know it is a minority government, but there is an expectation that the official opposition will at least have some interest in taking actions that would also support Canadians.

• (1240)

On Monday, we talked about the Citizenship Act. There are people in Canada who should be Canadian citizens. We thought this was non-controversial legislation until the Conservatives started debate on it. They made it clear they are not going to support it, and then they brought in a concurrence motion to prevent that debate from taking place. What happened the following day, on Tuesday? The Conservative Party brought forward motions to prevent debate, just like they did again yesterday.

The example from yesterday is really good. The Conservative Party supports Bill C-66 for military court reform. In essence, it is for women who have been harassed or raped within the military. As opposed to going through a military court, they would go through a civilian court. That is the essence of it. Everyone in the House supports it. We all do, but the Conservatives brought in yet another motion of concurrence. That one, by the way, deals with housing. We have actually had that debate. We will see a lot of repetition of that today, but that is the concurrence report that they brought forward, even on a day when we were debating legislation that every member of the House of Commons supports.

In fact, late yesterday, when we were able to get onto the legislation, the Minister of National Defence, who was present and listening to the debate, at the conclusion of it, asked if there would be unanimous consent to let the legislation go to committee, but no. The Conservatives said no to that.

That is what today's debate is about—

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The hon. member for Sturgeon River—Parkland is rising on a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I would just ask, perhaps, if the member could bring the debate back to what we are discussing about chronic homelessness, which is a serious issue. I was not aware that we were back to debating the military justice system—

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The hon. member knows that members have a great deal of latitude when speak-

ing in the House. However, I would remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that he must stick to the subject at hand.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely will. I know the truth hurts. What I am saying is no doubt upsetting a lot of Conservatives, not only those inside the chamber, and especially Progressive Conservatives. I can appreciate that because they have to follow the direction coming from their leader. The MAGA right has more control over the Conservative Party today than the Progressives do by far, and that is why we often hear from the Conservative right and the Conservative reformers.

I started off by talking about the issue of homelessness and why the Conservative Party, in particular its leader, does not necessarily believe in the issue. He is using it as a mechanism to filibuster government legislation, and I am expanding on what I mean by making that statement, which is totally relevant as to why we are debating what we are debating today. That is why we have this concurrence report. It is not because the Conservative Party is really interested in the issue.

Let me give the Conservatives a bit of a saving grace. Let us say that they were interested in debating this issue. People who are following the debate would know the Conservatives are the official opposition, and every session, they get a number of opposition days. In fact, next week they have an opposition day. They can take the entire day, as opposed to three hours, because this debate will ultimately be adjourned, and have a motion to deal with the issue and then get a much stronger, more focused debate.

The Conservatives have had dozens of opposition days in the last number of years. Have they raised this issue once? I have been here for every opposition day motion, from what I can recall, and I cannot remember the Conservatives ever bringing up the issue of homelessness. I can remember them talking about the price on pollution. I know they do not support the carbon rebate because that is something they amplify every time they get an opposition day motion.

What are the Conservatives talking about next week? It is not homelessness, yet they believe they can come in here and bring in a motion using a concurrence report to talk about an issue they like to tell Canadians they genuinely believe in. Maybe some of the more progressive members of Parliament on that side might genuinely believe in it. I suspect there are members who honestly want to improve the conditions of people who are homeless.

However, that is not what is driving the Conservative Party today within the House of Commons. I believe I can clearly demonstrate that to be factual and true. All one needs to do is look at some of the things I have said that show the Conservative Party of today is more interested in bumper stickers and slogans, as well as trying to deceive Canadians through social media and beyond. That includes on the issue of homelessness, as they try to say homelessness is up, and that is sad to see. Governments of all levels are working together to deal with that in a tangible way.

Routine Proceedings

If members want a good sense of what the government has been up to on the file, there was a report tabled and there was a response to that report. Every member has access to that response. Did any of the previous speakers make reference to the 20-page response? There would have been great detail, and I will go into some of those details if time permits. However, I cannot recall any comments coming from members opposite that responded to the minister's response to the report we are talking about today.

• (1250)

Members want to talk about housing. No government in the last 50, 60 or 70 years has invested more in housing than this Prime Minister and this government. Whether the Conservatives like it or not, that is a fact.

We continue to work with provinces, territories, indigenous people and other stakeholders to improve housing conditions in every region of this country, because we understand the importance of housing. It is one of the reasons we doubled our efforts, with finances and resources, to support initiatives that will make a difference on the issue of homelessness, especially when it is a chronic situation. As a parliamentarian for over 30 years, I have witnessed this in every year of being a parliamentarian. I understand the role that provinces and municipalities play, that the federal government plays and that the many different stakeholders play.

For those following the debate, we are talking about other stakeholders, and there are some fantastic organizations out there. I have talked in the past about Habitat for Humanity. I could easily talk about the many housing co-op organizations too. Many faith groups have been a driving force in building low-income, non-profit housing. However, let there be no doubt that it is the responsibility of all stakeholders to come together and work on the issues that Canadians have to face today, and that includes Ottawa. We have been at the table and we have demonstrated leadership. Those are not empty words. There is no one inside the House of Commons who could indicate a government that has spent more money on housing than this government has over the last eight to nine years. As a government, we are committed to housing Canadians.

Interestingly enough, periodically members will talk about housing co-ops. Earlier this week, because we had a concurrence report dealing with housing and homelessness, I indicated that I am a very big fan of housing co-ops. I understand the benefits of housing co-ops. It was Pierre Elliott Trudeau's government that initiated, for the first time, federal government investments in housing co-ops. The Willow Park Housing Co-op happens to be in Winnipeg North. I believe it is the oldest housing co-op in Canada, possibly even in North America. It came into being in the late 1960s.

This government has advanced and promoted the issue of housing co-ops because it is a wonderful alternative that needs to be invested in. All one needs to do is take a look at the demographics and benefits. In a housing co-op, one is not a tenant but a resident, and there is a big difference between the two. Someone asked me once, "What do you mean, resident or tenant?" The easiest way to explain it is that someone is a part owner. If a person is in a co-op and wants to paint the walls blue in their unit, they can do that, but they cannot necessarily do that as a tenant.

There is no profit being driven through a co-op to the degree that we see in the private sector. We find that the costs and rents are substantially lower, especially if someone has been in a co-op for an extended period of time. Many co-op units are actually subsidized through government.

• (1255)

This leads me to non-profit housing units. Traditional non-profit housing units are seen in all federal governments. Even in Stephen Harper's government, there was financial assistance going directly from Ottawa to provinces to ensure that we could maintain and support people in non-profit housing units. A certain percentage of their income would go toward rent payments, based on income.

If we want to resolve the issues of homelessness and housing today, we need a strong national government that recognizes its important role, and we have that. We also need to recognize that it takes more than just the national government.

That is why the Prime Minister was in Winnipeg with the mayor, premier and other politicians talking about the accelerator fund; it was a fund that was making a difference. With the Liberal agenda and the co-operation and assistance of provinces, territories, indigenous people, different communities and the many non-profits that are out there, we have an ambitious plan to see literally several million homes built over the coming years.

We have a tangible plan that includes working with different levels of government and that will make a difference and deliver for Canadians. Meanwhile, the Conservative Party of Canada, the far-right reformers, the MAGA Conservatives, do not have a plan. All they talk about is slogans, bumper stickers and, wherever they can, character assassination. They bring out the negative side of politics. From both my perspective and, I believe, a vast majority of perspectives, Canada is not broken, unlike what the Conservative leader tells Canadians. Canada is the best place in the world to live in and to call home.

• (1300)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is facing a chronic homelessness situation. I had the privilege of sitting on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities committee when we were debating the introduction of the housing accelerator fund.

I asked the minister and those testifying how much of this money would be going to rural Canada and smaller communities. I was reassured that this money would be spread equally across our great nation. As the member said during his speech, it is important that this is an equitable fund and that the programs extend to all regions.

Routine Proceedings

How many projects in Conservative-held ridings in rural Ontario were delivered a single penny from the housing accelerator fund? If the member cannot answer that question, can he name one single Conservative rural riding in the whole country that received a single penny from the housing accelerator fund?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, it is very important that we work with all levels of government. I will give a specific example relative to the question being posed. The minister's office gave a written response to the report; it is about 20 pages.

Due to the nature of action research, the report reads, “preliminary findings will be shared broadly to support ongoing efforts in communities [and governments]”.

It mentions, in regard to Brandon, Manitoba, “exploring service navigation and connection hubs in rural areas and investigating the root causes of rural to urban migration in order to better support surrounding communities”.

There is a series of discussions taking place about both urban, high-density and rural, low-density communities, and there are many people living in rural Manitoba who want to retire in Manitoba. We are working with the different levels of government to make housing possible for all.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to return the report under study. We have been going all over the map.

The report mentions two of the Auditor General's key findings about how the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation had virtually no idea who would benefit from these initiatives. The initiatives were there, yet it was unclear who would benefit from them. There was practically zero federal accountability for the national housing strategy.

I see the federal government constantly withholding money that Quebec could use for housing construction, arguing that it is the one to tell Quebec what to do and that it is better than Quebec.

Is it not a little embarrassing for the federal government to be telling others what to do when the Auditor General has found that it is incapable of doing its own job properly?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, from my perspective, housing is an issue in virtually in every region of the country. I should not even say “virtually”; every region of the country has housing-related issues. Therefore I believe that the federal government does have a very important role to play on the housing file, and it has to be consistent as much as possible in regard to how the funds are being circulated and administered.

Yes, there are some requirements, but I do not think that should be a reason for any province, municipality or community-based group to reject federal funding and criteria that might be put into place. We should all be striving to deliver the optimum results, and the best way to do that is to have different levels of government working together, recognizing that we all have a responsibility to the people we represent.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about the accelerator fund, and we heard also from my colleagues on the other side about communities not getting access to that money. The government rolled out \$4 billion, and it was oversubscribed. Communities like Courtenay and Cumberland, which applied, were denied. Communities like Port Alberni, Parksville and Qualicum did not even have a chance to get their applications in on time, because they were hoping it was going to be extended.

What did the government do when the program got oversubscribed? It put \$400 million into the pot, 10% more. There is a housing emergency. Communities are lining up for the funding, when they could actually use that funding to accelerate building housing to help people have a safe place to live.

Another thing the government is failing so badly at is building indigenous housing on reserve. British Columbia is the only province in this country to actually put \$1 billion toward building housing on reserve because of the current government's failure to ensure that indigenous people have a safe place to live in this country.

Why does my colleague not address those important concerns from the people of my riding?

● (1305)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it was interesting that when the federal government came out with a program to try to increase the number of purpose-built rentals through forgiving the GST on new construction, some provinces actually took up the same initiative. I say that because at times during economic situations, there is no doubt that some governments are in a better position to take actions.

The accelerator fund was a huge success. It is being drawn upon. I have seen some of the tangible results of that. I participated with Mayor Scott Gillingham, the Premier of Manitoba and the Prime Minister in a press conference talking about the accelerator. It is a huge, wonderful program, and the take-up was great on it. We will have to wait and see what takes place in the coming federal budget.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was looking forward to debating Bill C-33, which in part would amend the Railway Safety Act. I wanted to bring forward the tragic accident that happened in my riding of Nepean a few years ago, where six people were killed when a city transport bus collided with a Via Rail train. That was the kind of thing I wanted to discuss, however now we are discussing this.

The federal government has a program called “Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy”, where we have committed \$4 billion with the aggressive target of reducing homelessness by 50% by 2027-28.

Routine Proceedings

I would like to ask my hon. friend to emphasize the importance of the other levels of government, the provinces and municipalities, that can work together with the federal government to reduce this huge problem.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the member was not able to speak to what he came in to speak to earlier this morning. I know he was very much following the debate and looking forward to being able to contribute to it. It is because the Conservatives want to continue to filibuster legislation, which is somewhat sad to see.

When we think of the sense of co-operation in dealing with homelessness, let us remember that there are a lot of factors that impact the issue. A good example would be issues surrounding addictions and mental illness. That is why we need a more holistic approach to dealing with the issue of homelessness, and that means working with other jurisdictions.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, homelessness is up markedly under the Liberal-NDP coalition.

[*Translation*]

I would also include the Bloc Québécois in that.

[*English*]

However, it is only the tip of the iceberg.

I was talking to a realtor friend who has been in the business for many years and he said he has never seen the number of people, whether new immigrants, temporary foreign workers, students or young people, who are cramming into one- and two-bedroom homes to try to cover their costs. They are finding it very challenging.

Will the Liberal member not recognize that the Liberals have absolutely failed on the housing file and that the tired, incompetent government should call an election right away?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that is the point. The member says, “call an election”. This is what the Liberals are talking about when we talk about slogans and bumper stickers. The Conservatives' interest is not in homelessness. All they want is that thirst for power to be answered and they will do whatever it takes.

I can say to the member in the Conservative right Reform Party opposite that at the end of the day, they can be focused on that. We are going to continue to focus our attention on delivering for Canadians and understanding the issues Canadians are facing day in and day out. That is where our focus is going to be. When the election happens, it happens. Let us remain focused on real people.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since I did not have the opportunity to do so earlier during questions and comments, I want to begin by commenting on the speech that the member for Winnipeg North just gave. I was extremely surprised. Right now, we are talking about the homelessness crisis, which is closely related to the housing crisis, but to hear the member for Winnipeg North talk, it

sounds like he does not think that he has done anything wrong. What is more, he was angry. I was wondering how he could be so angry, but then I figured that he must be angry at himself, since, after all, it is his party that has been in office for nine years. It turns out that he was actually angry about the questions he was being asked.

That is pretty bad. It is quite disappointing. I wanted to mention that because we are experiencing a crisis and it seems as though the Liberals are unable to face the mess they have made, that they are unable to see that part of the problem may have been caused by the government in Ottawa. They are unable to see that, if this problem has not been solved, it could be their fault, not that of the opposition parties. Our only responsibility is to propose solutions. We are doing that all the time. The problem is that the government does not listen to us.

I would like to begin my speech with an anecdote. We just had a by-election this week in the riding of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun that the Bloc Québécois won. Louis-Philippe Sauvé was elected. He has not been sworn in yet, so I can say his name. This is an historic win for the Bloc Québécois in a riding in Montreal's West Island where there is a strong anglophone presence, a riding that was considered unwinnable for the Bloc Québécois. This time, we won.

I think I know why we won. It is simple. I helped out my good friend by going door to door. We had the chance to talk to all sorts of people. One of the things that kept coming up was the housing crisis, of course, but also homelessness. Generally, when the Bloc Québécois talks about immigration, this automatically seems suspicious, especially to the Liberals. We are not allowed to talk about it. It is taboo.

When I knocked on one of the doors, an immigrant answered. Surely his thoughts on immigration cannot be considered suspect. This immigrant told me that it does not make sense, that perhaps there are too many immigrants. Some might say he is racist, that he is anti-immigrant. He also told me he does not feel safe anymore because there is a lot of homelessness and there are a lot of people around banging on doors. He told me that he feels ill at ease, that he had left his country because he did not feel safe there but then ended up finding it was the same here. He told me he was even thinking of moving, of leaving his area. I find that particularly interesting.

Routine Proceedings

By way of background, LaSalle—Émard—Verdun is a riding in Montreal's West Island, not in downtown Montreal. The area of the riding where I spoke with this person is LaSalle. It is in the most westerly area, about 10 kilometres from downtown Montreal, maybe even 15 kilometres. It would take about two and a half hours to walk there. This means that there is a homelessness problem two and a half hours from downtown Montreal, because it is rare for a homeless person to drive a car. This is serious. The government says it is not to blame. I think we have every right to wonder, especially since CMHC and National Bank economists have indicated that Canada has fallen into a demographic trap. Why am I talking about a demographic trap? I know I will be accused of blaming immigrants, but no, it is not the immigrants' fault. It is the government's fault for not properly managing the arrival of these people, for letting too many people enter the country and not building enough housing, which is all having an impact on our public services.

Obviously, it is this government that is responsible for our borders, that is authorizing people's entry and that is not providing enough funding for housing. That, too, is a problem. The government, which is waging jurisdictional battles to prevent the Government of Quebec and the municipalities from deciding for themselves how to manage their own affairs, is imposing all sorts of conditions and is always coming up with new programs so that it can have ever more control over what is happening at other levels. Even though the federal government is the one creating the problems, it thinks that it is going to be the one to implement solutions in areas that do not fall under its jurisdiction.

● (1315)

I am putting myself in the shoes of a mayor who sees the federal government impose new municipal rules that the mayor will have to adopt if they want to get money. That is what the Conservatives and the Liberals are proposing. I do not know what the NDP is proposing. If I were a mayor, I would tell the government, which is making a mess of things, to start by fixing its own problems with tools from its own tool box. It seems to me that, before telling others what to do, we need to set an example and do a good job ourselves. If that were the case, we would be able to tell the federal government that it is inspiring and is doing a good job. We might be more inclined to listen to its arguments.

However, from the perspective of mayors and municipalities, having a chaotic federal government tell them how to manage their affairs while failing to manage its own hardly inspires confidence. This government is telling them how to run their cities.

When we talk about homelessness, obviously there is a link to be made to immigration, the housing crisis and the lack of construction and funding for social housing. The reason I make all these links is that generally the first victims of a housing crisis are people who do not have a home. In general, who are the people who do not have housing? Those who leave their country to come live in Canada do not have housing. Then there are the young families hoping to get established and move out of their parents' home. Those families may have housing, but not the kind they want. If they are still living in their parents' basement, they are going to think twice before starting a family of their own. This is certainly

not a life goal or an aspiration. These are the people affected by the housing crisis.

How do people end up homeless? Often the people who are hardest hit by a housing crisis are those with fewer financial resources, those who are less fortunate. When house prices, rents and interest rates spike, these people are the first to find it impossible to pay for housing. They are the first to end up on the street.

I will give a few examples of situations we are seeing these days. I travel from Quebec every day, because that is where I sleep. I prefer to support the Quebec economy. When I come to work in Canada's Parliament, I take the highway, and I cross roads and bridges and see new things all the time. I have been fortunate to be an elected member and to represent my constituents for almost nine years now. Nine years ago, we did not see tents set up on the side of the highway. Nine years ago, we did not see homeless people everywhere, even just a few metres from Parliament. It is truly a scourge. It is a serious symptom of the lack of housing and affordability, and it is creating problems that will persist over time.

Once a person ends up on the street, it is hard to get out. Once people are on the street without a fixed address, they wash less often than they would like, eat less well, and pay less attention to what they wear. Finding a job is hard. Who wants to hire someone with no roof over their head? It slowly begins to affect them mentally and physically. Their health deteriorates. It is a persistent problem. Even if the housing crisis suddenly ended, even if there was suddenly plenty of housing for people experiencing homelessness, it would unfortunately be very difficult to get them off the street. Like it or not, the impact on their lives will linger on.

It also creates a less appealing set of economic and social circumstances for people trying to buy goods or walk on the street. It damages the social climate. It is bad on all fronts. That is why urgent action is needed.

I talked about what would happen if these housing units magically got built. I will quote a few figures. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation published a report a year ago. We do not know where things stand in 2024, but in 2023, the report concluded that Quebec alone is short 1.2 million housing units. The same 2023 figures report that Quebec built nearly 40,000 housing units in 2023.

● (1320)

On the one hand, there is a shortage of 1.2 million homes. On the other hand, 40,000 homes were built. If we divide 1.2 million by 40,000, that means it would take 30 years to build all the housing we need, and that is just to put an end to the current housing crisis. That does not take into consideration the fact that, over those 30 years, new people will be arriving who will also need housing. At this point, it is almost hopeless. We cannot expect the federal government to wave a magic wand and stick its nose in the business of municipalities, and that in two or three years' time, 1.2 million units will be built.

Routine Proceedings

It takes people to build these homes. It takes people who go to school, who are trained, who are certified, who have experience. It takes companies, equipment and people to finance these homes. It takes capital. We cannot just step outside and start building houses. It takes a lot of investment, time and skill. It is going to take time to increase the pace and build all these homes. It is not going to happen by trying to tell cities how to manage the situation. It will happen by working in collaboration with the Quebec government, for example. It is a matter of having discussions to find out what is going to happen.

That is a good thing, because we are seeing greater awareness, an awakening at all levels. We do not need to rely exclusively on the federal government to solve this problem, although we know that a great many of the reasons behind the problem can be traced back to the federal government. Every year, more than one million people come to Canada. One million is a lot of people. It amounts to almost twice the population of Quebec City entering Canada every year. It is mind-boggling. That is a lot of people. We need to house all these people. That puts a lot of pressure on the housing stock. These people naturally want a place to live, and they should have one.

When we have record numbers of temporary foreign workers, asylum seekers and international students pouring in, it becomes a problem. It is important to listen to what people on the ground are saying. The Quebec government keeps repeating that it has reached its capacity to deliver services. It is maxed out. Quebec cannot take it anymore. It cannot do any more. When Quebec says that, the federal government accuses Quebecers of being a bunch of unwelcoming racists. The fact is, we want to welcome people, but in order to do so, we have to be able to offer them a place to live. How can the government say we are not welcoming when we simply have nowhere for these people to live? Does anyone really think that welcoming people and forcing them to live on the street is our nation's dream? The current system is not working. We need to welcome people properly. We have to give them good opportunities in life. The current situation does not reflect well on Canada on the international stage. Obviously, Canada's mismanagement is also affecting Quebec's image because we are stuck in this country, which is keeping us on a leash.

I find it disheartening to see a government that, despite all this, continues to blame others. It says it is not its fault, that it is the opposition's fault. We agree with the government to a certain extent on that point. There is a growing awareness that Quebec welcomes 50% of asylum seekers, even though the province represents only 20% of the population. It only makes sense for the other provinces to offer to take in their fair share. Everyone says Quebec is unwelcoming, yet it welcomes 50% of Canada's asylum seekers. Consequently, it asked the federal government for help. After months of pressure, the federal government said it might talk to the other provinces. Four provinces said absolutely not. So much for the great Canadian federation. Everyone is supposed to get along, co-operate and work together. The federal government is certainly not doing that, and lately, neither are the other Canadian provinces. They seem to be saying that it is not their problem and that Quebec should deal with its own issues.

What is Ottawa going to do about it? That is the question on everyone's mind. Will Ottawa force the other provinces to take in more people? Will Ottawa decide to stem the flow and reduce the influx?

• (1325)

That might be a wiser solution. I think that is what I am getting at. This is where the government has to listen to reason. At some point, it has to be accepted that too much is too much. Once the numbers subside a little, we are left to face the whole issue of people who are still on the street. What do we do with them?

It is going to take a record investment and a lot of leadership to take charge of the situation. The more time these people spend on the street, the harder it becomes for them to leave it. It becomes increasingly hopeless, and the cost to society only keeps growing. We must therefore act fast to take charge of people living in the street, so we can help them.

I would like to discuss another aspect. Earlier on, I talked about the federal government meddling in municipal management. Let me explain how that happens. Certain infrastructure agreements provide partial funding for municipal infrastructure. This specifically includes the TECQ program, or the gas tax and Quebec's contribution. Other programs, known as bilateral agreements between the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada, ensure that funds flowing through Quebec can be transferred to the municipalities.

The 2014-18 Canada-Quebec agreement allocated several billion dollars. I do not remember the exact number. What I do remember is that part of the agreement was different from the agreements with the other provinces. Ottawa really does not like it when Quebec does not do exactly the same thing and it negotiates for itself a bit. In the Quebec agreement, a special clause stipulated that the money that was not spent under the 2014-18 agreement could be carried over and used in subsequent phases, under future agreements, in other words, the following agreement that covered the period from 2018 to 2024.

In that agreement, \$350 million that was supposed to go to municipal infrastructure had not yet been spent at the end of 2018. I asked the minister, who comes from Atlantic Canada, about it in committee. He said that the government would not respect the agreement nor keep its word, that it would keep the money, put it in the consolidated fund and the provinces would not get it.

The amounts set out in this agreement were negotiated and distributed equally based on the number of inhabitants, the percentage of the population. In short, the minister said that he did not feel like giving Quebec that money. He asked why Quebec's agreement was a little different from those of the other provinces. He said that he did not agree with that and, even though he signed the agreement, he would not honour it. That is how things work at the federal level. We have a trusted partner that does not keep its word. Because of that, \$350 million were never paid out to cities in Quebec, even though they were entitled to it. Quebecers pay taxes to Ottawa the same as every other taxpayer, but their share has been stolen from them. That is one of the government's ways of doing things.

Private Members' Business

There is also the gas tax, which I mentioned earlier. Part of the money collected from that tax is redirected to what is known as the Canada community-building fund. Let us compare the last agreement, the one for 2018 to 2024, to the new one for 2024 to 2028. When we compare the total amount that cities are entitled to and the federal contribution to the fund in both agreements, we see that the federal government is contributing 30% less. That means that cities will be entitled to 30% less under the new agreement compared to the previous one.

The mayors are starting to call to find out what is happening. They say that they are having problems because of the housing crisis and because of extreme weather events such as torrential rains. While they are having all these problems, including homelessness of course, the federal government is telling them that they will be receiving less money for their programs.

That is what the federal government is saying. During the pandemic, it recognized that there was a deficit, and it paid more money. Earlier, it recognized that there was a municipal infrastructure deficit, and it paid more money. However, that funding was not renewed, and now the municipalities have ended up with a shortfall.

Here is what the federal government decided to do instead. In the last budget, it came up with something new, the \$6-billion housing infrastructure program. That much-vaunted \$6 billion will be conditional on letting Ottawa dictate the zoning rules for the cities.

• (1330)

Rather than allocate the money to existing programs and improve funding for programs like TECQ, which works well and is appreciated by the cities, Ottawa keeps coming up with new programs to create new opportunities for interference. That is how Ottawa works. That is why we do not want—

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, the debate on the motion will be rescheduled for another sitting. The hon. member will have 10 minutes to speak to the motion the next time it is before the House.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL STRATEGY TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE AND COMBAT FOOD INSECURITY

The House resumed from May 10 consideration of the motion.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, for me, September 20 is a day to celebrate. On September 20, 2021, the voters of Laurentides—Labelle renewed my mandate. They reaffirmed their trust in me for a second time. Today, I must thank them once again. I want them to know that I will always strive to respect and honour the trust they have placed in me. This is my 11th time coming back to the House after a break. Since this is the first time I have addressed the House since our re-

turn, I would like to take this opportunity to say how proud I am to represent the people of Laurentides—Labelle. I strive to approach this exceptional role with the modesty, respect and resolve it deserves.

This summer, I travelled all over my riding. I went from Mont-Laurier to Sainte-Adèle, passing through La Minerve, Nominuingue, Rivière-Rouge and Montcalm. I cannot name all of the municipalities because there are 43, but I met with people who showed me how much hope they have and especially what a vibrant part of the country this is. There is no lack of initiatives, ideas and solutions on the ground. People in my riding are proactive. We just have to take the time to listen to them. That is what I did all summer. We cannot get bogged down in our assumptions and dogma. That is how I think about it, because my work as an MP did not come with an instruction manual.

Whether we are talking about Maison de l'entrepreneur, which offers one-stop solutions for SMEs, La Mèreveille, which celebrated its 40th anniversary last week and provides services to mothers and children, or organizations like Bouffe Dépannage, L'Ombrelle and Prévoyance envers les aînés, there is no shortage of generosity and courage in Laurentides—Labelle.

I say that because there is talent in our regions and we need to recognize it. The needs are known. I have to say again that the federal government is too fond of interfering in areas that do not fall under its jurisdiction. That is the case with Motion No. 110. I am not surprised that a Liberal MP from Ontario moved this motion. It is in Ontario's DNA to ask the federal government to help the province and its people.

The political culture is very different in Quebec. We do not turn to Ottawa for a shoulder to cry on; we do not turn to Ottawa when we are unhappy with the National Assembly; nor do we turn to Ottawa to oppose national, unilateral, rigid standards that are not rooted in Quebec's realities. In Quebec, we roll up our sleeves, get to work and move forward, to paraphrase Jacques Parizeau. In Quebec, we make do, just as our ancestors made do with almost nothing yet cleared the land, fed their children and built a modern, open, welcoming, dynamic, social, secular and distinct society. Quebecers do not want to be told what to do and what to think by a foreign government. Quebecers do not want policies imposed on us, especially when Quebec is already ahead of the federal government. Everyone has heard the examples: day care, pharmacare and even dental insurance. Then there is our pension plan. It is the legacy of the Quiet Revolution. It is who we are. It is intrinsic, it is our identity.

The current government is basing its policies on Quebec's policies, inherited from the Quiet Revolution and from the concept on which Quebecers have built of their society and modelled the role of their government.

• (1335)

It is happening again with this motion on food waste. I want be clear: This is a noble cause, but the Quebec government has already implemented initiatives in this area. As for food waste itself, waste management and many food donation and sharing projects fall under municipal jurisdiction. That makes this a matter for Quebec and the provinces. While Quebec is responsible for environmental and food safety legislation, the federal government has a more general role to play in food labelling and, of course, food safety in relation to imports and exports. It has no role to play in the context of the more global issue of waste.

Quebec's department of agriculture, fisheries and food, or MA-PAQ, oversees all waste-related initiatives in conjunction with the department of municipal affairs and housing. There are also several groups involved in managing this issue, including Quebec's public health agency, Recyc-Québec, community groups and municipalities.

Quebec also has a 2018-25 bio-food policy that includes two suggested courses of action, one aimed at reducing food waste and food loss, and one aimed at encouraging donations and encouraging the circular economy. We are very *avant-garde* in Quebec, especially when it comes to recovering co-products.

Food waste was one of the themes identified as requiring further reflection and work at a 2019 meeting of bio-food policy partners and in the 2018-25 bio-food policy action plan, which was released not too long ago in January 2020.

Starting in 2015, the government introduced tax measures to encourage donations to food banks in an effort to combat food waste and food insecurity, including a tax credit for food donations. Agri-food businesses that donate food could be eligible for a tax credit. There are roughly 100 initiatives of this kind.

Since I have barely two minutes left, I would also like to say that Quebec is very active when it comes to prevention and awareness.

I invite the legislative assemblies of all the other provinces to follow Quebec's lead like they did last year. I also invite the federal government to mind its own business. The federal government is acting like a neighbour who tells other people what to do with their property when their own is falling apart. It also likes to judge others. When someone else has nice things, it wants that too and takes it for itself. The federal government is acting like that neighbour.

It is not by trading four quarters for a dollar that things are going to change. It is not because a government is red, blue or orange that things are going to change. The only way to change things is for Quebec to become an independent state and for the Quebec republic to be born.

• (1340)

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Willowdale for making this debate possible today. I hope that his government will finally wake up and catch up to admitting that wasted food is an issue and an opportunity in Canada. This is a fact the NDP has shared in the House many times, putting forward multiple bills over many Parliaments. Per-

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sonally, I have tabled two binding bills in this 44th Parliament addressing this issue, Bill C-304 and Bill C-360.

Reducing food waste is, first, an important step to address the methane emissions it produces. In Canada, 17% of national methane emissions come from food in landfills alone. Combating food insecurity and reducing the cost of food are also a top priority in a bill like this. NDP members focus on protecting Canadians from climate change and corporate greed, as these two factors converge on grocery store shelves, making fresh fruit and vegetables more expensive.

Before I go on, I want to talk about the incredible work being done in Port Moody—Coquitlam to reduce wasted food.

The Immigrant Link Centre Society has been a champion for food waste reduction for years and is now the largest food recovery charity in British Columbia. It is both reducing emissions by diverting food and addressing food insecurity by recovering good-quality, healthy food and redirecting it to people in the community. Its hard work feeds thousands of people at more than 23 locations across the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Annually, it redistributes more than a million kilograms of food. This saved food is valued at more than \$7 million a year.

The vice-president, Reihaneh Mirjani, was recently awarded the 2024 Medal of Good Citizenship of B.C. This medal celebrates individuals who have acted in a particularly generous, kind or selfless manner for the betterment of their communities without expectation of a reward. Reihaneh's selfless work has provided food to low-income families, immigrants and refugees, while also preventing thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gases. I cannot think of work that would better embody the values of this award. Coquitlam and all of British Columbia are a better place because of Reihaneh.

In November 2022, I moved to introduce Bill C-304, an act to establish national food waste awareness day, inspired by organizations like Immigrant Link Centre Society and other food recovery organizations in Port Moody—Coquitlam that stepped up during the pandemic, including The People's Pantry and the Tri-Cities Moms Group. They have showed my community that everyone can play a part in reducing wasted food, reducing emissions and reversing food insecurity.

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I want to again thank the NDP member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for seconding my bills. Bill C-304 specifically would designate October 20 as national food waste awareness day. Having a day to recognize the impacts of wasted food on food insecurity will raise awareness, inspire change and contribute to meaningful solutions to make Canada's food system more secure.

Sixty per cent of the food produced in Canada each year is thrown out, and half of it is fresh, edible and nutritious food that could help feed four million Canadians, one million of whom are children who struggle daily with access to healthy food.

Let us take a moment to talk about the children who are struggling to access healthy food. According to research done at the University of Toronto, approximately 2.1 million children live in households that are food insecure. According to Food Banks Canada, one-third of all food bank clients are children, which means that over 600,000 kids are relying on food banks this year, while landfills continue to fill up with perfectly good food. This is unacceptable and unconscionable. No one should go hungry in a country that produces enough food to feed everyone. That is why the NDP pushed the government to finally implement a national school food program. We are proud of that work for children and families.

I want to talk about my other bill, Bill C-360, an act to establish a national strategy to reduce the amount of wasted food in Canada. If the government were truly serious, like the NDP is, about ending food waste, it would pull that bill. It is binding, unlike today's motion, which only tackles the issue through lip service.

● (1345)

My legislation was informed by consultations with groups such as Second Harvest, Fresh Roots, FoodMesh and the National Zero Waste Council of Canada, which have the solutions we need. All that is left is for the government to act on the bill. I ask the Liberal government now to make Bill C-360 a government bill.

I am happy to see the acknowledgement of this problem, but I want to be clear that this motion will not be able to do anything to solve the problem. Eight years ago, both the Liberals and the Conservatives voted against an act to establish a national food waste awareness day and to provide for the development of a national strategy.

I am not surprised to see the Conservatives voting against fighting climate change, nor am I surprised to see the Liberals protecting corporate grocery stores and their profits, but I am surprised to see a non-binding motion instead of a comprehensive piece of legislation. All the work has been done to have a comprehensive binding bill, and the member still has time to work with his government to get that done. I cannot understand why he would not do that, although it does fit a Liberal pattern of claiming to care, but when it comes to action, the Liberals are nowhere to be found.

The long-standing need for a national strategy to reduce wasted food is becoming clearer and clearer, and there are so many partners ready to do that work. Just as in the work of the Immigrant Link Centre Society in Port Moody—Coquitlam, there are endless programs across the country doing what they can to fight this growing problem, but they need government support.

I implore the Liberal government to get serious and take this opportunity now to engage partners on a strategy. Canadians who are food insecure and all of us who are deeply concerned about the ramifications of climate change need more than just a motion that expresses an opinion of the House. It is important to acknowledge this problem, but the solution has been on the table for at least eight years, so the Liberal government should act now.

In closing, I urge my colleagues to join me in calling for meaningful action on this critical issue. The government does not have to wait any longer to adopt legislation that puts forward concrete steps to reduce wasted food. Let us work together to build a Canada where no edible food rots in a landfill. Again, I ask the government to make Bill C-360 a government bill. It should not make Canadians wait any longer.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in a number of ways I agree with the principles the member highlighted regarding the abundance of food that is wasted. Communities can make a difference and so can governments.

Where I tend to disagree is on the importance of the motion that the member for Willowdale has introduced. I believe the member has understood a very important issue that Canadians can really relate to and has put it in the form of a motion that I would like to think will pass. I applaud him and whoever assisted him in making this motion possible today for their efforts. I would like to think that all members would vote in favour of it. I understand the Bloc has concerns with it. I tend to disagree. I am a nationalist; I believe in Quebec, Canada and all of the provinces. The need is in every region where there is waste and hunger. We need to bridge that together.

I want to emphasize the importance of non-profit organizations, along with the generosity we often see from producers, and I thank those individuals specifically. They have understood the issue for a number of years now and that is why we have food banks, groups like the Winnipeg Bear Clan Patrol and many other organizations, both small and large, that have contributed to closing this huge gap.

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I look at the motion as a very strong positive because there are some powerful words in it that would commit the House of Commons to, hopefully, following through. I look to certain organizations and policies. For example, in reading the motion, one of the first things that came to my mind was the national school food program the government just put in place and how, in implementing that program and by working with other jurisdictions, we can incorporate something with regard to food waste. Because it is a nationally led program, there might be some opportunities. As has been pointed out, we are talking about hundreds of thousands of children who will directly benefit from that program, and there might be other, more indirect benefits.

I think of the changes made to the Competition Act to try to drive down prices on food. I am looking at what we can do to stabilize the cost of food. Along with those policies, we need to recognize the massive amount of waste taking place. If I were to contribute to the debate what I think would make a stronger difference, I have found that the most effective way to minimize that waste would be empowering local organizations to participate in a larger way. They have connections to local businesses and can tap into that.

• (1350)

On the Prairies in particular, there is the huge, lovable farming community, our agricultural sector. The other day I had the chance to talk about taking my most recent flight into Winnipeg. We looked down and saw the ground because there were no clouds, and we saw vast acreages of product, of commodities, including wheat and canola. There is something to say about the beauty of the Prairies when we see the abundance of food there.

When I think in terms of the production of food, I also think of companies like Maple Leaf Foods, processing millions of pigs in the province of Manitoba, or HyLife from Neepawa. I think of the chicken producers. There is so much more in terms of vegetables, such as Peak of the Market and the fine work the growers do.

One of the things they all have in common, whether the farmer, the processor or the distributor, is the interest to address the issue of food waste. They will often, by the crateload, contribute to some of the non-profit organizations that are circulating food. I think of PuroLator and the CFL and the amount of food they donate. There are so many examples out there. Where there is a lot of room for us to make improvement is likely with restaurants and other businesses within the hospitality industry, yet there are so many connections that can be made.

That is why I am suggesting as a contribution to the debate that governments at the national, provincial and municipal levels look at ways in which we can provide, as is being suggested within the motion, incentives for food contributions of different forms. It is something that would go a long way in dealing with the amount of waste we see today in our landfills, as a direct result. If we were to be aggressive on that particular file, it would make a world of difference.

Getting the motion that the member for Willowdale has introduced today as an opportunity to highlight and to build a consensus around, sends a very strong and powerful message to the wide spectrum of stakeholders out there that the leaders of our country recognize just how important an issue this is. It is not just one level of

government; it is all of us who actually can contribute in a positive way.

That means looking at the food we have in our home, and if we are not going to be consuming it, often instead of throwing it out, even stuff that has not expired, contributing it to an organization, maybe taking it to a game and giving it as a donation. We all witness, first-hand, people with exceptional generosity, something Canadians are known for around the world. That is a good approach.

I thank the member for identifying the issue and bringing it to the floor of the House of Commons.

• (1355)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is often said that the road to hell is paved with the best intentions, and I think the motion brought forward by the Liberals on a national food strategy is very similar to that. What is interesting is that on multiple occasions, the Liberals have tried to address a problem that they, in their policies, have created.

Let us go over the timeline. In 2018, the Liberals brought forward the National Zero Waste Council report on a national food waste strategy. In 2019, they brought forward another report, from Environment and Climate Change, on reducing food waste in Canada. In 2020, they spent more than \$20 million on the food waste reduction challenge. I guess there were no results from the millions of dollars spent on these different programs. Now, in 2024, we have another motion with another national strategy for food waste reduction.

That seems to be the traditional Liberal logic. The Liberals cause massive problems with a record number of Canadians being forced to go to food banks to feed their families and a record number of Canadians facing food insecurity. However, rather than getting to the root cause of those problems, which the Liberal-NDP government caused itself, they establish yet another level of bureaucracy and red tape, and hire a bunch more public sector workers to try to cover up the problem.

As part of this motion, the Liberals want to establish a national food waste hierarchy. I do not know exactly what that intends to solve. In fact, every policy the Liberals have brought forward has, in fact, made matters worse. I talked about that earlier. Feed Ontario said the number of Ontarians going to food banks is up one million people. That is an increase of 25%, setting a new record.

In a new report, the government's own data shows the number of Canadians facing food insecurity is up 111%. Let us think about that for a second. That means almost a quarter of our population does not know where their next meal is going to come from. These are not just numbers. These are millions of Canadian parents who cannot feed their kids.

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The Liberals put all these great-sounding programs up in the window, but they have tried this multiple times in the nine years of the Liberal-NDP government. In fact, none of them have done anything. There have been zero results, other than spending millions of dollars and forcing more and more Canadians into food banks, when they have the solution to the problem. We have been talking about it all week since we got back into Parliament on Monday. They can solve the food insecurity issue by axing the carbon tax.

• (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have his phone on his desk? There is some feedback.

I just want to remind members, if they are going to speak, not to put their phones on their desks because it is problematic.

The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, I apologize to the interpreters for that.

The Liberals would have the solution if they would just listen to common-sense Conservatives and axe the carbon tax, which is driving up costs for farmers, truckers, manufacturers, food processors and retailers. This drives up the cost of food on the grocery store shelf, which Canadians are struggling every single day to pay for.

I appreciate the comments from my Liberal colleague from Winnipeg North saying how important it is for Canadians to donate and volunteer at food banks. In fact, it has gotten so bad that the member for Kingston and the Islands had to donate \$1,000 to a local food bank. If only more Liberals were following his lead and donating to food banks. Food banks would not be facing record numbers, and in many cases, we have food banks saying that they cannot meet the demand, if Canadians were not facing an affordability crisis as a result of the Liberal government.

Let us take a look at some of the other programs that the Liberals have brought forward that are actually making the situation worse. The Liberals have also talked about a P2 plastics ban on front-of-pack labelling. Again, this sounds like something that would be positive but, yet again, surprise, surprise, the Liberals have not done any consultation to understand the consequences of these types of policies. An in-depth report by Deloitte on the Liberals' P2 plastic ban policy said that the impact on food prices would be profound. I will go over the list that came from the Deloitte study.

This would increase the cost of fresh produce by 35%, reduce the actual availability of fresh produce in Canada by 50%, cost the industry \$5.6 billion, increase fresh produce waste by 50% and increase health care costs by more than a billion dollars as a result of lower fresh produce consumption.

The front-of-pack labelling issue, which the Liberals are moving ahead with, will cost the industry \$8 billion, as companies are having to switch over and change all of their label manufacturing processes. The Americans have also said that this is a trade issue and they will not be importing products into Canada, which would again reduce access to these fresh products. What will happen? We will drive up food prices yet again.

As Conservatives, we have offered solutions to these problems. For example, Bill C-234 would remove the carbon tax from the nat-

ural gas and propane farmers use for drying grain and for the heating and cooling of barns and greenhouses. This would save farmers more than a billion dollars this year. That is not including when the carbon tax is increased on April 1. What happens when we reduce costs and input costs for farmers and truckers? It reduces the food costs on the grocery store shelves. Once again, the Liberals have opposed that legislation and, in fact, they instructed their senators in the Senate to gut that private member's bill. We know that, unanimously, every single farm stakeholder group in this country supports Bill C-234 to make farming and food more affordable.

We have brought forward a number of alternatives to try to address the affordable food issue. Two years ago, the Liberals imposed a self-imposed potato export ban on Prince Edward Island. In fact, not only did they block farmers in P.E.I. from exporting fresh and seed potatoes, the Liberals paid \$24 million to destroy 300 million pounds of fresh potatoes.

We had farmers from Prince Edward Island drive to Ottawa, and they were handing out five-pound bags of free potatoes to everybody they could find on Wellington Street. This was before the Liberals were very scared of truck drivers coming up to Ottawa. In fact, they were helping feed Ottawa residents. This continues to be the story of the Liberals professing to want to solve problems that they themselves have actually caused.

• (1405)

While I appreciate the sentiment of my Liberal colleague in bringing something forward that the Liberal government has done multiple times as part of its mandate but with no results whatsoever, the facts are clear: When the Liberals get involved, they make matters worse. That is what we are hearing from Canadians, who are struggling with food insecurity in record numbers. When one-quarter of the Canadian population does not know where their next meal is coming from, we need to let that sink in.

Liberal policy has made Canada into a developing country where Canadians are struggling to feed themselves. We need to come up with real solutions, and a Conservative government, under the guidance of the member for Carleton, will ensure that Canadians can afford to put food on the table and feed their families.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, once is not a habit. Again, this government is trying to interfere in the affairs of Quebec and the provinces through the municipalities. Most of the rules governing food product and food donation management fall outside federal jurisdiction. I consider it my duty to remind my colleague of that. Either he has not done his homework and does not know where federal jurisdiction begins and ends, or this is a direct and repeated attack on Quebec's jurisdiction.

In either case, the Bloc Québécois will not let this initiative pass and will oppose the motion. Let no one put words in my mouth. I understand the noble intention involved. However, most of the solutions put forward in the motion have already been implemented, either by the Government of Quebec, or the federal government itself through the food policy for Canada. Is the Liberals' memory failing them?

Keep in mind that they were the ones who launched the preliminary public consultations on this food policy back in 2017. They were also the ones who developed it in 2018 and then announced it in the 2019 budget. Is this an admission of incompetence, an admission that their work is not producing tangible results, so they now feel compelled to outdo their own commitments?

A closer look at this so-called food policy quickly reveals that it is empty and effectively pointless. Unsurprisingly, it is inadequate. At one level, the Bloc Québécois agrees with the assessment. What we take issue with is the form this government's solution is taking.

A UN report published in 2021 reveals that Canada is the undisputed champion of food waste. According to the study, every Canadian throws away 79 kilograms of food a year, 20 kilograms more than the average American. In 2019, three million tonnes of food were thrown away in Canada. The report prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme estimates that nearly one billion tonnes of food were wasted around the world in 2019.

All of this comes at a cost. According to Quebec's department of agriculture, fisheries and food, food waste costs Canada an estimated \$31 billion every year. While households are responsible for 47% of this waste, industry accounts for 53%. In Quebec, 3.1 million tonnes of food waste are discarded throughout the food supply chain, from the land or sea to the table.

In addition to being an inappropriate use of our resources, food waste generates greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to climate change. As we know, a certain party in the House that wants to take office denies the existence of climate change. Both the party and its supporters deny climate change. We need to remind those who are watching us right now of that.

To address this issue, the Liberal government is proposing several measures in its motion. The first is to establish a national food waste hierarchy, which ranks the actions that need to be taken to reduce or avoid waste in order of priority. This is an important step, but one that has already been taken through the work and the research funded by the Quebec government and Recyc-Québec. Next, the motion proposes to align municipal and provincial regulations concerning food waste reduction and food donations, lead efforts to

reduce the adverse environmental impact of unused food resources and establish protocols and partnerships to facilitate food redistribution and rescue efforts. However, most of the laws and regulations governing food waste fall under the jurisdiction of the Quebec and provincial governments. What the Liberal government is trying to tell us here is that the relationship between the federal and provincial governments is hierarchical, not complementary.

● (1410)

This interpretation of federalism is a reason in itself to oppose this motion, even though it is well intentioned. Let us set the record straight. Quebec and the provinces handle this specific matter in collaboration with municipalities and with the businesses and organizations involved in the production, processing, sale and donation of food products. The federal government is not involved.

Some might say that agriculture is a shared jurisdiction, so the food issue could be Ottawa's responsibility. However, the management of resources, land, processing and marketing in Quebec and the provinces is outside the federal government's purview.

The federal government helps with the development and funding of certain risk management, research and interprovincial and international trade programs, but it stops there. That has to be explained to my colleagues. Waste in general, waste management and certain food donation and sharing projects are governed by municipal by-laws and so, once again, Quebec and the provinces are responsible. It is my pleasure and duty to remind my Liberal colleagues of that.

Quebec's department of municipal affairs and housing, commonly referred to as MAMH, does not fall under federal jurisdiction either. Municipalities are not managed by the federal government, much as it wishes they were. Likewise, Quebec manages environmental and food safety legislation. The federal government has a role to play in food labelling more generally and in food safety when it comes to imports and exports. However, it has no concrete role to play in the context of the more general problem of waste.

Now that we have those clarifications, let us complete our list. Through this motion, the government wants to identify policy and fiscal incentives to reduce food waste and raise public awareness regarding food waste, food insecurity and associated government initiatives. The federal government could do those two things. However, it will have to take into account the special characteristics and initiatives of communities that already have established programs. This is called working collaboratively.

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We have seen examples in several other sectors where the federal government believes it is helping, but it is actually making things more complicated by creating overlapping programs and unilaterally adding criteria that are not adapted to every situation. It will have to take into account the established environmental rules, the community structure and the connections already made by the groups. In Quebec, it is MAPAQ and MAMH that regulate food waste initiatives.

Many groups and organizations are also involved in tackling this problem, including the Association pour la santé publique du Québec, Recyc-Québec, community groups and municipalities. We also have a 2018-25 clean bio-food policy that includes two suggested courses of action, one aimed at reducing food waste and loss and promoting food donation, and one aimed at supporting the circular economy and recovering co-products.

Food waste was one of the themes identified as requiring further reflection and work at the May 2019 meeting of bio-food policy partners and in the 2018-23 bio-food policy action plan, which was released in January 2020. In addition, the 2021 edition of this action plan calls for the implementation of a food waste reduction project in co-operation with bio-food partners.

Let us also note that, in 2015, Quebec brought in tax measures to encourage food bank donations in an effort to reduce food waste and address food insecurity, including a tax credit for donations.

Quebec is doing something about this and we want this request to be respected. At the Bloc Québécois, we also want the meaningful positions adopted by Quebec to be respected. We are getting a sense that there is overlap in the work and no real respect for the roles and responsibilities set out in the Constitution. Let us not forget that Quebec has never signed that Constitution.

I get the impression that we are getting mired in motions that are slowing down our efforts. The ball is in the government's court.

Will the government take the ball and do something constructive?

• (1415)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Willowdale has five minutes for his right of reply.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, allow me to begin by thanking all the MPs who have contributed to the debate on Motion No. 110 regarding the need to adopt a national strategy to reduce food waste and combat food insecurity.

Over 20% of the food produced in Canada is avoidably wasted, resulting in a direct economic impact of tens of billions of dollars on our families and communities. Avoidable waste drives up costs right across our domestic food supply chains. It has therefore been highly informative to hear the perspectives of all colleagues on Motion No. 110.

All these discussions have made one thing clear. Everyone agrees that far too much time, energy and resources are being invested in producing food that ultimately becomes avoidable waste. It is imperative that we recognize the economic, social and environmental costs of food waste. Avoidable food waste causes significant green-

house gas emissions, while exposing an unacceptable number of Canadians to food insecurity.

All of the parties in this House have acknowledged these multifaceted concerns in the comprehensive eighth and 10th agriculture committee reports published last year in 2023, and several provincial governments have begun implementing incentives to cut down on food waste.

While I recognize that disagreements may exist among us, it is clear that all members of this House understand that tackling food waste and food insecurity are important challenges that can and should be addressed. None of us should be against devising solutions to address this critical issue on a national scale or remain indifferent to food wasted at every step from the farm to the table.

Should this motion pass, the federal government will have an opportunity to learn from a multitude of stakeholders located across our country to develop a plan grounded in hard-earned experience. We need to hear from family farmers that remain the backbone of our agricultural sector and of countless communities right across our country, and we also need to hear from processors, brilliant researchers, retailers and community food organizations.

Ample evidence exists that developing a national strategy will assist in establishing a national food waste hierarchy, contribute to aligning federal, provincial and municipal regulations, and assist in identifying fiscal incentives to reduce food waste.

Our peer countries have already taken effective steps. After all, in 2015 the United Nations set sustainable development goals that included a commitment to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030. The United States, European Union, Australia, Japan and South Korea have implemented coordinated government-led strategies to successfully quantify and address the challenge of food waste. To cite one example, government initiatives in South Korea have increased their national food waste recycling from 2.6% in 1996 to 95% in 2022.

While food waste reduction efforts in Canada remain a priority, NGOs such as Food Banks Canada have emphasized the potential of redirecting wholesome but wasted food to community food organizations to help our most vulnerable.

Financial incentives can also make a world of difference for local producers and processors. Pathways exist to recycle food waste into economically valuable assets. These pathways involve converting waste into animal feed, compost for fertilization and biofuels.

However, despite the benefits of such initiatives, a lack of access, scale or information has frustrated our ability to seize these opportunities. Researchers and activists have persistently warned us that the scale of Canada's food waste crisis has persisted and indeed worsened due to misleading information, confusing guidelines, outdated regulations, a lack of meaningful financial incentives and an absence of coordination between the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government.

Left to their own devices, individual actors across the continuum of our food supply chains will continue practices that generate food waste, and shift the associated costs onto our businesses, Canadian households and the environment. A variety of private practices regarding best-before dates, food labelling and vendor supply agreements also frequently lead to the destruction of unsold but wholesome food.

• (1420)

Let me close by—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but the hon. member's time is up. I have been trying to give him some signals.

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The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

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.

[*English*]

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

• (1425)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 25, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

It being 2:25, the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:25 p.m.)

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