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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, November 3, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*English*]

CANADA-UKRAINE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

The House resumed from October 24 consideration of the motion that Bill C-57, An Act to implement the 2023 Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Ukraine, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Madam Speaker, a decade ago, this very month, I walked through the Euro-maidan. On the cobblestone streets of Kyiv spanned crowds of thousands. They were jubilant, humorous and optimistic. They sang and cheered in peaceful protest. On stage, speeches extolling the promise of a future independent of Kremlin domination, enabled by oligarchs and their corruption, gave voice to generations of Ukrainians fed up with the old order.

Ukrainians had survived Stalin's famine 90 years ago through Holodomor, Ukrainians whose perilous march to freedom had been perpetually subjected to subversion.

As far as the eye could see, ribbons of yellow and blue adorned a people with the powerful idea that they might soon be free of the yoke of the neo-colonial, revanchist ambitions, free of a neighbour they longed for good relations with, yet a neighbour determined to deny the self-determination of an entire people.

I accompanied my friend and former boss, Canada's foreign minister John Baird. I watched him take in what we had been witnessing together, make a wide grin, and then take to the stage to stand with a people whose moment of independence had arrived. Months later, we returned to charred buildings and cobblestone ripped from the ground by protesters fighting a government that turned its guns on them and flowers laid before portraits of the fallen.

In the subsequent vacuum of transition, on March 2014, Russia illegally annexed Crimea. It was the opening chapter of what now constitutes Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

By April, Russian special operations, Spetsnaz GRU units, paratroopers of the 45th Guards Spetsnaz Brigade of the VDV and Wagner contractors seized territory in Donbass.

Too often we start the story at the middle and not at the beginning. To some, the story of Ukrainian independence commenced in the mid-2000s, amid political turmoil, economic challenges and external pressure.

The Orange Revolution in 2004 set the stage for a democratic transition but the road ahead was far from smooth.

At communism's end, Ukraine held the third-largest nuclear arsenal in the world. They divested that power to guarantee their territory. In 1994, they received those guarantees from the Russian Federation, the United States and the United Kingdom at Budapest. Had the allied world deepened this commitment to Ukrainian territorial integrity, as Prime Minister Stephen Harper strenuously recommended at NATO in 2008, today's brutal, illegal, costly war in Europe would never have happened.

The Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement that Prime Minister Harper first negotiated in 2015 was one part of a much more robust approach. It led the world. It supported the people's Euro-Atlantic aspirations and their territorial integrity, even as war was being waged against them.

Conservatives, with Harper, recognized the importance of supporting ascendent Ukrainian civil society and its democracy. We strengthened Ukrainian democratic institutions, enhanced the rule of law and combatted corruption.

Conservatives, with Harper, were at the forefront of imposing sanctions on Russia at every stage. Serious costs were imposed on the Kremlin. Along with free trade, Conservatives, with Harper, stabilized the Ukrainian economy, preventing financial collapse and bolstering Ukrainian resilience.

As Russia's aggression escalated, Conservatives, with Harper, launched Operation Unifier, the Canadian Armed Forces mission that founded the modern Ukrainian Armed Forces.

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That, as President Petro Poroshenko said, was instrumental in how Ukraine repelled Putin's opening advance toward Kyiv in February last year. The strength of the Conservative approach to securing Ukraine, stabilizing the world, was indeed the envy of the world.

It culminated in 2014, when Prime Minister Stephen Harper confronted Vladimir Putin's repugnant deceptions at the G8, looked him squarely in the eye and said, "Get out of Ukraine." The G8 became the G7, rightly so, because of a strong and principled Conservative leadership that ensured the integrity of our alliances.

Compare that to NDP-Liberals who arrived in office to an inheritance in which Canadian influence was undeniable. What did they do with it? They pursued entreaties of appeasement instead.

NDP-Liberals dispatched senior diplomats to capitals around the world with a message of "Canada is back", back to the Kremlin, back to Tehran, back to Beijing, appeasement that even as Russia intensified its invasion of the Ukrainian east, then-foreign minister Stéphane Dion dispatched his officials to seek to restore good relations with Vladimir Putin.

It was appeasement by sending emissaries to the clerical regime in Iran, even as it showcased its domestic brutality. Exported terror armies were now attacking Israel from across the Middle East and pursuing nuclear weapons. They did not learn. In 2020, there was appeasement after Ukraine International Airlines Flight PS752 was shot out of the sky by a regime sheltering itself under the human shield of civilian flights, killing 55 Canadians and 30 permanent residents.

There was appeasement that shocked the families of victims, watching their prime minister warmly hold the murderous regime's foreign minister's hand, beam a warm smile and bow his head. There was appeasement by pursuing free trade, extradition and cybersecurity treaties with Beijing, while turning their back on the trade deal Conservatives negotiated across Asia.

We will now watch as the Liberals pretend Bill C-57 is the singular triumph of a foreign policy that is clearly broken. Conservatives will consult, we will be clear-eyed about the interests of Canadians, and we will take the right decisions for our country and our alliances. Conservatives will pursue policies of peace through strength, instead of entreaties of appeasement.

How about a real trade deal that could end the war in Europe? Canada is the sole NATO ally with the potential to backfill European energy demand with \$3-trillion worth of natural resources, the world's fourth-largest oil reserves, NATO's third-largest reserves of natural gas and the capacity to scale agricultural products and technologies for the world.

Today, Putin mimics Stalin nearly a century ago: He is bent on creating famine by weaponizing the food supply, and burning and blockading Ukrainian grain so it cannot reach fragile markets. Vladimir Putin spent years choreographing Germany's dependency on Russian oil, having exploited that to shake down Europe. He intervened in Syria and Libya to subvert pipelines that would supply Europe and amplified misinformation against Canadian energy.

It ensured a steady stream of revenue for Russia's war machine, nearly \$1 billion a day, including more than \$250 million a day from Germany alone to fund his war. When Germany finally realized the costs of this, Chancellor Scholz came knocking on our door for Canadian energy and we turned him away.

Russia and Iran scale production today, evade sanctions and provide discounted prices to Beijing to wage their wars in Europe and the Middle East. Qatar, host to Hamas, inked a 3.5-million-tonne gas deal with France just this week. If NDP-Liberals truly care about trading relationships that support Ukraine, then they can do the one game-changing thing the world has been demanding: end Russia's weaponization of energy, and let Canadian resources be what fuels, feeds and secures the world and Canadians.

Across the world, we must confront the illiberal project posed by our medieval rivals upon the modern age of democracies. Our town squares are burning. Mobs are threatening individual dignity and freedom. The time has come for the return of leaders with conviction, leaders who do not bow before the illiberal age upon us, but who instead unlock the economic and military strength required in this generation's greatest test.

I think of Ukraine a decade ago and all that has transpired since, from the jubilation of the Revolution of Dignity, to all the carnage, the rubble, the costs of chaos and disorder that appeasement has resulted in. Hope seems like an idea so far away. One year ago, in a report from the bombardment of Kharkiv, an elderly woman stood in the rubble of her apartment. She interrupted her neighbour in the middle of an interview, surveying the damage inflicted by Russia's indiscriminate attacks. She shared three words: Hope dies last.

If we are to live up to our potential as a country, then we will heed her wisdom that without hope we have nothing. It is time to replace a government unwilling to do what Canada must. It is time to replace it with one that delivers upon the strengths of our nation to a world eagerly awaiting them; one that restores the promise of Canada to alliances broken so badly by the NDP-Liberals.

Let us make the trade deal we should be making, the one that delivers hope and the one that delivers the energy that would end the war, bring strength to the alliances we depend upon, and secure the future for all Canadians.

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• (1010)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would suggest that the member take the attitude that he has toward Ukraine and talk to members of his own caucus as they continue to filibuster this piece of legislation.

He is factually incorrect. It was this government that signed off on the first Ukraine deal. It is the Conservative Party across the way that continues to filibuster Bill C-57, the Canada-Ukraine trade deal. The Conservatives can say all the wonderful words they want and glorify Stephen Harper as the Prime Minister of Canada as much as they want, but the bottom line is the Conservative Party is reckless and risky.

At the end of the day, the Conservatives do not recognize the true value of seeing this legislation pass. It is economically the right thing to do. If we take a look at what is taking place in Europe, we can send a very strong message in favour of Ukraine that would be very powerful.

Will the member stand in this place and make a commitment that he will do whatever he can to ensure this legislation will pass throughout the House of Commons, including the Senate, before—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Calgary Heritage.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar: Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to the hon. House leader, especially because I think his perspective on what is going to make a difference in this war, in this world and for Canadians is quite skewed.

If the Liberals want to deal with the issues the world and Europe are dealing with, their dependency on the energy they have come to rely on the Russian Federation for, and for Putin's domination of the energy order of Europe to now come to an end and make a singular decision to end the war, then the energy and effort that Canadians need to be making is to get our energy and resources to market to displace Russian dependency with Canadian long-term supply.

We are a country that has the highest standards for the rule of law and the highest ethical standards. Our production reduces emissions internationally. It is one of the most important projects we could be undertaking in this venture.

• (1015)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to commend my colleague and thank him for his speech.

Obviously, we applaud this new agreement with Ukraine. I fully recognize that the previous agreement was negotiated by Stephen Harper. It was about to come into force when an election was called. This agreement goes further. Given that Ukraine is part of the World Trade Organization, there will be little to be gained from tariffs. The main purpose of this bill is to send another very strong message of diplomacy and show that Ukraine is our friend.

Obviously, we need to look at the financial markets. One thing about this agreement is that it entrenches in a treaty that Ukraine's

territory includes Donbass and Crimea. We think that is an excellent message to send.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar: Madam Speaker, Canada has always stood for Ukraine's territorial integrity. It will never accept Crimea's illegal annexation. It will never accept the idea that Russia's claims over the Donbass are somehow credible. They are not. They have never been credible. They are a giant pantomime hosted by Vladimir Putin in his own mind about a neo-Russian idea of the country.

When we think about how to deal with the issues the hon. member has raised, the most important thing to do is to assess what kind of trade deal we want to make. The trade deal around getting our energy to Europe is one of the most important deals we could make.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that when my hon. colleague talks about illegal occupations and indiscriminate attacks he condemns Russia for it, but of course his party praises Israel when Israel does it.

I was in this House when the Harper government was in power. It was totally disrespected on the world stage because of that kind of inconsistent, imbalanced, outdated and Cold War oversimplification.

From 2015 to 2021, we had a Liberal majority government and a Liberal minority government, yet in the member's speech he incorrectly and repeatedly asserted that these were Liberal-NDP decisions in that time period. An accurate history is the basis of sound foreign policy. With that kind of disregard for Canadian history, how can Canadians have any trust that Conservatives would have sound foreign policy in the future when they cannot even get Canadian history correct?

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar: Madam Speaker, I am deeply offended with how the hon. member has described the situation in the Middle East. As we know, there are many anxious communities affected here in Canada today. He and his party are determined to try and paint the State of Israel and the IDF that way, when they have every right to defend the hostages who have been taken from their land and their state and believe that anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism. This hon. member is clearly on the path of anti-Zionist thinking. It is a condemnation of a democratic state that should never be tolerated in this chamber.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this important agreement.

I want to focus my comments on a few things. First, I noticed in debate that there has been some insinuation that reviewing this bill and its contents is somehow inappropriate for Parliament. I want to refer colleagues who are making that assertion to comments that were made earlier in debate, I think it was last week, by the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay. He talked about how, in previous trade agreements that have come before the House, the government has not afforded Parliament a lot of time to review things.

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He actually cited that, in February 2020, ahead of the renegotiated CUSMA agreement, the minister made the following commitment: to require that a notice of intent to enter into negotiation toward a new free trade agreement be tabled in the House of Commons at least 90 calendar days prior to the commencement of negotiations, and to require objectives for negotiations towards new free trade agreements to be tabled in the House of Commons at least 30 calendar days prior to the commencement of negotiations. Under normal parliamentary procedures, these objectives would be referred to the committee on international trade.

As far as I understand, and I am happy to be corrected, I do not believe that the government actually did that in this case. That is problematic. Because the government has failed to do this, it is incumbent upon parliamentarians to take time to scrutinize this legislation. It affects many different aspects of the economy, some in very positive ways. Our job here is to scrutinize legislation, and the assertion that somehow we should not be doing that is actually anti-democratic.

I hope that hon. colleagues refrain from making that assertion and, instead, focus on the subject at hand today. I also hope that, if the government is going to enter into future negotiations such as this, they abide by the rules that they have put forward to this place. It would make things a lot more productive, and it would be far more respectful of our time and parliamentarians' time here.

On the subject of the agreement, I would like to focus my comments on this bill for consideration in two key components. First is the concept of treatment of intangibles in free trade agreements. There was quite a bit of rightful concern about the government's lack of focus on how to treat intangibles in the previous Canada-U.S. free trade agreement. I think it is incumbent on us to be looking at this particular aspect in any free trade agreement, including this one. I would just implore colleagues to do so, should this bill make it to committee.

I want to read one passage, just to put it into the record for colleagues to consider as they are deliberating this bill. It was a passage by Jim Balsillie, a Canadian industry leader, talking about intangibles in trade:

The instruments designed to govern the intangibles economy – including the new-age trade agreements such as CUSMA, CPTPP, and the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) – entrench and expand protection for owners of IP and data.

However, he noted that this is not new. He said:

... in 1990s trade agreements became the main tool for devising preferential marketplace frameworks that suit the owners of IP... Nowhere was the shift from a tangibles to an intangibles economy set in sharper relief than with Canada's largest trading partner the United States.

Later, he went on to critique how:

Canada's woefully late recognition of the shift to intangibles and failure to understand its significance for national prosperity and security resulted in its falling behind, walking into strategic errors, and now leaving it poised to enter the post-pandemic world not just in catch up mode but relegated to competing globally on the cost of its tech talent with low-wage jurisdictions.

He talked about how:

Canada has an IP trade deficit. The Council's recommendation would have us paying even more rents out to IP owners, who are principally foreign.

This is something that I really hope colleagues will consider in their deliberations over this bill, particularly as Canada still lags behind the rest of the world in terms of dealing with artificial intelligence regulations.

We are entering a phase where the global economy is not just entering into a digital economy; it is in a digital economy and progressing into a generative economy.

• (1020)

If we just have widgets and tangibles as a primary focus of trade agreements, and we promulgate other aspects, such as intellectual property protection and data ownership, without thinking about the downstream impact on our economy in 10 or 15 years, then we are setting Canada's economic prospects behind. I am not necessarily saying that is the case in this agreement, but I would just hope that parliamentarians who are tasked with looking at it, particularly in the committee stage, would focus on the precedent that is being set with regard to intangibles and the intellectual property component. Moreover, with any other trade agreement, that is something that Parliament needs to be seized with. This is just a note to colleagues who might be looking at that in the future.

The other thing I want to focus on would be article 13.10 of the trade agreement, under subsection 8(d), which says, "promote the rapid transition from unabated coal power to clean energy sources".

This is a great, laudable objective. As colleagues have talked about previously in the House, the provision of clean energy and reducing Ukraine's and other European countries' reliance on Russia for energy should be an objective of the Canadian government. However, as other colleagues have pointed out, the government's own actions over the last eight years have been antithetical to that posture. Therefore, it is very difficult for the government to make such an assertion in a trade agreement after eight years of failing to acknowledge that Canada has a duty to build up facilities to provide cleaner sources of energy, such as liquefied natural gas, to other economies.

The reality is that Canada's government has taken a posture that is against the development of this resource. In fact, I would draw members' attention to an article in Reuters from October 6 of last year, over a year ago, titled "Canada's [Prime Minister] under pressure from Conservative rival to back new LNG".

This article extensively covered what happened when the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, came to Canada. He was seeking a major role for Canada in replacing Russian supplies, such as energy. The rebuff that our allies in Europe got from the current government was wholly inappropriate. A year has gone by, and we are now taking this posture in this trade agreement without having seen any movement forward from the government on how to increase this type of export in an environmentally sustainable way. That is wholly irresponsible.

Earlier, my colleague from Calgary Heritage talked in his speech about Canada's failure to provide when we have this resource in abundant supply and some of the strictest environmental controls in the world. Canada is actually remarkably well placed to develop this resource in an environmentally responsible manner. There are colleagues from all different parties who represent ridings that are part of the development of this resource. There is a bit of cognitive dissonance between the posture that the government has taken in article 13.10 of the trade agreement and the reality of building out this infrastructure.

Therefore, I would encourage colleagues, as they consider this bill, as well as colleagues from the governing party, to look at ways to close that gap or to bring those two postures together. We cannot be putting postures like this in a trade agreement with any sort of truth to it without building out that infrastructure. It is good for the Canadian economy, and it certainly would defund the Russian war machine. This is really important. It is a broader objective, and it would provide stronger economic support for the country.

I will just close with this: Many colleagues in the House have pointed out in the debate over the Conservative motion on removing home heating tax, which will be voted on this Monday, that natural gas is a cleaner source of energy and that we should be looking to displace it. I do not understand why that cognitive dissonance exists in other areas.

• (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, back in September President Zelensky came to Ottawa and spoke in this very chamber. Part of the purpose of the trip was to sign off on the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. That is what this legislation is based on, and it was brought in shortly after the signature. Given the fact that we have the President of Ukraine coming to Canada during a time of war to sign off on a trade agreement, to see the silly games being played on this legislation by the Conservative Party of Canada is somewhat disgraceful. I believe that, in the Conservative Party, there is an element that does not want to see this legislation pass.

The member's colleague from Cumberland—Colchester referred to this legislation as “woke” and suggested that, in some way, Canada should not be having an agreement with Ukraine at a time of war. I will ask the member this: Does she support his comments?

• (1030)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I am actually surprised my colleague brought up the incident that happened during President Zelensky's address. It did not go so well for the government. I think the government owes a significant apology to the

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Ukrainian people for its complete mishandling and the debacle that ensued there. It was disgraceful, what happened, and the government should be ashamed of itself.

In terms of calling the review of legislation that is before this place “silly games”, I think that is very indicative of the government and the Liberal Party's disrespect for Parliament and parliamentary privilege.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): First, I want to remind members that, if they have other questions, they should wait for an opportunity to ask. Second, if they want to have conversations, they should take them out of the chamber while the House is in session.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill for her speech. I heard her make various comments about the content of the agreement.

More generally speaking, we know that MPs have almost no power to change the content of international treaties. They can only agree or disagree with the agreement. We are not able to propose amendments. The role of parliamentarians is very limited.

Members will recall that, in November 2020, during the renegotiation of the post-Brexit agreement with the United Kingdom, members of the Standing Committee on International Trade were asked to debate a text that they did not even have a copy of.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on the fact that parliamentarians have almost no power to influence the negotiation of international treaties and that such negotiations are left exclusively up to the executive branch.

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent point. I know that the member's colleagues in her party have been making this point in debate, and it is a good one. It is a strong contrast to what the parliamentary secretary said when he characterized the scrutiny of the agreement as “silly games”. That is not appropriate. That actually denigrates Parliament and our role.

I would point out again that, in debate, our colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay pointed out that the government made a commitment to Parliament to give advance notice and to have trade negotiation go through the international trade committee. That has not happened in this case, and it is incumbent upon us to point out that Parliament has a role. We have a large, diverse regional economy, where we have many stakeholders who will want feedback. That is our job, and I fully support the member's assertion that the government did not undertake that in this instance, and now we have a duty as parliamentarians to undertake that role.

That is an excellent point that I fully agree with.

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Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, one thing I have noticed about this draft is that there is a chapter on trade regarding indigenous peoples. I really like that there is a chapter to make sure that there are some activities regarding economic development in free trade. If I understand it correctly, this is the first time that there has been a chapter like this in a free trade agreement.

Does the member agree that, for any future free trade agreements, there should always be chapters to make sure that Canada's indigenous peoples are highlighted and have a profile, ensuring that we have better economic development activities to support them?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, it is vitally important that Parliament and the Canadian government consider the economic self-determination rights of indigenous persons in all activities. This should be a principle that is extended beyond these agreements to natural resource development, environmental assessment and the inclusion of indigenous and traditional knowledge in policies such as health, science, and research and technology. As such, it is encouraging to see more discussion of this and this particular principle included in debate in Parliament writ large.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I believe in free trade. I believe in Canada and in Canadians. I know that we are some of the most creative people in the world. I know that there is no one who surpasses us in business acumen or in the quality of the products we make. I also know that, on a level playing field, Canadians will always succeed. Our strength is our people. We are so much more than the hewers of wood and drawers of water of our colonial past. We are energetic and innovative, and we have been energized by the input of people and cultures from around the globe. Canadians are not afraid of free trade; we welcome it.

Before the people of Edmonton Manning asked me to be their representative in the House, I was a businessman. Arriving in Canada as an immigrant with little more than the clothes on my back, I took the opportunity that this country gives. I worked hard and built a business that had customers around the world. Anyone who has experience in international business will say that there seems to be no end to the possible problems and pitfalls. All too often, in too many places, the rules of business do not seem fair. A free trade agreement is designed to make rules fair and to open up opportunities for business people in the countries it covers. A free trade agreement tells the world that the countries signing it are not afraid of fair and honest competition, and that they believe in the ability of their citizens and want them to prosper. I know first-hand that Canada and Canadians can compete with whatever the world has to offer. I know that we have the people and the brain power to shine on the world stage.

The ties between Canada and Ukraine are long-standing and historic. It was under a Conservative government that, on December 2, 1991, Canada became the first western country to recognize Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union. It was under a Conservative prime minister, Stephen Harper, that Canada undertook Operation Unifier, the Canadian Armed Forces mission to bolster the capabilities of the armed forces of Ukraine through the provision of critical military training. Ukraine has been so successful in the past two years in fighting against the invader in part because of that partnership with Canada. That partnership is more than a mili-

tary alliance; it is also about trade. It was Conservatives who successfully negotiated the current Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement.

What would the bill before us do? Among other things, it is designed to:

(b) promote, through the elimination of barriers to trade in goods and services, the expansion of reciprocal trade and the strengthening of economic relations between Canada and Ukraine in order to create opportunities for economic development;

(c) promote conditions of fair competition affecting trade between Canada and Ukraine;

(d) ensure a predictable commercial framework for business planning and investment.

As a former businessman, I appreciate that the word “predictable” is very comforting. What any business person wants to know is that the rules are solid, that the ground does not shift in the middle of a deal. In a world where there seems to be an increasing number of variables, where so much is uncertain, it is important to have a predictable commercial framework if we want business to invest and spur on the economy.

I am a big fan of fair competition. As I said, I believe in Canada and in Canadians. I think we can hold our own in a fair competition. Indeed, we can do more than hold our own; we can excel. Canadian businesses are always looking for opportunities for economic development, opportunities for expansion. One of the reasons we have free trade agreements is to create those same opportunities.

● (1035)

The legislation before us would update the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement, which was first proposed by the Conservative government under Prime Minister Stephen Harper. The agreement, which came into force on August 1, 2017, eliminated tariffs on 86% of Canada's merchandise exports to Ukraine. In 2022, Canada's merchandise exports to Ukraine totalled \$150 million, while merchandise imports from Ukraine were \$271 million. As a reflection of the need brought about by Vladimir Putin's brutal invasion of Ukraine, Canada's top export to that country in 2022 was armoured vehicles and their parts. Also on the list were fish and seafood, pharmaceuticals, machinery and private donations. Canada top imports from Ukraine were animal and vegetable fats and oils, iron and steel and electricity machinery and equipment. In 2022, Canadian businesses invested \$112 million directly in Ukraine.

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Canada currently has a \$150-million trade deficit with Ukraine. When the Harper government originally negotiated the FTA, it was designed to be an asymmetrical agreement in which Ukraine would initially gain the most benefit. The inclusion of more services trade in the updated FTA, and some of the other changes, should balance out bilateral trade. Especially in this time of conflict, Canada should continue looking for ways to use our economic strength to support the Ukrainian people. That includes exporting Canadian liquid natural gas to break European dependence on natural gas from Russia.

However, the bill before us, despite being called the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement implementation act, 2023, is not really about free trade. It is about hope. It is about the hope that one day, hopefully soon, Vladimir Putin will realize that his brutal invasion of Ukraine is doomed to fail, and the hope that once again there can be peace in the land. It is about the hope of millions of people displaced by fighting who are longing to return home to pick up the pieces of their lives. It is about the hope of a return to a normal where there is no longer the fear of falling bombs. It is about the hope that those areas scarred by war can be rebuilt and restored. It is about the hope that with peace can come renewed prosperity.

The agreement is about the future of Canada and the future of Ukraine, about an ongoing partnership that would benefit both countries. Canadians have been impressed with the courage shown by the Ukrainian people in the face of war. Their commitment to freedom and democracy is an inspiration. We want to do what we can to support them in their struggle. Indeed, the worldwide assumption was that in any military confrontation between Vladimir Putin's Russia and Ukraine, the outcome would be a swift and decisive Russian victory. On paper, there was no contest.

The bill is a sign that there is indeed life after war, and it will be a good life. It is important for Canada and all other democracies to show their support for Ukraine in its time of need. We have shown our support militarily. We have shown our support morally. Now, we need to ensure that postwar Ukraine has the tools it needs for rebuilding and for continued success.

Conservatives will always work to ensure that trade agreements are in the interest of Canada and of all Canadians, but part of that is ensuring that the agreements are fair to our trading partners. We are stronger as a trading nation when we deal fairly with others. Common-sense Conservatives support Ukraine 100%. I look forward to the bill's coming before committee, which will allow us to examine what is proposed and to see how it benefits the people of Canada and also the people of Ukraine.

• (1040)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member emphasized how the legislation is more about hope. I kind of agree with him, in the sense that it goes far beyond the economics of a trade agreement. The Conservative Party has traditionally supported trade agreements, yet today, what we heard were Conservative members condemning the legislation, in the sense of saying that it is woke legislation and that Canada is taking advantage of Ukraine because it is at war.

The issue is whether the member truly believes what he is saying. Can he please explain to Canadians why it is that the Conservative Party is the only party of the House that appears to want to filibuster and play games with this legislation, as opposed to allowing it to pass? It would be a powerful, hopeful message to send to Ukraine if we could have the legislation go through before Christmas. Would he not agree?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, the questions coming from the government side have been so divisive on the issue that Conservatives believe is very important.

I have spoken about hope and fairness. I said in my speech, if the hon. member was listening, that we need free trade agreements to be fair for Canada and for our partners, which, in this case, is Ukraine. Hopefully, the government will be more open to the opportunity to have an agreement that is very fair for both parties.

• (1045)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a similar question to the one that was just asked.

There have been times when Bill C-57 was scheduled for debate and, for one reason or another, my Conservative colleagues decided that debating concurrence in a committee report was more important. If, as my colleague emphasized in his speech, the relationship between Ukraine and Canada is so important, does he see the importance of eventually getting to a vote on the bill, and are there particular sections of the legislation that he thinks the committee needs to pay more attention to? I would like to get a little more clarity on that from my Conservative colleagues. This is not a question with an agenda; I am just genuinely curious whether they eventually want to get to a vote on this and improve it at committee.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I mentioned at the beginning of my speech that I am an international trade expert. I was involved in it as a private citizen before I got into politics. We need enough studies to make sure the bill would be to the best benefit of both parties, which are, in this case, Canada and Ukraine, the Canadian people and the Ukrainian people. That is the lens through which Conservatives would like to see this agreement go.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech. I would like to ask him a question about this and the other agreements.

In Canada, agreements are negotiated by the executive, the government. We know that the provinces have the authority to implement treaty provisions in areas under their jurisdiction, but they are not really involved in the negotiations. In Europe, for instance, we see the opposite. Member states play a key role even though the treaty is signed with the European Union.

Could Canada follow Europe's example in this regard?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, that is an important question. As I said earlier, I have been involved in trade myself on the international stage. I know that the implementation of any agreement, with the consultation of all, especially, in Canada's case, with the provinces and so forth, is very important. The input of everyone is very critical. Parliament, especially, has to have a proper say in order to make sure that such an agreement would serve all parties, in this case, Canada and Ukraine, well and with fairness.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege and honour to rise today to speak to this bill on free trade between Canada and the Ukraine.

I represent the riding of Calgary Centre, but a lot of people know that I grew up in small towns around Edmonton, Alberta. When someone grows up in and around a bread basket of Canada like Edmonton, Saskatchewan, as they do in so many parts of the Prairies, they become intertwined with the Ukrainian communities. I think of so many friends and hockey teams from when I was young, Harvey Chewinski, the Boychuks and all the families we were intertwined with.

This was the result of the wave of Ukrainian immigration that came into Canada after the Holodomor, which is a horrific episode in history, a genocide of the Ukrainian people. We have built our lives together with those of the Ukrainian immigrants who came at that time, and it is a wonderful blending of cultures. We know these people, and we love these people. We will continue to support these people in any way we can going forward.

I am also a Conservative, and everybody knows that. Part of the bedrock of what I believe is the openness of free trade around the world, free and fair trade. Conservatives started free trade in Canada back in the Mulroney years. In the 1988 election, we fought for free trade with the United States. Other parties opposed that then, but it carried. The parties that opposed it are now are jumping on board and saying what a great thing free trade is. I remember pushing Canadians over the line because of the negative talk from the opposition parties, both the NDP and the Liberals, who were staking our country's future on not having free trade. I am glad they have come on board, and they have helped expand free trade into other countries, including Ukraine.

The Ukraine free trade agreement was implemented by the last Conservative government, again expanding on that free trade, which we require across the country and across the world so we can continue to advance economic progress and our values, our values of freedom and democracy. Let us think about how that took root in Ukraine. We supported Ukraine. The Conservative government recognized Ukraine as a country at the time. It was one of the first to recognize Ukraine as a country. There was that bedrock of our blending with the Ukrainian people because of our common threads that bind us. This is something that we continue to build upon today.

This is a great debate. I am glad we are actually having this debate on this free trade agreement and that we can talk about the importance to Ukraine and the importance to Canada. This is an important free trade agreement, as was the one that was just recently

negotiated and came into effect in 2017. It was less than six years ago that we started having open free trade with Ukraine.

What happened since then, of course, close to two years ago, was that Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine. We recognized then what his goal was, and it was to submerge the Ukrainian people. He does not believe they are a separate people, a separate country or a separate entity where the people get to decide, in a democracy, how they rule themselves. We stand for them doing that. We stand for that here in Canada. We stand for that around the world. Democracy is something we need to uphold, and we will uphold it anywhere we can.

My party and, I hope, all parties in the House agree that this is a bedrock of democracy. We continue to support democracies around the world. We continue to strongly support the people of Ukraine in their struggle against an oppressor, on their border and inside their border, which is killing people on a daily basis. These people are putting their lives on the line to maintain what we have built together. We support them every step of the way, every day.

I remember when the invasion first happened. I asked the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources a question about whether he would stop the oil trade between Canada and Russia because it was a transfer of about \$5 million per day from Canada to import Russian oil. At that point in time, the minister stood up and said that we do not import any crude from Russia. The minister did not then understand the difference between crude and oil.

We did import about five million dollars' worth per day of partially refined oil from Russia to Canada to supply our needs on the eastern coast. We are a country that imports energy in the east and exports it in the west. This is a bit of a travesty because we were funding \$5 million per day to Russia's war machine, so it could take away the sovereignty of a democratic country.

● (1050)

This was an issue we had to get ahead of very quickly. Eventually, the minister, in about a week, figured out I was right. We do have trade with Russia on oil, and we do need to do something about it. Of course, within the next month, they looked around and figured it out. It was incompetence. I accept that not everybody is going to be on top of every file.

It was brought to the attention of the government what it should do about trade with Russia while it was subsuming, or attempting to subsume, one of the best and emergent democracies in Europe. We needed to act quickly, and I deplore the government for not acting as quickly as it should have. I implore it to act more quickly in getting Ukraine its needs as soon as possible, particularly in this existential fight it has with an authoritarian regime right on its borders.

Statements by Members

We gave support. Let us think about where Conservatives are on this. Conservatives have supported free trade everywhere in the world. Everywhere there is free and fair trade, we have negotiated great agreements all along the way. We have one here we have to look at. Of course, like with everything, the devil is in the details. We are going to go through it. We are looking forward to looking into the details of this and getting input from so many people at the international trade committee when we examine it there.

I think about the other support we have given Ukraine. Under the Harper government, we helped it build its military. We brought a bunch of expertise. Effectively, its ability to defend itself is largely dependent on the fact that Canada stepped up at a time when danger was not on the horizon. Ukraine needed our help to build the infrastructure and security, which has sustained it, and it has helped ensure it does not just become subsumed by a much larger entity, Vladimir Putin's Russia, as it has been historically. It is called the "bloodlands" for a reason. A lot of conflict has happened there over the centuries.

We talk about all the things we could be doing with Ukraine if the government were to look at what trade means to this country. We do not have liquefied natural gas going to Europe. Why not? It is because we have had our head in the sand about the number one way we can contribute to fixing global warming around the world, and that is to get so many countries off of coal.

Who has stepped up? Vladimir Putin's Russia has. It exports natural gas everywhere it can. It has pipelines into Europe. It has pipelines through Ukraine going to Europe. It actually has pipelines of natural gas supplying the people it is fighting against. We stand against this. We think there should be the availability of resources from a democracy such as Canada to supply Europe with the energy it requires now.

I want everybody to know that, when conflict happens, such as a war in Russia and Ukraine, resources are everything. If someone does not have the resources to fund their democracy, they will have to eventually capitulate. We need to continue to supply those resources and think about what we can do here, think about how we can displace the Russian oppressors here. We could actually replace its natural gas with Canadian liquefied natural gas.

We can replace its fertilizer. They are the number one and two exporters of fertilizer around the world. Canada is the swing producer, and we could get a whole bunch of fertilizer, potash, offshore to displace Belarus and Russia, which are funding a war machine that is challenging the existence of Ukraine. Those would be important trade mechanisms to take here. International commerce has to proceed.

I remember very well the CUAET program. At the beginning of the war, the government developed the CUAET program, which is the Canada-Ukraine immigration program, where we allow them to come to Canada and potentially move back. It is a temporary program for Ukrainians to come and be safe here in this country.

Many of them came through Calgary Centre. My office helped so many of those people. I am proud. I meet with those people often, and it is another great testament to how our two countries work together, hand in hand, in advancing common goals, common ob-

jectives and common culture. Let us see how this free trade agreement melds into that.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1055)

[*English*]

TRIBUTE TO A MOTHER

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, it would not be appropriate, so I would not dare point out to members if there was someone quite special to me in the gallery, even if it were my mom.

The daughter of Italian immigrants, she was the first to model for me what it looks like to passionately advocate for someone else. In my case, she was fighting for me through the depths of our health care system when I was just a kid. She is the first one who showed me what care and thoughtfulness looked like, such as when she would make lunch for my brothers and me, carefully noting on each lunch bag whose tuna salad sandwich had celery in it and whose most certainly did not.

She is the one who, through all of the years, reminded me again and again that I can be my own harshest critic and that I can only do my best. Whether it was when I got nine out of 10 on a math test or came in second in my first election campaign, she has always been my biggest fan, reminding me that she loves me to the moon and back.

[*Translation*]

Thanks, Mom. I love you too.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member is correct. It is not right for him to point out who is in the gallery, but I am sure his mother is very proud of him.

The hon. member for Nepean.

* * *

HINDU HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, every year, November is Hindu Heritage Month. This provides us the opportunity to recognize, preserve, celebrate and promote Hindu culture and heritage.

Hindus are close to one million strong in Canada. They have come to this wonderful country from all across the world. It is important for us to preserve our Hindu culture and heritage in Canada for our future generations. Hindu Canadians are the most peaceful, highly educated and hard-working community, and hence, it is a successful community. Hindu Canadians have significantly contributed and continue to do so for the socio-economic development of Canada. We have immensely enriched the rich Canadian multicultural fabric.

Statements by Members

Though the ancient Hindu heritage is alive and growing, it freely adapts to any society or civilization and also gives to whoever it comes in contact with. I wish all members a happy Hindu Heritage Month.

* * *

• (1100)

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada will mark Remembrance Day next Saturday, and we will gather to honour those who have served in guiding our country's freedom, those who currently serve and those who have paid the ultimate price. We are forever in their debt.

In Calgary, Remembrance Day ceremonies started on November 1, as we mark 10 additional days of memorializing those who answered the call. These 10 days occur along the aptly named Memorial Drive, where the tree-lined sides serve as a living testament to soldiers who died during World War I.

The Field of Crosses began in 2009, when it was started by local hero Murray McCann. It punctuates Calgary's landscape with over 3,500 crosses paying tribute to soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice in defence of freedom. Sustaining this endeavour is an army of local volunteers and those who are inspired to provide ongoing support for remembrance through the adopt a cross fundraising effort.

It is a sight to behold: white crosses, representing our fallen, row on row. Lest we forget.

* * *

BUCKAM SINGH

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians from coast to coast could tell us about the many contributions that Sikh Canadians have made in all sectors of our country, but during this Veterans' Week, I would like to especially recognize the tremendous sacrifices made by the over 365,000 Sikh soldiers who fought with us and our allies during World War I and World War II.

This Sunday, many Canadians, including myself, will be attending the Sikh Remembrance Day ceremony at Mount Hope in Kitchener, to remember these heroes. The annual Remembrance Day ceremony for Sikh Canadians in Mount Hope is a 15-year-old tradition that has been held at the grave of Private Buckam Singh. Private Buckam Singh joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1915. He was a pioneering Sikh Canadian who served right alongside other Canadian troops in World War I.

Private Buckam was a brave hero who was wounded twice in two separate battles. He fought and died for our country. In honour of his memory, today in Brampton, we have a school in his name. As Canadians, may we never forget the sacrifice and contribution that Sikh Canadians such as Private Buckam Singh have made to Canada.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I urge the Prime Minister to call for a ceasefire in Israel and Palestine.

We must condemn the horrific killing of Israelis by Hamas and the taking of hostages. We must condemn Israel's relentless killing of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, including over 3,000 children. UNICEF has said that Gaza has become a graveyard for children.

Let me be clear. Canada is complicit. Canada's arms exports to Israel are at record high levels, with over \$20 million exported last year. A significant percentage of our exports include explosives and components related to military aircraft. There is the risk that they have been used in the bombings of refugee camps, hospitals and the killing of entire families.

Canada used to be a leader for peace, in Sinai, in Cyprus and at the UN. We need to be that voice for peace now more than ever. I urge the Prime Minister to call for a ceasefire, for the freeing of hostages, for immediate humanitarian aid and for a two-state solution, with peace and security, including the end of the occupation and a just peace for Palestinians.

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[*Translation*]

FARMER RESILIENCE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we had a very hard summer. We experienced extreme heat, torrential rain and forest fires of unprecedented proportions.

Once again, I was struck by the courage and solidarity of Châteauguay—Lacolle farmers in the face of climate adversity. I am pleased that my colleagues from Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation and Laurier—Sainte-Marie were able to admire their resilience and know-how as well.

Better still, we have been listening to them, and we will continue to be there for them. Farmers exist on the front lines of climate change. They are our partners in the battle we are waging together for the future of our planet.

* * *

• (1105)

[*English*]

STEVE HAYWARD

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): We have lost a good one, Madam Speaker. Steve Hayward passed away in August this past summer. He spent his entire life serving our community in Caledon.

I met Steve in 2019 at the Alton Legion during a Remembrance Day ceremony. Steve was a fixture there. In fact, Steve spearheaded the \$400,000 renovation of the Alton Legion. He was also in charge of trying to get Dixie Road renamed "Veterans Way". He was always giving to our community and always giving to the Legion.

It was all about community for Steve. He volunteered everywhere. He founded Club Caledon to help young people. He volunteered with lacrosse, minor baseball and minor hockey, just to name a few. He was also, in 2021, Caledon's senior of the year. However, there is more. To children all across Caledon, he was Mr. Santa. He dressed up in that beautiful red costume and brought joy to children all across Caledon.

We have lost a good one. Steve's family and friends have our deepest condolences. He will be missed.

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LEBANESE HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this November, we celebrate Lebanese Heritage Month and the rich culture of Lebanon, its generous and hard-working people and their contribution to making our communities vibrant and prosperous.

Thousands of Lebanese call my community of Windsor—Tecumseh home, and because of that, my hometown boasts some of the best festivals and food in Canada. Whether it is the annual St. Ignatius and St. Peter's festivals or the bounty of restaurants such as Souq, Hamoudi's, Mazaar, Al-Sabeel or Tabouli, our Lebanese community proudly shares its rich heritage.

It is also a community of dedicated doctors, nurses, teachers, artists, athletes and entrepreneurs. Yesterday, the founders of Cedar Valley, our local manufacturer of fattoush salad dressing and authentic Lebanese-style pita chips, were featured on CBC's *Dragon's Den*.

Let us deepen our appreciation of the priceless contribution that Lebanese Canadians make to our Canadian mosaic. To everyone back home, *Kulluna lil-watan, lil'ula lil-alam*.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Milton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I proudly grew up at the Chautauqua Co-op. It was a vibrant community built with federal funding from Pierre Elliott Trudeau's Liberal housing strategy back in the eighties.

We do not have enough public non-market housing in Canada, and that is a real problem, so I am proud of the government for investing over \$1.5 billion in non-market housing solutions going forward. However, this week I was disgusted to hear the Conservative leader refer to co-op housing as "Soviet-style" housing. My mom's family escaped Soviet Hungary and she has been building co-ops in this country for the last 30 years. To hear that from a guy who has never had a job outside of government and lives in government-subsidized housing was tremendously disturbing.

Stigmatizing low-income Canadians will not build housing, and neither will the Conservatives' risky, irresponsible plan. It is time that we end this stigmatization of people on the lower-income scale and get them the housing they need and deserve.

Statements by Members

CARBON TAX

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada was once a country where everyone was equal, but after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, it seems that some Canadians are more equal than others. Rather than axing the tax for all Canadians everywhere, the Prime Minister declared a carbon tax exemption for some Canadians in some places. Why? It is because his Atlantic caucus revolted with dwindling poll numbers.

The Minister of Rural Economic Development said if people want an exemption, they should vote Liberal. My father had a phrase for that, which I cannot say here. On Monday, the Liberal member for Edmonton Centre will have two choices: Will he side with the Prime Minister's ideological project and tell his constituents he does not care how much it will cost to heat their homes in frigid Edmonton this winter, or will the Liberals have a free vote for the common-sense Conservative motion to make all Canadians equal by axing the tax?

* * *

• (1110)

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this week I met with Lori Oschefski and representatives of Home Children Canada, an organization raising public awareness about an important time in our history when Canada's immigration laws facilitated the flow of orphaned or low-income children to be immigrated for the purpose of domestic servantry.

While many of these children lived hard lives in the U.K., enduring the industrial boom and world wars, their time in Canada was hardly easy. They worked on farms or in homes under very harsh conditions, and many of these young children were abused, mistreated and neglected.

So many of the stories of home children have been lost over time that many Canadians today are unaware of their family's connection to this issue. I know this because I am a descendant of one. My great-grandmother Elizabeth Boardman arrived alone at the very young age of 13.

I share this statement today to ensure the stories of British home children are never forgotten considering the harrowing fate many of them met while in Canada. I thank Lori and all members of Home Children Canada for their continued advocacy on this very important issue.

* * *

CARBON TAX

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, on the Liberal tax on home heating, inexplicably the member for Edmonton Centre suggested that his constituents should switch out their natural gas furnaces for expensive, higher-emitting heating oil systems.

Statements by Members

The member for Calgary Skyview has done precious little to get Calgaryans the same tax relief for home heating that his party has given to other parts of the country.

In debate here, the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River defended the Liberal tax on home heating, even as people in his community are struggling to afford food and housing under eight years of the NDP-Liberal coalition.

These Liberals need to get their act together.

On Monday, the Liberals have the opportunity to admit the Liberal carbon tax is not worth the cost and vote in favour of our common-sense Conservative motion to axe the tax on all forms of home heating. Winter is coming, and Canadians in all parts of the country are watching. The Liberals should do the right thing, stand up for their constituents and vote in favour of this motion.

* * *

CARBON TAX

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, Nova Scotia Liberal MPs got an earful this summer on how the carbon tax was making life more unaffordable in that people were having to choose between eating, heating and housing.

Last week, on the day of the massive rally for the leader of the Conservatives in Nova Scotia, the panicking Liberal Prime Minister, who is plummeting in the polls, made an emergency announcement. What was the big announcement? Was it to remove the cause of the problem of the cost of living crisis and axe the carbon tax? No. Was it to permanently take the carbon tax off home heating at least? No. It was to pause the tax on oil heating temporarily but quadruple it after the next election, and the Liberal minister from Newfoundland said the pause only applies to places that vote Liberal.

Atlantic Canadians want fairness, not divisive politics. I challenge the Atlantic Liberals to vote for the Conservative motion to remove the Prime Minister's costly carbon tax from all forms of home heating so that Canadians can keep the heat on.

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[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL INUIT DAY

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Madam Speaker, *ullaakut*. I rise today to mark International Inuit Day, which is celebrated annually on November 7.

Are members aware that the number of members of the Inuit community living in the national capital region represents the largest Inuit population in southern Canada?

The riding of Ottawa—Vanier has several organizations for the Inuit community, including Isaruit Inuit Arts; the Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families; the Nunavut Sivuniksavut education centre; and St. Margaret's Church, which welcomes members of the community on Sundays to gather together and practice their faith in Inuktitut.

[*English*]

This Sunday, I invite members to join me and the Ottawa Inuit community to celebrate International Inuit Day at the Annie Pootoogook Park in Sandy Hill from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. It will be an opportunity to experience the unique Inuit culture, heritage and traditions. Community feasts, Tuvan throat singing and drumming performances will be featured.

Nakurmiik.

* * *

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, now more than ever, we need true leadership from those elected to represent Canadians. We are seeing the devastating impacts of the climate crisis, and too many are struggling to make ends meet. However, the outdated first-past-the-post electoral system is not providing Canadians with the representation they need, one that truly matches our communities.

Canadians know change is necessary. We do not have time to wait. The Liberals ran off a promise of electoral reform, but instead that promise was broken time and again.

Motion No. 86 calls on the government to implement a national citizen's assembly on electoral reform. Ensuring democracy is strong is the responsibility of us all as elected officials, yet Canadians are watching in dismay as divisive politics and partisan games get in the way of real action.

Today, I call on all members of the House to listen to Canadians and support Motion No. 86.

* * *

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Parti Québécois just published the theoretical finances of an independent Quebec, “Un Québec libre de ses choix: finances d'un Québec indépendant”, a study that is thorough and fair.

Its publication pushed the National Assembly to unanimously adopt a motion that recognizes “the financial viability of an independent Quebec”. In other words, every elected member from every political party represented in Quebec City, including the West Island Liberals, agrees that Quebec as a country is financially viable.

The study shows that Quebec compares favourably to the G7 and OECD countries on every financial aspect. The study notes that, beyond financial viability, the economic advantage of being a country is the power to choose where to invest one's money and, as the leader of the Parti Québécois said, “putting an end to federal favouritism to the detriment of Quebec when it comes to direct investments in the economy”.

Oral Questions

Quebeckers have more than enough money for their country. The only question is: When?

* * *

[English]

ARRIVECAN

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, members will not believe what happened in a committee hearing yesterday about the Prime Minister's \$54-million arrive scam, which is now under RCMP investigation. Kristian Firth, one of the co-owners of GC Strategies, is a ghost contractor and key player in arrive scam who was ordered to appear at committee. When asked if a senior government official had a cottage, he said no. However, when pressed, Firth said that it is a chalet, not a cottage. People in rural Ontario do not speak the same language as the Liberal elite, but they do know when someone is lying.

When asked if he met with another senior government official in their house, Firth again said no, but documents prove that he did. He was asked if he met with government officials after hours in their homes. He said no, but when I pressed him, he admitted that he did in fact meet with some government officials in their homes. There were so many meetings between a shady contractor and government officials that he cannot even remember them.

We have ordered him back to committee with his bank records. Conservatives are going to get answers with respect to the Prime Minister's \$54-million arrive scam.

* * *

CENTRE FOR IMMIGRANT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, happy 55th anniversary to the Centre for Immigrant and Community Services. CICS was started by a few students back in 1968. Now it provides 20,000 people annually with newcomer settlement services, language training, employment support and community health and wellness care from eight locations in the GTA, including its head office in Scarborough—Agincourt.

Under the leadership of Alfred Lam, CICS is addressing food insecurity by using food from raised-bed gardens, vertical farming and an on-site greenhouse to feed local communities. I thank the staff, board members and volunteers who make CICS special.

I am proud to say that the federal government has supported CICS with a variety of funding, including a recent grant from the community services recovery fund. Congratulations to CICS and cheers to another 55 years.

temporary pause on carbon tax on home heating for some Canadians in some regions, but only if they heat with oil. How is that fair? In Sudbury, temperatures drop to minus 30 in the winter. Families are struggling to keep the heat on. Conservatives would take the carbon tax off of all home heating bills on all Canadians. On Monday the Liberal MP from Sudbury has a choice to vote for the Prime Minister's carbon tax or vote for our common-sense Conservative plan to take the tax off and keep the heat on for everyone in Sudbury.

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when it comes to fighting climate change, all I ever hear from the Conservative Party members is what they oppose. They oppose providing heat pumps to save on energy bills. They oppose a price on pollution that will put more money in the pockets of Canadians. The heat pump program is a national program. They oppose offshore renewable energy projects. If the Conservative Party actually cared about Canadians, it would present policies that actually support and not just cut government programs. Climate change is important. We are taking steps to deal with it, and that is what we are going to be doing.

● (1120)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister is creating two classes of Canadians: those who pay the carbon tax and those who do not. The temporary pause on home heating is for some Canadians but not for everyone in North Bay. The North Bay Food Bank reports it is running low on supplies. Winter is coming.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, that desperate Prime Minister announced a

After eight years of the Prime Minister, people are forced to choose between heating and eating. He is not worth the cost. On Monday, the Liberal MP from North Bay has a choice to vote for the Liberal carbon tax or vote with common-sense Conservatives to take the tax off and keep the heat on for everyone in North Bay.

Oral Questions

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are helping Canadians all over the country move away from expensive polluting fuels as quickly as possible to fight climate change. That is why we are making it even cheaper and easier to install heat pumps. We are expanding the program to save \$2,500 a year on home heating bills and put more money in people's pockets. This is particularly important for rural and remote communities. The Conservatives are doing all they can to end action on climate change, cut government programs and block good jobs on renewable projects.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, what happened to “a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian”? The Liberal member for Thunder Bay—Superior North has been in cabinet for eight years, yet energy prices have skyrocketed in her region. The Prime Minister's temporary pause on carbon tax applies to some Canadians in some regions, but not everyone in Thunder Bay. That is not fair. Conservatives would take the carbon tax off all home heating bills for all Canadians. On Monday the Liberal minister from northern Ontario has a choice to vote for the Liberal carbon tax or vote with common-sense Conservatives to take the tax off and keep the heat on for everyone in Thunder Bay.

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, every day Liberal MPs stand up against the Conservative Party, which routinely votes against vital supports for affordability, housing and health care. We have been there for Canadians across every region for the past eight years. Meanwhile the Conservative MPs are opposing every single measure we introduce to address affordability and climate change. This approach is reckless. Instead of their track record of divisive politics, they should be able to support good measures to help Canadians. This is a national program, despite the misinformation from the Conservative Party. Their approach is reckless and unacceptable.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that I am sure whoever posed the question wants to hear it, as opposed to hearing members interrupt.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of this Liberal government, the Prime Minister has once again invented a new way to divide Canadians: those who will benefit from a pause on the Liberal carbon tax and those who will not, which is 97% of Canadians.

This is proof that this tax is not worth the cost, and neither is this Prime Minister. It is also proof that this Liberal carbon tax is a fiscal measure, not an environmental one.

When will the Prime Minister understand? More importantly, when will he allow Liberal MPs to vote using common sense and abolish the Liberal carbon tax on home heating?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is no price on pollution

in Quebec. When it comes to fighting climate change, all we hear from the Conservatives is that they oppose it. They oppose a national program for heat pumps, which save on energy bills. They oppose a price on pollution and putting more money into the pockets of Canadians.

If the Conservative Party really cares about Canadians, they should come up with a plan, not just list the cuts they cannot wait to make. The Conservatives want to cut programs, not support Canadians or fight climate change.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, what we want to cut is the Liberal carbon tax.

Here is something everyone agrees on. Winters are cold in Canada. People have to heat their homes, so that costs a lot of money. That is why we need home heating in the winter. Everyone agrees on that. Where we disagree is that some people think it is a good idea to have a carbon tax on heating. We disagree. We will be voting on this on Monday. It sounds like the NDP will vote in favour of the motion. With all due respect to New Democrats, I will believe it when I see it. One other unknown is whether the Bloc Québécois will vote with the Liberals or with common sense.

When will we find out if the Prime Minister is going to allow his MPs to vote for common sense?

• (1125)

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, every day, Liberal members oppose the Conservative Party, which consistently votes against essential support measures for affordability, housing and health care.

Over the past eight years, we have supported Canadians in every region, while Conservative members have opposed all measures to fight poverty and climate change. Their approach is irresponsible. Instead of standing up for Canadians, they continue with their politics of division. We need to support positive measures to help Canadians across the country.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, yesterday, TVA announced the elimination of 547 jobs. This is a dark day for both the company and Quebec television. The Bloc Québécois stands in solidarity with the men and women who are being laid off today after giving of their time and talent to TVA for years.

Traditional television has been threatened for a long time. Everyone knows it, but nothing has been done. What more will it take for the government to wake up and realize that the future of our television is in jeopardy?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, our thoughts are with the more than 500 families who are affected by these job losses. We will be there for them, and we will also be there for the cultural industry and the media. The reality is that this is the reason why we need to continue our work on Bill C-11. That is why we introduced that bill. The reality is that the Conservatives always oppose measures to protect the cultural industry, the media and even Canadian content.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, yesterday, Pierre Karl Péladeau made it clear that the traditional television business model is broken. We have to go back to the drawing board. Television, radio and newspapers all face the same dilemma. Unless we make a fresh start and acknowledge the scope of the crisis facing our media industry, our access to information, to our creators and to our culture will come under threat. We have reached a crossroads.

My question is simple: What is the plan? What does the government intend to do to save our traditional television and print media?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my heart goes out to the journalists and workers at Quebecor and TVA, all the 500 employees who lost their jobs yesterday. This is not good news for Quebec. This decision was made by a private company. We always support journalism and information sharing.

That is why Bill C-11 is so important. We hope that the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives will vote with us to support Canadian and Quebec journalism.

[English]

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the Liberals continue to ignore the NDP's call to reform nutrition north. Last month, the minister made an announcement that did not make any reforms and only gave support to a tiny fraction of hunters and food-sharing initiatives. Continuing to subsidize for-profit companies is not reform.

When will the government stop equating a few thousands of dollars in supports to hunters with the millions in subsidies to for-profit corporations?

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, transparency, accountability and effectiveness of nutrition north are an absolute top priority. That is why we have established the nutrition north compliance audit review committee, to look at how the subsidy is rolled out. That is why we have expanded the nutrition north program to include the harvesters support grant, which helps traditional hunters hunt, harvest and fish. That is why we have created the community

Oral Questions

foods program that works with schools and non-profits to make sure people are getting the nutritious food they need.

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, Food Banks, like loaves and fishes in Nanaimo, are overwhelmed. Two million Canadians are turning to food banks. That is the highest number we have ever seen. Clearly, food prices are out of control and families are suffering. The Liberals promised food costs would be lower by now, but their out-of-touch plan of nicely asking CEOs to stabilize already high prices is not working.

Will the Liberals support the NDP's plan to bring down grocery costs by putting people before profits?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government has listened to Canadians, over months, who are saying that they are struggling to pay their bills. We recognize that it is challenging when we see that the grocery industry is highly consolidated with 80% market share, and food prices are way too high. That is why we called the CEOs of the largest grocery chains to Ottawa, and they have developed action plans. We are now seeing them implement those action plans, and we are monitoring closely to make sure that we can hold those grocery chains accountable. We are also updating our competition laws to increase competition in the marketplace, and I think that is essential. That is responsible action on behalf of our government.

● (1130)

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, last Thursday, the Prime Minister flip-flopped on his NDP-Liberal carbon tax scheme. He is giving a tax pause to select people for select types of home heating. After eight years, this Prime Minister is just not worth the cost. With winter just around the corner, every Canadian deserves tax relief on their home heating, including in places like Sault Ste. Marie.

On Monday's vote, can that member have the freedom to vote for our Conservative common-sense plan to take the tax off all forms of home heating for those in Sault Ste. Marie and for all Canadians?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, fighting climate change while helping families with their affordability challenges is a dual priority, and a serious plan needs to have both. Our government is standing up to take action on the environment in a way that directly helps Canadians.

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The recent changes are about home-heating oil, the dirtiest way to heat one's home. As a rural member of Parliament, a lot of my neighbours use home-heating oil and I want to help them get off that, and this plan does just that. There are more people who use home-heating oil in Ontario than there are in Nova Scotia. This is a pan-Canadian solution to getting off home-heating oil just like we are trying to get off coal.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister has created two classes of Canadians: those who pay carbon tax and those who do not. I am sure the member for Sault Ste. Marie has been hearing the same thing from his residents as I have from mine. People are struggling to afford to keep the heat on when the temperature goes down. They do not understand why they are being punished for using clean natural gas.

So, again, on Monday, will the member for Sault Ste. Marie vote with his Liberal government's costly, unfair tax on home heating or will he stand with the Conservative motion and take the tax off and keep the heat on for residents of Sault Ste. Marie and for all Canadians?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think it is important to point out, since the question came from a member from British Columbia, that British Columbia does not have a federal carbon tax, it uses its own, and it is actually a leading province on fighting climate change.

Conservatives keep claiming that pollution pricing is driving up inflation, and that is just false. This is about moving away from the dirtiest way to heat a home, the least healthy way to heat a home, and lowering emissions at the same time.

It would be great that if in this place we discussed not whether we should fight climate change but how we fight climate change. It would be great to hear from the Conservatives if they have a plan.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of this NDP-Liberal government, they finally admitted that their carbon tax is making it harder for Canadians to afford to heat their homes. The Liberals have said that only people who elect Liberals will get a break. To folks who cannot afford to eat, heat or house themselves, this Prime Minister just is not worth the cost.

Seven of eight members of Parliament in Ottawa are Liberals, but the common sense of the MP for Carleton will give them all a chance to take the tax off so Ottawans can keep the heat on. Will the Liberal members for Ottawa vote for our common-sense plan to take the carbon tax off home heating bills for everyone in Ottawa and eastern Ontario?

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, all of the Conservatives, including that member, ran on a platform that included a plan to price carbon. They also ran on a plan with a clean fuel standard almost identical to what was proposed by our government.

Now, that member has many constituents who use home-heating oil, and that is bad for our air quality, it raises emissions, it is the dirtiest and it is the most expensive way to heat one's home. We are providing free heat pumps for any Canadian whose province wants to work with our government to get them off home-heating oil.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to say that it is quite disrespectful when a member is standing up answering a question and others are having conversations across the way. Again, I want to remind members that if they do not want to take part in question period and be respectful, they should maybe step out and have those conversations together somewhere else.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, what is clear is that this is a tax plan and not an environmental plan.

After eight years of this NDP-Liberal government, the Liberals told Canadians that if they wanted a break from the carbon tax, they had to vote Liberal. Ottawa has seven Liberal MPs. Glengarry—Prescott—Russell has a Liberal MP and Kingston and the Islands has a Liberal MP, but with all of these Liberals, why do the residents of eastern Ontario and Ottawa not get a break from the carbon tax? Will any of these Liberal MPs, like the member for Kingston and the Islands, stand up right now and say that they will vote to scrap the tax on home heating?

• (1135)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes knows that he ran on a platform to price carbon in the last election. He promised his constituents that he cared about climate change.

As I said before, it would be great if we could spend some time in this House debating how we fight climate change, not if we fight climate change. Not only is this hypocritical of the Conservatives, but it also shows that they cannot be trusted. Their plans are risky; no, if they had a plan, it would be risky. It is irresponsible and reckless.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years, this government is making Quebecers poorer. The second carbon tax applies in Quebec and adds up to 20¢ per litre of gasoline. I am not the one saying that. It is the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Even that is not enough for the Bloc Québécois though. They want to drastically increase it. Voting for the Bloc Québécois is costly. Our Conservative motion is calling for the carbon tax to be cancelled across the board: everywhere and for everyone.

Will the Liberals support our common-sense motion to eliminate the carbon tax on all forms of heating and for all Canadians?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that is stretching the truth a bit and not putting it the right way. The member who just spoke was part of the Quebec National Assembly when it put a price on pollution. Quebec was a leader in the world when it did that.

Now, in the House, she is standing up to say no. She should talk to the opposition leader and tell him that what they are doing is risky. It does not help the environment, Quebecers, or Canadians.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, this government is panicking. The Prime Minister announced that he was pausing the carbon tax for the Atlantic provinces.

That is not enough. We are asking him to be fair to all Canadians, including Quebecers, because unlike what the Bloc Québécois is saying, the second carbon tax does apply in Quebec. Voting for the Bloc Québécois is costly because they want to drastically increase the carbon tax. We like to remind people of that.

Will the Prime Minister ignore the Bloc Québécois's requests and vote for our motion, which helps Quebecers?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague clearly did not understand my answer. When she was part of the government in the Quebec National Assembly, she supported carbon pricing in Quebec, which is now a leader in that area.

I do not understand how this member can rise in the House today and say that a price on pollution is not one of the best ways to fight climate change.

I strongly encourage her and the other Conservative members to talk to their leader to make sure that he understands that carbon pricing is important. It is important for Quebecers and for Canadians across the country.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, a full-blown atomic bomb has dropped on the world of Quebec television. TVA—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Some members are not being respectful in the House when it is not their turn to speak. I would remind them once again that, if they want to speak, it would be better if they did so elsewhere.

The hon. member for Drummond may begin his question again.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, a full-blown atomic bomb has dropped on the world of Quebec television. TVA, the

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most-watched television network in Quebec, will be laying off 547 people, a third of its workforce. We are losing extraordinary artisans of our culture. It is catastrophic.

It is catastrophic, but not surprising, unfortunately. If this is happening to TVA, all of our media are at risk. We have to rethink everything, if we want to save our media. A massive undertaking is needed.

Does the Minister of Canadian Heritage seriously think that Bills C-11 and C-18 are enough to save Quebec media?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this situation is another sad example of what the Online Streaming Act and the Online News Act are meant to address.

We understand that it is not easy to reform the media landscape to make it fair, competitive and respectful of all Canadian voices, but we have worked to ensure that markets across Canada, including the francophone market, are supported.

Our culture and our democracy depend on the measures that we are taking to support the information system that Canadians are looking for. That is what we are doing, and that is what the Conservatives have opposed every step of the way.

• (1140)

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, the hundreds of job losses at TVA will inevitably impact news in the regions. There will be fewer journalists, fewer editors, fewer studios, less airtime, and smaller teams with fewer resources. Add to that the fact that print and local media are in crisis, and we have the perfect recipe for our regions to fall off the radar.

Meanwhile, it is clear that the Online News Act is about to hit a wall.

What will the Minister of Canadian Heritage do to protect television, radio and newspaper news outside major urban centres?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again, our thoughts are with the workers and their families, particularly as the holiday season approaches.

This situation could have been avoided and all of those workers would still have jobs if the Conservatives had not spent the past few years opposing Bill C-11. Yes, Bill C-11 is enough. Yes, we are here with a bill that is in place to help save media jobs. We managed to get Bill C-11 passed, and it will provide solutions to protect thousands of well-paying jobs.

*Oral Questions**[English]***CARBON PRICING**

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Madam Speaker, the single mom in Calgary who might lose her home next month woke up to news that one part of the country gets relief from the NDP-Liberal carbon tax. She does not. After eight years, the Prime Minister finally admits he is not worth the cost. When will he realize that heating a home is not a luxury and end this carbon tax chaos for all Canadians?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with respect to the colleague, we set up a national program. We have heat pumps that will be available to all provinces. Right now, Nova Scotia, P.E.I. and Newfoundland and Labrador have signed up. Yesterday, the minister was talking with B.C. and Manitoba. Therefore, I encourage our Conservative members to talk to the Conservative premiers, to call us and to get involved, so that we can make sure that we provide free heat pumps to all Canadians and make sure we get off oil energy as quickly as possible. It is dirty, and it is expensive.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Madam Speaker, in Calgary, temperatures can drop to -40°C in the winter. A heat pump is not the solution for people in my community who are already struggling. On Monday, the Liberal member for Calgary Skyview has a choice. Will he vote for the Prime Minister's carbon tax, or, after eight years of sitting as an NDP Liberal, will he vote for our Conservative plan to axe the tax and keep the heat on?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are Canadians in every province and territory who use home heating oil to heat their homes. It is the most expensive way to heat one's home, and it is the dirtiest way to heat one's home. It is the most emissions-intensive way to heat a home, and it is also the least healthy way to heat a home.

Our Canada-wide program will get Canadians off home heating oil and using a heat pump. This is a program that is for every province and territory in the country. It is all about lowering our emissions. Former Liberal governments phased out coal. We are going to continue to phase out coal, and we are going to continue to work toward an emissions-free Canada.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years with the Prime Minister pretending that his way was the only way to reduce emissions, he announced a pause on the carbon tax on home heating, but only for some Canadians, only in some regions and not for all Canadians. Calgarians are already struggling to meet everyday expenses and keep warm during cold winter nights.

On Monday, the member for Calgary Skyview has a choice to make. Will he continue to support the Prime Minister's plan to divide Canadians by taxing regions differently, or will he be allowed to support our common-sense Conservative plan to take the tax off and keep the heat on for all Canadians?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Min-

ister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will accept that the member for Calgary Centre probably has zero constituents who use home heating oil. That is not true across the whole province. There are Albertans who use home heating oil and are not on propane or natural gas. The difference between propane and natural gas and home heating oil is that home heating oil is way more expensive, way more emissions-intensive and less healthy. We need to get Canadians off that product and using a heat pump.

We already know that the Conservative Party of Canada is here for the oil and gas sector. Let us see if the Conservatives are here to fight climate change and help Canadians get to using a heat pump.

• (1145)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, that is the first time I have heard somebody differentiate the warmth going into people's homes in the wintertime to keep them from freezing, but thanks. The NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost, and Canadians can see it. Canadians are struggling to make ends meet with the inflation compounded by the Prime Minister's policies.

We have put forward a common-sense Conservative motion to take the carbon tax off, so all Canadians can keep the heat on. Residents of Calgary Skyview want to know if they will be left out in the cold by their Liberal member. Will the government allow the backbenchers to vote for tax fairness for all Canadians?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pricing carbon is a market-based solution. I know the member for Calgary Centre is an economist, and he is a smart guy. We have spent some time in the House debating such issues, but a market-based instrument is not a controversial one.

We are talking about the most expensive, the dirtiest and the most emissions-intensive way to heat a home. We need to get Canadians off that product and using an efficient heat pump to heat their homes, lower our emissions and make sure we are driving toward a net-zero future for Canada.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, small businesses need a real extension to repay the CEBA loans that they used to survive the pandemic. The Liberals' solution is an 18-day extension. That is a cruel insult to businesses in my riding, which are facing a perfect storm of post-pandemic recovery, high inflation and, now, impacts from wildfires. The Penticton and Wine Country Chamber of Commerce is calling for action.

Oral Questions

Will the minister listen and give small businesses the one-year extension to the CEBA loan deadline that they need to survive?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that question. That is why we are offering additional flexibilities for small businesses to repay their CEBA loans. This includes a full one-year extension on the term loan repayment deadline, more flexibility on refinancing and more time to access loan forgiveness, which is both balanced and fiscally responsible.

We know times are tough, which is why our government is also cutting taxes for growing small businesses and lowering their credit card fees by up to a quarter. We will continue to listen to small businesses, and we will be there for all Canadians.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, the long and painful legacy of Canada's neglected Métis people has and continues to have horrific impacts on Métis children. Métis families in British Columbia deserve a child welfare system that centres them, their culture and their future. Today, it fails to do that. Métis children deserve to know that, when their families need support, they will get that support from those who understand the most: their families.

When will the government meet honourably with Métis Nation British Columbia to ensure that Métis children in the province do not continue to fall through the cracks?

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his passion in regard to advancing Métis interests across Canada. Our government is committed to working with Métis people. Our government is continuing to advocate and make sure that all indigenous children in Canada have the proper supports.

We are going to continue to work with first nations. We are going to continue to work with Inuit people. We are going to continue to work with Métis people. We will get it right. We are going to have to meet with the stakeholders to make sure we do so, but we are committed to doing so.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members of the natural resources committee have had their work brought to a standstill by a reckless and wasteful Conservative filibuster. The Conservatives are deliberately trying to stop workers from getting a seat at the table and trying to end Atlantic Canada's offshore renewable energy opportunities by opposing vital legislation.

Can the parliamentary secretary please share with the House the negative impacts that delaying these important bills, Bill C-49 and Bill C-50, will have on the lives of Canadian workers?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official

Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is appalling that the Conservatives would rather play political games and partisan games, and derail the work of Parliament, than actually roll up their sleeves and work. The sustainable jobs act and the Atlantic accord act are vital pieces of legislation for economic development.

We call on the Conservatives to listen to workers, to listen to labour leaders and to listen to Canadians who are asking them to get back to work and end this shameful, reckless filibuster.

* * *

● (1150)

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Calgary Skyview should be fighting to get the same tax relief for home heating for Calgarians that his party divisively gave to other parts of the country. After eight years of the Liberal government, his constituents, who are next door to mine, are struggling to buy food and afford mortgage payments. On Monday, he has a choice to make.

Will he check the mail, stand up for the people of Calgary and vote in favour of our common-sense Conservative motion to axe the tax on all forms of home heating?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are targeting home heating with oil across the country. There are 1.3 million households that have home heating oil. Oil heat is more expensive. It is two to four times more expensive compared with natural gas. Since 2022, with the war on Ukraine, oil heating has increased by nearly 75%. We have also increased the rural rebate. We have doubled it from 10% to 20%.

These are affordability measures. I would encourage the Conservative Party to support climate change, to support affordability measures to help constituents and support this program all across Canada.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do not think the member for Edmonton Centre got that particular memo, because earlier this week, the member, whose constituents overwhelmingly use natural gas to heat their homes, suggested that his constituents, in fact all Canadians, should switch out their cleaner gas furnaces for expensive, dirty heating oil systems. I say, "wow".

I have a better idea. Will the member for Edmonton Centre get with the climate plan and vote in favour of our common-sense motion to axe the tax on all forms of home heating and provide the same tax relief that his party is giving to other parts of Canada?

Oral Questions

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know the price of home heating oil has skyrocketed due to global commodity prices, and that is why we are stepping up to help with a national program.

The Conservative Party needs to do its homework. We are focused on ensuring that we are addressing the pressing needs of every part of the country. I would encourage the member of the Conservative Party to talk to the provincial premiers. We have Nova Scotia, P.E.I. and Newfoundland. We need other premiers to come to the plate to establish a home heat pump program and make it free for all Canadians all across—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, people in British Columbia are coming to realize that the NDP-Liberal carbon tax is exactly that, a tax plan that is causing inflation, higher interest rates and higher mortgage payments. After eight years of the NDP-Liberal government's mismanaging our economy, Canadians are starting to realize that the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

On Monday, will he allow his members to vote yes to the common-sense Conservative plan to take the tax off and keep the heat on?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, the member opposite knows that B.C. has its own system, so that is just not accurate.

It is not the only place we are seeing inaccuracies. Look at the health committee on the accusations of waste there that are completely unfounded. They are talking about an advance purchase agreement for vaccines. Details relating to this contract released to the Standing Committee of Public Accounts in the context of its study of the Auditor General's report on COVID-19 vaccines were already there. All parties were able to review the documents with the appropriate confidentiality provisions in place. Due to a confidentiality agreement with the contractor, specific details of the contract, including the vendor name and financial information, could not be discussed publicly. Of course, the Conservatives know that.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite is not even listening to what British Columbians are saying; 72% of people in my province say that the carbon tax is both ineffective and unfair. Even the NDP premier is now calling for carbon tax fairness.

The member for Cloverdale—Langley City has a choice to make on Monday. Will he vote for the Liberal plan of different taxation for different people, depending on where they live, or will he vote yes for the common-sense Conservative plan to take the tax off and to keep the heat on for all Canadians, including all members of Cloverdale—Langley City?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague knows that British Columbia, as a leader against climate change, has been working hard for almost two decades now on its own price on carbon. The plan we have put forward will benefit thousands and thousands of British Columbians who continue to

use home heating oil. They will be able to take advantage of what we have put in place.

In addition, as was already said, the Premier of British Columbia is going to work with us to ensure that those British Columbians who cannot have access to heat pumps will be—

• (1155)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but somehow the microphone went off, so I will allow the hon. member to finish up.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, simply put, what we have put in place will help the thousands of British Columbians who continue to use home heating oil. It will help them move to heat pumps. The Premier of British Columbia has announced that he will work with us.

That is how we will continue the fight against climate change: by working together, not by opposing every single measure like the Conservatives do.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Public Health Agency of Canada wasted \$150 million of taxpayers' money on a contract that failed. People must be wondering how so much money could possibly be wasted, and so are we. The government refuses to say anything about the contract, who it was with and for what services, why it did not work and, most importantly, why the government is not demanding a refund if it did not get any value for our money.

Quebeckers have a right to know who took off with \$150 million of public money without delivering any services, and why.

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I recall that early in the pandemic, times were very difficult across the country and around the world. At the time, we needed to ensure that all options were on the table. That is why we entered into agreements with several companies to create any kind of vaccine, because it was impossible to know at that time which vaccine would work for the population. That is why it was important to try all the options, and that is what we are talking about here today.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government cannot and will not get off that easy.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that he would expect the government to be in a position to provide at least some details, if they cannot or will not reveal the name of the company. He also says that he thinks the loss for one contract of \$150 million is clearly worth some explanation. He is right. Quebeckers deserve an explanation. The government cannot possibly be unable to provide more details.

What happened to the \$150 million?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, every detail was available, not just to the Auditor General, but to all the parties. The Bloc Québécois had the opportunity to see all the information. It was a process tied to COVID-19 and all the information was available.

At the beginning of the pandemic, it was so important to ensure that every option was available. It was a very reasonable measure. It is why Canada had one of the best responses in the world during the pandemic.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, what I hear back home about the carbon tax is that people work all week to buy food that costs too much. It is the same for gas. New Brunswick wants the carbon tax gone, just like it wants the Prime Minister gone, because he is not worth the cost.

On this side of the House, we understand the pressure the Liberal carbon tax has put on everyone. We will continue to fight to axe the tax.

Do the Atlantic MPs support the Prime Minister with his plan to quadruple the carbon tax to 61¢ after the next election?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, after a year in which Canadians have experienced record hurricanes and destruction from other natural disasters such as wild fires, the Conservatives still cannot say the words “climate change”. They cannot acknowledge that climate change is impacting our economy, our livelihoods and, in many cases, our very lives.

We need to step up and fight climate change. It is time we stopped debating whether we fight climate change and start debating how we fight climate change. I would urge the members opposite, particularly those from Atlantic Canada whose livelihoods are impacted by climate change every single season, to consider this.

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, that is more divide and conquer from the other side of the floor.

Last week, the minister from Long Range Mountains said that the punishing carbon tax exemption was not granted to Canadians across the country because they did not vote Liberal. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister said that, if re-elected, the NDP-Liberal government would quadruple the carbon tax on home heating, gas and

groceries to 61¢ a litre. After eight years, the Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost.

Will the Prime Minister direct the finance minister, in her call today with provincial ministers, to axe the carbon tax for good and for everyone?

• (1200)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our vision is to move Canadians who currently use home heating oil, which is the most carbon-intensive, the least healthy and the most expensive way to heat a home, onto an efficient heat pump. I know for a fact that there are a lot of constituents in New Brunswick who still use home heating oil, but the premier of New Brunswick still has not signed on to our heat pump program.

I am going to spend the next couple of weeks talking to Conservative provincial members to try to convince the premier of Ontario to sign on, so that my neighbours in Milton who use home heating oil could have access to a high-efficiency heat pump and get off that expensive, dirty way to heat their home.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Nova Scotia NDP-Liberals said that removing the carbon tax from home heating would save only pennies. Every tank of home heating oil has at least \$200 of carbon tax, apparently just pennies to Liberals. The Liberal carbon tax plan now is to increase home heating oil and carbon taxes to \$2,400 a year after the election. After eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Will the Liberal who supports the quadrupling of the carbon tax to 61¢ after the next election please stand up?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are not giving all of the information.

There is a rebate provided to Canadians. There is also what we have done: Last week, we doubled the rural top-up to 20%, which is important. If the member cared about jobs, he would have voted for Bill C-49. If the member cared about jobs, he would tell his party to stop filibustering at the natural resources committee so it could pass legislation on Bill C-49. They will not even have the legislation come to committee for debate, to bring in the premiers and to bring in witnesses to talk about it.

It is shameful and it is reckless, and Conservatives are not there for Canadians.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when Canadians needed support during the pandemic, community groups stepped up to provide crucial aid. Today, many of them are having a tough time generating revenue and coping with rising costs. They are also having a hard time attracting and retaining staff and volunteers.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development inform the House of the measures that are being taken to support these organizations?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Thanks to our community services recovery fund, nearly 5,500 organizations across the country have received funding. In the member's riding, Châteauguay—Lacolle, that means that groups like Centre 55 Plus Châteauguay are now better equipped to support seniors. It also means that organizations such as Cultivons Châteauguay can continue to feed their communities and that the Centre multifonctionnel Horizon can continue to serve people with disabilities.

These are local groups that are making a real difference, and I thank them.

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*[English]***CARBON PRICING**

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, last Thursday, the Prime Minister announced a temporary pause on the carbon tax on home heating for some Canadians but not all. It is cold in Calgary in the winter, and after eight years, Calgarians are struggling to afford to heat their homes. They know that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

On Monday, will the MP for Calgary Skyview be permitted to vote for our common-sense Conservative plan to take the tax off so Canadians can keep the heat on, or will his vote get lost in the mail?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to reinforce the fact that it is a Canada-wide program, and it is about getting Canadians off home heating oil, not in one region but in all regions, because heating a home with home heating oil is expensive, dirty, unhealthy and the most emissions-intensive way to heat a home. A home heat pump would provide relief economically and on the environmental side as we lower our emissions, phasing out coal and dirty fuels like home heating oil right across Canada.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government and the parliamentary secretary are simply dividing Canadians. The government continues to divide Canadians.

It gets even colder in Edmonton, and it is obvious the minister from Edmonton Centre has absolutely no pull with the government, because for years, he has failed to deliver and to represent Alberta in cabinet. Monday is his big chance.

Will the minister from Edmonton Centre finally stand up for Alberta and vote for our common-sense motion to take the tax off so his constituents in Edmonton can keep the heat on?

● (1205)

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me go back to the earlier question about northern Ontario. I am happy to say that, for the first time, the former leader of the Conservative Party, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, came to northern Ontario. He is there now. People in northern Ontario have voted strongly for strong Liberal MPs in Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay. I am really happy to see that now, for the first time, the Conservative Party is paying attention to northern Ontario. Its members voted against the critical mineral program, which is \$3 billion. They voted against FedNor. They voted against EV. They are voting against projects that are important to northern Ontario. I welcome the debate in the House—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, on Monday, members of the House will have the opportunity to vote for common sense and cancel the carbon tax on every type of home heating. After eight years, this government still does not understand that it has to give all Canadians a break.

Unfortunately, the Bloc Québécois does not understand that either. It wants to drastically increase the carbon tax. It is costly to vote for the Bloc Québécois.

Will the Prime Minister finally listen to reason, ignore his Bloc friends and vote in favour of our motion?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important. Unfortunately, I have to repeat, myself yet again: There is no federal carbon tax in Quebec, but members from Quebec can contribute to the fight against climate change. Fighting climate change while helping families make ends meet is a winning solution for everyone.

A price on pollution is the most effective and affordable approach for Canadians.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians know and have always believed that immigration is not only good for our economy but is also essential for the future of our communities. There is no doubt that newcomers have been the engine of growth in Scarborough. They start new businesses, take care of our families and contribute significant skills to the fabric of our society.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship please share our plan to bring newcomers to Canada and our vision on immigration in the years to come?

Mr. Paul Chiang (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to stand with the Minister of Immigration as he tabled Canada's immigration levels plan this week. I am delighted to share that Canada will continue to welcome skilled workers, reunite loved ones and stay true to humanitarian tradition.

We also have a sensible immigration plan that allows for stable growth to balance pressure on housing, infrastructure and essential services.

Immigration is important to Canada. We will continue to embrace newcomers and set them up for success.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, York Factory First Nation has called a state of emergency, calling for federal help to get essential goods to their community. In the face of climate change, York Factory is clear: it needs all-weather road access.

It cannot rely on ice roads. It is not alone. Other first nations like Wasagamack and communities on the east side need all-weather road access now. From getting health care to bringing in building materials to lowering the cost of living, an all-weather road is about survival.

Will the federal government work with York Factory, Wasagamack and the east side first nations to build all-weather road access now?

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we realize climate change is impacting indigenous communities in the north far more than in other parts of Canada. The Minister of Northern Affairs was with me at the United Nations when we heard this. We are looking for solutions. We are looking to work with stakeholders.

I look forward to talking with the member opposite and to figuring out how our government can provide more support. We know

Points of Order

climate change is real. We know that it is impacting the north and coastal communities more than other communities.

We will continue to fight climate change every step of the way.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, every 10 minutes, another child is killed in Gaza. UNICEF is now referring to Gaza as a “graveyard for thousands” of kids and “a living hell for everyone else.”

In just the past week, a refugee camp has been bombed, more hospitals are no longer functioning and over 900 Palestinian children have been killed in Gaza alone, in addition to 33 children killed in the West Bank and 29 in Israel.

How many children need to die before the government calls for a ceasefire?

• (1210)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his empathy and for his advocacy.

We unequivocally condemn the Hamas terrorist attack. The price of justice cannot be the continued suffering of all Palestinian civilians. What is unfolding in Gaza is a human tragedy.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has been to the region twice to oversee our efforts to help Canadians and also work to de-escalate. We continue to call for humanitarian law to be upheld and for humanitarian pauses. Canadians must be allowed to leave. More humanitarian aid needs to be delivered and all hostages must be released.

Canada is committed to a goal of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wanted to briefly follow up on my point of order yesterday that was quite extensive about question period, citing Speaker Bosley, Speaker Milliken and the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Routine Proceedings

All of it focused on the reality of question period needing to be a forum for government administration and government business. I raised the fact that previous Speakers have ruled very clearly on that, that members have to keep their questions on government administration. I would note that many of the questions today were a series of epithets, followed by wild speculation about one member or another member and how they may vote on something. This has nothing to do with government administration. I note, as I did yesterday, that if the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle were Speaker today, he would have cut off many of those questions.

I wanted to add that in question period today, many of the questions were completely out of order, just statements or speeches rather than questions on government administration, and add that as an appendix to my point of order yesterday. We, of course, await a timely reply from the Speaker on that important point of order.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is almost like there is an echo or we are getting an encore for people who did not have the opportunity to hear from the House leader of the NDP yesterday.

As the Speaker knows, all the questions that came from the official opposition today dealt with the question of the government's unaffordable carbon tax and its effect on people's ability to feed their families, heat their homes and house themselves. Our questions were about support for that and a motion that is before this House to take the tax off so Canadians can keep the heat on.

We encourage all members of the Liberal caucus to join us in this common-sense motion and vote for it on Monday.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have another supplemental to the decision that you will ultimately be ruling on.

I listened with great interest to the comments made by my colleague from my neighbouring riding. I would draw to your attention that what he is saying is not entirely true. I would encourage you, in your ruling on this, to review the question from the member for South Shore—St. Margarets because he specifically asked a question of a Liberal member. He did not ask a question of the government. He did not ask a question specifically about policy. He was asking a Liberal member.

I hope you will take this, along with all of the other information that you have received, to properly review it and provide a response to this House in due course.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): I would like to inform my colleagues that the issues that have been raised will be taken into account in the Speaker's ruling that will be handed down shortly.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1215)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 22 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliament Assembly respecting its participation in the 22nd Winter Meeting in Vienna, Austria, from February 23 to 24.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in relation to Bill S-202, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (Parliamentary Visual Artist Laureate).

[*English*]

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to support the bill back to the House, with amendments.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the third report of the Standing Committee on National Defence, presented on Monday, April 24, be concurred in.

It gives me pleasure to have the opportunity to debate concurrence on this important report tabled in the House of Commons.

The Standing Committee on National Defence undertook a lengthy and comprehensive study of Arctic security. Arctic security is Canadian national security and continental security, and it is under significant threat. We are in a rapidly evolving threat environment that the current policy of the government is not ready to face.

There are 26 recommendations, which are extremely important. I think it is important that we have an opportunity to get government members on the record to say whether they support this or not and to get a vote on these important recommendations.

We had a very co-operative committee. We heard from a variety of witnesses, about 46, if I recall. All parties were able to bring them to committee to hear a variety of perspectives on Arctic security and how best to undertake an improvement of our policy on Arctic security.

Routine Proceedings

The New Democratic Party dissented from the other parties and has a supplemental report. I imagine its members would look forward to having an opportunity to get on the record whether they utterly reject this committee report, given their dissension on some of the points they identified in their report.

These reports are important. They inform the government. It is important that members of Parliament have the opportunity to both debate them and have their views recorded for their constituents.

The recommendations, if adopted, would be transformative for our Arctic security. Therefore, I will bring to the attention of members a number of them.

The first recommendation states, “That the Government of Canada immediately begin the process to procure undersea surveillance capabilities for Canadian Arctic waters in order to detect and monitor the presence of foreign threats to our national security.” We heard expert testimony from the Canadian Armed Forces. We heard from academic experts from Canada and other allied countries. It was really quite sobering to hear about and learn from experts the shortcomings and gaps in domain awareness.

The Arctic region is an enormous land mass that represents three-quarters of Canada's coastline, so domain awareness is extremely important for the security of Canada, for continental security and for our sovereignty. The ability to detect and monitor the presence of foreign threats in this environment is challenging. The infrastructure we have presently is not up to it, and there are many areas of domain awareness that need immediate attention.

There are some more specific recommendations I am going to get to, but the committee is recommending that the Government of Canada immediately begin its process to procure undersea surveillance capabilities.

That takes us to the second recommendation, which is a little more specific. It states, “That the Government of Canada undertake on an urgent basis a procurement process to replace the Victoria-class submarines with new submarines that are under-ice capable for operations in our Arctic waters.”

At present, Canada has a fleet of four submarines, and there is a long and tragic history of the submarine procurement that occurred a generation ago. Of these four submarines, at most we can have one in the water at a time. In 2019, I believe, we went a whole year without a submarine sailing in Canadian waters. This is unacceptable in the current threat environment in which find ourselves given the sheer volume of our Arctic space and Arctic coastline.

● (1220)

However, even when these particular submarines are in the water, they cannot operate under ice for the length of time required to ensure subsurface domain awareness. These submarines cannot traverse the Northwest Passage. They cannot go from Atlantic to Pacific coasts. We desperately need superior capability for subsurface domain awareness, and the committee has recommended that this procurement be undertaken urgently.

I am not going to have time to go through all the recommendations, but one of the others is also quite specific and gets into subsurface detection and the ability, not necessarily vessel-borne, to

have the sonic capability to detect submarines in our waters. In fact, we had expert testimony that said presently there is no ability to have full domain awareness, either surface awareness or subsurface awareness. This needs to be done urgently.

Part of the emerging threat environment was brought forward and expressed quite forcefully by the chief of the defence staff, General Eyre, who said that we are in the most dangerous period and that the threat environment is greater now “than at any time since the Cold War”. He said perhaps there has been no greater threat environment facing Canada since the beginning of the Second World War. This is testimony from the chief of the defence staff, and that is the urgency of the crisis of preparedness we face now. It is greater than the heights of the Cold War according to our own chief of the defence staff, and this was echoed by other experts at our committee.

The third recommendation in this report says, “That the Government of Canada reconsider its longstanding policy with respect to the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defence program.” I will note that for this one, there was division on the committee, and members will see from the supplemental report by the New Democratic Party that it did not agree with this recommendation. Again, part of the reason it is important that we have concurrence debates and concurrence votes is so that members can go on the record and declare whether or not they support important recommendations that have been made to the government.

The report notes:

Witnesses raised concerns about Canada's lack of a missile defence system, suggesting that the country is currently vulnerable because of virtually no capability to intercept inbound missiles of any type. [Experts] referred to Canada's lack of participation in ballistic missile defence (BMD) and to the Government of Canada's February 2005 announcement [and decision] that Canada would not join the United States in a [ballistic missile] program.

This happened many years ago, and the threat environment is different today. We see what is happening throughout the world. We see the threat that Russia poses to its neighbouring countries and see its global ambition. It is clear that Russia considers Canada one of its targets, and we see it in a number of ways. We need to be prepared for the threat that Russia poses to our security and sovereignty in the Arctic.

● (1225)

We need look no further than the illegal and utterly shocking invasion of Ukraine to see the kind of threat that Russia poses to its peaceful neighbours. Canada is a peaceful neighbour in the Arctic region, but we need to adapt to the threat environment in which we find ourselves. The recommendation of this committee on revisiting the decision from 2005 is an important one that members of this House should have the opportunity to both debate and vote on. That was the third recommendation.

The fourth recommendation says:

Routine Proceedings

That the Government of Canada urgently address the personnel crisis in the Canadian Armed Forces by fast-tracking the recruitment of new members, aiming to complete the recruitment process in under six months to ensure we have the level of personnel needed to defend our Arctic now and into the future.

Perhaps the greatest crisis of the Canadian Armed Forces is personnel. There are 16,000 vacant positions that need to be filled just to get us up to the strength that our current planning is based on. However, it is even worse than that, because we heard testimony in subsequent studies, and have heard reports of this as well, that there are 10,000 undertrained and undeployable members within the CAF. We need 16,000 new recruits and need to get 10,000 existing recruits up to deployable readiness. That is without undertaking a series of these other recommendations that would involve new kit, new capability or new tasks that our forces can undertake. We have to do something about this. This affects every part of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I asked one of the generals if he could identify which position needs to be filled the most. We have been told that it is everything from cooks to pilots and electricians to tank crew members. There are tremendous opportunities in the Canadian Forces, and we need the forces itself to ensure that its processes can be tightened and that we can bring people in more quickly. There is frustration expressed by some people wishing to join the forces, who say that it takes too long to get through the process and into the door. I hope we can debate many of these recommendations.

The fifth recommendation says:

That the Government of Canada undertake a comprehensive survey of our infrastructure, including military, civilian, and corporate holdings, as well as natural resources, mining and mineral operations in our Arctic for the purpose forward planning for NORAD modernization, developing a strategy for critical infrastructure investments and protecting Canadian interests from malign foreign actors.

There is a lot in that recommendation. It is about our own awareness of what is in the Arctic. The private resources, natural resources and even government resources that exist are not properly inventoried in a way to best come up with an efficient and effective strategy for NORAD modernization.

We had quite strange testimony. I thought it was incredible to learn that in Inuvik, there is a privately owned hangar adjacent to the runway. I would like to have the opportunity to travel there and see what is on the ground.

● (1230)

We had testimony that it is not only the only hangar in which a CF-18, or perhaps a future F-35, could be hangared, but it is also the only building where refuelling aircraft can be hangared. The government let its lease with this private facility lapse, or did not renew its contract with the operator. The operator has a business to operate. He owns the building. Its purpose is to hangar large aircraft in a remote community.

Do members know who was interested in taking over this building? The owner had inquiries, as a business that had to make a decision on whether to sell the building or find a new tenant, from the United States government and from the People's Republic of China's Ottawa personnel, who came kicking tires, looking around at this military facility in Inuvik. That is quite staggering. The testimony from the vendor was very interesting, and it reveals just how thin resources on the ground are in remote communities and remote

places. We cannot park a CF-18 overnight when it is -45°C and just go out and start it in the morning. We are not talking about simply taking out a driver's licence, scraping off the windshield, getting in and going. These aircraft need to be hangared, and the personnel have to have a warm place to go inside during things like the refuelling process or any kind of maintenance. It is bitterly cold, life-threateningly cold, in this environment. The equipment needs to be stored properly, and the people who work there need to be able to stay warm.

It is things like this, figuring out what private assets exist that could be utilized in partnership with the Canadian Armed Forces or with the Canadian government. The urgency of NORAD modernization is something that is in the recommendation I just went through, and it is also in subsequent recommendations. There is, for example, the present satellite system. It is believed that the RADARSAT mission will be at end of life before we have any replacement for it, so we are looking at a gap, perhaps of years, without proper radar satellite capability in the Arctic if we do not act immediately. Therefore, this is an urgent recommendation. It goes to the broader NORAD modernization issue, where we absolutely must get our NORAD systems in partnership with the United States. This is tricky because its expenditure, as well as ours, is high, but the current government has placed parts of NORAD modernization in its budget. However, we have not seen any concrete steps to ensure that we will not have critical failures of our Arctic domain awareness. We lack and desperately need over-the-horizon radar. We need much to ensure our Arctic safety. It is all in the report, so the report is of critical importance for Canada's future Arctic security. I urge members of Parliament who have not read it to do so, to bring their voices to the debate on it and to register their support for it.

With respect to the NORAD modernization and the financing of these large procurements, the government is lapsing in much of its spending, so we are concerned that sometimes it even puts things in the budget, authorizes it through the Treasury Board and then does not even get the money out the door.

I look forward to the questions members will have about this important report.

● (1235)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, due to climate change, the north is opening up. Due to the warmongering of Russia, the threat to the Arctic is increasing.

Is the member aware of the technologies required for ISR: intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance? The technologies almost do not talk to each other. There is a need for the integration of the various technologies to handle ISR operations for the entire north, especially the Arctic region. Does the member have any comments on that?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, the report did talk about the changing environment in the Arctic and the pace of, for example, the navigability of portions of the Northwest Passage.

There is a lot in the report about domain awareness. I am not going to get into the specifics of the technology available as part of the report debate, but the report does talk, in great detail, about how the changing environment in the north affects our threat analysis and the evolution of our domain awareness needs in the Arctic.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

My colleague's speech is very interesting. Committee reports deserve to be debated, and those debates deserve to be heard. I am just wondering how many members are interested in the speech. I would ask the Chair to verify whether we have quorum today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): We will call for quorum.

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The House has quorum, by a generous margin.

The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

• (1240)

[English]

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague for bringing the motion forward.

I would argue that other than the affordability crisis that we are dealing with in this country right now, the government's priority always has to be the defence and security of its citizens. We obviously have a weakness when it comes to what we need to do to improve things in the Arctic.

I am looking forward to reading the whole report in great detail, considering my own past experience, in particular with recommendation 3 around ballistic missile defence. I would like to ask my colleague to expand, because it is more than just ballistic missile defence; we are dealing with hypersonic missiles and other threats. We are seeing this coming out of the Ukraine war as Ukraine fights against Russia's illegal invasion. We are seeing this with North Korea as well, as Russia, China and other nations are putting increased technology into North Korea as it develops these capabilities.

It is absolutely essential that Canada invests appropriately and reconsiders our policy around how we are going to have an all around air defence policy. I would like my hon. colleague to please expand on that.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his service to Canada, both when he served in the CAF and now as the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

The recommendation is an important one. There was a decision made in 2005. The debate seemed settled for quite some time. However, the threat environment has changed. It is incredibly important. We cannot remain stuck in an old threat environment as new ones emerge.

We heard testimony during the study. Major General Michael Wright stated that Russia sees North America as a single target. We are part of a continental defence system with the United States.

Routine Proceedings

There are concerns in the United States about Canada's contribution to NATO and ensuring that Canada does its part to participate in continental defence.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to serve with my colleague on the Standing Committee on National Defence, where something rather remarkable happens often, that is, members reach a consensus.

One thing that came up a lot during our study on the Arctic and other studies we have done, particularly during discussions of the spy balloons intercepted over Canada, is the fact that Canada's Arctic radar coverage is very poor. We heard in committee that less than half of the Arctic region is covered.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about the risks arising from the fact that we have no way of knowing exactly what is going on in an area as vast as the Arctic. As we know, climate change is expected to make the Arctic increasingly accessible to people from outside the country. It could well become an area of growing interest to countries other than Canada as well.

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, the member raised an excellent point that the balloon incursions occurred while we were in the midst of the study. They revealed quite clearly the limitations of domain awareness and the importance of domain awareness and being able to detect objects in our airspace, but there is also coastal defence and awareness. We heard at committee about rangers who do incredible work in the Arctic, but we cannot rely just on the hope of seeing a passing vessel that might be traversing our waters without a transponder and that would potentially be invisible to Canadians.

Yes, there are gaps in domain awareness. There are growing threats in the subsurface, on the surface and in the air, everywhere we look at it. We need better radar. We need over-the-horizon radar. We need to get the satellite system replaced or we need a path to replacing it before it fails, and we need to do it quickly.

• (1245)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the indigenous and northern affairs committee also had a study on the Canadian Rangers. I am glad to see that there were also discussions about the Canadian Rangers in the report. It is great that it heard a witness from my riding, Calvin Pedersen, who is a fourth-generation Canadian Ranger.

I could also see in the report that some of the same issues that were addressed at our committee were also addressed at the member's committee, including what the results of the lack of investments in the north have meant, not investing in health care, housing and other activities that would allow better engagement of northerners to participate in Arctic security.

We see that the Canadian Rangers do want to participate in Arctic security. I wonder whether the member agrees that recommendations 21 to 25 are very important recommendations in the report and that the government must take these recommendations and act on them as a priority.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I am glad the member brought up the rangers and her constituent who gave excellent testimony to the committee that was very informative for the recommendations we made.

I did not have time in my speech to get through all the recommendations, so I am glad I can now. I do not know how many I will hit, but let me start with recommendation 21: “That the Government of Canada immediately increase the equipment usage rate for Canadian Rangers.” This is a source of frustration for Canadian Rangers: the compensation for their own equipment that they need to use.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to see you in the Chair.

[English]

I have a question for the member opposite. While I can speak about defence spending all day and would love an opportunity to sit down and discuss this with him, we were scheduled to discuss Bill C-57, the trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine. I am at a loss to understand why we moved a concurrence motion again today to eliminate the opportunity to speak about this important piece of legislation.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I am not responsible for managing the government’s calendar, but I do have an ability to bring forward a concurrence debate at Routine Proceedings, which is the correct time to introduce it. We had debate on that bill earlier today. I am sure we will have another opportunity for debate on that bill as soon as the government calls it next.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a cop out. That is what we just finished witnessing from a Conservative member. He says the Conservatives are not responsible for setting the government agenda and that is the reason, so do not blame them. The Conservative Party is a destructive force on the floor of the House of Commons today. There is absolutely no doubt about their intentions to prevent legislation from passing.

The real shame of it all is to look at where and how they are using concurrence motions to play games with very important issues that Canadians want us to address. I say shame on each and every Conservative member who continues to want to filibuster on important pieces of legislation.

I am sharing my time with my colleague from Etobicoke Centre.

There are many opportunities for the member and the Conservative Party to have the debates they want on all these reports that they continue to bring up in order to prevent debate on government business. The member, in his speech, made reference to the mean Russians and what is happening in Ukraine. I agree, the illegal invasion by Russia into Ukraine is absolutely disgusting, and Canadians understand that and believe it also.

The President of Ukraine, President Zelenskyy, was in Ottawa back in September. A country is at war, the president comes to

Canada to sign a trade agreement and the Conservative Party of Canada is playing games. As opposed to seeing this legislation debated and passed, we see the type of kid’s play coming from the Conservative Party of Canada. That is the reality of it.

What does the member say? The most recent speaker said they were not the ones who set the government agenda, as if they have nothing to do with what is taking place inside the chamber. If we want to talk about being obstructionist and preventing legislation, we can say that we do not see any concurrence debates coming forward from the Conservative Party on opposition days. Where is the concern about the issues that they raise then? It is not there. It is absolutely bogus.

We were expecting to debate Bill C-57 today. We have been waiting for that debate to hopefully collapse and go to a standing committee. We get the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of Ukraine signing a trade agreement, and then we get the Conservative Party of Canada filibustering. It is filibustering free-trade legislation more than any other political entity in the House. Is that not ironic, to a certain degree?

At the end of the day, there are many different avenues. We are all concerned about Arctic sovereignty. It is an important issue. If it were really as important as the Conservatives say it is, so much so that they had to prevent the debate on free trade between Canada and Ukraine, why did they not bring it up as an opposition day? Why did they not introduce it as an emergency debate or request that the government have a take-note debate on it? Why did they not ask one question on it during question period today? However, they still felt it was so important to bring up.

Let me give a rationale: We get the member for Cumberland—Colchester standing in his place and saying that the Ukraine trade debate, the legislation to enact the agreement, is woke and that Canada is taking advantage of Ukraine. That is what one member of the Conservative Party has said. Do they not know any shame?

They cannot have it both ways. They cannot say they are strong allies and support solidarity for Ukraine, then behave as we have witnessed. This is not the first concurrence report to prevent this legislation, Bill C-57, from being debated and passed. They even get members who will stand up and talk about sympathy.

Earlier this morning, one member said the free trade agreement is not only good for the economy, but it is also all about hope. Yes, it is good for the economy. There is no doubt about that. Canada and Ukraine will benefit economically, in many different ways, because of the legislation.

● (1250)

It is more than that. We are the first country to work with Ukraine during a war period, to actually go ahead and get a trade agreement. We can think of the morale boost of that and the statement it makes, worldwide.

Routine Proceedings

As the world unites in solidarity to support Ukraine, what does the Conservative Party of Canada do? It filibusters important legislation that is going to make a powerful statement to the world in regard to the relationship between Canada and Ukraine and in recognizing Ukraine as an independent state, including Crimea. This is such an important thing, and Conservatives want to play games.

We have seen them move other motions for concurrence on other important pieces of legislation. It is not just the trade agreement.

However, I think the trade agreement amplifies the degree to which the Conservative Party has one intention. Its whole political scheme is bumper sticker politics, trying to make things as simple as possible. They believe that Canadians are stupid and that they are going to believe everything that the Conservatives say on a bumper sticker.

That is the type of politics we are witnessing from the Conservative Party today. It is reckless. It is risky, and they are not going to fool Canadians at the end of the day.

We are concerned about the Arctic. We appreciate the fine work that all our standing committees put in. However, if the member was being honest in talking about the report, why did he not talk about the billions of dollars the implementation of this report is going to cost?

He referred to submarines. Does the member know how much a submarine costs? He is saying submarines, plural. He is talking about several submarines, with a bill totalling \$10 billion. That probably would not even cover the cost.

The Conservative Party talks about how, if they are going to spend a tax dollar, it is going to cut and find a place for it. For these multi-billions of dollars that it is prepared to commit, based on this report, where are Conservatives going to find those cuts that they talk about? Are they going to go after our senior programs or child care? Where are they going to come from?

There is a hidden agenda across the way, and it will be unveiled. More and more Canadians are going to find that there is absolutely no substance to the Conservative Party that goes beyond a bumper sticker. That is what we are going to find out.

The best example of that is in regard to the Conservatives' whole idea of the environment. They have no clue whatsoever about what is in the best interest of the environment. They flip-flop like a fish on a dock, all over the place. They do not know where to land on the issue. I guess they cannot get their climate policy on a bumper sticker, and that is the problem.

We look to the Conservative Party as an opposition party that is supposed to be recognizing that Canadians, in the last election, voted for a minority situation. However, part of having a minority government is that it also puts some pressure on the opposition party to behave in a somewhat responsible fashion.

Its actions, in virtually every way, are to prevent legislation from passing. As we can see, I really believe that there are members that are actually thinking, in the Conservative Party, of voting against this legislation.

It is not as though we are asking for Bill C-57, the Ukraine-Canada trade deal, to pass third reading in 24 hours. However, I will say that Christmas is going to come quickly. We have to get it to the Senate. It has to go through the standing committee. It has to come back to the House.

I think it is fair to request and see that important legislation of this nature should be able to pass through the whole system, royal assent and all, before Christmas. I would like to see the Conservatives stand up and agree with that point.

● (1255)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the member chose to impugn my motives in doing my job as a parliamentarian and bringing an important committee report to the floor where it can be voted on by members, I will point out a couple of things. Canada's support for Ukraine, the Conservatives' support for Ukraine and the support of all Canadians for Ukraine depends on our ability to improve the capabilities of our military, including in the Arctic. This is very relevant to the situation in Ukraine and our ability to support Ukraine.

The member thinks that this is just procedural. He is the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader. Is he not aware that there is a precommittee study already under way? There is nothing in this concurrence debate that is holding up the study of this bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member does not know what he is talking about. By bringing in the concurrence motion, doing what he has been asked to do by the leadership of the Conservative Party, he has prevented the debate on Bill C-57, the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. That is what he has done. By doing that, the Conservative Party continues to filibuster what is a very important piece of legislation. I do not know if the member realizes that. Based on the question, I do not think he does.

It is great that the standing committee is continuing a discussion and having dialogue and so forth. That is what should be happening at the standing committee. If the member wants the debate to take place on the floor of the House, he can put it forward in the form of an opposition day motion. There are all sorts of other alternatives.

Why play games? Why politicize Bill C-57, the Canada-Ukraine deal? Why not allow that legislation to pass?

● (1300)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North because he always finds a way to wake up the House, even on a Friday afternoon. We appreciate that very much.

I heard him ask the Conservatives where they would get the money if they wanted to increase defence spending. The consensus in committee is that defence spending cannot be cut. We have a lot of questions about how the \$900 million in cuts that were announced will be made.

Routine Proceedings

Setting that aside, I might have a recommendation or suggestion for the hon. member regarding where the government could make cuts. Why not simply eliminate subsidies to oil companies, which are already making \$200 billion a year in profits and yet continue to receive money? I would like him to comment on this proposal.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, some of the oil subsidies the member referred to deal with orphan wells. There are a lot of subsidies, and I understand that if they are not completely gone today from the federal government, they are going to be. We are phasing them out. However, I believe they are gone.

With regard to military spending, ironically, even though the member talks about spending billions and billions of dollars, it was Stephen Harper who had the lowest number. I believe it was just under 1% of GDP around 2013. I might off be off by a year or two, but it is interesting that this government brought it closer to 2% and the Stephen Harper government brought it to just under the 1% margin.

We do not need to be given lessons from a Conservative Party that depleted it and did nothing to build a stronger, healthier Canadian Forces while the Conservatives were in government.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will agree with my colleague that it is hard not to see a pattern this week, as on both Wednesday and Friday, Bill C-57 was scheduled. It is made all the more odd by the fact that most people in Canada who claim Ukrainian descent live in an area represented by Conservative MPs. I hope those Conservative MPs are able to explain themselves to their constituents.

I want to ask my hon. colleague a question about this report. We know that the Arctic Ocean is warming at a rate that is seven times the global average. We know that the loss of permafrost and the opening of sea lanes present an existential threat to our military capabilities and Arctic communities there. We were disappointed in not seeing any emphasis in the report on that particular point.

I am wondering if my colleague can comment on the need to focus more attention on how a warming climate is affecting our capabilities there.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, one only needs to look at the policy we just recently made. Across Canada, no matter where one lives, we are trying to encourage people to move away from oil and use natural gas or heat pumps, which are healthier for our environment. There are different ways to seriously look at the environment.

I think the report is lacking. I went through the 20-some recommendations in the report—

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): Unfortunately, I have to interrupt the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

[*English*]

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we need to start by clarifying what we are debating and why we are debating it.

For folks watching at home, we should be debating the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement legislation, which is important to Canada and to Ukraine. It is important to help Ukraine win the war, and it is a priority for President Zelenskyy for a number of reasons, which I will get into. However, instead of debating that, moving it forward and getting it to a vote so that it can get passed to the Senate and passed to become law, we are debating a motion for concurrence on a committee report. So, we are redebating a committee report that has already been debated at the defence committee where MPs from all parties have already had a chance to express their points of view on the matter.

Why have the Conservatives brought this forward? They claim they are doing this because they care about Arctic security.

I will start by saying that Arctic security is an important issue. I sat on the defence committee, I worked on the issue of Arctic security and I spent a lot of time with my colleagues on this matter. I think that there are a lot of things that are important that Canada needs to do to make sure that we protect our security. However, if we look at what our government has done in terms of our investments in a number of things, including equipment in the navy and Arctic presence, we have done a tremendous amount to strengthen our Arctic security over the last several years.

However, I want to get back to why we are here. Let us not pretend that we are debating this motion because Conservatives suddenly care about Arctic security, which is something they almost never raise in this House, I do not think I have heard them raise it over the past year at all, and they rarely raise it in committee. Let us not pretend that Conservatives care about Arctic security, because if they cared about Arctic security, when they were in government, they would have invested in Arctic security. However, when in government, the Harper government reduced spending on defence to below 1% of GDP.

Our government has not only increased the amount of spending on defence in dollar terms but actually as a percentage of GDP. So, while our GDP has grown, we significantly invested in our defence capabilities. However, the Conservatives do not care about Arctic security, because they did not do anything about it when they were in office. They do not raise it in the House, they do not raise it in committees, but suddenly they raise it when we are about to debate the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement.

Routine Proceedings

For those who care about Arctic security, and I think many people here in this House do, the best way to defend our Arctic security is to help Ukraine win the war, because the greatest threat to our Arctic security is Russia. If members ever thought about who our neighbour to the north is, it is Russia. What is the country that has previously tried to make claims to Canadian territory in the Arctic? It is Russia. If Ukraine were to lose the war against Russia, then Russia would know that the international community, democracies around the world, the western world, does not have the desire or the resolve to defend a sovereign, democratic ally. What does that mean for the rest of Ukraine? What does that mean for Poland, the Baltics and other NATO countries, which Putin has said that he believes should belong to Russia? What does that say about the Arctic territory in Canada, which Putin has said belongs to Russia? It means all of that is under much greater threat.

If the Conservatives really care about Arctic security, then let us stop the filibuster tactics, let us stop bringing forward concurrence motions on things we have already debated in committee and voted on, things that the government is already working on. Let us move the free trade agreement forward so it can benefit Canadian businesses and workers and Ukrainian businesses and workers and, most importantly, actually help Ukraine win the war and rebuild. However, the Conservatives do not want to do that.

This is the second time that I am sitting in this House over the past week when, instead of debating this free trade agreement, we have been debating concurrence motions. This is basically a filibuster. Why are Conservatives doing this?

As I said yesterday when I rose in the House during question period, we have worked very hard. I chair the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group and I work with MPs of all parties. I have worked very hard, members of this House have worked very hard, to make the unwavering support for Ukraine a non-partisan issue.

• (1305)

Members can look at my statements from the beginning of the further invasion and they will see that. They will see the effort that I have made and others have made to make this a non-partisan issue. We have worked so hard.

However, the reality is that the Conservative leader and some Conservative MPs clearly do not support Ukraine. I do not want to have to be saying that in this House. I want to be able to say that support for Ukraine is unanimous, that everybody is pulling in the same direction and that we are all together on this, but the facts show otherwise.

Let me present the facts that I am talking about. First of all, the fact that we are spending hours upon hours debating concurrence motions on things that the Conservatives actually do not really care about and do not ever treat as priorities, instead of debating the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement, shows that the Conservatives do not consider the free trade agreement a priority and they want to push it back and delay it. That is obvious. Anybody observing this can see that is what has happened. The Conservatives are delaying the debate, therefore delaying the vote, therefore delaying passage and therefore delaying the benefits that come from this free trade agreement for both Canada and Ukraine.

Let us remember that this free trade agreement is not just symbolic. It is meaningfully important for our economy and for the Ukrainian economy, but it is also meaningfully important for Ukraine. Ukraine's economy after the further invasion by Russia declined by 50%. Let us just think about that for a second. When our economy moves by half a percent or by a percentage point, that is meaningful. Canadians feel that, we talk about that and we try to address that. It is 50%, so President Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian government are trying their best to do everything they can to strengthen Ukraine's economy, and trade with Canada is part of that. This free trade agreement and its passage are also critical to help Ukraine negotiate this type of agreement with other countries around the world and therefore further help strengthen its economy.

The free trade agreement is also important because it facilitates not just the trade of goods or even the trade of services, but foreign investment in Ukraine, which is fundamental not just to rebuilding the economy but to rebuilding Ukraine. Ukraine is going to need, by some estimates, well over \$1 trillion in foreign investment to rebuild. That includes schools, hospitals and roads and this free trade agreement would facilitate that. When President Zelenskyy was in Canada visiting, one of the things he made time for, and a priority for, was meeting with people who are interested in investing in Ukraine, because he is that concerned about it. This agreement is not just symbolically important. It is substantively important to helping Ukraine and Ukrainians survive and fund this war and rebuild their country and win this war. As the Conservatives get in the way of this free trade agreement, they get in the way of Ukraine winning the war. We have to be clear about that.

The second thing is that the Conservatives are not just delaying the agreement; they are actually criticizing it. I do not think that they actually support the free trade agreement. We have had members getting up in this House during the limited debate that we have had with respect to the free trade agreement and they have had the audacity to call this free trade agreement “woke”. One of the members suggested that Canada, in negotiating this agreement, has actually taken advantage of Ukraine. How preposterous is the suggestion that somehow, by doing something that helps Ukraine win the war and rebuild its economy, it is bad for Ukraine? That argument makes no sense at all. Let us remember whom they are suggesting we are taking advantage of. They are suggesting we are taking advantage of President Zelenskyy. This is the man whose government and whose people have stood up to the second-largest military in the world, and we have seen the success they have had on the battlefield. These are the people who are not giving up and will fight until every inch of their territory is back and somehow we are taking advantage of them by helping them build their economy.

Last is the thing that is most concerning. As I said yesterday in question period, it is the Conservative leader's lack of support for Ukraine. The Conservative leader, since becoming leader, has not once advocated for more military support, for more financial support or for more humanitarian support for Ukraine. He has not once called out Russia's acts of genocide against the Ukrainian people.

Points of Order

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Yvan Baker: Madam Speaker, he has not once done that. Even the Conservative members are surprised.

• (1310)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I want to remind members that if it is not time for questions and comments and they do not have the floor, they need to wait. I would ask them to please hold on to their thoughts until then.

Mr. Michael Barrett: On a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but the hon. member is not in his chair so I am not going to recognize him.

The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Madam Speaker, the Conservative leader's silence in his lack of support for Ukraine speaks volumes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would inquire of the Chair if it is incumbent upon all members when they are giving speeches in this House to be truthful. Is that still the case?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): A point of debate is what that hon. member is doing, and again I would appreciate if members did not run into the chamber and yell.

The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

• (1315)

Mr. Yvan Baker: Madam Speaker, it is interesting to hear Conservatives talking about telling the truth when they do exactly the opposite every day in this House, especially in question period and especially their leader. Last, I will say that—

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We have been told many times by Chair occupants that we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly. The member there just accused members of the official opposition of lying. That is unacceptable in this place. The member should withdraw and apologize for his comments. They are unacceptable.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am just going to double-check on something. I did not see that the hon. member was talking about a specific member.

I do want to remind members to be very careful with the words they use and how they direct those words. This happens on both sides of the House. I am going to review the Hansard and see how that wording was actually used, because I am not quite sure. I will come back to the House if need be.

The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Madam Speaker, once again it is the height of hypocrisy for the member to get up, suggest that I am lying and then to raise a point of order to suggest that I should not be challenging him and his leader for not telling the truth.

However, I will finalize my remarks on this issue we are debating in the House by saying that the Conservative Party of Canada clearly does not support the people of Ukraine. Their leader is silent on support for Ukraine. He has not called out Russia's acts of geno-

cide against Ukraine since he has become leader and he never advocates for additional assistance for Ukraine. Now, his party members are introducing motions for us to debate, which have already been debated in committee, to delay the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement.

It is time for Conservatives to stand up and start supporting the people of Ukraine. I am going to continue doing that. This government is going to continue doing that until they win.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members, because when I allowed the hon. member to restart again he specifically mentioned another member not telling the truth, that type of wording actually causes disorder in the House. I would just ask members to please be very careful on how they use their words. They should not be directing specific adjectives to individual members.

I would just ask members to please be respectful within their debates here in the House.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am tabling the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1710, 1712, 1715 to 1719, 1724, 1725, 1711, 1713, 1714 and 1720 to 1723.

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NATIONAL SECURITY REVIEW OF INVESTMENTS MODERNIZATION ACT

BILL C-34—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the report stage and third reading stage of Bill C-34, an act to amend the Investment Canada Act.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the respective stages of the said bill.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

PARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to come back to the discussion that the Chair had on previous points of order and the things we can or cannot say in the House, such as implying that a colleague is not telling the truth or that a party lacks courage.

I would sincerely appreciate some clarification. When it is proven that colleagues are saying things that are not true and that are known to be false, am I to understand that, as members of Parliament, who are meant to hold the government to account for its actions and to denounce comments made by another opposition party, we have no way of doing so in the House, since we are not allowed to say that what a colleague is saying is false?

Routine Proceedings

I would sincerely like some clarification on this, because I get the impression that, for some time now, we have been somewhat limited in our scope of action and our flexibility, particularly in our choice of words.

• (1320)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, my understanding is that it is entirely appropriate to say that what someone is saying is false. What is not permitted is to call somebody a liar in the House.

Madam Speaker, if you are not prepared to rule on this right now, perhaps you should reflect on that and come back at a later time. The comments the member from the Bloc brought up are extremely germane to this, and I would hate to see us rush into making a ruling right now without proper reflection because it is very important.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Your points are all well taken. We will have more discussions, do a little more research and come back to the House on this.

I would hope that members, when giving their speeches and participating in debate, are making sure that the information they are using is correct. It does not bode well for either side when that is not the case. I would also ask members to please be very judicial.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATIONAL DEFENCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I find it ironic that the member talks about unity, and then goes on to give a speech basically attacking Conservatives and attacking the Conservative Leader.

First of all, the member should take a look at something published on February 20, 2022, by the Conservative leader, where he condemns the invasion and calls for more support. To say that the Conservative leader has not done that is absolutely the definition of misinformation. There is so much misinformation in what the member said. First, there is an existing free trade agreement right now, one that the Conservatives negotiated.

To talk about the issue before us, this piece of legislation is at pre-study at committee on Tuesday. The pre-study will turn into the study so that the bill can be voted on and brought back to the House. To suggest that this is somehow delaying that shows the member's absolute incompetence as a member to understand what is happening in the House.

He should stop using those lines. In fact, he should apologize, and apologize to the Conservative leader.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, unity is what I am asking for. Unity around support for Ukraine is what I am asking for, and we are not getting it from the Conservative Party of Canada. We are certainly not getting it from the Leader of the Conservative Party.

What I said about the Leader of the Conservative Party's record on Ukraine is absolutely true. Did the member just get up to say that the last time the Leader of the Conservative Party said anything about Ukraine that includes any degree of support was October 2022? Has he not realized that there is a genocide happening in Ukraine every day, that people are dying every day, and that Canada's security, including our Arctic security, is under threat every day?

Maybe the Leader of the Opposition should wake up to that and start speaking out. He has never advocated for more support for Ukraine since becoming leader. He has never called out the act of genocide. It is about time he did.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am thoroughly disgusted by this debate. I know that Nunavummiut are as well.

Inuit from northern Quebec were forcefully lied to. They were made to go from northern Quebec all the way up to the high Arctic in Grise Fiord and Resolute. They are called the high Arctic exiles. This was done in the name of Arctic sovereignty and Arctic security.

This report is very important to us. For the debate to focus on other matters outside of this is very disconcerting.

What the Arctic is experiencing right now, in addition to threats from Russia and outsiders, is climate change. I would like to ask the member if he agrees with a statement by chief of the defence staff, General Wayne Eyre, who has said "making that infrastructure durable and sustainable into the future with the changing circumstances related to climate change" is important. Does the member agree that we also need to ensure that the Arctic is able to deal with the existential threat they are experiencing because of climate change?

• (1325)

Mr. Yvan Baker: Madam Speaker, absolutely, I think we do. That is why so many of us in the House, and so many of us on the government side as well, have worked with some colleagues in the NDP and the Bloc to make sure we advance policies that continue the fight against climate change, which is so important to the folks in the Arctic, and around the world, frankly.

I would like to clarify for the member's understanding that Arctic security is incredibly important and the people of the Arctic are, of course, incredibly important. I have worked on this as a member of the defence committee.

My sole concern about this is that the Conservatives are bringing this forward in a way that is designed to undermine measures we are taking to protect Arctic security, undermining our ability to support the war that is happening right now, which ultimately threatens all of our security.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, before I begin my remarks on the report of the Standing Committee on National Defence concerning the Arctic, I would like to briefly touch on the other debate that was supposed to take place today, on Bill C-57, which implements a free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine.

In the questions I asked earlier today, particularly to the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill, I mentioned that, unfortunately, even if we do take time to debate bills meant to implement international trade agreements, the role of MPs is, after all, quite limited. We can basically only agree or disagree with the content of the treaties, since they are negotiated and drafted by the executive branch. The role of MPs—who represent the people and are supposed to play the most democratic role of all—is rather limited. It is so limited that, as I mentioned earlier, when an interim agreement between Canada and the United Kingdom was being negotiated after Brexit, the members of the Standing Committee on International Trade did not even have the text of the treaty in front of them when they were supposed to be debating it. This shows just how limited the role of Canadian members of Parliament is in drafting, negotiating and improving international treaties.

Even though we have clearly not had much time to debate Bill C-57, from what I understand we will have even less given the announcement that was just made about a time allocation. I still have questions about what MPs are even able to do with the time they are allocated for debates on international agreements.

That said, I want to make a few comments on the Arctic committee's report. First, I would say that the content of this report, no matter what other debate might be overshadowed by the Arctic debate, is extremely important and is bound to change over time. Since this report was first debated, there have been articles in the media that have made me rather pessimistic about the importance the government places on monitoring in the north. During questions and comments today, there was a lot of talk about climate change in the north. We know that traffic in the north has increased by approximately 44% between 2013 and 2019. That is the result of melting glaciers and the fact that the Northwest Passage is opening up even more.

In the meantime, the government is decreasing its investments in environmental monitoring and follow up. This summer, we found out that some weather stations are closing. Since 2017, some of these stations have no longer even been able to send information on what is happening weather-wise in the north. That is problematic in terms of ship navigation and knowledge of the area. It even affects the statistics collected by Environment Canada since the data that is collected in the north is no longer being taken into account.

In the meantime, we see that Russia is investing heavily in weather stations. In the past year, Russia installed 42 new weather stations to learn more about the land because it is interested in that land. There is a major gap between these two Arctic nations, Canada and Russia, when it comes to their interest in what is going on with the climate. This is going to be a critical issue in the next few years.

Madam Speaker, I see that you are about to cut me off.

• (1330)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings on the motion. Accordingly, the debate on the motion will be rescheduled for another sitting.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

POLISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.) moved:

That:

(a) the House recognize the significant contributions Polish Canadians have made to Canadian society, economy, politics and culture, and the importance of educating Canadians of all ages about the core values that Polish Canadians have imparted to the strength and diversity of Canada; and

(b) in the opinion of the House, the government should reflect upon Polish heritage for future generations and designate May 3 of every year as Polish Constitution Day, and the month of May, every year, as Polish Heritage Month.

He said: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Etobicoke Centre, for seconding this motion. I know that he has a large Polish Canadian community in his riding.

Witam. Dziękuję.

I stand before everyone today with a heart full of pride and gratitude, as we embark on a significant journey together. Today, I propose a celebration of heritage, a recognition of history and a dedication to unity. I stand and ask for everyone's support to declare May to be Polish heritage month and to designate May 3 as Polish constitution day in our great nation of Canada.

Motion No. 75 transcends mere acknowledgement of the historical bonds connecting Canada and Poland. It also serves as a heartfelt tribute to the flourishing Polish Canadian community, which is celebrated for its substantial contributions to our nation.

The historical roots of Polish immigration to Canada reach back to as early as 1752, when the first documented Polish immigrant set foot on Canadian soil. Today, the Polish Canadian community numbers over a million strong. Polish migration to Canada has a long history, with the earliest waves of immigrants arriving in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Many Polish immigrants sought better economic opportunities and escaped political unrest in their homeland. The subsequent waves of migrations occurred after World War II and under the Communist regime in Poland. These historical events shaped the size and composition of the Polish Canadian community.

The Canadian Polish community is widespread across Canada, with significant concentrations in cities such as my hometown of Mississauga, Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Windsor, Calgary and Edmonton, just to name a few.

According to the most recent census data, in 2021, there were approximately 1.1 million people of Polish descent in Canada, making up close to 3% of the total population. These statistics provide some insights into the distribution and growth of the Polish community within the country. Their valour, unwavering determination and tireless efforts spanning 271 years stand as a testament to their unwavering commitment to enriching our nation with the essence of Polish culture, a robust work ethic, deep faith and unparalleled resilience. The profound impact of our Polish Canadian community on Canada's social, cultural, political and economic landscape cannot be overstated.

Their dedication and perseverance have left an indelible mark on our nation. From the arts and music to entrepreneurship and academia, the Polish Canadian community has made boundless contributions to our society.

The proposition to designate May 3 as Polish constitution day and dedicate the entire month of May to Polish heritage goes beyond symbolism.

Like Canadians, Polish people have ardently pursued freedom and democracy, bringing Europe its first modern constitution on May 3, 1791; it is the second oldest, after the U.S. Constitution.

On the walls here in this Parliament building, one will see all the names of the MPs. To find the first member of Parliament of Polish descent, one must go all the way back to the first Parliament of Canada, in 1867. Alexandre-Édouard Kierzkowski, MP 1867, was born in Poland, immigrated to Canada and represented the St. Hyacinthe, Quebec, riding in Canada's first Parliament.

Today, in our 44th Parliament, we have a number of MPs of Polish descent. This includes my colleague, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, who is the chair of the Canada-Poland Parliamentary Friendship Group.

This motion is a tangible and deeply sincere expression of our gratitude for the remarkable achievements and contributions of the Polish Canadian community. This proposal represents our heartfelt homage to their history, a celebration of their present and an inspiration for their future.

I have had many opportunities to speak with countless numbers of my Canadian Polish constituents about their immigrant story, including friend and Olympic coach Bogdan Poprawski and my friend Ziggy Pigiél. My good friend and neighbour, John Solariski, has enriched my life, I can tell everyone, with his stories of Polish businesses, such as his dad's pharmacy in Roncesvalles, or sports, such as the Polonia baseball team he coaches. From his words, I can feel the great pride he has as a Canadian of Polish heritage.

● (1335)

All Poles feel joy when their Canadian-born children learn new Polish words, like *babcia*, which means grandmother, or *Dziadek*, which means grandfather; or when their kids ask about what their grandparents' and parents' early lives were like; or when children

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research for themselves their Polish history. They are truly celebrating their past.

It is my hope that Motion No. 75 will provide another opportunity for the community and families to recount their lives on the farm and in the village, their ancestors, the food, the traditions, the language, their journey to Canada and much more. Despite being half a world away from their original homeland, in some ways those in the Polish community are more connected to it than when they left. Today, their new-found heritage grows through their children and grandchildren as Polish Canadians.

Keeping Polish culture and heritage alive does not only happen at home. It also happens in the broader community through cultural centres, churches and schools. It happens through organizations like the Canadian Polish Congress, the Polish Teachers Association, Polish scouts, the Canadian Polish Business Association and veterans associations.

We have great festivals, like the Mississauga Polish Day festival, whose founders and leaders are Anna Gulbinski and Anna Mazurkiewicz, and the Chopin Society festival. I want to thank Henry and Anna Lopinsky for sharing their love of music. There is Mississauga's Carassauga festival, with its Polish-Canadian director Marek Ruta. That is just to name a few.

Allow me to highlight Canada's strong ties with Poland and its representatives here. I want to thank Polish Ambassador Witold Dzielski and the embassy for their support of the Polonia community in Canada and for this motion. Ambassador Dzielski is no stranger to Parliament or to Mississauga, a city that is home to one of the largest Polish populations in all of Canada and has a mayor of Polish descent, Mayor Bonnie Crombie. The community organizes various events and initiatives to celebrate Polish heritage and to promote cross-cultural understanding.

I am so proud to represent Mississauga East—Cooksville, as it has the largest Polish community in all of Canada. Also located in Mississauga East—Cooksville is the John Paul II Polish Cultural Center and The Maximilian Kolbe Foundation. The Maximilian Kolbe Foundation was founded in 1982 and is the heart of the Polish community in Mississauga and the GTA. It established a cultural community centre for the Poles in Mississauga. After years of hard work and collecting funds, the centre was opened in the fall of 1994. Both the foundation and the centre are closely connected with the largest Polish church, the St. Maximilian Kolbe parish, in Canada, and we thank Father Bogdan Osiecki for his service.

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Adjacent to the church is where the John Paul II Polish Cultural Center building is situated. The centre consists of a concert hall, stage, library, bowling room and club. Almost every day it hosts various cultural events, as well as classes for education and integration for adults, children, youth and seniors. It serves as a central gathering place for the Polish community in Mississauga, offering various programs and events that celebrate Polish culture, including language classes, art exhibitions, music performances and dance groups like the Radosc-Joy vocal dance group and the Lechowia Polish Canadian Folk Dance Company.

The Canadian Polish Congress is an organization that acts as a voice for the Polish-Canadian community, advocating for its rights and interests. It has shown great leadership in advocating for and championing this motion, and I thank the congress. I want to give a big thanks and shout-out to its national president, John Tomczak; the first vice-president, Dominik Roszak; board member and friend, the district president, Leszek Blaszcak from Mississauga; and the entire board of directors. I thank the congress. I also thank former Toronto councillor Chris Korwin-Kuczynski for his support.

• (1340)

The Congress represents the Polish community's interests in the Government of Canada by providing a strong national voice in the decision-making around our government's policies and by promoting the rights of Polish Canadians to full and equal participation in all aspects of Canadian society. The motion before us is in large part due to their advocacy.

The Canadian Polish Congress promotes awareness of and respect for Poland's history and heritage and the contribution of Poles to the culture of Canada and the world. We thank them. The Congress is a unifying force, coordinating and supporting Polish-Canadian organizations, so those community organizations provide a wide range of programs, events and services to support the local Polish population. I want to commend the Congress for its focus on youth in particular and for hosting many youth leadership opportunities, such as the Polonia leadership summit we just had here two weeks ago on Parliament Hill.

Also, I thank the Polish Teachers Association in Canada for its mission to teach the Polish language in as many Canadian schools as possible, with teachers such as Irena Urbaniak and many others. Polish schools in Mississauga play a crucial role in preserving Polish language skills, culture and heritage among Polish-Canadian children. These schools provide language instruction, history lessons and cultural activities to ensure the transmission of Polish traditions to the younger generation.

Many of our Polonia youth are involved in Polish scouting in Canada. In my riding of Mississauga, it is one of the great ways in which hundreds of junior and senior scouts learn Polish culture, Polish language and Polish scouting traditions while exploring Canada's great outdoors through all seasons, including the winter.

Polish Canadians have always rolled up their sleeves with a vigorous entrepreneurial spirit. I thank the Canadian Polish Business Association and its president and CEO, Mr. Eric Szustak, for their tireless work to enhance the business climate in the Polish-Canadian community and expand international trade. The ties between Poland and Canada have only grown stronger, and local small and

medium businesses run in the Polish community continue to thrive, adding jobs and growth to our country.

Canada and Poland exemplify solidarity. We have continued, are continuing and will continue to stand together. On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to also extend a heartfelt thanks to our Polish Canadians for Poland's unwavering support to Ukraine during these difficult times.

The Polish community has integrated into the Canadian cultural landscape by preserving Polish traditions, organizing cultural events, contributing to various sectors and fostering cross-cultural understanding. Polish festivals, food, music and arts have become part of the multicultural fabric of Canadian society, enriching the cultural diversity of the country.

I wholeheartedly implore members to support this endeavour. I call upon each member to join hands in making this motion a reality to pay homage to the remarkable legacy of the Polish-Canadian community and to reaffirm the enduring partnership between Canada and Poland. Let us, as a united House, recognize its invaluable contributions and celebrate its enduring spirit.

Niech żyje Polska. Niech żyje Kanada.

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague and commend him for his initiative. We know that Polish culture is extremely important in our society. The same holds true in Quebec. Quebec is endowed with a strong Polish cultural component. In fact, my favourite performer, Lydia Képinski, is of Polish origin. If members ever want to dance, I encourage them to go see one of her shows. They will not be disappointed.

On May 3, Poland celebrates Constitution Day to commemorate the promulgation of its Constitution in 1791. On the same day, the Constitution marathon takes place in Warsaw. I know that my colleague, the chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, is a superb long-distance runner.

If this important motion passes, would he be interested in organizing a marathon to celebrate Polish culture?

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Madam Speaker, the hon. colleague and I sit together on the finance committee. His words regarding this celebration really relate to freedom, democracy and the first constitution in Europe, which is the second-oldest constitution in the world.

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I will say, with respect to the challenge of a marathon, that I will walk with my colleague. We will do it around Parliament Hill the day this passes. I thank my hon. colleague for his support.

Yes, the Polish community has great talent in music and the arts. To know that one of the first parliamentarians of the first Parliament here was from Quebec, from Saint-Hyacinthe, is something we all cherish.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I did my undergrad at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay and I know there was a wonderful Polish community there.

I wonder if the member could respond to what would happen if this motion was not passed.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Madam Speaker, like in Thunder Bay, at Lakehead and right across our great country, from coast to coast to coast, we have Polish in all of our communities.

I know this House will embrace this motion because all of us support our diversity and our unity. What brings us together is the richness of the many cultures that we have in this great country of Canada. It would mean so much to the Polish community if we were to give them the opportunity to be able to again celebrate May 3 as *Trzeciego Maja*, as they say, which is constitution day, here in Canada, for years to come.

Again, I implore all members to support this motion for the Polish community.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this motion to the House. I have had the opportunity to work with the community. Edmonton is home to a large Polish community. As well, I had a neighbour from the Polish community.

My question is this. During Polish heritage month, what types of activities would the community be looking to host in the month of May?

• (1350)

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Madam Speaker, of course, they are in Edmonton and in all communities right across our great land.

The one thing I did not talk about was the great food. We have pierogi and sausages. I have to say that I love the beer. We have festivals, which are an opportunity to celebrate culture and history and bring everybody together. It is also a time to talk about our democracy and what Poland has brought to Canada.

This motion would be the impetus for bringing the community together in a way to celebrate not only within the community, but to share with others all the great things about Polish heritage and culture. It will be a great time. I look forward to going out with the member and eating some nice pierogi and great Polish sausage.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am joining the debate. I will read the parts of the motion that I want to talk about the most. First is “the importance of educating Canadians of all ages about the core values that Polish Canadians have imparted”. The second part I want to draw the attention of the House to is “the government should reflect upon Polish heritage for future generations”.

I have a Yiddish proverb, as I always do. Yiddish and Polish are very closely connected, as many members know. “I am not asking God for an easier burden; I am asking for broader shoulders”, when I speak with respect to this subject.

The previous member who spoke talked about the wave of immigration to Canada. Those waves were caused by events happening in eastern Europe. From the first partition of Poland in 1772, the member spoke about the constitution, *Trzeciego Maja*, May 3, 1791. It is the second-oldest written constitution in the world. The constitution was then abolished by a future parliament of dubious distinction. The final partition of Poland was in 1795, where Poland disappeared.

Poland's greatest contributions are not institutions and organizations. They are its people; those people all over the world who have fought for freedom in the name of freedom, from the American Revolution to those who came to Canada and built a new life for themselves, but also many who then returned to Poland or to continental Europe and fought in the different wars of independence so that Poland could be free again.

Another thing I want to draw the House's attention to is the Statute of Kalisz, signed in 1264 by another great Pole, Bolesław the Pious. The people of Poland were the first people to give legal rights to the Jewish people in continental Europe, so I want to draw the attention of the House to that as well.

One other great Pole I want to recognize is Zbigniew Gondek. At 99 years old, he passed away. He was a Polish veteran of World War II. He fought at Montecassino, earned the *Virtuti Militari*, Poland's highest military decoration. He was a great Polish Canadian.

Another Pole I want to draw the attention of the House to is Jan Karski. Jan Karski wrote *Story of a Secret State: My Report to the World*, where he described the horrors of the crimes committed by the Nazis, and by the Soviet Union of course. He was born in Łódź in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I. He was a proud Pole who fought Red Army soldiers because the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, invaded Poland with its allies in Nazi Germany and crushed Poland's armies after a few weeks. He was made a POW and deported somewhere into Siberia. In his book, he tells the story of the abuse he suffered at the hands of Soviet soldiers. He was also later captured by the Gestapo as a courier for the Polish Underground. In his book, he also relates the story of meeting the U.S. president and relating all the crimes that were committed by Soviet and Nazi soldiers against Jewish people, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Ukrainians and many others.

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I have the book and I want to read from it because there is mention of Canada. Jan Karski had never come to Canada, but when he was being smuggled through Spain, his handlers told him this, and I am going to read from it: "He turned to the conductor and slapped his chest. 'Canada', he said triumphantly. 'Canada', his son echoed. 'Canada', I added weakly. 'Bravo, bravo', the conductor beamed at us." It was obvious then, if they got captured, to say they were Canadians because Canadians in Spain would be deported to Britain and Britain was their destination of choice.

I wanted to make sure that I mentioned that, when speaking of Jan Karski who was one of those great Polish patriots.

Another person I want to mention is Captain Witold Pilecki, who is credited as the only man to have volunteered to go to Auschwitz. It takes a certain type of human to volunteer to go to a concentration camp. He spent 947 miserable nights there so that he could then relate it back to the Polish Underground and the Polish Underground could then inform the western powers, including Canadians, of the crimes being committed against the Jewish people, Poles, Ukrainians, Slovaks and all those who opposed the Nazi regime.

Witold Pilecki fought in the Polish-Lithuanian war. He fought in the Polish-Soviet war. Like many Poles of his era, he was actually born in Russia. His family had been deported from Vilna to east Karelia, and that is where he was from. He is also one of many Polish Underground members who would be later murdered by the Soviet Union in show trials. He was arrested in May 1947, sent to Mokotow prison, which many Poles know very well. After a show trial that lasted barely a few weeks, he was sentenced to death and he was executed, as were his so-called co-conspirators. Many Poles remember him as one of those great freedom fighters.

• (1355)

I want to mention one thing about those events. Among the Poles in Canada, the Katyn massacre is remembered as a great crime committed by communists in the Soviet Union. Secret order number 001177 was issued by the politburo for the execution and murder of 25,568 people. They were called victims, but these were Polish generals, soldiers, members of the clergy and professors, proud Poles who were murdered by the Soviet Union. The truth only came out in the 1990s and was then shared more broadly with the world. It is one of those crimes that the Russian Federation, the Soviet Union, have never been made to pay for, with more public criticism of it.

Closer to home, there was mention of the first Polish member of Parliament, the member for St. Hyacinthe from 1867 to 1870, Alexandre-Édouard Kierzkowski. Those at Hansard do not have to worry; I have written down all the names. If they want to get the notes from me afterward, they can figure out how to spell them correctly.

Some of the community centres were mentioned. I want to draw attention to Maximilian Kolbe. He is a very well-known priest who was in Auschwitz and gave himself in place of a Jewish man. He volunteered himself to be executed before somebody else. That is why so many community centres are named after Maximilian Kolbe. It is also why if someone Polish names their first son Maximilian, the way I did, they will forever be asked the question by other Poles, "Did you name him after Maximilian Kolbe?" It takes

a special type of person to volunteer themselves for death for a member of another faith community, because it is right thing to do. That is their calling in life.

The Canadian Polish Congress is a long-running institution. I said I would not talk about organizations, but I want to talk about one gentlemen from this organization, Wladyslaw Lizon, who was a member of Parliament, a Conservative who represented this place proudly. He is a former president of the congress. I also want to note Sir Casimir Stanislaus Gzowski, who was Lieutenant Governor of Ontario between 1896 and 1897. He was personally knighted by Queen Victoria.

To get back to more history, the Trial of the Sixteen is a well-known event about Polish underground leaders who were invited to Moscow after the war officially ended for western European powers, although not so much for Polish people in eastern Europe. In the Trial of the Sixteen, the Polish underground leaders were kidnapped by the NKVD, and most members were then either executed or imprisoned for long lengths of time.

Closer to recent history, the Solidarity movement is well remembered. Many members have family members who were in Solidarity, some whose parents were arrested. My father was a member of Solidarity, but he was never arrested. He did leave Poland a week before my younger brother was born, much to my mom's infuriation.

With Solidarity, everyone thinks of Lech Wałęsa, but we should really draw attention to the woman who kicked off the protests. Anna Walentynowicz was fired five months before her retirement because the communists could not stand that she was simply drawing attention to the fact that people were stealing from and mistreating the workers. She was tired of the communists oppressing the trade union workers. She deserves credit for the kickoff of the protests, which eventually led to martial law in Poland. Many of us in my generation were made to leave during that time period.

I want to talk very briefly about the new brotherhood we have between Poles and Ukrainians, because I think it stretches beyond just the region. It stretches to the diaspora communities in Canada.

For centuries, hundreds and hundreds of years, Poles and Ukrainians have not always gotten along. We are the same ethnic group. We have a different language. We mostly share the same faiths. However, never before has there been such a march of darkness in eastern Europe, where people are struggling and fighting for their own freedoms. Now two people who historically have fought wars and have done terrible things to each other are standing side by side.

I have a Ukrainian intern. I have hosted them in years past. I want to say this, after she gave me a book and I got to read a bit more about Ukrainian history: Without a free Ukraine, there is no free Poland, and without a free Poland, there is no free Ukraine.

I will draw the attention of the House to this, because I know my time is running short. I did get in my Yiddish proverb. The Polish national anthem, *Dąbrowski's Mazurka*, has two lines in it that speak to what Polish people truly care about. The two lines, in English, are:

Poland has not yet perished,
So long as we still live.

• (1400)

The most important contribution Poles have made is the people, the freedom fighters, who have fought for freedom wherever we have been in the world.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, before getting to the heart of the matter, I too want to join my colleagues in expressing my full solidarity with the artisans from TVA who were laid off as part of this restructuring. People are now unemployed, the national news media is in crisis, and a culture is under threat. We must take action and be proactive by translating solidarity and compassion into meaningful action.

I am pleased to rise in the House today with my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois to support Motion No. 75 to establish Polish heritage month. I am just as pleased that the first Polish person to sit in this Parliament where, in my opinion, we should no longer be sitting, was one of my predecessors. He was there when this Parliament was first created in 1867. The first Polish member of the House was Alexandre-Édouard Kierzkowski, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe in 1867. That makes me especially pleased to rise to speak today. Mr. Kierzkowski was once the MNA for Verchères in the National Assembly of Quebec with the Parti Rouge, a successor to the Parti Patriote. It is a movement that really resonates with my republican values.

The Bloc Québécois would like to highlight the exceptional contribution made by Quebeckers of Polish origin to Quebec society and to Quebec culture. One cannot say for certain that the history of Polish Canadians is the same as that of Quebeckers of Polish origin, particularly since the Quiet Revolution and the adoption of the Charter of the French Language, precisely because of the special bond that unites Quebeckers of all origins and that makes our identity our common history. I am talking, of course, about our common language, French.

It is interesting to note that the first Polish immigrant to settle in Canada arrived before the British conquest. He was a fur merchant from Gdansk named Dominik Barcz. I hope the the Polish Quebeckers and Polish Canadians who are glued to their screens right now will forgive my occasional mispronunciation. Polish is not my first, second or third language. I actually do not speak Polish, so I apologize for that. As I was saying, this gentleman settled in Montreal in 1752. He was joined there in 1757 by Charles Blaskowitz, a deputy surveyor-general of lands. New France was therefore the first home for Polish people in Canada.

The Bloc Québécois is pleased to join its voice to that of the author of the motion to acknowledge the history of great Quebeckers who are of Polish origin, such as Wanda Stachiewicz, to whom we

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owe the founding in 1943 of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in Canada. This was a very important contribution. Quebec and the Quebec Polish community has strong institutions, such as the Institut canadien-polonais du bien-être, a health institution whose first centre was inaugurated by René Lévesque in 1966 when he was the health minister. Then, a new centre was inaugurated in 1984 by Dr. Camille Laurin, the father of the Charter of the French Language, when he was health minister. The ethnolinguistic nature of the institute, its independence and its specific mission for Quebeckers of Polish descent was recognized by the National Assembly of Quebec in May 2004. Quebec has been recognizing this immense contribution for a long time.

The destiny and life stories of Polish immigrants have also left their mark on Quebec's culture and literature. In her famous novel *Ces enfants d'ailleurs*, the great storyteller Arlette Cousture, author of some of Quebec's favourite novels, introduced us to Élisabeth, Jan and Jerzy, who, with their parents Tomasz Pawulski, a history teacher, and Zofia Pawulska, a musician, flee the war in a Europe so sad that "even the birds have fallen silent". That is a beautiful turn of phrase. In 1939, they travelled from Krakow, Poland, to Quebec, "near a large river, in the colourful [and welcoming] city of Montreal". That is how it was described.

We are pleased to be a part of designating May 3 as Polish constitution day and the month of May each year as Polish heritage month. Every year we celebrate the national holiday of May 3, which commemorates the day the constitution was adopted, that is, May 3, 1791. It was signed 20 years after Poland was partitioned by Russia and Germany, which, as we know, was a tragic event. It is one of Europe's first modern constitutions.

• (1405)

At least the hereditary monarchy it enshrined was a constitutional monarchy. Inspired by the French Revolution, the constitution ushered in free elections. It was based on the spirit of the Enlightenment and founded on the principles of reason, freedom and the rule of law. At the time, it also stood as a symbol of hope for the eventual restoration of the country's sovereignty. We hold these same concepts dear. Throughout the ages, May 3 has remained an inspiration to Poles in their quest for independence.

During the same period, our ancestors in Quebec were just beginning to experiment with the parliamentary system as the first elections were held and Quebec's first Parliament met in 1792. French Canadians, and later Quebeckers, have also been seeking political freedom ever since. As we tirelessly pursue our own quest for national independence, Quebeckers will joyfully draw inspiration every May 3 from the resilience and commitment of their fellow Quebeckers of Polish heritage.

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I would just like to mention one other point. By referring to “Polish Canadians”, the text of the motion portrays Polish people in Quebec and Canada in a way that does not reflect reality. It suggests that the Polish diaspora forms a uniform community across Canada. That attitude is not surprising, of course, since it is in line with English Canada's multiculturalist vision, which depicts Canada's population as a vast cultural mosaic that is supposedly not influenced by the nations that exist within Canada. However, Quebec and Canada's respective national realities have absolutely had an impact on how successive waves of immigrants have been welcomed over the decades.

The linguistic and cultural factor is enough to preclude equating the journey of Polish Quebecers with that of Polish Canadians. In fact, they do not integrate into the same society. Immigrant populations that settle in Canada outside Quebec integrate into Canadian society, in other words, into the English-speaking majority. Immigrant populations that settle in Quebec integrate into Quebec society, that is, into the French-speaking majority. It is quite possible, and even desirable, to recognize the cultural heritage of Polish people in both Quebec and Canada.

Simply put, to do so does not require that we assimilate Quebecers and Canadians into a single, solitary nation, as the motion erroneously seems to suggest. We intend to support the motion while highlighting as much as possible the special contribution Polish Quebecers have made to Quebec society and the key role that the French language has played in their successful integration.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased today to rise to speak to Motion No. 75 regarding Polish heritage month.

It is no secret that in Edmonton and right across Treaty 6 land and much of the Prairies, Polish Canadians have not only found peace and prosperity, but have also found, in many ways, the steps, materials and time to build relations with so many other groups. It is a great day, particularly for me, to speak to the unique history Canada has, a history that has welcomed newcomers as early as the 1600s and that also includes when the first Poles arrived in the 1880s. This has been something I think most Canadians may not be aware of, and I think it is incumbent upon all of us to remind them that there are so many folks, including the great many Polish Canadians right across the Prairies, who have contributed to the very early building of Canada. This history is what so many Canadians may take for granted in this very difficult time for our country. When it first started to be built, there is no question that many of those people sacrificed much of what they needed, and made sacrifices with respect to whom they brought with them. There was also immense work and sacrifice to rebuild and restart, coming from so far away.

Canada is a relatively new country to the west. Many indigenous people, including my family, have been here for millennia. In 1867, the Crown, by way of Queen Victoria, asserted jurisdiction over huge swathes of land here in Canada. Indigenous people took the opportunity to find peace and prosperity with our Crown partners by way of treaty, and it was not until the question of treaty, and particularly the historic numbered treaties, was answered that other

folks could come to Canada. The Crown had to do a really big job. It had to delineate who could be present in North America, at that time known as “British North America”. British North America, for a long period, did not occupy much of western Canada, so western Canada was devoid of many persons of European descent other than those who entered the fur trade.

Later, in 1876, Treaty 6, on which land most Polish Canadians now find themselves, was signed. It was signed at Fort Pitt and Fort Carlton on the North Saskatchewan River. That treaty is so important for Canadians and, in particular, members of Parliament. We must understand how important these treaties are in order to better understand why Canadians are here, why we have the great mosaic we have today and why we celebrate and lift up Polish Canadians and so many others. It was in 1876 that our indigenous ancestors and many Canadian forebears came together at those places on the North Saskatchewan River, and we signed an agreement. I will read a portion of Treaty 6, and I hope many members can take an opportunity later today or in the many months to come to read some of the historic treaties here in Canada, because they directly relate to how many peoples, including Polish Canadians, found themselves in our Prairies.

Treaty 6, in the preamble, states:

that it is the desire of Her Majesty to open up for settlement, immigration and such other purposes as to Her Majesty may seem meet, a tract of country bounded and described as hereinafter mentioned, and to obtain the consent thereto of Her Indian subjects inhabiting the said tract, and to make a treaty and arrange with them, so that there may be peace and good will between them and Her Majesty.

Today, indigenous people right across our country, here on Turtle Island, continue to lift up and acknowledge our obligations to treaty, and one of those obligations is to continue to ensure that those seeking peace, those seeking freedom and those seeking prosperity can continue to find those things across our country. Those historic treaties are so critical to the founding of this country and continue to be aspects on which many new Canadians rely in order to gain access to Canada.

Noted earlier today were some of the remarkable contributions made not only to this place, the House of Commons, by Polish Canadians, but even to the very founding of the prairie provinces much later on. Today, the diaspora of Polish Canadians is right across our country, and most particularly in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The first Polish immigration to Alberta was in the 1880s, and it followed those historic treaties I mentioned, four years prior to their first settlement.

Private Members' Business

• (1410)

I grew up with many stories, and with many Ukrainian and Polish folks in the northeast part of rural Alberta. We traded and discussed. Today, for example, in the indigenous communities in Alberta's northeast, there are still artifacts and stories of those times of first settlement, including the trading of textiles and goods. There is no question that Polish Canadians have done not only so much to ensure the future of the provinces that we enjoy today but also the very hard work it took to ensure that there could be places for all of us to enjoy.

In the city of Edmonton, for example, many Polish Canadians pray and worship at the Holy Rosary church, where many of my own constituents attend and pray in peace. It is by the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology in Edmonton. There is also The Canadian Polish Research Institute, an immense and extensive library of archives and history. It publishes excellent data that is driven by important research.

In addition to all of that, there is also the Canadian Polish Historical Society, which was established in the city of Edmonton. It is a great Canadian organization with the primary mission to promote the understanding and exploration of Polish history, customs and culture. It gathers and preserves significant historical documents that highlight the achievements of individuals of Polish heritage in Edmonton, and in all of Alberta, maintaining records of many Polish-Canadian immigrants.

I encourage members of the House to look to some of these organizations, in particular the Canadian Polish Historical Society, to see how they have contributed in so many ways to the communities we all know and love, specifically the members' own communities. For Polish Canadians, however, there is much more work to be done to ensure the promotion of their unique language, heritage and culture here in Canada. We have to urge the federal government to not only recognize Polish heritage month but also make sure we go further by ensuring there are tangible resources that promote Polish culture, heritage and learning among all Canadians.

Our country is truly great. It is great because of the qualities of diversity it holds so near and dear to its soul and its being, as manifested in the history of our country, as promised by first nations, Métis and Inuit persons to that of the Crown, to continue to ensure that new Canadians can find peace and prosperity here and that their histories are never forgotten.

Canada is a young country, and because Canada is a young country, it is so important that we lift up and hold sacred those stories that created the foundation that we all enjoy today. Following their immense work of building farms, townhomes and eventually villages and cities, Canada is a prosperous place because of those sacrifices. We need to fully acknowledge the immense contributions of many Canadians in the early settlement period, particularly those of Ukrainian, Polish and other eastern European individuals. Without them, we would not have a Canada.

I am so grateful and honoured to rise in support of Motion No. 75 on behalf of all New Democrats. We need to ensure that we continue to lift up Polish heritage and strive to ensure that their stories, unique perspectives and what they have to offer to Canada can continue for many more years to come. I am excited for us to vote on

Motion No. 75 and to, hopefully, see swift and unanimous passage of Polish heritage month here in the House of Commons.

• (1415)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a proud Polish Canadian, I am so honoured to rise in the House of Commons to speak to the rich history, heritage and contributions of Polish Canadians to Canada and to the rich and vibrant multicultural tapestry of our country.

I will begin by giving a heartfelt *dziękuję*, or thanks, to my friend and colleague, the MP for Mississauga East—Cooksville, for bringing forward this historic legislation that will establish the first-ever national Polish heritage month in Canada.

There are 1.1 million Canadians of Polish descent living in Canada in communities in every corner of our country, including major centres such as Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Vancouver, Toronto, Hamilton, Winnipeg and Calgary, as well as my community of Windsor—Tecumseh. Polish Canadians are business leaders, teachers, nurses, engineers, electricians, artists and athletes. They drive trucks that deliver goods. They are as resilient and determined as they are generous and kind, and they have been a blessing to this country, just as Canada has been a blessing to us.

The story of Polish immigration to Canada is remarkable, and it provides insight into a community that prides itself on the values of service above self and that prioritizes family, community and faith. The first Polish immigrant, a fur trader, landed in Canada in 1752, but the first wave of Polish immigrants to Canada arrived in 1858 from the Kashub region of northern Poland. They made their home in Renfrew County in the Town of Wilno, the oldest Polish settlement in Canada. For two centuries, subsequent waves of Polish Canadians arrived in Canada, at times to flee conflict and persecution, and always to build a better future for themselves and for their children. The Polish-Canadian story is a quintessential Canadian story, and it is one I want to tell from the perspective of my family and our Polish community in Windsor.

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Back in Poland, my father was an electrical engineer and a leader in the solidarity movement, which fought for the rights of workers against the Communist dictatorship. Minutes past midnight on December 13, 1981, martial law was declared, solidarity leaders were rounded up and the police arrived at our door to arrest my father. After his release, Canada offered us safe harbour; in April 1983, we landed at Pearson airport. We spent the first year in Scarborough, in an apartment block with Polish families who arrived the same way we did. My parents took English language courses at George Brown College during the day. My dad laid tile during the evenings to save up for a car and to buy his boys their first Christmas gift in Canada: hockey sticks. Within a year, my dad landed a job in the auto industry in Windsor, so we barrelled down the 401 with hearts full of hope, gratitude and a little trepidation about the road ahead.

For Polish Canadians, like so many immigrants, their gratitude finds expression in an enormous sense and need to give back, to volunteer, to help build our Canada and the communities that have become our homes. I see the expression of this in my community of Windsor—Essex, which is home to a vibrant community of 12,000 Polish Canadians. The heart of our community has always been Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church on the corner of Langlois and Ellis. It is where my brother and I were quickly enrolled as altar servers. It is where we celebrate *Pasterka*, or midnight mass, and where I married my better half, Shauna.

Saturday mornings were spent attending Polish school at St. Angela Catholic Elementary School, with wonderful teachers, such as Pani Bochus, Pani Zechaluk and sisters Mary and Urszula from the Ursuline Sisters. They made sure we kept the Polish language alive. They taught Polish history, telling us about Copernicus, Marie Curie Skłodowska and the Battle of Grunwald. We learned about Janusz Zurkowski, the test pilot for the Avro Arrow and the first Canadian to break the sound barrier. We learned about Sir Casimir Gzowski, an engineer who helped build the Grand Trunk Railway and the Welland Canal, whom Canada Post put on the five-cent stamp. We learned about Stanley Haidasz, a doctor, a member of Parliament, the first minister of state for multiculturalism and the first senator of Polish descent.

After Sunday morning mass at Holy Trinity, we would stop by Blak's Bakery for fresh rye bread and strudel. Blak's is the oldest bakery in Windsor. It opened in 1918. On Fat Tuesday, there are lineups around the block to get a box of their famous plum-filled paczki. At the same time, we would head over to the European Market or Polish Village Deli to pick up deli meats, pierogi or kielbasa for the barbecue.

● (1420)

Polish Canadians are incredibly industrious and entrepreneurial. In addition to shops and restaurants that brought colour and flavour to Ottawa Street, there were Polish-owned factories that provided thousands of jobs for local residents for generations. Companies like Victoria Steel, White Eagle Press, Gorski Transport and NARMCO started by the Bas, Polewski, Rodzik and Gorski families who gave back to the community in many ways. Just last week, I attended the reopening of the University of Windsor law school building that underwent generational renovations, funded in part by the generous contribution of the Rodzik family.

Indeed, Polish Canadians are known for their honest and hard work as skilled machinists, electricians and engineers. Many rose to positions that shaped local industry especially our vital auto sector. Mr. Puklich as the plant manager of the Windsor-Essex Ford engine plant and Mr. Frank Ewasyszyn as the vice-president of Chrysler are just two examples.

However, outside the business world, the Polish community made tremendous contributions through the arts, culture and sport. Dom Polski, or the Polish Hall, was the hub of cultural life in our community, the place where theatre productions were held, where the Tetry dance ensemble performed, and where weddings and celebrations took place. Dom Polski is also where each year the Polish community throws open its doors, hosting a Polish village that draws thousands of local residents for live music, dancing and great Polish food as part of the annual carousel of the nation's celebrations.

This year, the Polonia centre sports club celebrated its 40th anniversary, thanks to the dedication of volunteers like Mr. Kowalczykowski and Mr. Sak, who coached players of all ages and backgrounds from across Windsor-Essex.

The incredible spirit of volunteerism drives the Polish community. It is who we are. I am proud to say my parents, Marta and Richard, were part of a long tradition of volunteers and leaders who gave their time and energy to organizations like the Polonia Centre that organized and raised funds for educational and cultural events that brought community together.

The Polonia centre set up annual scholarships for students from all backgrounds attending post-secondary school. An annual fund was set up to help the University of Windsor purchase books for the Leddy Library. That sense of solidarity extends far beyond the community. When natural disasters like floods hit Canada and around the world, the community quickly mobilized to raise funds.

When 9/11 hit, the community even sent a letter to the mayor of New York with a cheque for \$5,000 to support victims' families. Two years ago, when Russia invaded Ukraine, the community quickly organized a pasta and pierogi dinner and raised over \$30,000 for Ukrainians and Ukraine.

Solidarity and hospitality go hand in hand. There is an old saying in Polish.

[Member spoke in Polish and provided the following translation:]

That means when a guest is in the house, God is in the house.

[English]

That is why we saw hundreds of thousands of Poles opening their apartments to 1.5 million Ukrainian refugees fleeing the war. It is the Polish thing to do when their neighbour calls for help.

A terrific example of the combination of solidarity, and hospitality was the building of Polonia Park in 1980, a neighbourhood containing 342 affordable and attainable townhouses that the Polish community constructed thanks to Monsignor Lawrence Wnuk and visionary volunteers like Jan Partyka, Jan Armata, Stan Niec, Mitch Puklicz and the Bas and Polewski families. It was pioneering, decades ahead of its time, and it went a long way to make sure all Canadians in Windsor could find an affordable place to live in dignity and with pride. I know, because Polonia Park afforded my family our first home in Windsor.

Service to community is a huge part of our Polish heritage; so too is service to our country. The same Dom Polski that hosted weddings and Polish theatre was also the home of the Polish army in North America during the Second World War and a recruitment centre for Polish volunteers heading to Europe. In 1917, the Government of Canada opened the Polish army training camp called Camp Kosciuszko in Niagara-on-the-Lake, under General Jozef Haller where 2,200 volunteers were trained to fight as the Polish Blue Army in the First World War.

Throughout history, Poland and Canada have been brothers in arms in major battles like the Battle of Britain and Montecassino where Polish and Canadian soldiers now rest together in cemeteries of honour.

Last week I had a chance to reflect upon my family's story and how our single thread weaves itself into the beautiful fabric of the Polish Canadian story in Canada. I attended a citizenship ceremony for 49 new Canadians who arrived in Canada from 18 different countries. I saw in their eyes their happiness, hope and promise and, above all, their incredible feeling of gratitude. It fills people's hearts knowing that they are Canadians, knowing that Canada is their home.

I am proud of my Polish heritage. I am proud to be a Polish Canadian. With everyone's help, my dear colleagues, we will have a

Private Members' Business

Polish heritage month to celebrate a long-standing and colourful piece of that beautiful Canadian mosaic together.

● (1425)

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I, like many other members of Parliament in the House, have Polish heritage. There is my last name, although I cannot say it in the House, as it is not appropriate, but my mother's maiden name is Zatorski, which does sound very Polish with the "ski" at the end.

My great grandparents came to Alberta in 1906. I know, for a lot of other family members, that is not that long of a time, but for Albertans, that is actually quite a while that my family has been in Canada. I want to talk about how Jakov and Ann Zatorski came to this country from Poland because they wanted to have a much better life. That is the whole purpose of why they came. From that date, they had many children, 13 to be precise, which included my grandfather, Paul Zatorski, who was born in 1913. In some ways, I am already a third-generation Canadian and Albertan from that side of the family.

It is nice to see that we are supporting this heritage month for Polish people and people of Polish descent. It is very important to many Canadians for this history that we have with each other.

I know that, when they came to Canada, they did not have much with them. In 1906, very few families had much for any possessions.

● (1430)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

[Translation]

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

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