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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 12, 2021

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-210, An Act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act (organ and tissue donors), as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Len Webber moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-210, at third reading. For those who may not be familiar with Bill C-210, it is a proposal that would allow Canadians to indicate their interest in being an organ and tissue donor through their annual tax forms. Right now the tax forms can only be used for the collection of taxes. The bill would create a legal exemption, just like that made to Elections Canada, to allow for its important question of organ donation to be added to the tax form.

The bill was unanimously supported at both second reading and at committee. The bill was also my bill, Bill C-316, in the last Parliament where it was also unanimously supported, however unfortunately, it died in the Senate. It did get a second decent life in this Parliament when I won the PMB lotto. I was picked as number one, so I resurrected the bill.

It is very timely that we are speaking about the bill today as April is Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Month. It is also

two weeks away from the tax filing deadline in Canada, so it is ironic to be speaking here today on this. If we have any hope of getting these changes to the tax form implemented in time for the next year, the 2021 tax year, we need to move the bill through both the House and the Senate before the summer. If we miss that deadline, the Canada Revenue Agency will not be able to implement the required changes for yet another year. We just cannot let that happen.

I want to convey my sincere thanks to all parties in the House for showing such strong support and offering genuine co-operation to move this proposal forward. Members' unanimous support and unwavering support at every stage has been heartwarming and shows we really can pull together for Canadians. I specifically want to thank all my colleagues from all parties on the health committee, both currently and in the past when I served on the health committee, who have been vocal, determined and dedicated supporters of the bill.

I also want to thank the government for the allocation of funding in the past fall economic statement to facilitate the implementation of this legislation. Governments do not often commit funding ahead of legislation passing, especially when it is for a private member's bill from an opposition member of Parliament. That funding is very much appreciated and it signifies a shared will to see the bill pass.

I want to bring out the matter that came up at committee. First of all, for this initiative to be most effective, the question on organ and tissue donation needs to be placed on the front page of the tax form. The committee members made this very clear to the CRA. In fact, they specifically voted down the idea of suggesting that the CRA had latitude to move it to some back page in oblivion. Parliament has spoken and it wants this on the front page along with the existing Elections Canada question.

I was pleased that individuals from the CRA have acknowledged that this is a priority of Parliament and committed to putting this on the front page. I implore the folks at the CRA to dig deep and push forward to make sure that we get this done as soon as possible. Their work will have life-changing consequences.

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One other aspect I want to spend a few minutes on is something that the bill does not directly address, but is a significant problem here in Canada. This is the reason we have Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Month. Research has shown that as many as one in five potential organ and tissue donors have their final wish overturned by their family at the time of death. That is 20% of families overturning the wishes of their deceased loved ones. This decision by their families is robbing those in need of a life-saving transplant of a chance to live. It is robbing their loved one of their final wish. This is unconscionable and it has to change.

• (1110)

We can do better and we must do better, and that is why it is so important to talk to family members about final wishes when it comes to organ and tissue donation.

I have met with many people who have allowed the donation of organs and tissue of their deceased loved ones, and every single one of them without exception has said that it was an essential part of their grief and healing process. The ability to find some good in a time of utter grief is profound and everlasting. They want other families to know that sharing a loved one makes accepting the loss so much easier. Their loss has purpose, and their gift has brought unimaginable relief and joy to another family in need. That is the legacy to leave for a loved one.

We have our own reasons for supporting this legislation. Some of those reasons are closer to home for some members than others. Some members themselves or their family members have medical conditions, which means that they know one day they may require a life-saving transplant. Other members in the House are able to love, laugh and live with loved ones because they received a life-saving transplant and are still here with us today. No matter the reason for supporting this bill, it is very much appreciated.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his private member's bill. It is quite rewarding as a private member to have a bill go through this place to committee and then come back here with such support. Indeed, what the member has presented is something that will change lives.

For so long, we seem to have been stuck in this place of not taking initiatives like this. The member's idea of having this option on the tax form, which the vast majority of Canadians complete on an annual basis, would put it right in front of people's faces so that they can see it and make that decision. I think a lot of people retroactively would have wished that they had made that decision if they could have, and this gives them the opportunity to do that.

I am wondering if the member could comment on why he thinks it has taken so long to get to this place, and how he sees people supporting it and actually using it on their tax form.

Mr. Len Webber: Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree with the member that this is long overdue.

What initiated this bill is the fact that we could not get a bill passed here in the House on creating a Canadian-wide organ and tissue donation registry because it conflicted with provincial jurisdiction. I wondered how we could help the provinces and their registries as a federal government, and this bill came to mind. We

could get this question on the tax form and then share that information with the provinces throughout the country.

I certainly hope that we can get this bill passed before the summer so that we can get it implemented in the next tax season.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, this bill hits close to home for me, since I have family members who needed an organ donation and some of them died before they were able to get one.

It is another step in the right direction, but my hon. colleague raised two equally important points. What can we do to improve education regarding organ donation so that the family does not go against the will of the person who chose to check off the box?

[*English*]

Mr. Len Webber: Madam Speaker, the intent of this bill is to have a tax filer indicate their willingness to donate their organs upon death. All it would be is a tick on the box on the form, and that information would then be shared with provincial registries throughout the country, depending on what province the tax filer is living in. A representative from the province would then contact the individual to ask the appropriate questions on what his or her wishes are, whether it is to donate any and all organs, specific organs or whatever, and so the detailed information would come from the provinces from asking those questions.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for bringing forward this important private member's bill.

The Liberals, the New Democrats and the Conservatives have all brought forth this bill at one time or another. I am so proud of the work this member has done to make this a reality and hope it gets through the Senate this time around.

Could the member talk to the House about how important it is that people access this? I am also wondering about his thoughts. Other countries have chosen an opt-out system, in which everybody is on the list and they have to opt out, and they have found a lot more participants and saved a lot more lives. I am wondering what his thoughts are on that.

Mr. Len Webber: Madam Speaker, I want to correct a statement the member made with respect to others in the House trying to pass this particular bill in the past. That is not correct. I think the hon. member is talking about the attempt to have a national registry implemented in this country. It is something that was attempted in the past, but it was unsuccessful. This is why I have now brought forward this particular bill to help out these provincial registries.

With regard to the opt-out question, it is provincial jurisdiction to determine whether to implement an opt-out system, so I will leave it with the provinces.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, my thanks to the member for Calgary Confederation for bringing this issue back to the attention of Canadians and the House. We will also be recognizing National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, which will take place from April 18 to 24 this year.

This is a timely discussion, as this upcoming event raises awareness about the critical need for more donors across the country and encourages Canadians to register their decision and talk to their loved ones about organ donation. This topic hits close to home for me as my family and I are all registered organ and tissue donors. I believe more Canadians should at least consider this option as we see rising numbers of people added to wait lists each year.

According to the latest data from the Canadian Organ Replacement Register, in 2019 a total of 3,014 organ transplant procedures were performed in Canada, which is an increase of about 42% since 2010. Despite this good news, the national data shows that approximately 4,400 people in Canada are waiting for organ transplants, and more than 1,600 people are added to the list each year. Sadly, due to this, an estimated 250 people die each year while waiting for a transplant. As our population ages, the need for organ and tissue donations keeps increasing.

The Government of Canada recognizes the value of organ and tissue donation and transplantation. Since 2018, the government has supported an initiative called the organ donation and transplantation collaborative, led by Health Canada. The collaborative's goal is to achieve organ donation improvements that result in better patient outcomes and increase the number and quality of successful transplantations.

The government recognizes that too many Canadians are on organ wait lists. We are committed to improving the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system. Alongside the provinces, territories and key stakeholders, we are establishing leading practices, strengthening professional education and raising awareness to improve organ and tissue donation. The Government of Canada continues to work collaboratively with organizations such as Canadian Blood Services, as well as with the provinces and territories, to encourage public participation and increase organ donation rates across Canada.

Additionally, I am proud to say that in the 2019 budget, the government allocated \$36.5 million to develop a pan-Canadian data and performance system for organ donation and transplantation.

I would like to briefly note that my colleague, the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge, suggested certain amendments at the committee stage to make Bill C-210 easier for the CRA to implement. While these were not adopted, I believe it is important to review and discuss the intentions behind the amendments. I want to emphasize that we all want the objectives of Bill C-210 to become a reality sooner rather than later. At any moment anyone in this room or their loved one could be in need of an organ. I sincerely hope that it will be there when they need it. Therefore, I want to take a

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moment to address some concerns regarding the implementation of this bill.

The current legislation, which has the CRA directly collecting organ and donor consent on behalf of the provinces and territories, could potentially cause significant roadblocks and time-consuming delays. For the CRA to implement Bill C-210 in time for the tax filing season next year, we need the quick engagement and support of the provinces and territories.

• (1120)

We have spoken in the past about the need for efficient implementation of this bill. The member for Vaughan—Woodbridge proposed an amendment that would have the CRA collect and share the personal information of individuals wishing to become organ and tissue donors with their respective provinces and territories. The provinces and territories, in turn, would obtain consent from Canadians to share this information and store it in a database. Although this amendment was defeated, I still emphasize the critical role of the provinces and territories in the administration of this bill as the maintenance of donor information is legally within their jurisdiction.

Additionally, the legal requirements of donor eligibility and informed consent are very complex and vary greatly by jurisdiction in Canada, so the bill would have different applications for each province and territory. This is why my colleague, the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge, proposed a separate sheet for organ donation that could be inserted into T1 income tax packages. This sheet was modelled on the insert page for the Ontario Trillium benefit, which is inserted into the tax packages of Ontario residents and then provided directly to the Province of Ontario.

Despite these concerns, I want to reiterate that the CRA will continue to respect the role that the provinces and territories play in organ and tissue donation, ensuring that Canadians' personal information is handled securely. I believe strongly that this collaboration between the CRA and the provincial and territorial governments is essential to delivering real, positive change to Canadians. In fact, I believe that having a pan-Canadian data system in place would support decision-making and improve patient care. It would also help create better records, which could be used for both monitoring and forecasting purposes.

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Despite the concerns about the manner of implementation, rest assured that the Government of Canada will fully support Bill C-210. The CRA will continue to work with all parties to make the member for Calgary Confederation's objective a reality, which would make the dream of saving the lives of thousands of Canadians a reality. It is only by working together that we will continue to improve organ and tissue donation progress, along with the transplantation system, and ensure that Canadians have timely and effective access to care.

I encourage all members in the House to vote in support of this bill once again.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to say hello to all of my colleagues. I am very pleased to see them again after the two weeks that we spent in our ridings.

The debate on Bill C-210 is timely because National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week is set to take place from April 18 to 24. This bill seeks to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act.

First, the bill would authorize the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, to enter into agreements with the provinces and territories to collect, via the income tax return, the information required to establish or maintain an organ donor registry. Second, the bill would authorize the CRA to disclose that information to the provinces and territories that have entered into such an agreement.

Just as a reminder, this bill was first introduced in 2016 by our colleague from Calgary Confederation as Bill C-316. Unfortunately, it did not get past first reading in the Senate. This iteration of the bill has a new number, but the contents are the same. As such, the Bloc Québécois's position on this bill remains unchanged. Quebec is just fine with Bill C-210, and the Bloc Québécois fully supports it.

However, as I have already told my House colleagues, it is highly unlikely that Quebec would sign an agreement with the CRA because it already has its own tax return. It is also no secret that the Bloc Québécois is fighting for a single tax return managed solely by Revenu Québec, so why delegate to the CRA a health matter that Quebec is perfectly capable of handling and that is under its exclusive jurisdiction?

Basically, the Bloc Québécois supports this bill because we believe it will benefit the inhabitants of other provinces and territories where the CRA administers the tax system.

We have absolutely no issue with allowing the CRA to collect and share information related to organ and tissue donation. If the Quebec National Assembly were to sign an agreement with the CRA, we would fully respect that decision. Quebec is free to sign or not sign an agreement, and my tone would be completely different if we were to assume otherwise.

According to the most recent data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information, in 2019, 3,084 whole organs were transplanted into 3,014 recipients. This includes 1,789 kidneys, 610 livers, 212 hearts, 404 lungs and 68 pancreases. This might seem like an odd list, but it demonstrates the magnitude of the situation. Further-

more, although the total number of transplants has risen quite dramatically compared to ten years ago, I would remind the House that there is still a significant gap between the number of transplants performed and the number of people on waiting lists. In 2019, of the 4,352 people waiting for a transplant, 249 unfortunately died before getting their surgery. This is appalling, and it could be described as a deadly wait. The governments of Canada, Quebec and the other provinces must do better, and everyone needs to do their part.

The COVID-19 pandemic certainly has not made things easier in that regard. In 2020, Transplant Quebec recorded a 20% drop in organ donation and transplantation activity, both in terms of referrals and actual donors and transplant recipients. Quebec is not alone. Other provinces and other countries have seen a similar decline. The pandemic is hitting us hard, but thanks to the tenacity and remarkable adaptability of our medical community in Quebec, things have returned to a semblance of normality in the past few months.

• (1130)

Before I go any further, I would like to take a minute to sincerely thank all the donors who have signed their card and consented to organ or tissue donation. I know that it is not an easy decision for everyone to make.

I also want to take this time to commend the work of doctors who specialize in organ procurement and those who perform the transplants. They do remarkable work. We can never say it enough. Thanks to them, 13,000 people in Quebec and Canada are living with a transplanted organ. It is amazing. However, we cannot rest on our laurels. We must do more, and Bill C-210 will help us do that.

As I mentioned before, this bill will probably not affect Quebec in any way because Quebecers have their own tax return, and Quebec could collect the required information for its own registry if it wanted to. So much the better if Quebec does not have to do it and Ottawa manages this matter. However, the last time I checked, health is almost exclusively a provincial jurisdiction. In this great and beautiful Canada, geographical distance is a significant problem for the successful completion of transplants. In light of the fact that a transplant must be completed within 12 hours for a liver and eight hours for a lung, for example, it is obvious that the proper administration of registries is crucial. In my opinion, the provincial centralization of data collection and registry maintenance is a win-win proposition.

That said, I would like to share some more thoughts about this bill. This amendment to the Canada Revenue Agency Act is truly a step in the right direction, but there is no evidence to show that it will have a direct, noticeable impact on the number of deceased donors, so long as we do not do more to promote awareness and education of organ and tissue donation. I remind the House that there is still a significant gap between the number of people who say they are in favour of organ donation and those who explicitly consent to it. I signed these papers when I turned 18 because I had a teacher at the end of high school who told us about the importance of organ donation.

I do want to commend the Government of Nova Scotia, which officially adopted an opt-out system in January. This system is the complete opposite of the opt-in system that exists in the rest of North America. Quebec has been considering this issue for some time now. I would be interested in seeing how this system unfolds with our maritime neighbours. I think it could be very worthwhile. I remind members that there is no data to establish a clear link between the implementation of an opt-in system and an increase in the number of transplants.

That has been demonstrated by Spain, which is a leader in this medical field. The opt-in system expands the pool of deceased organ donors, but that is only useful if we have the appropriate and necessary infrastructure. One of the keys to reducing the gap is to increase investments in medical infrastructure related to organ donation and transplants. There is no point in having more donors if there is a lack of trained staff or if the registry is not administered properly.

Another key is awareness, and I have a special interest in that. In addition to family refusal, there is also a widespread belief that minimal effort will be made to save the lives of those who agree to be organ donors. We need to counter this type of misconception through education and awareness.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize the work of an organization in my riding in Quebec called Chaîne de vie. Chaîne de vie's team of health and education professionals have been visiting high schools across Quebec since 2007 to educate young people between the ages of 15 and 17 about organ and tissue donation. This tremendous work does not just raise awareness among youth. It also encourages family discussion—

• (1135)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The member's time is up.

The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am here today to speak to Bill C-210. This bill would change the Canada Revenue Agency Act to allow for people in Canada to sign up for organ donation on their income tax form.

I want to thank the member for Calgary Confederation for bringing forward this bill for a second time. As this is National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Month, it is important that this is the debate we are having at this time.

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This is a hard one to talk about because of the emotional nature of this process. Currently, we know that there is a provincial and territorial jurisdiction. This means, sadly, that someone could be in desperate need in one province or territory and have no way to access organs that people have identified they want to donate. This means that people cannot get their second chance.

As a New Democrat, I fundamentally believe that we must make every possible effort to ensure that every Canadian who needs an organ or tissue transplant receives it. This is so important, and I support this because it allows people, while they are doing their taxes, to check another box, to show that this is something, if they were in the saddest circumstances, they would be able to provide.

We know that one donor could save up to eight lives and benefit more than 75 people. That is a tremendous generosity. Yet, at 18 donors per million people, Canada's current donation rate puts us at the lower third of developed countries.

Allowing Canadians to register to donate their organs and tissues through their tax return would help increase registration rates. This would improve consent rates and also help to build a donation culture in Canada. If we think about this being something that we do once a year to review, it would give that opportunity for us to have conversations with our loved ones about the decisions we have made.

We know that across Canada people are dying on wait-lists because our organ donation rate is so low. At present, only 20% of Canadians have joined their province's organ and tissue registry.

This is such an important bill because it allows the federal government to coordinate with provinces and territories to allow Canadians to register as an organ and tissue donor through their taxes.

There is a lot of concern here, sometimes, about the bill with its unauthorized sharing of personal information. This would allow for individuals to be required to give consent.

In my riding, I have read multiple articles about constituents, or have talked to constituents themselves, who have talked to me about the gift that it is when they receive a transplant. What I hear from people, again and again, is how they do not take a moment of their life for granted, as a donor. The gratitude they have for the person who gave them their second chance is incredibly powerful.

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Not too long ago, I read about a constituent named Darvy Culleton, who received a double lung transplant. He was born with cystic fibrosis, a genetic disorder that affects the lungs and other major organs, and was told from a very early age that he would potentially only live until around the age of 29. When he was 29, he got his transplant, and now has married his wife, Megan, and they have a baby. Although he did not know much about his donor, he said that every day he lives with a deep and profound gratitude, one that is shared by his family.

In the last Parliament, the same legislation, then Bill C-316, was passed unanimously by the House of Commons. Unfortunately, it did not get passed through the second House, the Senate. In 2016, we know there was some concern that the Liberals brought forward about this bill, and it did not move forward in the way that it should have, because it was under provincial jurisdiction. I am very happy to see that people are coming together, understanding that this is the way we could make this work through the system.

I know that for New Democrats in this House, the opt-out system is something we are very supportive of. We know that countries that have an opt-out system, which means people are automatically put into the list unless they take themselves out of it, see record-high donation rates. This is part of the approach that has made Spain a world leader in organ donation over the past 25 years. We know that in Australia the donor rate grew tremendously through the opt-out legislation that was put forward.

● (1140)

This is always a hard thing to talk about, because it is really about a sad situation that leads to somebody else having an opportunity. I want to thank the member for bringing it forward. I want to thank all the people across Canada who put their names forward to be organ or tissue donors. I want to stand in solidarity with the people who live life because somebody else was generous with theirs.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to address the chamber on such an important issue. I have been listening to members speak on this legislation, and I would like to start by complimenting the member for Calgary Confederation for a job well done in bringing forward and encapsulating what I believe Canadians and parliamentarians want to see take place.

For example, the member for Oakville North—Burlington talked to me on a couple of occasions about wanting to see the bill pass, as I know Liberal members from all over the country want to see it pass. I suspect it will be passing, because that seems to be the desire and will of the House, which we have seen in previous votes and in the dialogue we are hearing during debate.

It is interesting that we are having this debate today, when only a few days from now we will be starting the April 18 to April 24 National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week. In good part, the purpose of that is to raise awareness of the issue across Canada so all Canadians can get directly involved, if they choose to do so, in promoting the importance of organ donation and raising general awareness.

In listening to the debate, I could not help but think of why it is so important that we recognize that we need to respect provincial jurisdiction in the area of health care. I have talked at great length in the past about health care and have often cited examples of why the federal government should be involved, at times directly through cash transfers, but also indirectly. We need to respond to our constituents and listen to what they are telling us.

In listening to members, I detected a great deal of respect for provincial responsibilities and jurisdiction, while at the same time reflecting on the importance of the issue at hand today. This bill would authorize the Canada Revenue Agency, in essence, to enter into agreements with territories and provinces with respect to the collection and disclosure of information required, which would enable the establishment of an organ and tissue donor registry in that province or territory.

The member for Calgary Confederation rightfully pointed out that it is somewhat different from previous legislation, but it is very important legislation. It is not the first time there has been the principle of recognizing organ donations as something needing some involvement from the national government. It has been there now in different forms from different political entities inside the chamber. There are members of Parliament who have been touched in one way or another by this issue, either directly or indirectly.

I think of a gentleman by the name of Hank Horner, who passed away. He was a huge advocate, and when I was an MLA it seemed like virtually every week he would talk to me about why it was so important for politicians to do more. At that time, I was a member of the provincial legislative assembly. He had ideas about MPI and how it could be mandated to have a reverse option, meaning that it is assumed that people are prepared to donate their organs unless they tell the government or MPI otherwise.

● (1145)

There was a bit of debate and discussion on that, and a bit of resistance. However, one of our provinces in Atlantic Canada has adopted that policy. I do not know all the details, but I do recognize that because there is provincial responsibility or jurisdiction over health care, we could see different systems across Canada.

I come from a national perspective as to how we can best serve our constituents when they feel passionate about the national government doing things. A good example of that would be long-term care. We have this idea that has been talked about, voted on and passed through the House of Commons about the importance of the federal government playing some role in ensuring that we have donors from coast to coast to coast being more engaged and proactive on such an important issue.

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, there were some interesting numbers that had come from that. It cites, in particular, the year 2018. To give people who might be following the debate a sense of what those numbers are, in 2018 there were 2,782 transplants performed in Canada. We are very much dependent and reliant on those numbers being collected and provided to the agency, and we feel confident in knowing that this number is fairly accurate. That is 2,782.

We can take a look at the number of people who are on the wait-list, the individuals who are in need. I made reference to Hank Horner as an individual who inspired me on this particular issue. He was on a waiting list for many years, as many organ recipients are. At the end of the day, he was successful in getting his transplant, but he had to wait a considerable amount of time.

We can think of the waiting list and how many people are on it, waiting. Back in 2018, the number that was provided through the Canadian Institute for Health Information was 4,351 people who were on the waiting list. If we contrast that number to the number of people who received a transplant, which was 2,782, we can get a sense of the numbers that carry over into the next year, and then new ones are added on. Hank Horner goes all the way back to the mid-1990s, if my memory serves me correctly, and every year there have been significant waiting lists. I do believe there is a need.

It was reported back in 2018 that there were 223 patients who died while on an organ wait-list or waiting for a transplant. I am not a physician by training, but I suspect the correlation would be very high as to why they passed away. The question is, had they received the transplant, would they have survived? I believe the overwhelming response to that question would be yes.

The very legislation we are talking about today matters. It saves lives. That is why I look at the member for Calgary Confederation and I say to my friend that I applaud his efforts in bringing this forward and look forward to its ultimate passage.

• (1150)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is also an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-210, introduced by the member for Calgary Confederation. I understand, based on some of the discussion today, that he had also introduced a similar bill to this one in the last session of Parliament.

I know from my own experiences how challenging it can be to work and navigate through the system and to hit those pitfalls and challenges along the way when trying to introduce a private member's business. However, to have the opportunity to come back and do it again, I really admire the passion the member has shown in his determination to get this issue on the table and in the centre of the public's attention.

When it comes to a tissue and donor registry, as I indicated in the question I had asked earlier, I often wonder why it has taken so long just to get to this stage in having this discussion. I will focus on that for a bit and then I want to talk about the significance of putting this on the tax form and the intuitive way the member has gone about doing this, which I think is really going to highlight the need for this for so many Canadians.

First, I will talk briefly about an experience I had as it relates to organ and tissue donation.

I am not familiar nor do I know of anybody who has received an organ or has had his or her life significantly altered as a result of receiving an organ. However, when I was mayor of Kingston, going back seven or eight years, I was invited to a ceremony at the Providence Motherhouse in Kingston. As politicians, we are invited to so many of these various events and after a while they all start to appear to be the same. However, this one really sticks out in my mem-

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ory. This was an opportunity for people who had received organs from other people to celebrate that they had those organs.

Different speakers spoke about the way that getting the organ had changed their lives and how their lives had been impacted by the new opportunities they had. They talked about their lives before versus after. It truly, for me, was an eye-opener to what it meant to somebody. Sometimes, with the scientific talk and everything that goes on in the medical field, when we learn about these things, we quite often think it is pretty neat and interesting stuff. However, until we start to really hear the stories from the people who are impacted by these changes in medicine and these ways we can now save lives where we never were able to before, until we have the opportunity to experience that, I do not know if we really can appreciate the contribution that something like this has to somebody's life.

I will always remember this, because part of the push at this event was to celebrate the lives saved and to hear the stories, but also to bring about awareness as to why it was so important to ensure that registries existed and that people got on the registries. As we know, it is an opt-in system in most parts, if not all, of Canada, and previous people talk about this, and that is one of the struggles. A lot of people do not want to think about this kind of thing. I will be totally honest with everyone that before I had been to this event, I had never wanted to actually think about dying and what would happen to my organs. It is something I think that, very innately, people do not want to think about, and so people try to push it off and say they will maybe think about it another day.

However, when we consider the impact that we could have in saving lives and the impact it has on the families, as the member for Calgary Confederation mentioned in his speech, of the individuals who have passed on, knowing that they have contributed to another life that has been saved truly, is remarkable.

• (1155)

Going back to this event, I will never forget talking to some people there and thanking them for having invited me. I remember going straight home and telling my wife about this. Because people in Ontario can indicate it on a driver's licence or health card, I immediately signed up as a donor. I knew that if anything was going to happen to me, being totally honest about it and thinking clearly about it, there was nothing I could do to prevent or stop it, but what I could do was improve somebody else's life. Why would we not want to do that? Why would people not have that desire, knowing that if they were in a fatal accident, unfortunately ending their lives, why not use that as a way to improve somebody else's life moving forward?

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I really commend this. I had always wondered why we did not have an opt-in system. My NDP colleague from North Island—Powell River brought the point up about why we did not have a default system where everybody would be in and people could opt out based on personal, religious or any reasons individuals might have. They should have the right to make that choice, but by default, that would put so many more people into the system, people like me who did not want to think about it but when I did, recognized I did not have an issue with this, that it was really a good thing.

What the member for Calgary Confederation has proposed recognizes that we might not be able to have that system given the complexities of the way our provinces work together and with the federal government in whose jurisdiction this might be under. However, it would put this right on the front of a form that Canadians are responsible to fill out every year. If accountants fill this out every year, they will ask their clients how they would like them to check the box off. It would force people to make that decision on an annual basis.

I know that by default, this would generate so much more interest in it and would force people to have to think about it. As I said earlier, I did not want to think about this until I was confronted with the realities of about it. Knowing people will have to think about it and make that decision is important. It puts the onus on individuals to make a decision and this way their families do not have to be put in that position later on. People can declare early on whether they would like their tissue and organs to be donated.

The government spent just under \$37 million in budget 2019 specifically to work on collecting data and putting it together in a more cohesive way so it could be shared throughout the country. Various territories and provinces have been working on this information. If my memory serves me correctly, I believe Quebec is an observer to that and might not be in this group.

All of that aside, this takes on a whole new dynamic, a dynamic that would put this in front of people when they do their tax returns. It is a form that every Canadian has to fill out. Therefore, it is a great opportunity to push this issue and put it at the centre of people's attention.

I want to thank the member for Calgary Confederation for bringing this forward. In minority Parliaments like this, it is very easy to bring other ideas forward, some that might be a lot more partisan and political in nature, but the member has truly hit the nail on the head in finding something that appears to have bipartisan support throughout the House. I applaud him for that.

• (1200)

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would also like to speak briefly on this with the few seconds I have. I certainly am a supporter of an opt-out system.

In a recent conversation, a good friend of mine told me about his heart transplant and the challenges with respect to the waiting period to become a recipient, the disruption to his family life, the financial challenges and so on. It is really challenging for people who depend on someone donating an organ to them. I understand where the member for Calgary Confederation is coming from and I speak

in favour of his bill, because it is truly a great gift to receive that kind of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. member and advise him that he will have nine minutes the next time the House debates the bill.

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.

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• (1205)

[*English*]

ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2020

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-14, An Act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 30, 2020 and other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (for the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance) moved that the bill be concurred in.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent to adopt the motion.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (for the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

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[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to take part in this important debate on Bill C-14, which is set to implement certain aspects of the fall economic statement that was tabled in Parliament a number of months ago. Before I get into the specific measures included in Bill C-14, I think it is important to reflect upon the year we have just been through and the pandemic that very much continues today.

Over the course of the past year, we have seen communities suffer in a way that I had never envisioned I would see in my lifetime. We have also seen communities across Canada respond in a way that is more admirable than I could have possibly imagined just a year and a half ago.

I remember, when COVID-19 first entered our collective vocabulary, the fear I saw in our communities. I remember what it was like to show up at the grocery store and, when the warnings were to keep six feet apart, people were doing their best to keep 20 feet apart. At that point in time, people were showing up wearing the Rubbermaid gloves meant for washing dishes and masks made of whatever they had at the house. This was before there was the opportunity to purchase them.

Perhaps what was most encouraging were the precautions I saw people taking. The behaviours I saw people demonstrating were rarely motivated by self-interest, but instead by an interest to help their neighbours and protect the integrity of our health care system. Warnings were coming through national media about the pressures that were being put on the public health care system in various provinces and the ability to take care of our communities' most vulnerable. I have never been so proud to be a Canadian and to be from the community I come from as when I saw my community members step up to help their neighbours.

I have also been very proud to be part of a government that exhibited that same attitude. I must say, I give full credit to certain members of various political parties who reached out to me in a non-partisan way to demonstrate that they also had ideas they thought would help folks in their community as we were struggling with this pandemic.

Our approach to combat COVID-19 has been first to do whatever we can to quell the spread of the virus as quickly as possible and, second, to support Canadian households and businesses so they will still be here to contribute to the recovery when it is over. The fall economic statement implements portions of that plan. Of course, in the early days of the pandemic, when Parliament was not sitting in the way that it typically does, we advanced a series of measures that were designed to keep people afloat.

I am thinking of CERB, which reached the kitchen tables of over nine million Canadians; the wage subsidy, which has kept over five million Canadians on the payroll at their work; and programs such as the Canada emergency business account, which has helped nearly one million businesses literally keep the lights on and the doors open. These are important programs that I anticipate will be viewed

quite favourably when history shines a light on the economic response that Canada has put forward in this global pandemic.

I will now turn my attention to the specific bill before the House of Commons, Bill C-14. There are a number of specific measures included in this bill, but largely they play into the strategy that I described at the outset of my remarks, which is to help diminish the spread of COVID-19 in our communities, particularly among vulnerable members of the public, and to support households and businesses as we continue to weather the storm, so they can contribute fully to the economic recovery when the time is right to do so.

The first policy I will draw members' attention to is the Canada child benefit. This was a marquee campaign commitment from our 2015 election. I will point out that I have recently seen data that indicated that the Canada child benefit has now helped lift more than 435,000 Canadian children out of poverty. That is something I am extraordinarily proud of, but there is still work to do.

When I look at the child poverty numbers in my home province of Nova Scotia, I find it unacceptable that any child goes without the food they need, or are in a household where parents, through no fault of their own, may not be able to afford the very basics so many of us take for granted. That is why I am supportive of this particular measure to increase the Canada child benefit up to \$1,200 per child under six this calendar year.

Importantly, the pay periods of January and April have now passed, which means that as soon as this bill achieves royal assent, we can expect the increased child Canada benefit payments will flow to Canadian families this year.

● (1210)

This is the kind of thing that not only helps lift children out of poverty, but also helps with the increased cost of child care, which many families are dealing with. I can speak first-hand about the difficulty in trying to arrange ad hoc child care with a five-year-old at home who attends the pre-primary program in Nova Scotia some days of the week but not others. Finding someone to step in can be a challenge for parents. I know that this increase of up to \$1,200 to the Canada child benefit this year would make that a little easier for a whole lot of families.

I also want to draw attention to the change to the regional relief and recovery fund. In my mind, one of the strengths of our pandemic response, and I have heard this from constituents from the early days of the pandemic, was a willingness to consider the initial policy design and make changes as we realized the circumstances demanded such changes.

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At the outset of this pandemic we launched a number of programs that have developed over time. A great example of this is the increase of the initial version of the wage subsidy from 10% to 75%. I am thinking of changes such as increasing the Canada emergency business account, which was initially from \$40,000 with \$10,000 forgivable, and is now \$60,000, of which \$20,000 is forgivable.

Some of the changes we are looking to make in the scale and scope of the Canada emergency benefit require a legislative change to help those businesses that may not have been eligible to seek access to the regional relief and recovery fund through regional development agencies. The bill would align those two programs to ensure that if a business did not access CEBA, but could access the regional relief and recovery fund, it would benefit largely from the same terms under either program. We heard testimony at the finance committee specifically indicating that as soon as the bill achieves royal assent, that money could flow to businesses in need to help them keep their lights on.

There are a few other programs I would like to draw to members' attention, and before I turn to certain public health measures, perhaps I will look at one other along the lines of direct support for individuals. Long before I came into federal politics, my first foray was as a university student. I was the student union president at my undergraduate university, StFX. One of the things I took on in that role was to become an advocate in federal politics for policies I felt would benefit students. I remember sitting across the table from MPs in Ottawa when I was a student in Antigonish asking for certain measures to be adopted that would make life easier for students and young professionals.

One of the things we always looked for was relief on the interest that accrued for students who had Canada student loans. A similar issue faces students at community colleges or polytechnics who may have accessed a Canada apprenticeship loan. One of the changes in the bill would put an end to interest accruing this year on the loans they may hold through federal programs.

Given the disproportionate and negative impact that COVID-19 has had on the economic prospects of young people right across Canada, this is good policy. This is something that is going to make life a little more affordable for young people as they embark on their careers.

I want to turn the House's attention to some of the public health measures included in Bill C-14 because we know they are the right thing to do to fight the virus, but they are also the smart thing to do from an economic perspective. Recent data indicate that the best economic strategy we can adopt is to advance a significant public health response and try to achieve a zero-incidence rate of COVID in our communities.

I point out in particular, being from Nova Scotia, that we have had some real success in managing the COVID-19 pandemic compared to some of our counterparts in different regions of Canada. In my community, I can still take my daughter to swimming lessons. In fact, I have to do that this evening after we wrap up in the House. I can still visit with friends up to our gathering limits without social distancing and without masks. We still choose in many instances to take those precautions.

Businesses by and large remain open, despite very serious early shutdowns and the public response has really shown that they have bought into the idea that we need to continue to take care of one another during this time of emergency. While I say it is also a sound economic policy, members do not need to take my word for it. We can look directly to the recent labour force survey results, which come out each month. The reason I argue this is because it is true.

• (1215)

Nova Scotia has now reached 100% of its pre-pandemic job levels. That would not be possible if we did not have such a strong public health response to COVID-19. It makes sense, of course, that when businesses must close down in order to protect the public's health, the jobs located in those businesses will disappear from the labour force survey. However, if they initially took the smart step to lockdown when it was appropriate to do so, and then continued to monitor community spread diligently, then there would be the opportunity to safely operate in their communities.

Those strategies benefit from serious federal investments through the safe restart agreement with the provinces. They benefit from serious investments and things such as rapid testing and personal protective equipment. They seriously benefit as well from some of the economic measures we have extended to support households and businesses. Those measures, collectively, have allowed certain provinces to do what may have seemed like a difficult thing at a time, but what was the right thing and ultimately has been proven to be the smart thing.

Specific to Bill C-14, there are certain public health measures that will continue to enhance the public health response to COVID-19 across Canada, but will also contribute to our ability to enter the recovery phase more quickly. Specifically, I want to draw members' attention to the issues around long-term care.

The deaths we have seen in our long-term care facilities across Canada have been nothing short of a national tragedy. I think everyone in the chamber, whether present virtually or in person, knows someone who has been impacted by the spread of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities. I take everyone at their word that they want to address this issue when they say so. This bill is going to advance in excess of \$500 million toward our long-term care facilities. It will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 among the vulnerable populations who live in those facilities.

However, that is not the only public health measure included in this particular bill. Before COVID-19 was something that we had heard about, health care was the number one priority for my constituents. By and large, after being asking time and time again, this was an absolute priority. In particular, mental health and access to family doctors were at the very top of that list.

This bill would not necessarily solve the shortcomings in the provincial health care system when it comes to accessing primary care or expanding support for mental health, but it will make a difference in the short term in a few very particular ways. This bill specifically is going to advance \$133 million toward virtual care and mental health care.

One of the things that I would urge people to do is this. If someone has never used virtual care, telehealth, or an online portal for mental health, it is easy to dismiss them as being less than having a person in the room with them. For some people, in-person care is essential, but there are others who will be able to access the quality of care they need virtually.

I will give an example of telehealth, in particular, that I heard from my own community recently. It was in response to a comment about how these 1-800 numbers for certain health care do not really make the difference that certain people would like to see. The response came from the executive director of a local non-profit. She cited Kids Help Phone as one of those mental health supports offered through a 1-800 number.

She explained to a room filled with people who were actively questioning the value of these telehealth opportunities that when a child calls Kids Help Phone, they often do not know where to turn. They do not have any other options, but they are not met with an operator or a robot on the other side who does not understand what they are going through or what resources may exist locally. In fact, in this instance, the person on the other side of that call said, “I know of a local non-profit in your community. It's a few blocks from you. You can go down and speak to a person who's going to find an adult who can help with the situation that you're dealing with.” I will reserve any details about who these individuals were for sake of their privacy.

At the end of the day, access to that telehealth option provided a young person in my community with access to a professional who they were able to deal with and they continue to maintain a relationship with today. That is a positive outcome from embracing telehealth.

• (1220)

I have spoken with many people who have now dealt directly with a physician over a video call or through a simple text or phone call. The Wellness Together portal, which has been advanced with the support of federal money through this pandemic, has provided access to a huge number of Canadians who can conduct self-assessments and gain access to a professional if needed. I would encourage anyone who might be struggling with mental health or substance use to check out the Wellness Together portal that has been made available online through this pandemic, because it has helped a significant number of Canadians already.

My hope is that some of the measures outlined in this bill and our pandemic response actually survive the pandemic. I am from a province that has historically had fewer family doctors than we would like to have, and I envision one day being able to create the opportunity for someone who lacks access to primary care in Nova Scotia to reach out to a doctor in western Canada who is looking for patients, and to access their services for basic prescriptions or referrals virtually. These are the kinds of innovations that may stem from this pandemic that would provide a long-term systemic benefit for Canadians right across our country.

Our pandemic response has been expensive, but inaction would have been more expensive. We know that to do the right thing, we had to make serious investments to keep businesses afloat, keep workers on payrolls, keep families fed and ensure that provinces

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had access to the testing or personal protective equipment that they needed.

There is a light at the end of the tunnel now, as we get closer to vaccine appointments. I think my parents are scheduled for theirs later this week, which is deeply encouraging, I must say, though I live in an area that has a relatively low number of cases. To see family members, friends, neighbours and particularly the most vulnerable members, front-line workers in the health care system and in retail, start to see the end coming is deeply encouraging.

However, we are not there yet. We need to continue to advance the kinds of supports that are outlined in Bill C-14. It has been a pleasure, once again, to speak on this important piece of legislation. My hope is that this will pass unanimously in Parliament so that Canadians can access the supports they so desperately need. It would help protect our health and our economy in the long run.

• (1225)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the very important aspects of this bill that the member neglected to comment on is the fact that it would actually increase the country's debt limit from roughly \$1.1 trillion to \$1.8 trillion. This is a sum equivalent to Canada's total combined debt in history, from Confederation to 2020.

Does the member not think, in the spirit of good governance, that a matter of this import should be debated and voted upon in a separate bill?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, the short answer is no.

The long answer is that I agree it is important, but I do not think its inclusion in a fairly modest piece of legislation, which has only a few parts, diminishes the ability of parliamentarians to debate it, particularly given the extensive debate that it has received on the floor of the House of Commons and the delay that has cost about four months in its passage.

Good governance demands that we monitor the spending of the Government of Canada, and that we plan for it accordingly.

If the member is arguing that the debt limit should not be increased because we should be limiting government spending, I would ask the member to make that argument directly. It is clear to me, frankly, that the Conservative position seems to be to cheapen the economic response to the pandemic when our decision has been to invest in Canadians.

The reality is that the pandemic created serious costs. The government made the decision to cover those costs and is planning accordingly for the future. We laid out all the details, by the way, in our fall economic statement—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his speech. We will absolutely vote in favour of this bill because action is needed.

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However, we all know that this bill does not address everything. We could speak at length about health transfers, but I want to call the parliamentary secretary's attention to the tourism and cultural sectors, and in particular the sugar shack sector, which have received little to no support so far. I have already asked the parliamentary secretary about this issue, and I appreciated having a meeting to discuss it.

Where do things stand? Is progress being made? Can the parliamentary secretary give us any hope ahead of the upcoming budget?

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, this piece of legislation includes certain measures that were included in the fall economic statement. It is not meant to be a comprehensive outline of the government's public health response throughout the pandemic or going forward. Of course, the budget will have more to say. I note in particular the recent announcement by the government to advance \$4 billion directly to the provinces for the provision of health care, given that this burden has rested on the provinces.

The tourism and transport piece is perhaps a separate conversation. The crux of his question was about the *ma cabane à la maison* initiative, which I did have the opportunity to meet with him on. I can spoil no secrets about the upcoming budget. I will mention that I had the opportunity, following our meeting, to connect directly with the Minister of Finance's team. I have seen the Prime Minister drawing attention to the initiative, and I would be happy to continue to work with my colleague as further updates become available.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government typically puts in measures that help with the pandemic and then it overreaches. The overreach is in one of its first pieces of legislation: It asked for unfettered spending for almost two years. With this particular piece, there is absolutely important support. However, then it asks for \$1.8 trillion in terms of the debt level. This is much more than it says it plans on borrowing to fund its activities for the next few years.

How can it justify asking for the ability to borrow \$1.8 trillion when, according to its plans, it is not going to need that kind of money? Are the Liberals being disingenuous in terms of their plans, or are they again overreaching like they typically do?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I do not view this to be an overreach in any way, shape or form. The details of our spending plan have been laid out in the fall economic statement, including a variety of different potential scenarios.

I point out that in 2016, we passed a piece of legislation in Parliament that mandated a review periodically of the federal government's borrowing limit. The time has come to consider that limit and frankly, given what has transpired in the past year, it is obvious to me that we should be planning for the future and not setting the buffer exactly where the intended spending ought to be. That would not be a sound policy decision.

We know the COVID-19 pandemic has created an immense cost. The government was better positioned to cover some of the costs to society than individual households or businesses would have been, and I would stand by the investments we have made to keep households and businesses afloat through this pandemic.

• (1230)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the member about the clause in Bill C-14 that is authorizing a health-related payment of about \$64 million for mental health and substance abuse. Investment in this area is very welcome, especially for communities like mine. However, it seems that when the government has opportunities to do big, bold things to finally tackle the opioid crisis, such as declaring a national health emergency or even Bill C-22, the recent justice bill, they are full of half measures.

To this day, with all the statistics in place, why has the government not taken the big, bold steps to finally confront and put an end to the opioid crisis, which is ravaging so many small communities like mine?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I sincerely appreciate my colleague's advocacy on this issue, not just today but over the past number of years. It is important to reflect upon the opioid crisis, which is a massive problem that is perhaps, in some regions, underappreciated in its severity. We may not see the concentrations of case numbers they have in his community, but nevertheless we are suffering serious consequences as a result of addiction.

We have been trying to work with the provinces to advance funds for mental health support. In Nova Scotia alone, as part of our 10-year agreement, we reached a funding arrangement that saw \$130 million that must be spent directly on mental health in the province. If the province believes tackling the opioid crisis with that money is the best thing to do, then we will be there with them. We do not want to substitute exclusively our own priorities for those of the provinces but we will—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his speech.

I noticed that he described the work that has been done since the start of the crisis as admirable. I would not want to underestimate certain measures that have made a difference since the crisis hit, but, with all due respect, I find it less admirable that the government has been unable to adapt to the changing situation. The economic update came out last fall, and now it is spring. The pandemic has evolved and some sectors, such as aerospace and tourism, have received no direct assistance. They were forgotten then and are being forgotten now.

What solutions will the government offer in the next budget to help these sectors be part of the recovery, as the parliamentary secretary was saying?

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[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, it may be outside the scope of Bill C-14, but that does not mean it is outside the scope of what the government is working on. When we tabled the fall economic statement, I did not anticipate there would be a need to continue to debate the fall economic statement in the following spring. Unfortunately, there has been a series of delays for this bill, which I believe were for largely partisan reasons, although the member's party agreed with us in that regard.

For sectors such as aerospace, transportation and tourism, certain measures have had significant benefits. The wage subsidy is a perfect example, and we put forward HASCAP to specifically tackle some of these problems.

We know more work needs to be done. I had the opportunity to meet with the aerospace sector, and I meet frequently with tourism associations in my own community. I will be looking forward to the upcoming budget to identify further opportunities for assistance to those hardest-hit sectors.

• (1235)

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to add a little more to this debate.

I just wanted to begin by sharing with the parliamentary secretary that what we as parliamentarians are doing in the House in debating and reviewing Bill C-14 is scrutiny and oversight, which is the role of the official opposition, and we are unapologetic about doing that. I want to start off by saying that we fully support parts 1 through 6 of Bill C-14, which would continue to provide Canadians with the critical support they need as they try to make it through this pandemic. The challenge is that, as Liberals are wont to do, they have also added the most massive borrowing increase in Canada's history to that bill. The parliamentary secretary suggested that these social program modifications are fairly modest and really should not prevent us from debating this, but this is the largest, most historic increase in Canada's debt ceiling and borrowing capacity ever, so that should provide Canadians with the context in which to judge this bill.

What is it that Canadians are looking for from the government, now that we are slowly moving through the vaccination stage? Canadians are looking forward and asking when the end is going to come. I would suggest that Canadians are looking for hope and confidence for their future and the future of their children and their grandchildren, of which I have 11 and another one on the way, and even their great-grandchildren down the road. Do they have a prosperous future to look forward to? That is the question I believe Canadians need answered.

By the way, they are not asking for the Prime Minister to reimagine the economy. They are not asking for the Prime Minister to build back better. Every single Canadian I have spoken to simply wants a return to some level of normalcy. They want their lives, their jobs, their small businesses, their communities and their places of worship back. They are not looking for the Prime Minister to foist a massive new social and economic experiment on them. Again, they want life to return to normal. That is it.

Would Bill C-14 do that? Would it give Canadians that hope? So far, I have sadly concluded that it does not. Bill C-14 would implement the government's fall economic statement. That statement does include additional supports for Canadians who need help to make it through the pandemic. By the way, we support those benefits, as we have every single other COVID-related benefit program the government has brought forward. We have stood shoulder to shoulder with the government in saying that Canadians need and deserve that support.

The problem is that the government has paid absolutely no attention to the long-term plan for our economy. What does our long-term future look like as a country? We know that the government failed to deliver a budget for over two years. In fact, Canada was the only G7 country not to deliver a budget over the last two years. The provinces and territories delivered budgets, yet the government's excuse was that we are in the middle of a COVID pandemic, so delivering a budget has no value. Actually, it is in the middle of a pandemic and the greatest economic crisis this country has faced since at least the Great Depression that is exactly when we should have had a budget and a plan for our economy, and sadly the Prime Minister did not deliver on that responsibility.

In the meantime, Canadians have been in the dark about what the future holds. They are asking for a plan to reopen our economy and to get Canadians back to work, and to support small businesses as they struggle to get back on their feet.

• (1240)

Members should know that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has made it very clear that there are some 240,000 small businesses that could very well be permanently shut down by the end of this COVID pandemic. We know that the million-plus small businesses in our country are the great job creators. Effectively, if 20% to 25% of those businesses are eliminated, it will dramatically undermine job creation going forward.

Let me talk very briefly about the seven parts of this bill. Quite frankly, Conservatives are in support of the first six parts. For example, part 1 would implement increases to the Canada child benefit, which I am sure families would welcome. It also addresses serious design flaws in the rent subsidy program to finally allow commercial and industrial tenants to receive some relief before they pay their rent. The irony was that, in the middle of this pandemic when tenants did not have the cash to pay their rent up front, they were being told they would not get support until after they paid their rent. This legislation would address that serious design flaw. There are other things in the bill as well that Conservatives support, such as eliminating interest on Canada student loans and Canada apprentice loans for one year and authorizing the Governor in Council to make regulations to seek additional information from companies about food, drugs and medical devices.

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In short, the six parts of the Bill C-14 fall economic statement effectively introduce, modify and improve programs that the government brought forward and that we as the official opposition are fully supportive of. Of course, like all things Liberal, there is always a catch. In this case it is part 7 of the bill. As my colleague from Winnipeg has just mentioned, the Prime Minister is asking Parliament to approve a historic, massive increase in the debt ceiling, in other words, the line of credit that the government has available to it. The government wants to increase that by \$663 billion, almost one-quarter of a trillion dollars. That is massive.

Before any parliamentarian should ever provide their support to that kind of an increase, they should be asking what this borrowing capacity is going to be used for. We have to consider this in the context of the fact that the Liberal government has been chastised by the Parliamentary Budget Officer for not being transparent in its spending endeavours. Every time it brings forward a spending bill, it refuses to explain to Canadians exactly how that money will be deployed. Parliamentarians do not have the ability to exercise proper scrutiny and oversight. The PBO identified that and said that the government is not transparent.

Why should we trust the government when it now says it wants another \$663 billion? I was at committee when we were asking questions of the Minister of Finance. We expressly asked her to please tell us what this additional \$663 billion is needed for and where it will be deployed. All she did was refer Canadians to one chart in the fall economic statement. She said to go and look at that, all Canadians have that available. Most Canadians are not going to go looking for the fall economic statement to find the one chart that actually did not show where she was spending the money. It simply showed how much money she was asking to borrow. We deserve better as a country.

Another thing is signalled in this fall economic statement and that is a \$100-billion stimulus fund that the Minister of Finance has suggested might be required for Canada to get through the pandemic. Again, at committee, we asked very expressly if she could tell us what this stimulus fund is all about. She talks about \$100 billion, asks us to trust her and so far she had been unwilling to provide any transparency on where that money might be deployed. Now she had an opportunity. She would not tell us. Would that money go into productivity-enhancing investments like hard infrastructure? Was it going to go into soft infrastructure? She would not say. She made vague references to guardrails, supposed rules that she was going to put in place to ensure that there were triggers that would allow it to slowly ease this money into our economy. The problem is that the economists have all pointed out that she has been so vague about what those guardrails are all about that it is impossible for anyone to exercise any kind of oversight over this \$100 billion of additional spending. Those same economists have also sounded a precautionary note.

● (1245)

The government's \$100 billion stimulus must take into account inflationary pressures. When we pump \$100 billion into the economy in a short period of time, it means there are more dollars chasing the same number of goods, and that could lead to inflationary pressures. When the central bank, the Bank of Canada, senses that there are inflationary pressures, it increases interest rates.

If Canadians across the country knew right now that there was a significant risk of interest rate increases, a lot of them would be panicking, because they got into this incredibly expensive housing market upon the condition that interest rates would stay low. However, if we pump more and more stimulus into the economy, that will stoke the fires of inflation, and it gets worse.

Economists have also warned the government and the finance minister that the government needs to take note of the massive stimulus that the American government is pumping into its economy. It is a \$1.9 trillion stimulus plan into the American economy. Layered on top of that is a \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan, which adds even more stimulus to the economy. When that economy starts being stimulated, that sloshes over the border into Canada. It impacts economic growth, but it can overheat economic growth and again stoke inflationary pressures.

Layered on top of all that is something that is counterintuitive. Even though we have come through the worst pandemic in our lifetime, the worst economic crisis in my lifetime, we have a situation where we have record amounts of savings on both the household side and the corporate side in Canada, savings that are eventually going to be pumped back into our economy, injected as stimulus. Therefore, when we add all this stimulus together, the government has to be very wary of adding another \$100 billion to that.

This is an unprecedented crisis, but Canadians want hope and they want confidence for the future. They want to know that the Prime Minister and the finance minister have a plan to safely reopen our economy. That includes safely reopening our common border with the United States, because we have somewhere in the order of \$2 billion in trade crossing our border every single day. The U.S. is by far our largest trade partner. Therefore, I encourage the government, as it is moving toward tabling a budget, its first budget in over two years, to ensure that the budget includes a clear plan going forward to safely reopen our economy, and that will require Canadians to be properly vaccinated.

What is the plan? The current plan has been a bit of a boondoggle. I think Canadians are understanding that. We need a plan to safely reopen our economy to get Canadians back to work, to help small businesses get back up on their feet and to manage this massive new debt that the government has incurred on Canadians' behalf. There has to be a management plan, which includes strong fiscal anchors, rules and guidelines by which the government will be guided as we emerge from the pandemic and struggle to get a grip on this massive financial obligation with which we will burden future generations of Canadians.

We are fully supportive of parts 1 through 6 of the bill. It is part 7, the massive increase in borrowing, we cannot support, especially when the minister has been unable or unwilling to explain how that additional borrowing capacity, some \$663 billion, will be deployed going forward.

Canadians are fair, reasonable, generous people. All they are looking for is ethical and competent leadership, transparent leadership, to help them emerge from this crisis. So far, they have not been getting it, and they deserve better.

• (1250)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is April 12 and we are still discussing the fall economic statement that was introduced on November 30 of last year.

The member started off his speech by telling us about how important it was for the opposition to critically look at every piece of legislation, and rightfully so. There is definitely a role and a responsibility to do that. My sense is that it will only be the Conservatives speaking until this bill eventually comes to a vote.

Then the member proceeded to talk about how he supported parts 1 through 6, basically all the very important measures for Canadians, but then does not support the measure that actually pays for it all.

Could the member explain to the House how he, if he were finance minister, as I am sure he aspires to be one day given his new role, would pay for everything that he supports in the bill without having to borrow the money to do that right now?

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I am sad that the member did not follow the proceedings of the finance committee, where we reviewed Bill C-14.

At finance committee, we very clearly made it known that we were supportive of an increase in the debt ceiling to accommodate the current spending that the government had told us it had already blown through the previous debt ceiling, so we knew what the spending looked like. We were prepared to accommodate the spending we are discussing today in the fall economic statement, but we said that the amount that was in excess of that, some \$300 billion that the minister refused to provide any insight on, refusing to explain where it might be deployed, we just could not support—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague touched on the issue of housing. Quebec is currently in the grips of a vicious, chronic housing crisis. Rent in Montreal is very high. It is hard to find housing for less than \$1,000 a month. For families with more than two or three children, there is practically nothing available.

In Saint-Hyacinthe and Granby, the vacancy rates are 0.3% and 0.2%. It is outrageous.

Does my colleague not think it is high time for the government to invest heavily in social housing to help the people most affected by this housing crisis?

• (1255)

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, it is time for us to look at how we address the current housing bubble in Canada. It is up to the

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Liberal government, in its upcoming budget, to come up with a plan to address the incredibly expensive housing market in Canada.

Let me add that the solution is not to tax home equity as some Liberals have suggested. We know, as we speak, that CMHC is conducting a study on taxing the equity in principal residences. The government has denied it has any plans to tax home equity. We should not kid ourselves. The Prime Minister has made many promises and denials before, but has always been found wanting.

The number one challenge with housing in Canada is, of course, a lack of supply. There are many other factors as well. It is up to the Liberal government and the finance minister to table a plan to address the housing crisis in the upcoming budget. To that extent, I agree with the member.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, the New Democrats are also concerned about how we are going to pay back the deficit we are running right now during this crisis. In fact, I received a message from Paul, a local health worker, last night. He is worried he will end up having to pay for the costs of repayment of the deficit.

As New Democrats, we put forward a proposal to tax the super-rich, the multi-millionaires who hold wealth of over \$20 million and the biggest corporations that have had excessive profits during this pandemic. We are not talking about the local bike shops. We are talking about the big banks and the largest corporations. However, the Conservatives and the Liberals voted against our proposal. They want this deficit to be left on the backs of everyday Canadians.

When will the Conservatives stop defending the big banks and Canada's largest corporations and the super-rich, who have benefited and profited from this pandemic, and get them to pay instead of leaving it on the shoulders of everyday Canadians?

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I completely disagree with the premise of that member's question, but I would point him to what is the greatest generator of prosperity in Canada, and it is not going to be taxing Canadians to death. It is going to be generating economic growth, putting in place the key drivers of economic growth: investing in our productivity, investing in the competitiveness of the Canadian economy and ensuring our tax environment is one that attracts foreign investment rather than chases away foreign investment the way it has been chased away under the Liberal government.

We, as Conservatives, will be coming forward with a plan for our economy. It will be a plan that focuses on economic growth and one that is going to ensure that future generations of Canadians have a prospect of prosperity, a prosperous future for themselves and their families.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, in listening to my hon. colleague from Abbotsford, one would be hard pressed to know the overlap between our health and COVID and the health of our economy.

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I am still waiting for a vaccination. How we get our vaccination is provincial jurisdiction and how they are purchased is federal jurisdiction. In the course of this debate, how do we insist businesses reopen when it seems increasingly clear that we are in a third wave where our focus should be on public health and ensuring we stop thinking we can bend the curve but actually slam it down to zero?

• (1300)

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, if the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands looks at the opposition day motion that asked for the Liberal government to come up with a proper plan to reopen the economy, she will notice the words “safely and gradually” prefaced the word “reopening” the economy. We are in favour of reopening the economy, but only if it can be done safely and gradually.

However, we have not seen any plan from the Liberal government at all. The one plan it had for rolling out vaccines has been badly botched. We are falling way behind other developed countries in the world. We are last in the G7. We are, I think, 52nd in the world. That is not a record of which I would be proud.

We need the government come up with a plan to restore and protect the health of Canadians and also restore—

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

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I cannot help but feel the hon. member across the way is very out of touch with the business community. As past president of the Guelph Chamber of Commerce, someone who was on the board of the Downtown Business Association and was a board member on the Guelph-Wellington Business Enterprise Centre board and an Innovation Guelph co-founder, I have not found one business that says delaying talking about legislation is a good strategy to support businesses.

For four months, we have been trying to get to the point of discussing this bill. Could the hon. member maybe highlight why this was a good strategy that the Conservatives employed to try to stop us from talking about this legislation and therefore stopping supporting our businesses in our communities?

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I have absolutely no idea what he is talking about. He is suggesting that somehow this delay happened.

I noticed today that the Liberals were debating this very bill. If they were so intent on getting this bill passed, why do they continue to debate and debate in the House? The hypocrisy is jaw-dropping. I will repeat what I included in my earlier comments. The role of an official opposition, which the member obviously does not understand, is oversight and to exercise scrutiny over the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Joliette.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, this is unbelievable. It is April 12, and we are still debating Bill C-14, which implements certain measures announced in the fall economic statement. We are still debating this many months after the economic statement was presented.

Part 1 of Bill C-14 deals with the children's special allowances program and corrects a problem regarding the Canada emergency rent subsidy. We support that.

Parts 2, 3 and 4 of the bill temporarily eliminate interest on the federal portion of Canada student loans. Quebec is being compensated. We support that.

Part 5 aims to prevent shortages of therapeutic products. Once again, of course we support that.

Part 6 authorizes payments to be made from the consolidated revenue fund, specifically for the regional relief and recovery fund, to support the economy. We support that.

Part 7 of the bill raised some questions and concerns. With that part, the government is asking to significantly increase Canada's debt limit. The current limit is \$1.168 trillion, and the government wants that increased to \$1.831 trillion. Those are astronomical figures.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer spoke about that at the finance committee. The answers he provided confirmed what I had read and believed: This is not about providing spending authority, but about increasing the debt ceiling. He stated that every expenditure proposed by the government should be voted on in the House. There could not be any shenanigans during an election, which could come sooner rather than later, when the government would ask the chief justice, who is standing in for the Governor General, to support other new spending. This part thus seeks to increase the debt ceiling.

This is similar to what we often see in the United States, where the Republican Party's strategy is to limit the government's spending capacity to the extent that it is no longer able to pay civil servants and has to shut down entire segments of the public service, something we do not want to do. Of course, that is not what would happen in the Canadian system. If such a situation were to occur, an election would be called. I do not think that we would want to call an election for that reason during a pandemic.

Yes, this is a hair-raising amount, but it is an authorization to increase the maximum amount that the government can borrow to cover future expenses. Now, the budget will be tabled on Monday. We expect it will include a major recovery plan. I am looking forward to studying and analyzing it to see if it will meet Quebec's wants and needs. The money is to cover those future expenses.

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I would like to take the government to task for a few things. To my knowledge, setting a debt limit and making us vote on it before we see the spending plan is a relatively new approach. I am not against the idea, but I think the Minister of Finance should have taken the time to talk to all the political parties and finance critics to really clarify all this. Lawmakers who are analyzing the government's pandemic response need reassurance. They need to be certain that everything is above board, that they have a clear understanding of what is being done and that nobody is pulling the wool over anyone's eyes, which has happened since the start of the pandemic.

The government has never spent as much as it did last year, and some of that spending is certainly debatable. Did the government systematically use a rigorous approach or standard? The answer is no. We need only look at the WE scandal or Frank Baylis's high-priced ventilators, which did not find any takers because they do not suit the needs of the health care system.

Then there is the wage subsidy. There is not one word in the bill about the political parties using the wage subsidy. Using the wage subsidy to refill party coffers is unethical. The Bloc is the only party that did not touch this subsidy because we thought that would be unethical. I would remind my colleagues from all the other parties that this was inappropriate. The government has to be transparent.

Part 7 seeks to raise the borrowing limit. The government could have communicated its intention better and not dilly-dally for months. It makes no sense.

• (1305)

Once again, the Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-14, which clearly does not mark the end of the COVID-19-related economic measures. As I was saying, we are looking forward to the government tabling its first budget since it was elected, which it plans to do on Monday. It has been over two years since the federal government has tabled a budget, and that is unacceptable. We understand that the government was under tremendous pressure and had to react quickly to the pandemic by developing programs and holding consultations. However, the pandemic has been going on for over a year now. That may have been a reason for the budget to be a bit late, but it is not a reason for the government to fail to meet its obligations, which is what I think it has done by not tabling a budget for two years.

Obviously, in order for the Bloc Québécois to support the budget, the budget will have to meet the needs of Quebecers, in accordance with our demands. There are no surprises there, since the government is well aware of what we want. I have already presented our demands to the Minister of Finance, and my leader will reiterate them to the Prime Minister today.

The Bloc Québécois's budget expectations include better health care funding for the provinces, with no strings attached. That is what the Government of Quebec and the Council of the Federation want too. Studies conducted by the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Conference Board of Canada show that health care spending is skyrocketing, pandemic or no pandemic. The provinces are the ones that have to cover those costs, and Ottawa is not contributing as much as it should. We want Ottawa to play catch up. If it

does not, the provinces' financial situation will be untenable in the short and medium term and will even get worse in the long term.

The amounts announced in Bill C-14 are woefully insufficient to rectify this situation. The Council of the Federation, which includes all provinces, wants Ottawa to increase its share of health care costs to 35%. When this program was originally created, Ottawa was to cover 50% of the costs, matching the provinces dollar for dollar in the interest of fairness.

Another thing we want to see in the budget and did not see in Bill C-14 is better support for seniors. This is something we have been calling for and waiting for since the last election. For decades now, old age security payments have failed to keep pace with inflation or the average salary. This benefit was originally meant to be commensurate with a percentage of the average salary, and we want to bring these payments back in line with that percentage. It is a matter of fairness and dignity for seniors. Simply put, we are proposing that old age security benefits be increased by \$110 a month.

In the last election, for some unfathomable reason, the Liberals decided to do that, but only for people aged 75 and older. Come on. Why would they want to create two classes of seniors, those 65 to 74 years old and those 75 and older? It is a matter of dignity. Although seniors are not complaining, we can see in our ridings that they are struggling, especially those who depend on that income to live with dignity. Housing and food costs have gone up, especially during the pandemic, when seniors cannot go out and do their shopping themselves. We need to ensure that all seniors aged 65 and over are treated fairly.

For goodness' sake, let us stop dividing seniors into two classes. Over the weekend, the Liberals voted for that increase to come into effect at age 70. That is a step in the right direction, but it is not good enough. There is only one class of seniors: people aged 65 and older.

In addition, the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency rent subsidy are all well and good, but we need programs targeting particularly hard-hit sectors, such as the aerospace sector, which Canada has abandoned, unlike other countries around the world with major aerospace industries that have all set up programs. Nobody in government recognized the strategic value of supporting an extremely profitable industry.

The same goes for our airlines, the tourism sector and travel agencies in my riding and elsewhere, whose employees I have met with. They are going through really tough times and need a helping hand. Also on my mind a lot is the cultural sector. We can be proud of our creative industry, which generates economic spin-offs, but lockdowns have hit it harder than ever. We cannot afford to lose this sector. Culture is good for our souls. It shows us who we are. We have to support this sector and buoy it up, not give up on it. Another sector having a very hard time is local and regional media, which plays such an important role. Times are tough.

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• (1310)

To come back to next week's budget, last fall, the Minister of Finance announced \$70 billion to \$100 billion for her economic recovery plan. Meanwhile, in the United States, the Biden administration has a \$1.9-trillion recovery plan. Again, these are astronomical figures. There is much debate over whether such a plan is justified or not. The Bloc Québécois position will depend on what we see in the plan and whether this plan sets the stage for tomorrow's economy.

I am thinking about the green economy. Quebec is all set for this shift. The climate crisis is the most significant crisis, and we have to pivot to a green economy. We need to see that in the finance minister's budget and her recovery plan. There also needs to be support for our flagship sectors and our regions, of course.

The past year and next week's budget are going to cost a fortune, a colossal amount. Over the past few decades, or even the past century, economists have taught us that the least painful solution during a recession or a major crisis is to take carefully targeted action in order to relaunch the economy and eventually reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio. We know that Ottawa's debt has exploded during this pandemic, which is concerning, and I would like to take the government to task over that. It will have to act on this sooner rather than later, starting with a fairer tax system.

The pandemic gave an unprecedented advantage to web giants like Amazon, which were the big winners last year. While our local businesses struggled and fought to survive, many people began buying from web giants by ordering online for home delivery.

However, the Liberal government in Ottawa is still not taxing transactions with web giants. Come on. There was an announcement about this, but no action has been taken yet. Consequently, throughout the entire pandemic, Amazon and the other web giants were able to benefit from this advantage. Furthermore, these giants do not pay income taxes. Discussions are being held about potentially instituting a levy that would be equivalent to an income tax, but this measure is even further off. The pandemic gave all the advantage to web giants, and Ottawa did not even ask them to contribute. That must change, and it must change now. We can never make up for what was lost this past year because of a failure to take responsibility.

Local businesses here in downtown Joliette and all across Quebec and Canada are struggling or shutting down. It makes me sick to see the Prime Minister acting like he is down-to-earth while putting web giants ahead of small, independent businesses that are struggling. It makes no sense. We should be putting local businesses first and, at the very least, requiring web giants to follow the same rules. How has this not been done yet? This is unacceptable, and it needs to change.

Speaking of missing revenue, I think the government should be taking a harder stance on tax havens than it has so far. The fight against tax evasion and tax avoidance is a global concern, but Canada has made no progress in a little over five years, since the current Liberal government and Prime Minister came to power. Notwithstanding the lofty rhetoric from the Minister of National Revenue, Canada has an abominable record and is in a class of its

own compared to the rest of the world and other countries in the G7 and the OECD. This needs to change. It is ridiculous.

I will give an example that was reported on by the CBC about a week ago, I think. Five years ago, the Panama papers came to light. Every country conducted an investigation into this worldwide scheme, leading to criminal charges and convictions. As I recall, the United Kingdom recovered over \$300 billion and Germany recovered nearly \$250 billion. The Panama papers therefore made it possible to recover hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars. However, Canada recovered only \$21 million. How many cases here resulted in criminal convictions? The answer is a big fat zero, which is rather shameful.

• (1315)

Revenu Québec managed to recover more money from the Panama papers than the Canada Revenue Agency did. I feel a bit resentful about that because it seems to me that everyone pays, everyone has a hard time, and the country goes into debt when some people who should be contributing do not. The government's role is to make sure that things are fair, but it is asleep at the wheel. This does not make any sense, and it has to change.

When I introduced my bill on a single tax return, one of the arguments that the Liberals put forward against it is that it would hinder the fight against tax evasion and tax avoidance. Quite frankly, Revenu Québec is doing a better job than the Liberals just for Quebec.

Clearly, Canada is an international laughingstock when it comes to the fight against tax avoidance and tax evasion, and the current Prime Minister and the Liberal party are largely to blame. The Prime Minister likes to project an image of himself as a progressive leader, but he is allowing the inequality gap to continue increasing by allowing access to tax havens. This is unacceptable; it has to change.

Of course, I am also thinking of the abuse associated with the big banks on Bay Street, which all have subsidiaries in tax havens. They artificially and virtually divert funds and declare their most lucrative activities in those countries so they can pay less in taxes here.

Throughout the pandemic, the government has been asked a number of questions in this House about companies that use tax havens to avoid paying taxes here but are supported by wage subsidies and other measures they are entitled to. The Prime Minister said this was necessary to save jobs and support the economy. That is a good argument, but if we do this, we must ensure that everyone contributes according to their means, without giving a free ride to the wealthy who use schemes and tax experts. There must be fairness for everyone.

Canada will soon have an unprecedented opportunity. The United States Secretary of the Treasury, Janet Yellen, announced plans to crack down on tax avoidance and tax evasion. She is calling for a more vigorous and coordinated international response. I hope Canada will answer the call, reverse its permissive approach of recent years and decades and stop pandering to those who use tax havens. This is an opportunity, and people can count on the Bloc Québécois to keep an eye on things and make sure Ottawa alters its approach to this issue. This is not a trivial issue.

Anyone who checks out the website for Morneau Shepell, former finance minister Bill Morneau's family business, can see that the company offers to advise insurance and pension funds on how to take advantage of tax havens so they do not have to pay tax in Canada.

That brings to mind another Liberal finance minister, Paul Martin. He owned a fleet of ships called Canada Steamship Lines, which he had purchased from the Desmarais family. These ships primarily navigated the St. Lawrence but were registered in Barbados, a country that had just become a tax haven under new income tax regulations brought in on the sly. That example involves the highest political office in the country.

The entire tax haven system needs to be replaced, and it always has. Sure, we needed an economic development and support plan during the pandemic, but at the very least, things need to be fair and everyone needs to contribute their fair share. Web giants, multinational corporations and the big banks are using tax havens, and this needs to stop right now.

● (1320)

[English]

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Madam Speaker, through some great work by the Auditor General and the PBO, we have known for a fact that many of the COVID support programs were very poorly targeted and, even more shocking, friends of the Prime Minister got single-source contracts shaped by the PMO staff, which is totally illegal. We sent money to people in businesses who should not have received it. We overpaid so much that the finance minister had to create some media spin, calling the overpayments “preloaded stimulus”, so she is clearly in damage control mode.

Knowing all these facts, does the member really expect Canadians to have any confidence that the Liberals will be good stewards with further massive borrowing capacity?

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague for her question and comments. I would also like to tell her that it is a pleasure working with her on the Standing Committee on Finance.

In a recession, an economic recovery plan is obviously the best or the least bad solution. However, in that case, there must be full confidence in the government and the measures must be very well targeted. A business or individual should not receive money they do not really need. In fact, we know that taxpayers will have to pay back this money, and that is why it is important to properly design the measures.

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As my colleague mentioned, corners were cut in some cases. The Liberals attempted to award contracts to their friends or even did so, but this was not done to serve the common good or Canadians. It is our role to be watchful.

The government must change its approach because Canadians must have confidence in it. In my opinion, the government made serious mistakes that are undermining this confidence. That is why we continue to be watchful and monitor what the government does.

I would like to tell the Prime Minister and the government that there will be no more Frank Baylis ventilators.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are well into the third wave, and we are in a situation where many small businesses and Canadians on the whole are very worried about their economic future.

The small business community is calling for the extension of the wage subsidy and the rent subsidy, to be extended until the end of 2021. Is that something the member will support?

Further, would the member support sector-specific funding? For example, he mentioned the live industry sector and the cultural sector. We really need to be dedicating resources to those communities so they can survive the pandemic and thrive beyond the pandemic.

● (1325)

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vancouver East for her question.

I completely agree with her. We need to help our SMEs and our businesses for as long as the crisis lasts. Often, we are talking about businesses that have been operating for decades, family businesses, people who do not have a ton of money and who contribute to their community and to society.

We do not want to wake up tomorrow morning and see our city centres deserted or repopulated with soulless American retailers. We therefore need to support these measures for as long as it takes.

I also want to reiterate to the Minister of Finance that our SMEs need predictability. If the announcements are made month by month, these individuals and businesses will not necessarily make the best decisions for their survival and for the stability of the economy. They need predictability, and special measures are needed for the hardest hit sectors.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Joliette is a brilliant economist who knows how to explain complicated things in a simple way.

When we invest in something, we usually expect a significant return, one that is larger than our investment. Last June, I asked the Minister of National Revenue about the \$1-billion investment to combat tax havens.

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In my colleague's opinion, has that investment yielded a good return for taxpayers?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou and thank her.

Before the last election, there was plenty of talk in the House about how the billion-dollar investment would tighten the net. We saw what happened with the Panama papers: \$21 million were recovered thanks to that \$1-billion investment.

Of course the Canada Revenue Agency needs the resources to investigate and put a stop to wide-open access to tax havens. That means investing and developing expertise. Despite the minister's claims, the Liberal government has completely missed the boat so far.

I just want to remind my colleague that, two years ago, on the very day the minister signed off on a report detailing the recovery of tens of millions of dollars, the minister said the government had recovered \$25 billion. We therefore have reason to doubt her competence.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend from Joliette for his speech.

That is a key issue. We are in the middle of a pandemic, a public health emergency. At the same time, we are in a climate change crisis, a climate emergency.

The Canadian government continues to give large subsidies to the fossil fuel industry.

Would my colleague from Joliette agree that we need to eliminate these multi-billion-dollar subsidies, like the ones paid for the Trans Mountain pipeline?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands. I want to congratulate her on all the work she has done for so many years to save the planet.

We are in the midst of a pandemic, a terrible crisis. However, the real crisis of our time is the climate change crisis. We must do everything we can to stop it. In order to succeed, we must indeed take measures to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Subsidizing pipelines and incredibly polluting fossil fuels is wrong, for we are now living in a new era. Obviously, we need to consider the people who live in those regions and we need to offer them alternatives. Let us all work together to develop the green economy.

• (1330)

[*English*]

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I note that in the comments made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, he spoke pretty much about every aspect of Bill C-14 except the one that actually touches on his portfolio, which is the increase of the debt limit to \$1.8 trillion.

First, does the member think this is a matter that should be debated under a separate bill? Second, is he concerned that there is a lack of transparency by the government in bringing such an extraordinarily large measure in a bill with many other things?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. Until recently we had the chance to work together at the Standing Committee on Finance and it was always a great pleasure.

As I said in my speech, part 7 of Bill C-14 is problematic. It calls for increasing the debt ceiling. We had questions about that, but I was quickly reassured when my questions were answered, including through the responses from the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

The problem I have is that the government brought this in out of nowhere, as though it were a foregone conclusion. We are being asked to say that the government can borrow up to \$1,831 billion. The Minister of Finance could have taken the time to sit down with representatives from each party to explain where things stand, take questions, have discussions and address the challenges. Instead, here we are. In my opinion, this is the government's fault. We could have split the bill because this part is quite different from the other parts. I completely understand the concerns of my colleague and his party.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to follow up on some comments my colleague made about the energy sector in my province. The reality is that we are not going to have an economic recovery unless we are prepared to work to revitalize our critical sectors in this country, which includes resource extraction and manufacturing. It baffles me that some political parties think we can have a strong economic recovery without attending to those elements, which of course supply transfer payments to the member's province and have been key for the prosperity of the whole country.

I wonder if he has a comment on how Quebec would do without the benefit of the transfer payments it has been receiving from energy-producing provinces for a long time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, climate change is the defining issue of our time.

We must transition our economy to a green economy. I know that it is quite complicated and is causing hardship for families in his riding and province who work in these sectors. I know it is not easy. However, I believe, as does my party, that we do not have a choice.

Can we afford not to shift to a green economy and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. Resuming debate.

Government Orders

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am hopeful that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for me to split my time with the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, it is a huge honour to rise on behalf of the people of Courtenay—Alberni and as the critic for the federal NDP on small business, tourism, fisheries and oceans, and economic development.

As we know, the third wave is among us, especially here in British Columbia. I would not be surprised if further measures are announced by the provincial government today, but right now we know that restaurants are closed for the better part, unless they are serving on a patio outside. Many small businesses are restricted in what they can offer right now. It is having a huge impact on everyone in all of our communities, on their mental health and well-being, and on economic opportunities. People are scared. People are wondering how they are going to survive the pandemic, especially those in the hospitality and tourism sector. We know that small business owners have done the right thing. They have closed their doors or they have adhered to public health measures to protect public health. They are truly the unsung heroes, I believe, of this pandemic.

In my riding, tourism alone is almost 10,000 jobs, so it is having a huge impact on people in our communities. Right now we still are not seeing any supports for start-ups, for example. There is a brand new bakery called Wildflower Bakery. It really is a wildflower. It is a fabulous and great eatery that has just opened up. The bakery is employing people, creating economic development and prosperity in our community, offering diversity of cuisine. It is a new start-up and it has not been able to access the wage subsidy, rent program or the CEBA loans program, yet it is still paying rent. There are common-sense provisions that the government could provide so that it could qualify for the wage subsidy and the rent program, but the government has chosen to leave them out. It has been abandoned by the government.

We know that there is a group that started savestartups.ca that is building momentum. This is a generation of businesses that we could lose if the government does not amend the programs and create more flexibility. We are hearing from a lot of people who have fallen through the cracks who cannot access these programs, whether it be the HASCAP or many other programs that are being offered. They might be off a basis point or two, or somehow fall through the cracks in terms of the timing of when they started or whatnot. The government needs to create more flexibility to support these businesses or we are going to lose them. The cost to the Canadian economy is much greater than saving them right now.

We are calling on the government to come up with a program. I asked the Minister of Finance about this very concern. She said that the government understands that this is a problem and that it is

looking into it. The government has been looking into it for months. Meanwhile, people are losing sleep or losing their businesses and wondering how they are going to survive it, if they can.

The other thing that we are hearing from businesses is that they want certainty. Whether it be the wage subsidy program or the rent program, we know that there is a commitment from the government until June. We need the government to commit that it is going to be there, in place, until the end of the pandemic. We just met with the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, which is deeply concerned. We know that this summer, for example, regardless of how quick the vaccine rollout is, it is very unlikely that we are going to have international tourists coming to our region. If one's business relies on international tourism, it is going to lose a second summer. We need the government to commit that it is going to be there right until the end, instead of actually doing segments like we are doing. This uncertainty is killing business. Also, it is very difficult for business owners to go out to seek financing and get the leverage needed to continue to get through these difficult times.

The other thing is with regard to the CEBA loan program. The expected repayment date is the end of next year. It will be nearly impossible for small businesses, given that there is a third wave coming with such force and with the new variants spreading so quickly. We need the government to extend those repayment periods. In fact, I know when I had a loan with a community futures development corporation in my riding that it was a 10-year loan for \$40,000, so to expect that repayment date to be the end of next year is completely unreasonable. Businesses need to be certain that they are not going to be gouged with a high interest rate should they have to repay it. As well, the government needs to increase the loan. I know the government just extended it to \$60,000, but it needs to increase it to \$80,000.

● (1335)

Given that it is the third wave, it is the third round of impact that these small businesses are going through, and it is just impossible for many of them to survive without better support. In increasing that \$20,000 that they do not have to repay if they repay the loan in a certain period of time, the government could help absorb some of the costs that they are incurring.

Government Orders

Also, the government is talking a lot about a child care plan. Here in British Columbia, we have a provincial government that is investing in child care, and it needs a federal partner to create accessible, affordable, universal child care for everyone. The chambers of commerce in my riding are calling for that, and were calling for it before the pandemic. In fact, the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce cited that as its number one priority before the pandemic. We know that it is needed now more than ever before, given that women have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and many of them are struggling with how they are going to get back to work and how they are going to get the support they need.

As well, the government continues to not want to tackle the merchant fees. We are paying some of the highest merchant fees in the world. There is a voluntary rate of 1.4% based on the big players, whether it be Walmarts or large multinational corporations paying an even lower rate, which means that the smaller businesses are paying a higher rate. However, in Europe, they are paying 0.3%.

We know that this is not a priority of the government. In fact, in the last government, Linda Lapointe, a former member of Parliament from Quebec, made commitments to the Quebec Convenience Stores Association and other groups in Quebec to take on this issue. She moved debate on her bill 16 times. Clearly, the government did not want this bill to be debated, and it does not want to tackle merchant fees. I was appreciative of the spirit of her efforts, but it got shut down, and the government needs to take this on. The Conservatives do not believe this is an issue that they should intervene on either. We heard from their finance critic that they do not want to see government intervene. However, government does have a role and a time to intervene, especially when small businesses and merchants are being gouged by large corporations.

I have met with Visa and MasterCard and they say that it is not their issue but the big banks' issue. The big banks are getting record profits right now, which is public information, and they are not paying their fair share in this pandemic. We are calling on the government to hold them to task and make sure that they pay their fair share.

Members have also heard me speak about the wild salmon emergency and how critical it is that the government invest in wild salmon in this upcoming budget. However, there is nothing in Bill C-14 for that, despite the fact that we had the lowest return in the Fraser last year and the year before.

One thing that is really close to me and the people in my riding is the lack of investment in affordable housing. With the rapid housing initiative, the government committed \$1 billion. Out of the hundreds of billions of dollars in COVID support, there are people who are most marginalized, there are people who are falling through the cracks more now than ever. They are being isolated are dying on our streets.

We have an opioid crisis. I was talking to Julia Mewhort from Qualicum Beach, who has now joined up with Moms Stop the Harm. She lost her son, Stephen, to a preventable opioid overdose that resulted from fentanyl poisoning, a drug source that was tainted, which has killed over 16,000 Canadians, yet the government still has not declared a public health emergency. We know that it requires a national public health emergency declaration from the fed-

eral government under the Emergencies Act so that we can manage and resource this issue to reduce and eliminate deaths that are preventable. She is calling for action so that more sons like hers do not die due to tainted drugs.

The current war on drugs has clearly been grossly ineffective and has resulted in widespread stigma for addiction and those who use illicit drugs. We know that the government's new bill still carries with it the stigma and is not solving this issue. Criminalization of particular substances has resulted in the establishment of a drug trade that now trafficks dangerous and lethal products such as fentanyl.

We need new law reform, and the Liberals are not doing enough to end the stigma. We need to decriminalize and regulate to ensure safe sources and proper measures and supports that will reduce the number of deaths that are happening in our communities. We did not see anything in Bill C-14, but I am hoping that in the next budget the government is going to make it a priority, declare a national public health emergency and invest a lot more than \$1 billion in rapid housing. We are watching the sons and daughters of our communities die on the streets, and it is all preventable.

• (1340)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy the interventions from the member across the way, specifically mentioning businesses and people who he is serving in his community. He is obviously well in touch with the people he is working with.

I am wondering whether the hon. member could comment on the delay tactics that have been used to bring this legislation forward and whether the NDP could help us to move forward debates in the House so that we are not delayed by four months to deal with legislation such as we have in front of us today.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, it is frustrating. We have seen the Conservatives continue to delay legislation. They have not brought any new ideas forward to help in this crisis, and it has been challenging at best, but the Liberals as well are delaying. They are delaying every time that they put out programs with timelines like June. We are looking for the government to commit all the programs, whether they be the wage subsidy or the rent program, to the end of the pandemic. The small businesses need certainty. Like the member, I ran a chamber of commerce. I was deeply involved in the small business community where I come from, and they are saying they need certainty and a stronger commitment from the federal Liberal government.

Government Orders

• (1345)

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Madam Speaker, does the member have any explanation as to why the HASCAP, a program that took forever to happen and was supposed to support those in highly affected industries, is yet again another massive failure? Why on earth would the government allow banks to deny HASCAP loans to small businesses because they cannot provide a revenue statement? How can they provide a revenue projection when they have no certainty they can reopen in 2021, due to the pathetic vaccine rollout? How can this program be so dysfunctional yet again?

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question. We are also asking the government to fix the broken HASCAP. People cannot access the liquidity they need right now. These businesses are running out of time. I will go back to the certainty of the wage subsidy and the rent program. They need a commitment that the government is in it for the long haul, right to the very end, and will fix the broken program. Start-ups and other businesses are being left out by small slivers of the current program; programs need to be amended so they can capture these businesses and protect them. It is absolutely critical, so I appreciate her question, and we are looking to the government to answer that.

Why is there such a slow rollout on the HASCAP, especially when businesses are desperate right now?

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Courtenay—Alberni for bringing attention back to the critical public health emergency of the opioid crisis. He mentioned the extraordinary work and the courage of Moms Stop the Harm. Leslie McBain lost her son; she is one of my constituents from Pender Island. It reaches every community. It is not so much overdoses as fentanyl poisonings that are occurring, and it is urgent. I just wanted to thank him for raising it and join in his hope that we will see real movement in the upcoming budget to address the opioid crisis, if he wants to comment further on what needs to be done.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, everyone across the country is being impacted by the opioid crisis, and it is preventable.

These are fentanyl-poisoned drugs that people are using right now, when they need a clean source. The member asked about some of the solutions. We need therapeutic treatment centres like those in Portugal. We need the government to actually declare it a national public health emergency and to build affordable housing, so that we can get people in stable housing and get them the wraparound supports they desperately need. It is the only way we are going to resolve this issue.

I appreciate the pilot project in Vancouver and Victoria that is happening right now, but they need to broaden that right across the country. In rural communities, like where I live in Port Alberni, I have seen three of my friends' kids die in the last six months. I have not seen them, but I have known them, and these are lives that are lost that are all preventable deaths. That could have been done with common-sense policy, and instead the government is right now playing politics. That is costing people lives, and it is unnecessary. The Liberals need to take urgent action. They need to listen to Moms Stop the Harm. They talk about listening to public health,

emergency and medical experts. Why are they not doing that right now, when it comes to the opioid crisis?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to give a shout-out to the member for Courtenay—Alberni. We are in neighbouring ridings on Vancouver Island, and I always appreciate his interventions in the House and the work that he does on behalf of his constituents.

I am also pleased to be participating in today's debate to represent the good people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford and give some of my thoughts on Bill C-14, which is coming back to the House after its long journey through committee and is to implement certain provisions of the economic statement that was tabled in the House all the way back on November 30, 2020. I have a feeling that the bill, in a week's time, is going to be greatly overshadowed by the federal budget: the first one we are going to have seen in two years. It is going to be interesting to see what the government does with its budget implementation act and with Bill C-14, because it has taken a long time for us to get to this stage.

This is important to underline because a lot has changed in our country and around the world since the economic statement was delivered in November. In those days, we were just starting to get into the throes of the second wave of the pandemic. A lot of people were hoping that, by the spring, public health measures would have taken effect and we would largely be getting out of this ordeal, but that has not come to be. We are now very much in the grip of a third wave, and this one is very concerning because of the dangerous spread of variants of concern. Provinces such as Ontario and my home of British Columbia are seeing very worrying spikes, and this is certainly not a time for us to let up on our guard. It is certainly not a time, in particular, for the federal government to contemplate anything like an election, but it is a time to make sure the government is still there for individuals and for small businesses until our public health experts give us a clean bill of health. Until they declare that this pandemic is over, it is very important that all levels of government continue to focus on getting us through this.

I want to underline that people are exhausted. Pandemic fatigue is very much in place. We have been going through this for over a year. People are scared. They are worried about their futures, and people are wondering how much more we can go through. That underlines the importance of the federal government still being there.

Government Orders

I want to give a shout-out to communities like Port Renfrew, Lake Cowichan, Chemainus and Crofton, all the way down through the Cowichan Valley to its southern tip and the great city of Langford and the District of Highlands. The story is the same no matter which one of those communities people are in. Businesses have closed or they are operating on a razor's edge. People have lost their jobs. Front-line health care workers in hospitals in the region are dealing with so much. I want to give a shout-out to their efforts and say that we are certainly not all in this together, but we are in the same storm. Some of us have had a far greater ability to get through this than others, and for those who have been less fortunate it is very important that we collectively look after their interests.

In order for us to get through this pandemic, Canadians are looking for some semblance of normalcy. I agree with that, but I also think they are looking for innovative and ambitious measures to fight the pandemic and to get us on to the recovery. While there are a lot of things in Bill C-14 that I can support, unfortunately there are a lot of half measures. I want to see far more commitment to strengthening our communities over the long term.

For example, I know there have been commitments made recently by the finance minister with respect to strengthening our child care system. Unfortunately, this is a promise that we have seen all too often from the Liberal Party and, while in Bill C-14 we see measures to increase child benefit payments, it remains to be seen what kind of measures will actually be in next week's budget about strengthening the child care system. When I speak to many parents in my riding, the biggest concern aside from cost is availability. There simply are not spaces.

• (1350)

If we truly want parents to have full economic opportunity to participate in the workforce, particularly women who have been among the hardest hit in this pandemic, it makes economic sense to have those child care spaces so that small businesses are not losing valuable employees. When businesses are working with a staff of four or five people and they lose one, it can be devastating. It makes economic sense to be putting in these measures.

I want to go over a few things in Bill C-14. One helpful thing it would do is lift the interest on student loans for a full fiscal year: from April 1, 2021, through to March 31, 2022. However, this clause is a perfect example of how the Liberals like to govern: It appears they are tackling a problem, but they are really only paying it lip service.

Students have been particularly hard hit by this pandemic. I recently spoke with the Simon Fraser University Student Society. They are reporting that many of their members are using the food bank and skipping meals every single day to make their monthly budgets stretch.

Why not be bolder? Why not eliminate the interest on student loans altogether and give young people a real chance and opportunity at a time when society expects them to be at their most productive?

The federal government should not be profiting on the backs of students, through loans. We should be bold and get rid of the interest on student loans altogether. Let us give young people a real

hand up to make their way in the world once they exit post-secondary education.

A part of Bill C-14 refers to payments from the consolidated revenue fund toward some regional development agencies. That is good to see, but members will recall that the federal government recently made a big announcement about British Columbia getting its very own regional development agency. That is a great thing. Our province is unique. It needs to be split off from the other western provinces to recognize our unique needs.

However, since the announcement, we have heard nothing else. The details on how this new B.C. RDA is going to come into being remain scarce. I certainly am hoping for much more detail on it.

In the final bit of my speech, I want to speak specifically on the opioid crisis. In Bill C-14, there is an authorized payment of \$64.4 million for mental health and substance use in the context of COVID-19. I want to be very clear that I think any investment in this area is welcome news. My main problem is with the amount: \$64 million of investment.

I acknowledge previous investments have been made, but \$64 million spread across the country is very much a drop in the bucket. Communities like mine of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford are suffering under the opioid crisis. Every single death from fentanyl poisoning is preventable. I really need to give a shout out to the small business owners and front-line health care workers who are in the middle of this every single day. I live in a province that has been dealing with this crisis for many years, but last year we had a record number of deaths. The problem is not going away.

We do not need just \$64 million of investment. We need a federal government that is going to step up to the plate, declare a national health emergency, and work with full decriminalization of personal amounts. I know the government has introduced Bill C-22 with a declaration of principles, but that is not going to go far enough. When the Province of B.C. and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police are both asking for decriminalization and the federal government does not deliver, that is a very big problem.

The federal government needs to step up to the plate. The time for half measures in this area is well and truly over. We need bold policy.

There is a lot to speak to in Bill C-14. It is quite a big bill. At this point, I would welcome any comments and questions from my colleagues.

Statements by Members

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The questions and comments for the hon. member will come after Oral Questions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

NEWFOUNDLAND ELECTION

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Premier Andrew Furey on his recent election win in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Also, I want to give special recognition to all the successful candidates in my riding of Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, all of whom I truly look forward to working with to advance the needs of our common constituents.

While this election took many twists and turns, the people of this province have spoken to give Premier Furey a majority mandate to help guide us through the pandemic and beyond. I trust all newly elected MHAs will work together to address the many challenges facing this province, especially with COVID-19, and that our federal government will be a strong partner with the province in this fight.

I ask everyone in the House to join me in sending congratulations and best wishes to the newly elected majority Liberal government here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

* * *

• (1400)

HMCS WETASKIWIN

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the previous member of Parliament for the constituency of Wetaskiwin, it is an absolute privilege for me to be in the House today to honour the 81st anniversary of HMCS *Wetaskiwin*.

Laid down in north Vancouver on April 11, 1940, this Flower-class corvette proudly launched on July 18, 1940, and on December 17, was the first west-coast-built corvette to enter service with the Royal Canadian Navy during the Second World War.

She participated in 40 transatlantic convoys, including the largest convoy of the Second World War, with 166 ships escorted without loss. On July 31, 1942, while escorting convoy ON.115, she and HMCS *Skeena* sank the U-boat U-588.

HMCS *Wetaskiwin* received battle honours of the Atlantic 1941-1945 and of the Gulf of St. Lawrence 1944. She and her crews served our nation proudly and with honour.

It is important to pause to reflect and remember the important events that have shaped our nation's great history.

MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 31, McGill University celebrated the 200th anniversary of its founding. This historic institution of higher learning has been central to Canada's intellectual, cultural, political, social and economic development.

McGill's greatest strength has always been its people. Trailblazers such as Madeleine Parent, Maude Abbott and Ernest Rutherford have inspired generations of students. The university's faculties, including medicine, law, the arts, education, engineering, agricultural sciences and social work, have contributed immeasurably to the progress of society.

[Translation]

Today, McGill University has some 39,700 students, including more than 27,000 undergraduate students, more than 10,000 postgraduate students, and nearly 2,000 residents, fellows and postdoctoral scholars.

[English]

As a McGill alumnus and proud representative in Parliament of the university's Macdonald Campus, I wish McGill continued great success in its world-class educational mission.

* * *

[Translation]

LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we got some disturbing news about Laurentian University in Sudbury and the future of French-language education in Canada. The university is poised to eliminate around 60 programs in a bid to avoid bankruptcy, and programs for francophones are expected to be hit especially hard. Once again, the French language and francophone institutions are the first to be sacrificed in Canada.

The Bloc Québécois wants to reiterate its support for Franco-Ontarians and their ongoing struggle to protect their language. The ability to study in one's own language is a fundamental right. Young people in northern Ontario's large francophone community deserve to have access to high-quality services without being forced to move to Ottawa or Quebec.

The Minister of Official Languages needs to send a clear message today to all francophones outside Quebec. She must prove that her government is prepared to walk the talk, in light of its sudden interest in protecting French.

* * *

EDGARDO DURISOTTI

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, artists are creators who share their vision of the world poetically.

Statements by Members

Today I want to pay tribute to an artist from my riding, *signore* Edgardo Durisotti. Born in 1929 in northern Italy and introduced to painting and other art forms at a young age, he immigrated to Canada in 1954 to create religious art. *Signore* Durisotti is one of the few artists to apply gold leaf to church ornaments and to restore frescoes and statues. He has left his mark on many churches in Quebec and the Maritimes.

It was my honour to be personally acquainted with him and to have one of his works hanging on the wall in my riding office. This talented artist hung up his tools at 91, but he lives on through his work.

Buon viaggio signore Durisotti.

* * *

• (1405)

ROBERT HAKIM

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on March 31, Saguenay lost a great member of its community, a great advocate for regionalism. A friend to all and director of memories, Robert Hakim was more than a cousin to me. He was a friend. He put Saguenay on the cultural map. People from Saguenay and Quebec were able to participate in major events organized by Productions Hakim. One need think only of the Festival international des rythmes du monde and the Festival des bières du monde, which were two of his biggest accomplishments. Robert was a vital part of the community and knew practically everyone. He was intelligent, trustworthy, refined and, above all, extremely generous. He made a big difference in many people's lives, including mine.

The entire region will miss you. On March 31, I said that Saguenay would wake up the next day to a little more darkness, one less ray of sunshine, but, in reality, Robert, your light will continue to shine bright and strong.

Thank you for everything, and rest in peace.

* * *

[*English*]

ELSIPOGTOG FIRST NATION

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am filled with both deep sorrow and great joy.

On the opening day of my region's snow crab season last week, two members of the Elsipogtog First Nation, Seth Monahan and band councillor Craig Sock, also widely known as Jumbo, tragically lost their lives. The community has been mourning this great loss. I had the honour of having Jumbo present at my swearing-in ceremony in 2019. Seeing him sit in my seat in the chamber is a memory I will always cherish.

Before his passing, Councillor Jumbo, along with many in the community, had been working hard for many weeks toward the goal of having Elsipogtog named this year's Kraft Hockeyville. Well, the region came together to support a community in mourning Saturday night and it was named the winner. This will allow the rebuilding of the Chief Young Eagle arena, an integral part of the community.

The spirit and memory of Jumbo and Seth will live on in Elsipogtog, and I hope this great win will help members of the community with their healing.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MARISA FERRETTI BARTH

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 28, the Italian Canadian community was saddened to learn of the passing of Senator Marisa Ferretti Barth, a caring and selfless woman, a pioneer.

Senator Ferretti Barth was well known in Montreal. She dedicated her life to the well-being of seniors. She set up over 88 seniors' clubs and founded the Regional Council of Italian-Canadian Seniors, or RCICS. Thanks to her initiatives, hundreds, even thousands of seniors have access to living environments that help them break the fetters of isolation and allow them to flourish.

[*English*]

Her impressive community achievements and memberships in various boards were recognized in 1997 when she was duly named to the Canadian Senate. Her appointment was historic, as she was the first woman of Italian origin to ascend to the top leadership position in Canada's Parliament. Her accomplishments were remarkable and noteworthy, as she achieved them despite the challenges of gender equality. Her contributions to the well-being of our seniors and to the Italian community will always be an inspiration to me and to the many who knew and worked with her.

[*Member spoke in Italian*]

[*English*]

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CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, April marks the Canadian Cancer Society's daffodil campaign, an opportunity for us to show support for the over one million Canadians living with and beyond cancer, and to remember those we have lost after their own courageous battles with this disease.

This year, the daffodil campaign has gone virtual. Canadians can go to cancer.ca to donate and create their digital daffodils to honour and remember those who have fought this terrible disease. Nearly half of Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime, and every family is impacted by the disease in one way or another.

I encourage all members of this House, and indeed, all Canadians who have the means, to donate generously to this worthy cause.

Statements by Members

● (1410)

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share the miraculous story of Jude Leyton. On March 28, three-year-old Jude was reported missing in rural South Frontenac, Ontario, just north of my riding. The Ontario Provincial Police and community volunteers quickly coordinated a search response. This involved over 100 people navigating rough terrain as they scoured the surrounding area searching for Jude. For three long days, communities across Ontario were following the news closely, praying for Jude's safe return.

On the afternoon of March 31, the news broke that Jude had beat the odds and was found by an emergency response team alive and well after spending three days and nights, sometimes in sub-zero temperatures and rainy conditions, roaming through the forest. As a father, and like so many parents, I was overjoyed and immensely relieved to hear that Jude was found safe. I can only imagine how his family felt when they came to learn he would be safely returned.

It is with great respect and gratitude that I acknowledge the many police officers, community volunteers, firefighters and first responders who worked tirelessly for this incredible outcome to bring three-year-old Jude home.

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ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, April is Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Month. It is a month to highlight and raise awareness about the critical need for more donors across the country. It is a month that encourages Canadians to register their decision. Most importantly, it is a month to encourage Canadians to have important conversations with their friends and loved ones about their decision to donate and ensure their organ donation wishes are understood.

Every week, five Canadians die awaiting a life-saving transplant. Every week we lose five Canadians who could have enjoyed many more years of life had they received a transplant. Every day we dispose of perfectly good organs while some in our communities sit by the phone waiting for that second chance at life. Sadly, the pandemic has reduced transplants by 30% this past year.

Canadians overwhelmingly support organ and tissue donation, but we need to take that support just one more step. Canadians should register with their provincial registries today, tell their loved ones that they want to save a life when they die, and ask their loved ones to respect their final wishes.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the government have not just dropped the ball. They have buried it. The government's handling of the COVID crisis will go down in history as a prime example of how not to deal with a problem of national scope.

Last spring, the Prime Minister put all of Canada's eggs in one basket, turning to Communist China for vaccines. Last week, the Liberals decided their pet policies are more important than getting Canada's economy going and making a plan to return the lives of Canadians to normal.

It is time for this so-called woke Prime Minister to wake up. That is why we on this side of the House are calling for a public inquiry to examine every aspect of the government's pandemic response. The Conservatives are also calling for the appointment of a special monitor from the Office of the Auditor General to track the pandemic response in real time and ensure that lessons learned are captured for future emergency responses. If nothing else, the government should try to learn from its abject failure.

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HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE PHILIP, DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise virtually today to express condolences on behalf of New Democrats to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the entire royal family on the death of Prince Philip. As it has been for all families who have lost loved ones during this pandemic, necessary restrictions make these losses even harder to bear.

Prince Philip will be remembered not only for being the longest-serving consort in the history of the British monarchy, but also for being the person he was: someone dedicated to encouraging young people to set high goals and work hard to achieve them through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award; someone who recognized the importance of the conservation movement and keeping our world habitable; someone who could support a powerful and strong partner and only rarely, if ever, get caught trying to upstage her; and, someone who was a dedicated public servant, keeping an active schedule well into his nineties and even remarking at one point that he was probably the world's most experienced plaque unveiling.

Let us not forget that Prince Philip was also a World War II naval veteran as we wish him fair winds and following seas in bidding him farewell.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

YOUNG FARMERS' DAY 2021

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday was the Journée relève agricole, or young farmers' day 2021. Because of the pandemic, young farmers gathered virtually for an evening of fun and dialogue.

Oral Questions

We need to support the next generation of farmers and create the right conditions for them to thrive. Encouraging young farmers will benefit the economy of the entire country and ensure our food sovereignty. Government action is needed to facilitate the transfer of farms from one generation to the next and to correct the problems that make it easier to sell to a stranger rather than to one's own children.

I also encourage parliamentarians to continue to support Bill C-216, which seeks to protect our supply-managed sectors in future trade negotiations. This will ensure predictability for young farmers working in these sectors.

All parliamentarians must join with the Bloc and demonstrate that they are proud of our farmers and that they want to secure the future of our agricultural businesses.

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[English]

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE PHILIP, DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this moment to give my deep condolences to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the family of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip upon his passing earlier this week.

Prince Philip represented a shining example of loyalty, honour and committed service, both as the Queen's husband and consort, and in his work for the British Commonwealth. He served for decades as the Colonel-in-Chief of The Royal Canadian Regiment, during which he developed a strong bond with Canada. His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh was an ardent supporter of our Canadian military and its families, his ties formed and strengthened during his experiences alongside Canadians fighting in the Second World War. He visited Canada more than 60 times, including my riding of Sarnia-Lambton.

In 2011, upon the occasion of his 90th birthday, the Canadian government honoured His Royal Highness by naming him general of the Canadian army, general of the Royal Canadian Air Force and admiral of the Royal Canadian Navy. The death of Prince Philip is a loss to the Commonwealth and its people. May he rest in peace.

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[Translation]

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE PHILIP, DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was with great sadness last week that we learned of the passing of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh.

[English]

A man of great service to others, first as a decorated naval officer and later as a dedicated leader in the area of community engagement and philanthropy, the Duke of Edinburgh always sought out the best in people and challenged them to strive for greater heights. Prince Philip maintained a very special relationship with the Cana-

dian Armed Forces and over the years became the Colonel-in-Chief of six Canadian units.

In 2011, he was named the honorary general of the Canadian army and the Royal Canadian Air Force, as well as the honorary admiral of the Royal Canadian Navy. Prince Philip was a man of great purpose and conviction who was motivated by a sense of duty to others. Our Queen has lost a life-long companion who was always by her side. A family has lost a beloved husband, papa, grandfather and great-grandfather.

[Translation]

On behalf of all Canadians, I offer my most sincere condolences to Queen Elizabeth II and the members of her Royal Family.

May he rest in peace.

[English]

The Speaker: There has been discussion among representatives of all parties in the House, and there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence in memory of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

I now invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third wave is here, and while other countries are getting vaccinated and opening up, Canadians are being locked down yet again. Yesterday, Canada officially passed the United States in the number of new cases per capita. Twenty per cent of Americans are fully vaccinated; only 2% of Canadians are.

Could the Prime Minister admit that his slow vaccine rollout has resulted in the third wave of COVID-19 on Canadians and more destructive lockdowns?

• (1420)

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, we surpassed our six-million target prior to the end of March by receiving 9.5 million doses. We are on track to get 44 million doses into this country by the end of June, and 110 million by the end of September. We will continue providing the provinces and territories with vaccines, and we will work together as a country to ensure that all Canadians who wish to have access to a vaccine will have one prior to the end of September.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention told Americans last week to "avoid all travel to Canada". It said, "Because of the current situation in Canada even fully vaccinated travelers may be at risk". We know the Prime Minister is trying to blame the provinces for vaccines in freezers, but it is his slow and inconsistent rollout that is causing such poor delivery.

Oral Questions

How does the Prime Minister mess things up so badly that traveling to Canada is now a risk to people's health?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, my heart goes out to all who are struggling with COVID-19, whether they have been personally affected by it or whether they are on the front lines of our health care system working to save lives. The member opposite is right. Now is not the time to travel internationally, and I believe that it is very important that Canadians continue their hard work to protect each other. We know Canadians have sacrificed so much. We see the finish line. We will get there safely if we work together.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, most of this country is facing new and devastating restrictions, and this is a direct result of the Liberal government's inability to get vaccines. To add insult to injury, Canadians are being told they are going to have to wait four months for a second dose. Canadians are being forced to accept substandard dosage intervals. Why? It is because the Liberals cannot get vaccines on time.

How long will Canadians be punished because of the Liberals' failed vaccine rollout?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that vaccines are an important tool to save lives and stop the spread, but we also know that while we vaccinate, we have to continue to apply appropriate public health measures to protect each other. We also know that it is not the federal government that decides which public health measures need to stay in place in which province or territory.

I want to thank all Canadians for working so hard and making so many sacrifices to protect each other, knowing that we are going to be stronger together when we get through this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is being hit hard by the third wave, more so than other countries, all because of the Liberal government's inertia when it came time to negotiate vaccine procurement.

Barely 2% of Canadians have received their second dose to date, compared to 11% in England and 20% in the United States. Ten times as many Americans as Canadians have been vaccinated and five times as many British people as Canadians are now vaccinated. This makes no sense for a G7 country that we are all so proud of. Why did the government drag its feet on the vaccination file?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is now on track to receive 43 million doses of vaccine by the end of June and more than enough doses for all Canadians by the end of the summer. We will not rest until all Canadians have access to the vaccine. We will continue to be involved and work with the provinces and territories in these efforts.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, speaking of efforts, I thank the minister for speaking French and I congratulate her for her efforts.

However, the problem is that Canadians find the facts very troubling. New COVID-19 cases are levelling off in the United States,

but they have tripled in the last month in Canada. That is completely unacceptable.

The best solution, but not the only one, is vaccination. This requires access to vaccines. The third wave that is hitting Canadians so hard is the Liberal Party wave, because the Liberal Party unfortunately dragged its feet on the vaccine file. Why did the government drop the ball?

• (1425)

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Once again, by the end of September, Canada will have enough vaccines for every person who wants to be vaccinated. As I have already said, Pfizer deliveries have ramped up. We will receive at least one million doses every week from March 22 to May 11.

To date, Canada has received 10 million doses of the Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca vaccines. Vaccine shipments have resumed. It was a temporary delay, not a loss.

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a senior official has given us a glimpse into the federal government's mindset in the lead-up to the budget.

In response to a question from the CBC regarding provincial jurisdictions, the official said, and I quote, "The feds have the spending power. If we set out the terms and the money, the provinces who want to be early movers on this will come on board. Those that don't will have to reckon with their electorate."

This is peak predatory federalism. The federal government has the money, and if we want that money, we have to do Ottawa's bidding. Why is the government taking a confrontational approach instead of working with Quebec and the provinces?

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect, the federal government has been working hand in glove with provincial governments from the first time we got elected, in October 2015. I note in particular the health care transfers we have made to the provinces, which allow them to take care of their citizens but also target particular measures for areas such as mental health or in-home care for seniors.

I look forward to the upcoming budget so that we can continue to invest in partnership with provinces and territories to serve the best interests of Canadian families.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary sounds like a broken record.

Senior officials have said that Ottawa's budget strategy is to intimidate Quebec and the provinces into going along or else being cut off. That is the gist of the budget rumours we are hearing.

Quebec needs health care transfers to be increased to 35%. Not only is Ottawa refusing to do so, but it also wants to force Quebec's long-term care homes to comply with Canadian standards and force Quebec to adopt a Canadian pharmacare program. Both of these initiatives have been unanimously rejected by the Quebec National Assembly.

Why not simply address Quebec's needs?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague and friend spoke about rumours. I am going to talk about facts.

The fact is that we have been working with Quebec since the very beginning of the pandemic, first with regard to equipment and now with regard to vaccines. Aside from the pandemic, there is the joint announcement at Lion Electric and our ability to work together to solve the problem of Internet access in the regions. This proves one thing: If we ignore the rumours raised by my colleague and talk about facts, we see that the two governments work very well together.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third wave of COVID-19 is hitting hard. The variants are spreading rapidly.

We have seen a record number of cases in Ontario, and the numbers are rising in every province. We need to immediately improve access to the paid sick leave program. We need to do everything we can to get everyone vaccinated. We need to act now.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not waiting for anything.

We are working with all of the provinces, as we have been doing all along for PPE. Let us not forget that the Canadian Armed Forces and the Red Cross provided key support for our seniors. Our government has been working with the provinces to procure supplies and roll out the vaccines.

This is an ongoing process. Every day we are in talks to look at how we can improve the health, safety and lives of all Canadians.

The Speaker: I want to interrupt question period for a few moments.

For the sake of the interpreters, I would ask members who are participating virtually to place their microphones either between the nose and upper lip, or between the chin and lower lip. This will make the interpreters' job easier and would be appreciated.

The hon. member for Burnaby South.

● (1430)

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is on fire. The variants are spreading rapidly. COVID cases are hitting record numbers. We have seen a record number of COVID-19 cases in Ontario. They are needing to set up field hospitals. Things are very bad. It is not good enough to sit on the sidelines and ask to help. Leadership means finding solutions. Leadership means acting now.

Will the Prime Minister immediately improve access to the paid sick leave program, make it better and make it work? Will the Prime Minister use all tools available to assist in vaccinating everyone in this country? Will the Prime Minister act like it is the serious crisis that it is?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his deep concern for Canadians. In fact, it is actually Canada's field hospitals that are on loan to the Province of Ontario. It is a demonstration of how the federal government has been there for provinces and territories every step of the way. We will be there for as long as it takes and for as much as it takes to protect Canadians and to support provinces and territories to deliver in their health care jurisdictions.

We will stop at nothing. I think our government has demonstrated that.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House of Commons directed key players in the Prime Minister's WE scandal to testify at the ethics committee. Instead of obeying the will of Canadians, the Prime Minister blocked those witnesses from testifying. Canadians deserve answers.

Is the problem that the Prime Minister does not understand the rules, or that he believes the rules do not apply to him?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe in the principle of ministerial responsibility. It has been a long tradition in our country. We are accountable to Parliament, and our staff is accountable to us. I appeared at the ethics committee for three hours to answer many questions. My colleague, the associate minister of finance, was ready to do the same. She showed up twice, but the opposition refused to let her testify on both occasions. They say they want to ask questions, but at the same time they refuse for the minister to appear. They have to make up their mind.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the government House leader does not understand the question. It is very straightforward. The House ordered witnesses to appear, and the Prime Minister and the Liberal government blocked those witnesses from appearing. Will the Prime Minister apologize for defying an order of the House? Will he agree to testify at committee, or do we need to build back with a better Prime Minister?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe in ministerial accountability. This is why our ministers appear at committees all the time. They love to answer those questions for the opposition, but the Conservatives want to ignore that tradition. That was their position at the time. What is it today? If I read what their House leader used to say at the time, it was a bit different. I will quote him: “When ministers choose to appear before committees to account for their administration, they are the best source of accountability and they must be heard. Public servants and ministerial staff support the responsibility of their ministers. They do not supplant it.”

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sure, the minister was there to answer questions, except he did not know any of the answers. We asked, for example, why the contract with WE had been backdated more than six weeks; he did not even know that was the case. We asked why it was that they went ahead with the grant after Treasury Board found no evidence that WE could even deliver the program; he did not even know that. He did not know that the Prime Minister's Office had received promotional material from WE with his mother and wife in it.

Did they not just send this minister over to the committee because he did not know anything and therefore could not accidentally tell the truth?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that I was at the committee for three hours and I answered many of the questions, and all of this was to talk about a staff member who was barely involved in the issue. There was one phone call, and the opposition decided to have a three-hour meeting about one phone call, instead of concentrating on the priority of today. Our ministers appear at committee. It was a pleasure for me to appear at that committee. We do it all the time, but they should use the time that is allowed to the members to discuss the priorities of today.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we wanted to hear from the minister responsible, not Minister “I don't know”. That is what we got from him. He did not know any of the facts. We asked question after question, and he broke the Guinness Book of World Records for not having answers and, to his credit, openly admitting that he did not know any of the answers.

If he does not know any of the answers, can the Liberals send another minister, who can explain why the government gave a half-billion-dollar grant to a group that had paid the Prime Minister's family half a billion dollars?

• (1435)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows the answers. There is nothing new there. He read from a document

Oral Questions

where the answers were already there. The problem for the Conservatives is that they are trying to say, “Aha, there's something new here”, when there is absolutely nothing. All the questions have been answered.

We are defending ministerial responsibility, just as the member who just spoke defended it for a very long time until he changed his mind. I wonder why.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals at the defence committee just shut down the investigation into sexual misconduct allegations against General Vance. The Liberals are preventing key witnesses from appearing before committee and they are covering up what the defence minister knew about these serious allegations three years ago.

The self-proclaimed feminist Liberal government wants to bury the truth rather than stand up for the brave women in uniform who serve us.

Why did the Liberal government shut down the defence committee investigation that was trying to protect women in the military? What is it trying to hide?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will always respect the work done by colleagues at the committee. In fact, I have worked with the national defence committee on this matter quite extensively. I appeared at the committee three times for more than six hours. I repeatedly have stated at each of those appearances, and in many times in the House of Commons, that our government, and I personally, will not stand for any form of sexual misconduct and that we will take strong action on this.

I look forward to the recommendations of the committee when they come out.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister never did accept any responsibility. In fact, that is again another attempt on his behalf to cover up the sexual misconduct allegations he hid for three years.

The Liberals say that they want answers, but they shut down the very committee investigation that was trying to get to the bottom of them. If the government truly cared about our women and men in uniform, they would be supporting the work of the defence committee. Instead, they are trying to stop us from hearing from key witnesses, key Liberal witnesses, so they can cover up their failures.

Oral Questions

When will the defence minister take responsibility for his inaction and stop his minions at the committee from obstructing the truth?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the committee makes its own decision, but I absolutely disagree with the member's assertions. We have taken strong action. In fact, we took strong immediate action when the information was provided and the PCO followed up the next day. I took the time, at every opportunity, to appear at committee to answer questions, in fact, for over six hours.

I look forward to its recommendations on how we can stomp out this inappropriate behaviour inside the Canadian Armed Forces.

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[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, speaking to the CBC, a senior bureaucrat revealed how Ottawa really sees its relationship with Quebec. When asked about interference in areas under provincial jurisdiction in the budget, this source stated, "The feds have the spending power. If we set out the terms and the money, the provinces who want to be early movers on this will come on board. Those that don't will have to reckon with their electorate." In other words, we have the cash, and if Quebec wants any of it, it will have to accept our terms. How cynical.

We are in the midst of a public health crisis. Is it not time to work together?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a bit surprised to hear the Bloc member talk about working together, because what he is trying to do with that question is pick a fight. That is the opposite of working together.

What my colleague is saying is that one of the things Ottawa wants to do is impose its vision on Quebec, but the facts show that we work very well together. We are getting through the pandemic together. We are supplying vaccines, and Quebec is distributing them. We are doing all this together. We just addressed the issue of Internet access in the regions. We did that together. My colleague should at least have the decency to acknowledge that Ottawa and Quebec work very well together.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is doing what the Liberals did all weekend long, that is, claiming that the Bloc wants to pick a fight. However, the rumours being leaked by the government leading up to the budget suggest that picking fights is precisely its strategy. Its senior officials are not even trying to hide the fact that they will interfere in Quebec and provincial jurisdictions, set the terms, and threaten to take away funding from governments that stand up for themselves.

We are in the middle of a health crisis. Is this really the time to engage in such petty blackmail?

• (1440)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well, because I know him to be very well informed, that we have

transferred roughly \$7 billion in additional funding to Quebec, without any conditions or anything else, purely in the spirit of goodwill and collaboration.

That is what we have been doing from the beginning. We have taken a very pragmatic approach, like Quebec, to emerge from this crisis as strong as possible, to protect the health of all Quebecers, to solve the issue of Internet access in the regions, to invest in aerospace and to invest in Quebec society as a whole.

The Bloc Québécois does not like this, because they become weaker when Canada is doing well, and that makes them unhappy.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, instead of trying to interfere in Quebec's jurisdictions, Ottawa should look after its own.

Had it managed the borders as everyone had been asking it to do since the start of the pandemic, our schools might not be overwhelmed by the variants right now. Had it been quicker and more efficient at procuring vaccines, we might not be in the dark red zone today. We are paying dearly for this government's failures with respect to vaccine access and border controls.

What makes it think it is in a position to lecture us today?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is going to have to make up its mind.

Two weeks ago, just before the break, the Bloc wanted to exempt all snowbirds, all of them, even those who had been vaccinated, from quarantines. Now, all of a sudden, it is saying that we must have more stringent border controls. We cannot do both. Which one is the Bloc supporting?

The Bloc must at least be clear about that. We have been clear from the outset. We established strict rules at the border, among the strictest in the world. Why? It is because our priority is the health and safety of all Quebecers and all Canadians.

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[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, reports indicated the government threatened to cancel funding for the Halifax Security Forum if it awarded the John McCain Prize to Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen.

The government's attempt to silence those critical of China is shameful and it is counterproductive because it plays right into the hands of China.

Will the government reverse its position, speak out for human rights democracy and the rule of law and support the John McCain Prize for President Tsai Ing-wen?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will always be there to defend human rights. We have been there.

In the case of China, very recently we imposed sanctions on the individuals who were identified with respect to the treatment of Uighurs in Xinjiang. We have always spoken up very clearly, whether it is in China or in other countries, to defend the human rights of people living in those countries because it is part of our fundamental values.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, determining the origin of the coronavirus is essential for preventing the next pandemic.

However, we still do not know the exact origins of COVID-19, because Chinese leadership is obstructing the investigation by the WHO.

Will the government acknowledge that the WHO caved to pressure from China, and will it work with our allies in calling for an overhaul of that organization?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we very clearly acknowledged in a report we worked on with other countries that more needs to be done to better understand the origins of COVID-19.

The report that was submitted by the World Health Organization has gaps, and more information is needed to truly understand the situation.

Canada, along with several other countries, has recognized that fact, and we encourage the World Health Organization to go further to gain a better understanding of the origins of this pandemic.

• (1445)

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Taiwan's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the most successful in the world. With a population of only 23 million, Taiwan has only had about a thousand coronavirus cases and 10 deaths.

In May, Canada along with other countries, will be participating in the meeting of the World Health Organization, but Taiwan has not been invited even though it had observer status until 2017.

Does the government support Taiwan's participation at next month's meeting?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on what my hon. colleague said and very clearly state that Taiwan has been extremely successful in handling the COVID-19 pandemic within its own country. There are things to be learned from its experience. We feel that dealing with the issue of the pandemic is something that should involve all those who have been forced to handle this very difficult situation.

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the St. Lawrence River is one of our most precious assets. It represents hundreds of kilometres of rich biodiversity.

The NDP supports the proposal of the International Observatory on the Rights of Nature and is calling for the St. Lawrence River to be granted legal personhood to protect it, because it is at risk. Unchecked industrialization is jeopardizing many species. The port of Montreal expansion project in Contrecoeur, the Laurentia project at the port of Quebec and the threat of the GNL Québec project are just a few examples.

Will the overhaul of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act include recognition of the rights of nature before it is too late?

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to protecting fresh water and to ensuring a safe and secure supply of water for generations to come. We have a strong and comprehensive approach and we have taken concrete and measurable actions to protect our water. That includes investing \$31.5 million over five years to implement the St. Lawrence action plan.

We are protecting the St. Lawrence through science, partnership, including with indigenous peoples and community initiatives.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was quick to say that the Conservatives were out of touch when they voted against acknowledging climate change at their convention. However, this weekend, 70% of Liberal delegates voted against ending fossil fuel subsidies to big polluters.

The last time I called on the Prime Minister to end fossil fuel subsidies, he said that his government was on track to phasing them out, but recent reports show that is just not true. Not only are we not on schedule, but Canada has actually increased these subsidies year after year.

If the Liberals know there is a climate crisis but refuse to take the necessary action are they really that different from the Conservatives?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the report the hon. member is quoting includes money that the NDP has voted in favour of to clean up abandoned orphan wells. We are working on ending fossil fuel subsidies and we have taken real action on climate change and will continue to do so.

I hope members of the NDP continue to push forward for real action and help us move Bill C-12 through Parliament and into committee.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the beginning of 2021 has brought its share of challenges and anxiety, but Canadians can take great comfort in the results of the government's vaccine procurement efforts.

Not only did the government meet its objective of six million doses by March 31, but it exceeded its target by 3.5 million doses, which is a tremendous success.

Can the minister give the House an update for this week, this month and this quarter that will reassure Canadians and help them keep their hopes up?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

She is right, we do have more good news for the second quarter. We will be getting five million Pfizer vaccine doses sooner than expected. To date, Quebec has received over 2.4 million doses. Another 400,000 doses will be delivered to Quebec this week.

Canada is now on track to receive a total of 44 million doses by the end of June. We are well on the way to meeting our objectives by the end of the summer.

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, across Canada, given frequent recent changes in advice from the federal government, people are asking questions about the AstraZeneca vaccine and about vaccine dosing interval advice in Canada. Some of this might have been alleviated if the media had access to the process by which the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, or NACI, develops its advice and how that is being used by the government.

Most other developed nations have given the media access to their version of NACI. Why has Canada's Minister of Health not done the same?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will point the member to the NACI website, which will list the decisions that NACI has made and the underpinning science and research behind those decisions. I will also point out that any Canadian, in fact anyone across the world, can sign up for regular updates from NACI. I have and it is very helpful.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a bit misleading, because NACI has not allowed media access into its meetings.

In the last couple of weeks, we have had advice that said that AstraZeneca is safe for all age groups; then that it is only safe for those 55 to 63, but not those under 55; then the federal government said it was pausing the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine, and a few minutes later said it was not pausing the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine, or the other way around.

Given that NACI is a body created and appointed by the federal government, will the minister give a directive to allow media into the meetings?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have talked about before, as science and research evolves, so will the advice from the variety of different researchers and scientists who are advising Canadians.

I will also point to the fact that it appears the member opposite is in fact trying to instill fear and anxiety in Canadians. I would say that now is the time to remind Canadians that any vaccine approved for use in Canada is safe. We will continue to monitor science and research, and update Canadians as that science and research evolves.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will put this question to the government again because my colleague did not get an answer earlier.

Over the weekend, it was reported that funding for the Halifax International Security Forum would be cut because the forum wanted to award the John McCain Prize to Taiwan's president, a woman who is fighting for democracy around the world.

I would like to know if the government has changed its mind. Will it maintain funding for this important security forum?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an independent organization and makes its own decisions regarding these matters. In fact, when it comes to the funding, I authorized two separate funding authorizations in the last year; one in September and one in November.

We have supported the Halifax International Security Forum for the last 10 years.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would now like to come back to the vaccines.

For months, the Prime Minister stood in this House and told Canadians over and over that we had the largest vaccine portfolio in the world. The truth is that the Prime Minister has failed.

Yesterday the Globe and Mail reported that Canada had surpassed the United States for the first time in the number of cases per one million people. The United States is gradually returning to normal life. Here, provinces are having to tighten and add controls. Canadians are stepping up, but they are tired of living with uncertainty.

Oral Questions

When will the Prime Minister admit that he failed in negotiating vaccine contracts, which is why we are still in the grip of the pandemic?

[*English*]

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that 20% of Canadians have received at least one dose of vaccine.

Canada now stands eighth in the G20 in terms of doses administered per 100 people. We have received 10.5 million doses in this country to date. We are on track to receive 44 million doses by the end of June and 110 million doses by the end of September.

I would ask the opposition to co-operate and collaborate with all Canadians in the middle of this third wave so that we can ensure all Canadians are vaccinated as soon as possible.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PENSIONS

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals passed a resolution at their convention calling for old age security to be increased as of age 70, instead of 75, as the government wants. They are getting closer to the Bloc's position, which is to increase old age security for everyone 65 and older. That is the right position. The current proposal would create two classes of seniors: those aged 65 to 70 and those 70 and older.

Why not simply increase old age security for everyone as of age 65?

• (1455)

[*English*]

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know seniors are living longer than ever before and are worried about rising health care costs and running out of savings as they get older.

That is why we have reaffirmed our commitment to increase the old age pension by 10% for seniors aged 75 and over. It will bolster the financial security of over three million seniors and lift 25,000 seniors out of poverty, two-thirds of whom are women.

Seniors built the Canada we know and love today, and they can be assured that our government will be there for them.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is still discrimination on the basis of age.

All seniors are experiencing a decline in purchasing power. All seniors are facing increased costs because of the pandemic. All seniors are suffering from the stay-at-home and isolation measures, and they are making sacrifices. All seniors deserve better support from the federal government.

The government is finally recognizing that this is a problem and has publicly declared that it will increase old age security. How can it justify its illogical decision to seniors aged 65 to 75 that are being left behind and to those over the age of 75?

[*English*]

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to touch on the point that my colleague raised about seniors' isolation, because it is a very serious issue that we are dealing with.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, programs supporting local seniors and seniors organizations are more important than ever before. We have funded over 5,000 community support projects, supporting seniors to stay active and socially connected during the pandemic through the new horizons for seniors program. This year, increased funding and improvements to the program resulted in the highest number of applications ever, almost double the number of projects serving rural seniors and a greater share of funded projects for vulnerable seniors. It is important that we provide them with programs and support that they need and deserve.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the universal basic income, UBI, is an expensive, risky and untested experiment that will leave millions of Canadians behind as we continue to battle the pandemic.

An extensive study was done by economists from three of Canada's leading universities. UBI is "not the best policy option to effectively tackle poverty". It will instead leave seniors, people with disabilities, youth aging out of care and low-income Canadians worse off. Further, we know that UBI is estimated to cost an additional \$93 billion annually.

Will the Prime Minister be cutting critical social programs or raising taxes to fund this risky experiment, or both?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the outset of this pandemic, we made certain that we were going to be there for Canadians in their time of need. That approach led to the creation of the Canada emergency response benefit, which has now landed on the kitchen tables of more than nine million Canadians. As we come out of this pandemic and look to continue to support Canadians as we enter the recovery phase, we are going to be considering different options to ensure that Canadians have the means to make ends meet now and going forward.

My message to everyone listening today is that we are going to be there for them as long as it takes, no matter what it takes.

*Oral Questions***TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the ongoing lockdowns, thanks to the Prime Minister's vaccine problems, Canadians who live and work in rural communities are stuck without reliable Internet broadband service. Farms and small businesses are severely hampered by no access to high-speed Internet for conducting daily business, like processing credit card transactions or monitoring their barns or greenhouses. Even cell-based Internet is intermittent at best and it can cost hundreds of dollars a month.

When will this government stop the empty promises and start delivering reliable broadband for rural Canadians?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, life without high-speed Internet and cell service is difficult in the best of times. It has been particularly hard for rural and suburban Canadians, and Canadians living in smaller communities.

We have been working to connect Canadians since our first mandate, and we have set aside the single largest investment in Canadian history in broadband. Just last week, we announced the connections along the Highway of Tears. We are connecting tens of thousands of Canadians through the rapid response universal broadband fund. We are working with our partners at SWIFT and EORN and there is more good news to come.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government continues to fail Quebecers and all other Canadians when it comes to high-speed Internet.

While the big players keep receiving taxpayers' money, they continue to connect senior executives, like the CEO of Bell. In nearby areas, only 20% of Quebecers have adequate service. There is even a petition circulating in the riding of the Liberal member for the Pontiac.

The Liberals are now in full election mode and making empty promises as usual. When will there be a real action plan?

• (1500)

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we delivered for Quebecers.

[*English*]

The Prime Minister made a historic announcement with the Premier of Quebec to connect every single Quebecer to high-speed Internet over the next two years. This is a reflection of the hard work of the Liberal Quebecers in caucus. They have done the heavy lifting, we are getting Quebecers connected, and we will connect every Canadian to this essential service.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the inshore fisheries of Canada's east coast are often family-run businesses that drive rural, local, regional and national economies. The fisheries in Cape Breton—Canso are the pride of our commu-

nities. I would like to know how our government is helping these family-run businesses prosper during these difficult times.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his hard work, working with harvesters, as well as the seafood sector in his riding.

I am pleased to announce that our government put in place new measures to strengthen the independence of our hard-working interim licence-holders in Quebec and Atlantic Canada to ensure that economic benefits stay with them and within their communities. By enshrining the policies of owner-operator and fleet separation into law, we will be able to ensure that the revenue from the fisheries stays in our coastal rural communities.

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HEALTH

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last weekend the Prime Minister had the opportunity to acknowledge Canada's mental health crisis and the ongoing opioid crisis as he addressed his Liberal colleagues. Not once did he mention mental health or opioids. A hundred and forty days ago, parliamentarians voted unanimously to implement 988 as a three-digit national suicide hotline. Where is it?

Liberal amendments to MAID, unbelievably, will make it easier for Canadians struggling with mental illness to end their lives. As Canadians faces two crises that are worsening by the day, why has the Prime Minister thrown in the towel and given up on our most vulnerable?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that none of that is true and he also knows that we have done more than any government to manage and support people who are living with opioid issues and problematic substance use. He also knows that it was actually the Conservatives who had a very cruel policy of eliminating harm reduction and refusing to look at the evidence and science on substance use.

I will continue to work with the member opposite on the hotline that he knows we are working with him on, but it would be very helpful if the member opposite acknowledged things like wellnesstogether.ca so his constituents as well can get access to the help they need.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pandemic restrictions are supposed to be temporary measures to buy time and get appropriate plans in place to protect Canadians. Emergency management best practices are designed to, one, contain the spread and reduce illness and death; two, mitigate societal disruption; three, minimize adverse economic impacts; and four, support the efficient use of resources. The Liberals have failed on all four. Why? Because they continue to ignore the practices of emergency management.

When will Canadians be given an actual plan on recovery?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we have been there for provinces and territories, in fact, to do exactly what the member has suggested. We have provided billions of dollars. We have provided evidence, expertise, additional hands, rapid response programs, the Canadian Red Cross, even more money, all the vaccines, all the testing, all the PPE. We have done everything we can and we will continue to do everything we can so that every Canadian can get through this safely. We will continue to be there for provinces and territories as they deliver on their health care responsibilities.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to pay for raises, jet rides, payments to insiders and other lavish expenses, the Liberal government continues to increase taxes on Canadians who are just barely getting by. For some, a nice cold beer on a hot summer's day was a relatively inexpensive comfort, but, sadly, that too is being taxed away. Is nothing sacred anymore?

What other taxes is the government going to increase to pay for its lavish expenses?

• (1505)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with great respect to my hon. colleague, the line of questioning he just launched is absolutely ludicrous. From day one, we have made it a priority to support middle-class Canadians and have not been afraid to ask the wealthiest Canadians to pay more. The very first thing we did when we came into office was to raise taxes on the wealthiest 1% and cut them for the middle class. We extended the Canada child benefit program to put more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadian families. The very first thing we did after the 2019 campaign was to offer a middle-class tax cut for 20 million Canadians.

The thing that these policies have in common is the Conservatives voted against them, so I will take no lessons from my hon. colleague opposite.

* * *

SENIORS

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the most vulnerable populations impacted by COVID-19

Oral Questions

was seniors. The Minister of Seniors recently announced funding to support seniors as we continue to face this pandemic.

Can the minister please tell this House how this funding is helping seniors across Canada?

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Newmarket—Aurora for his advocacy on behalf of seniors and for letting me share this exciting news for his riding and communities across Canada.

This year, through the new horizons for seniors program, we are funding more than 3,000 community-based projects to support seniors. These projects will help seniors stay active, informed and socially connected during the pandemic. Our improvements and funding increase to the program resulted in almost double the number of projects serving rural seniors and a greater share of funded projects serving vulnerable seniors. This is great news for seniors all across Canada.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is on fire. People are worried. They are afraid and frustrated. To my question about the fact Ontario now had to set up field hospitals, the Minister of Health made it sound like a point of pride that the Liberal government sent the materials required for it. However, it is a mark of failure that we are at this point.

We are calling for immediate action. It is not good enough to respond to the crisis by saying the government has sent tents for hospitals. We need to immediately make it easier to get paid sick leave and ensure everyone in the country is vaccinated. Will the government do that?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite is missing the point, and the point is that we have been there for the provinces and territories every step of the way, including with billions of dollars, expertise, personal protective equipment, vaccines, rapid tests and PCR tests. The point is that we will not stop. We will be there for the provinces, territories and all Canadians within them. No matter what this virus throws at us, we are there for Canadians, including the financial supports he referenced.

Routine Proceedings
INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, from 1938 to 1974, the Bank of Canada provided very low-interest loans to the federal and provincial governments for public infrastructure projects. Since 1974, the federal government has been borrowing from private banks and foreign lenders instead. The interest paid on those loans is \$1.3 trillion. That is \$1.3 trillion taxpayer dollars paid to private banks and foreign lenders.

Will the government start using the Bank of Canada again for public infrastructure funding?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question. There are a couple of key points I would like to offer in response.

First, the activities of the Bank of Canada, including to whom it lends, are made completely independently of the bank. I will note that the bank has put forward a number of measures over the course of the pandemic to ensure there is sufficient liquidity in the financial system in Canada to allow the government to offer its suite of programs for both the federal government and the various provinces.

In addition, I would point out for the hon. member that we are currently benefiting from the lowest interest rates on government financing that we have had access to in over a century.

As we launch forward into additional programs to fund public infrastructure, which will create good jobs in the short term and set the stage for long-term growth, we will do it in a fiscally responsible way.

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● (1510)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, our Standing Orders prevent us from engaging in dialogue and discourse that would be considered dishonourable. In particular, one states, "Remarks directed specifically at another Member which question that Member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order."

Today during question period, the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman referred to other members on the Standing Committee on National Defence as "minions". I am wondering if he would like to apologize for making that comment to the House and for violating that standing order.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman is not responding, but I will take that under advisement and return to the House should we find it necessary.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

The Speaker: Pursuant to section 536 of the Canada Elections Act, it is my duty to lay upon the table a report on the 2020 by-elections.

[*English*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedures and House Affairs.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and 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 104 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

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[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development in relation to the motion adopted on Wednesday, March 31, 2021, regarding sanctions imposed by the People's Republic of China.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

HONG KONG

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, mainland China is tightening its grip on Hong Kong and its people. Recently, the territorial government signalled that Hong Kong residents who held dual citizenship had to choose between their Hong Kong identity and other national citizenships. It is a decision with severe consequences, including the loss of representation by the Government of Canada.

For many generations, Hong Kong has accepted migrants and refugees from mainland China and elsewhere in Asia who were seeking freedoms and a better life. Today, the Hong Kong people are seeking assistance from other democracies and Canada should stand with them.

Therefore, I table a petition signed by citizens and residents of Canada. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to protect the rights of our citizens by informing Beijing the mobility rights of Hong Kong Canadians are non-negotiable and to be upheld; quickly open a path to Canadian citizenship for family members of Canadian citizens in Hong Kong; offer a three-year working visa with a path to citizenship for Hong Kong students completing an accredited study program in Canada; expedite asylum claims made by Hong Kong people involved in the pro-democracy movement; and work with the United Kingdom, United States, France, Australia, New Zealand and other democracies to protect the fundamental rights of all dual-national citizens living in Hong Kong.

• (1515)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I did not want to interrupt the member in his presentation of the petition, but I would ask if you could provide more information periodically, indicating that when presenting a petition, it should be somewhat concise and to the matter at hand.

The Speaker: I should and the member just did it for me. I will remind hon. members to be concise and to the point. We only have a limited amount of time for petitions. It is a reminder more than anything else. I know sometimes we get involved and we get carried away.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to that. I generally agree and I do my best to keep presentation of petitions very brief. This is the first time I have presented a petition on this matter or, I believe, that any member has. Hence, it was a little longer than normal. I appreciate the Speaker's understanding in allowing me to complete the presentation. Should I come back on this, it will be brief like my other petitions.

The Speaker: Again, I am not pointing fingers at anyone or blaming; it is just a reminder. I know how we all get carried away and sometimes we say more. We would like to keep it concise.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have four petitions to present to the House today.

The first petition is with respect to Bill C-6, which proposes to ban conversion therapy.

The petitioners are supportive of the general direction of the government with respect to banning conversion therapy, but they have concerns about the drafting of the bill, in particular the definition used of conversion therapy. The definition used in the bill is not consistent with most definitions of conversion therapy that have been used or understood at other levels and in other circumstances. They are concerned about how the flaws in the definition create unintended consequences.

The petitioners call on the government to fix the definition so we have a bill that in fact can command the full support of all members.

Routine Proceedings

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with respect to the situation in the Tigray region in Ethiopia. Many Canadians are concerned about the human rights situation and the humanitarian dynamics as well.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to take a more active role in responding to that conflict; to engage directly with Ethiopia and Eritrean governments on the issue; to promote long, short and medium-term election monitoring in the upcoming elections in Ethiopia; and to immediately call for independent monitoring as well as humanitarian access to the region.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is in support of Bill S-204, which recently passed second reading and has gone to committee study in the Senate. It would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ that was taken without the consent of the person it came from. This is in response to organ harvesting and trafficking in China, but also in other countries around the world.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth and final petition calls on the House of Commons as well as the Government of Canada to recognize that Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China have been and are being subjected to genocide. It also calls for the government, in line with its obligations under the Responsibility to Protect doctrine, to do all it can to protect vulnerable people in this region, to use Magnitsky sanctions and to make reforms to supply chain legislation.

I commend these four petitions for the consideration of hon. members.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition focused on the government's subsidy programs to support commercial businesses.

The petitioners are concerned about the rules that exclude non-arm's-length holders who conduct their business in a 100% arm's-length manner. These businesses are in the tourism industry and they have been particularly hard hit by COVID-19.

The petitioners call on the government to listen to their concerns and consider reviewing the rules around the commercial rent subsidy program.

HOUSING

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table this petition initiated and signed by my constituents in Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners call on the government to take the following actions: to recognize housing unaffordability and homelessness as twin national crises; to redefine affordable housing to better reflect the economic realities of Canadians; to remove tax exemptions for real estate investment trusts; to increase regulation of foreign investment in residential real estate; to create an empty home tax for a residential property; to prioritize funding for non-profit and co-operative housing; to require covenants on taxpayer subsidized affordable housing units to ensure they remain affordable; and to create national standards to establish rent and vacancy controls.

* * *

● (1520)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 394, 396, 397, 398, 402, 405, 406, 411, 412, 414, 416, 418, 423, 428, 430, 437, 438, 440, 441, 443 and 450.

[Text]

Question No. 394—**Mr. Kelly McCauley:**

With regard to Canadian International Trade Tribunal (CITT) hearings since January 1, 2016: (a) how many times has the government hired external legal representation for CITT hearings, broken down by case (or by department represented if there's an issue of confidentiality) and date of hire; (b) what is the cost associated with the hiring of external legal representation, broken down by case (or by department represented if there's an issue of confidentiality) and date of hire; and (c) what is the cost associated with internal legal representation, broken down by case (or by department represented if there's an issue of confidentiality)?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the amount spent on legal matters brought before the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, CITT, since January 1, 2016, to the extent that the information that has been requested is or may be protected by any legal privileges, including solicitor-client privilege, the federal Crown asserts those privileges. In this case, it has waived only solicitor-client privilege, and only to the extent of revealing the total legal costs, as defined below.

The total legal costs, actual and notional costs, associated with matters brought before the CITT since January 1, 2016, amount to approximately \$8,105,000. These cases raise a variety of issues falling within the mandate of the CITT, including customs or excise tax matters, complaints by potential suppliers concerning procurement by the federal government, as well as issues arising under the Special Import Measures Act. In most of these files, the Crown did not initiate the proceedings but rather acted as a defendant or respondent. The services concerned are litigation services and litigation support services provided throughout the life of the file, not solely hearings, at the CITT level. They do not include services provided at other stages, for example at the Federal Court of Appeal, if the CITT decision is challenged. Most of these files are handled by Department of Justice, JUS, lawyers. JUS lawyers, notaries and paralegals are salaried public servants, and therefore no legal fees are incurred for their services. A “notional amount” can, however, be provided to account for the legal services they provide. The notional amount is calculated by multiplying the total hours record-

ed in the responsive files for the relevant period by the applicable approved legal services hourly rates. Actual costs represent the file-related disbursements paid by JUS and then cost-recovered from the client departments or agencies. The total legal costs, actual and notional costs, associated with files handled by JUS lawyers amount to approximately \$7,004,000. The balance, of approximately \$1,101,000, represents the costs associated with files handled by external legal agents. The Government of Canada has hired external legal agents for CITT matters 17 times since January 1, 2016.

The total legal costs, actual and notional costs, associated with files handled by JUS lawyers are based on information currently contained in JUS systems as of February 11, 2021. The costs associated with files handled by external legal agents are based on invoices received from them and taxed by JUS as of February 25, 2021. It was not possible, given the scale of the request and the applicable deadlines, to consult all the departments and agencies responsible for these cases. The amounts provided in this response should therefore be read as approximate.

Question No. 396—**Mr. John Brassard:**

With regard to Transport Canada and flight crew and pilot ‘sit time’ for medical purposes and wait time for licenses: (a) how many licensed pilots are currently medically unfit to pilot an aircraft; (b) how many flight crew personal, excluding pilots, are currently unfit to fly; (c) how many licensed pilots and flight crew have completed the two-year ‘sit time’ and have been waiting (i) for three months for paperwork to be completed so they can return to work, (ii) for six months for paperwork to be completed so they can return to work, (iii) longer than six months for paperwork to be completed so they can return to work; and (d) how many pilot licenses are waiting to be signed by Transport Canada?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a), there are 170 pilots who are currently listed as medically unfit to pilot an aircraft in Transport Canada civil aviation's, TCCA, licensing system.

In response to parts (b) and (c), flight crew, according to the definition in Canadian aviation regulations 100.01, “means a crew member assigned to act as pilot or flight engineer of an aircraft during flight time”. TCCA does not have data about cabin crew members, e.g. flight attendants, as they do not require Transport Canada, TC, medical certification to perform their duties.

Generally, pilots are not waiting on TC to complete licence paperwork in order to return to work. There are currently various COVID-19-related exemptions in place, which allow for pilots to continue using their current credentials to fly while waiting for licence paperwork to be completed.

TC civil aviation medicine, CAM, was one of the first branches at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic to develop exemptions to keep aviators and controllers working without interruption. These CAM exemptions, which were issued in spring 2020 and remain in force, enable renewal of aviation medical certificates, MCs, for pilots, flight engineers and air traffic controllers, while reducing the need for face-to-face medical examinations and the regulatory demand for scarce medical resources. These exemptions allow renewal by attestations and telemedicine consultations. Regular in-person assessments also remain available for renewals and new MC applications.

These processes are consistent with the acceptable renewal options permitted by the International Civil Aviation Organization during the COVID-19 pandemic. These exemptions optimize the use of attestations, i.e., self-declaration, and telemedicine to enable low-risk MC holders to be renewed immediately, i.e., no waiting period. Furthermore, civil aviation medical examiners remain able to renew MC in-office at their discretion.

These renewal options have been successful in enabling the vast majority of pilots, flight engineers and air traffic controllers to retain their aviation MCs without interruption throughout the pandemic.

While the exemptions have proven highly successful in ensuring that aviation MC holders remain certified, COVID-related disruptions to CAM administrative processes, caused by factors such as mail delivery slowdowns and government building lockdowns, have resulted in a significant lag in data entry related to MCs, including for MC holders who have remained fully certified throughout COVID. Thus, the CAM database is not able to provide the data requested.

Furthermore, the data requested would be inaccurate, since the database also includes MC holders who have voluntarily allowed their MCs to expire, which is not necessarily indicative of a licensed pilot being medically unfit to pilot an aircraft.

In response to part (d), if pilots fall within the parameters specified in the exemptions, they may continue to work with expired aviation document booklets as permitted/specified in the exemptions. If pilots are not covered by any of the exemptions, aviation document booklets continue to be issued in these rare cases, provided that the individual is in adherence to the regulations.

Question No. 397—Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:

With regard to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: has the government, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples, other federal ministers and the provinces, started to develop an action plan to achieve the objectives of the Declaration and, if so, does this action plan include (i) measures to combat injustices, (ii) measures to combat prejudice, (iii) measures to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination, including systemic discrimination, facing Indigenous peoples, as well as Indigenous seniors, youth, children, women and men, Indigenous people with disabilities and gender-diverse or two-spirit Indigenous people, (iv) measures to promote mutual respect and understanding and good relations, including through human rights training, (v) review or oversight measures, (vi) recourse avenues, (vii) redress measures, (viii) other accountability measures respecting the implementation of the Declaration, (ix) measures to follow up on its implementation, assess it and modify it?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-15, an act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peo-

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ples, was introduced on December 3, 2020 and is currently at the second reading stage in the House of Commons. The introduction of Bill C-15 was a key milestone to support the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. While the bill continues to advance through the legislative process, the government has begun preliminary discussions with indigenous peoples to determine the best path forward for the development of the action plan.

As written, this bill would require that the action plan include, at a minimum, measures to address injustices, combat prejudice and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against indigenous peoples; to promote mutual respect and understanding, through human rights education; and to develop monitoring, oversight or other accountability measures with respect to the implementation of the declaration.

It is important to note that Bill C-15 requires preparation and completion of the action plan as soon as practicable, but no later than three years after the day of coming into force, recognizing that the development of an initial action plan in collaboration with first nations, Inuit and Métis partners should take adequate, but not indefinite, time.

Question No. 398—Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:

With regard to statistics held by the government related to the Pleasure Craft Operator Card (PCOC) and reported pleasure craft incidents: (a) how many reported incidents took place each year on Canadian waters since 1999 (or as far back as PCOC statistics are available), broken down by type of incident (accident, injury, fine, etc.); and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by (i) how many involved an operator with a PCOC, (ii) how many involved rented watercraft?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the department does not have a mechanism in place for mandatory reporting of incidents involving pleasure craft. The pleasure craft operator competency database only holds information related to the person who obtained a pleasure craft operator card; it does not track incidents.

Question No. 402—Mr. Scot Davidson:

With regard to the agreements between the government and the companies providing the COVID-19 vaccine: (a) on what date did the government ask each of these companies to manufacture those vaccines in Canada, broken down by company; and (b) what was the response of each company, and the rationale provided?

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Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a negotiation team was assembled in June 2020, led by Public Services and Procurement Canada, to initiate negotiations with leading vaccine suppliers. During these early engagements, both Public Services and Procurement Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada raised domestic options for manufacturing vaccines. The specific details of the negotiations cannot be disclosed as it is confidential commercial information.

After reviewing the options, the manufacturers concluded that biomanufacturing capacity in Canada at the time of contracting was too limited to justify the investment of capital and expertise required to start manufacturing in Canada.

Question No. 405—Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:

With regard to confidential documents: what is the government's disclosure policy?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the security categorization of documents and the disclosure of documents are addressed through separate policies and processes.

With respect to security categorization, the directive on security management, www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=32614, standard on security categorization, www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=32614, requires government institutions to assign security categories to information according to the degree of injury that could result if it were compromised. For instance, if unauthorized disclosure could cause injury to the national interest, the information is categorized as "classified" information, i.e., confidential, secret or top secret. Similarly, if information could cause injury outside the national interest, then this information is categorized as "protected" information, i.e., protected A, protected B or protected C, as defined in the standard on security categorization.

With respect to disclosure, government institutions release information through a variety of means, such as by responding to requests submitted under the Access to Information Act. While the security category of a document may indicate the sensitivity of its contents, documents requested under the act may not be withheld on the basis of their security category alone. When a classified document is requested under the act, the government institution processes it like any other document, by conducting a line-by-line review to determine whether any of the exemptions or exclusions listed in the act should be applied to the information contained in the document.

Under the policy on service and digital, www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=32603, government institutions are also required to maximize and prioritize the release of departmental information and data as an open resource on the Open Government portal, <https://open.canada.ca/en>, while respecting information security, privacy, and legal considerations.

Question No. 406—Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:

With regard to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, since 1993: has the Service signed an information-sharing agreement with the Sûreté du Québec, and, if so, what is the content of that agreement?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of performing its duties and functions under the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, CSIS may, with approval of the minister, enter into an arrangement or otherwise cooperate with any department of the Government of Canada or the government of a province or any department thereof, or any police force in a province, with the approval of the minister responsible for policing the province.

Given its mandate and specific operational requirements, CSIS does not generally disclose details related to operational activity, including its information-sharing arrangements.

Question No. 411—Mr. Michael D. Chong:

With regard to the Prime Minister's comments on February 16, 2021 about "not applying it to things that don't meet the very clear internationally recognized criteria around genocide" in reference to not designating the treatment of the Uyghurs by the Chinese government as genocide: what specific criteria has not been met that is preventing the government from declaring it a genocide?

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following reflects a consolidated response approved on behalf of Global Affairs Canada ministers.

The Government of Canada has been clear in the view that human rights violations are occurring against Uyghurs. The nature and scale of the violations by Chinese authorities in Xinjiang, under the pretext of countering extremism, are deeply disturbing. Our government is gravely concerned about the existence of a large network of "political re-education" camps where credible reports indicate that over a million people have been arbitrarily detained. We are also deeply concerned by the reports of mass separation of children from their parents.

There are severe restrictions on freedom of religion or belief and the freedoms of movement, association and expression as well as on Uighur culture. Widespread surveillance disproportionately continues to target Uyghurs and other minorities. More reports are emerging of forced labour and forced birth control, including sterilization. Actions by the Chinese government are contrary to its own constitution, are in violation of international human rights obligations and are inconsistent with the United Nations' global counterterrorism strategy.

The Government of the People's Republic of China denies any and all allegations of human rights abuses against Uighur people and rejects any accountability for wrongdoing, instead casting blame on the victims and those who choose to speak out. Due diligence is needed given mounting evidence that the Chinese government's systematic ill-treatment of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang amounts to crimes against humanity and constitutive elements of genocide.

Canada, along with several other countries, has repeatedly called on the Chinese government to allow the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Special Procedures immediate, unfettered and meaningful access to Xinjiang. Such access would allow independent experts to assess the extent of the human rights abuses taking place.

Canada continues to review options in addressing the gross violations of human rights taking place in Xinjiang, and understands that the most effective path lies in coordinating with our like-minded partners to maintain pressure and international focus on this issue.

Canada has repeatedly called for an investigation so that impartial experts can observe and report on the situation first-hand. The onus must remain on the Chinese government to demonstrate that human rights abuses have ceased and that its obligations to prevent genocide are being fulfilled. More rigorous and comprehensive investigation and evaluation should occur in co-operation with our allies. Our collective voice, grounded in international law, stands to have the strongest possible impact.

Canada continues to take action in addressing the situation based on the information it has regarding this situation. On January 12, the government announced a comprehensive approach to the human rights situation in Xinjiang, including measures to address forced labour. Canada has repeatedly raised concerns alongside our partners at the UN, including before the UN Human Rights Council, HRC, and at the UN General Assembly. In June 2020, during the 44th session of the HRC, Canada and 27 other countries signed a joint statement on the human rights situations in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. At the UN General Assembly Third Committee on October 6, 2020, Canada co-signed, along with 38 other countries, a joint statement on the human rights situations in Xinjiang and Hong Kong.

In coordination with our international partners, we will continue to review available information and consider further options in how we address the situation in Xinjiang. We will continue to work to defend fundamental human rights and freedoms, and to call on China to uphold its international obligations.

Question No. 412—Mr. Kenny Chiu:

With regard to the processing of student visa applications by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC): (a) has IRCC targeted applications from students of certain countries in order to undergo heightened or additional scrutiny; (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, which countries' applications are receiving additional scrutiny; (c) what is the reason for why each country has been selected for additional scrutiny, broken down by country; and (d) what is the average additional processing time required by IRCC in order to perform the additional scrutiny?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, against the threat of potential exploitation of immigration processes by foreign state actors who seek to advance their interests, the Government of Canada leverages a range of tools to protect national security, including from foreign interference actors.

Foreign interference is a serious threat to the security of Canadians. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS, has the mandate to investigate such threat activities and uses the full mandate of the CSIS Act in order to investigate, advise on and reduce

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these threats. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RCMP, has a broad, multi-faceted mandate that allows it to investigate and prevent foreign interference on the basis of various laws. Immigration officers are highly trained to examine all evidence presented as part of an immigration application, including admissibility recommendations, before rendering a final decision in line with requirements of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

The Government of Canada takes seriously all allegations of interference by foreign states that would intimidate Canadian communities and applies a whole-of-government approach to protect national security, including from foreign interference actors.

In response to part (a), IRCC does not target applications from students of certain countries in order to undergo heightened or additional scrutiny. All IRCC temporary and permanent residence applications are assessed for security and criminality concerns on a case-by-case basis, based on various indicators.

Since the answer to part (a) is not affirmative, responses are not required for parts (b) through (d).

Question No. 414—Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:

With regard to meetings between Public Services and Procurement Canada and either Health Canada or the Public Health Agency of Canada concerning the procurement or production of vaccines since January 1, 2020: what are the details of all such meetings involving officials at the associate deputy minister level or higher or ministers or their exempt staff, including the (i) date, (ii) title of persons in attendance, (iii) agenda items, (iv) summary of decisions made at meeting?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, PSPC has been in constant contact with key partners including the Public Health Agency of Canada, PHAC, Health Canada, Industry, Science and Economic Development Canada, ISED, Global Affairs Canada, the COVID Vaccine Task Force and others to plan and execute the procurement of personal protective equipment and medical equipment, such as masks, gloves, sanitizer, gowns, and ventilators; COVID-19 vaccines; and all related supplies, such as syringes and freezers. The minister, the minister's staff and departmental officials are in constant contact with their colleagues.

Through this close, daily collaboration, the Government of Canada has taken an aggressive procurement approach to fulfill emergent and immediate as well as long-term medical supply requirements. As a result, it has secured more than 2.5 billion articles of various personal protective equipment, and continues to receive steady, ongoing deliveries. Departments are also working together to leverage domestic supply chains.

Question No. 416—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) support, including tax credits, provided to Huawei, since 2016: what is the total amount of SR&ED support provided annually to Huawei, broken down by year and by type of support?

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Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the CRA is unable to respond in the manner requested, as confidentiality provisions of the Income Tax Act prevent the disclosure of taxpayer-specific information.

Question No. 418—**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:**

With regard to the impact of the travel restrictions imposed by the government during the pandemic and the study released by Statistics Canada on October 23, 2020, which provided estimates on the amount of job losses and gross domestic product (GDP) reduction resulting from the travel restrictions: (a) what are the updated statistics on the estimated job losses and GDP reduction for 2020; and (b) what is the projected impact of the travel restrictions on job losses and GDP reduction for 2021?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the Statistics Canada study published on October 3, 2020, provided a range of estimates on the economic impact of travel restrictions on the Canadian economy in 2020. These estimates were based on several projection scenarios that were possible when the analysis was being performed, and these projection results differ from true estimates of what really happened. The scenarios involved different assumptions on when travel restrictions would be eased and what the recovery would look like after the easing of restrictions. For each scenario, a monthly recovery path for tourism activities from March to December of 2020 was assumed, as shown in chart A1 and chart A2 in the appendix of the study, which can be found at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-626-x/11-626-x2020023-eng.htm>. The study suggested that travel restrictions would lead to a reduction in gross domestic product, or GDP, ranging from \$16 billion to \$23 billion and to job losses ranging from 284,000 to 406,000 in the tourism industry in 2020.

Since the publication of the study, Statistics Canada has published several statistics on the tourism industry, including GDP and employment, up to the third quarter of 2020. With an assumption that the fourth quarter of 2020 is similar to the third quarter, this newly released data suggests that the tourism industry could experience in 2020 a reduction in GDP of about \$20 billion and job losses of about 190,000 from their 2019 levels.

The estimated impact on jobs as suggested by the newly released data is smaller than what was presented in the study. The difference arises because the initial study focused on the impact of travel restrictions by holding constant other factors. The study explained that behavioural changes made by consumers, businesses and governments in response to shocks are not taken into account; that is, the study assumed no change in the production structure of the economy, no change in the tastes or willingness to work of impacted individuals, and no government intervention. The need for social distancing has introduced changes in the way businesses operate and how individuals work: consumers and businesses rely increasingly on online platforms to purchase and sell products and services.

Also, the Government of Canada has responded to the pandemic with business liquidity support programs, including the Canada emergency wage subsidy, or CEWS; the Canada emergency business account; and the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program. The program take-up statistics for the CEWS suggest that the accommodation and food services industry and the arts, entertainment and recreation industry, main components of the

tourism industry, are among the industries with the highest take-up rates.

With regard to (b), Statistics Canada does not currently have an estimate for the impact of travel restrictions for 2021. Given the substantial changes that have occurred in the economy and the uncertainty regarding how consumer behaviour may have changed because of the pandemic, the methodology used in the initial study would produce estimates with unacceptable margins of error.

Question No. 423—**Mr. Tom Kmiec:**

With regard to the federal disability tax credit (DTC) that helps persons with disabilities and certain medical conditions defray unavoidable medical expenses, since fiscal year 2017-18: (a) what is the total number of DTC applicants for fiscal years 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20, broken down by year; (b) what is the total DTC amount claimed for fiscal years 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20, broken down by year; (c) what is the total number of DTC claimants for fiscal years 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20, broken down by year; (d) what is the total number of DTC applications that were denied for fiscal years 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20, broken down by year; (e) of the DTC applications that were denied, what were the tabulated and categorized reasons for their denial; (f) what is the total number of DTC applications that cited a doctor's recommendation stating the applicant qualified for the DTC; (g) what is the total number of DTC applicants in fiscal years 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20, that were previously approved for the DTC; (h) of the DTC applicants in (g), how many were rejected; and (i) in deciding whether or not to approve a re-application for the DTC, what are the criterion utilized by the Canada Revenue Agency to make such a determination, and how are these criterion logged and recorded?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), (b), (c) and (d), information is available on the Government of Canada website. This information is compiled by calendar year rather than by fiscal year.

The publication entitled “Disability Tax Credit Statistics – 2011 to 2019 Calendar Years”, which is available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/programs/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/income-statistics-gst-hst-statistics/disability-tax-credit-statistics/dtc-statistics-2019.html>, provides statistics based on information that the CRA processed from applications for the disability tax credit, or DTC, or from individuals who claimed the DTC on their individual T1 income tax and benefit return. Tables 1 to 10 present demographic data by calendar year, while tables 11 to 13 present data on DTC determination and utilization for calendar years 2011-2019.

Tables 1 to 10 contain the number of individuals with an accepted DTC certificate by restriction, age, gender, marital status and province.

Table 11 provides a breakdown of DTC determinations by basic activity of daily living, or BADL, for DTC certificates processed during the calendar year.

Table 12 provides the breakdown of the number of claimants from T1 returns assessed or reassessed over the calendar year. The breakdown by BADL is estimated by allocating that number by the proportion of accepted determinations by BADL published in Table 11.

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Table 13 provides the breakdown of DTC utilization from T1 returns assessed or reassessed over the calendar year. The breakdown by BADL is estimated by allocating the “Total Amount of DTC Utilized” by the proportion of accepted determinations by BADL published in Table 11.

Tables 11, 12 and 13 replace the former “Disability Tax Credit at a glance” publication. The CRA is now publishing data by calendar year rather than by fiscal year.

In some cases, totals may not add up due to rounding or suppression for confidentiality purposes. Please refer to the “Confidentiality procedures” section of the explanatory notes for more information.

With regard to (e), the CRA is guided by the criteria as set out in the Income Tax Act, the ITA, and based on the specific medical information provided, the CRA does not record the information in the manner requested.

With regard to (f), the CRA administers the DTC in accordance with the ITA. To that end, the CRA only captures the data needed to administer the DTC as prescribed under the ITA. For this reason, the CRA is unable to respond in the manner requested, as there is no legislative requirement to capture the information in this manner.

With regard to (g) and (h), this data is not readily available. It would require a manual search that cannot be completed within the time provided under Standing Order 39(5)(a).

With regard to (i), the CRA administers the DTC in accordance with the ITA. To that end, the CRA only captures the data needed to administer the DTC as prescribed under the ITA. For this reason, the CRA is unable to respond in the manner requested, as there is no legislative requirement to capture the information in this manner.

Please note that the CRA’s role is to determine eligibility for the DTC based on the legislation and the information provided by the medical practitioner who certifies form T2201, the disability tax credit certificate. If the medical practitioner provides the CRA with information that suggests the patient’s severe limitations may improve over time, DTC eligibility is allowed on a temporary basis. When that period ends, it is necessary to submit a new T2201 in order for the CRA to redetermine the eligibility based on the current situation. The determining factor in all cases, whether a first-time claim or a reapplication, is based on the effects of the impairment on a person’s ability to perform the basic activities of daily living, or BADL.

Although the ITA allows the CRA to request a new completed form T2201 at different intervals, all efforts are made to lessen the burden on the taxpayers and the medical practitioners.

Once a determination has been completed, a notice of determination, or NOD, is sent to the taxpayer; the information is updated on the DTC database; and the taxpayer can view the disability information using the CRA’s My Account.

Question No. 428—Mr. Gérard Deltell:

With regard to communication between the Office of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the Privy Council Office or the Office of the Prime

Minister and the Office of the Clerk of the House of Commons between noon on February 17, 2021, and 4:00 p.m. on February 18, 2021: what are the details of all such communication, including the (i) date and time, (ii) type of communication (email, text message, phone call, verbal exchange, etc.), (iii) names and titles of the participants, (iv) sender and the receiver, if applicable, (v) subject matters, (vi) summary of the contents of the communication?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Office of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons consults and interacts with all parties and MPs, as well as with representative of the House of Commons, in order to facilitate the mandate that the Prime Minister has given to him to lead the House leadership team to bring a collaborative and effective approach to the minority Parliament, placing a priority on transparency and communicating with Canadians on the work of their Parliament.

Question No. 430—Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:

With regard to the impact on the Canadian economy of the decision by the President of the United States to cancel the permits related to the Keystone XL pipeline project: (a) what are the government’s estimates on the number of job losses, both direct and indirect, as a result of the decision; and (b) what are the government’s estimates on the economic losses, both direct and indirect, as a result of the decision?

Mr. Marc Serré ((Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, following the recent decision of the U.S. administration on Keystone XL, which the Government of Canada strenuously objected to, the project proponent has stated that 1,000 construction jobs were impacted as construction season activity ceased. It had been anticipated that 2,800 construction jobs would be created in Alberta and Saskatchewan at the height of construction. The proponent has also stated that the project had been expected to create up to 17,000 direct and indirect jobs in Canada.

Question No. 437—Mr. Arnold Viersen:

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) hiring additional temporary employees for the 2021 tax season: (a) how many temporary employees is the CRA hiring; (b) prior to hiring individuals outside of government, did the CRA consider seconding individuals from other government departments or agencies who are on leave or unable to complete their regular work responsibilities due to the pandemic, and, if not, why not; and (c) how many temporary employees hired for this year’s tax season were seconded from other government departments or agencies?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 filing season, the hiring target for CRA call centres was approximately 2,000 temporary employees by March 31, 2021.

With regard to (b), at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CRA was called upon to help administer emergency benefits on behalf of the Government of Canada. The CRA worked closely with Employment and Social Development Canada call centres to ensure adequate support was available to Canadians facing hardship as a result of the pandemic.

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In April of 2020, the CRA made a call to employees across the agency, asking those whose workloads had been deemed non-essential to work as temporary call agents. Approximately 7,000 CRA employees came forward to help. However, as CRA business resumption began, the CRA employees began returning to their regular duties.

The CRA did not approach other government departments or agencies because we had made plans for recruitment and training of 2,000 external hires for filing season.

With regard to (c), none of the temporary agents hired for this year's tax season were seconded from other government departments or agencies.

Question No. 438—Mr. Marc Dalton:

With regard to the Office of the Procurement Ombudsman: (a) how many complaints has the ombudsman received during the pandemic, since March 1, 2020; (b) what is the breakdown of complaints by type of products or services involved; (c) what is the breakdown of complaints by type of complaints; (d) how many of the complaints involved tenders related to products purchased as part of the pandemic response (PPE, ventilators, etc.); and (e) how many of the complaints involved tenders related to the administration or implementation of government programs announced in response to the program?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), as per the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act, the procurement ombudsman can review two types of complaints: complaints respecting compliance with regulations made under the Financial Administration Act regarding the award of certain contracts; and complaints respecting the administration of certain contracts.

Since March 1, 2020, the ombudsman has received a total of five complaints regarding the award or administration of federal contracts.

With regard to part (b), the breakdown of complaints by products or services involved is the following: environmental studies; audio-visual services; air charter services; professional, administrative and management support services; and vehicles, motor vehicles and cycles.

With regard to part (c), of the five complaints, four were regarding the award and one was regarding the administration.

With regard to part (d), there were no complaints regarding the tender of products purchased as part of the pandemic response.

With regard to part (e), there were no complaints related to government programs in response to the pandemic.

Question No. 440—Mr. James Bezan:

With regard to the former Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, Mr. Gary Walbourne: (a) on what dates between January 1, 2018, and October 31, 2018, did he meet with the Minister of National Defence; and (b) on what dates between January 1, 2018, and October 31, 2018, did he hold a scheduled or unscheduled (i) phone call, (ii) video chat (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.), with the Minister of National Defence?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a) and part (b), concerning meetings between the Minister of National Defence and the former ombudsman Mr. Gary Walbourne be-

tween January 1, 2018, and October 31, 2018, there was one meeting on March 1, 2018.

Question No. 441—Mr. James Bezan:

With regard to the Minister of National Defence: (a) on what dates between January 1, 2018, and October 31, 2018, did the Minister of National Defence meet with the former Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, Mr. Gary Walbourne; and (b) on what dates between January 1, 2018, and October 31, 2018, did the Minister of National Defence hold a scheduled or unscheduled (i) phone call, (ii) video chat (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.), with Mr. Walbourne?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a) and part (b), between January 1, 2018, and October 31, 2018, the Minister of National Defence met with the former National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces ombudsman once, on March 1, 2018.

Question No. 443—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to the email exchanges of February 11 and 12, 2020, between Kevin Chan, global director and head of public policy at Facebook, and Owen Ripley, director general at Canadian Heritage, regarding a job offer from Facebook, and the statement from the Minister of Canadian Heritage to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage on January 29, 2021, "I did ask the department to look into the matter": (a) on what date did the minister become aware of the email exchanges; (b) on what date did the minister ask the department to review the email exchanges; (c) based on which laws, regulations or codes did the minister ask the department to review the email exchanges; (d) what issues did the minister ask the department to review or check; (e) how long did the department's review last; (f) under which laws, regulations or codes was the review conducted; (g) what were the findings of the department's review; (h) when did the minister receive the department's review; (i) what decisions did the department and the minister make following the review; and (j) what is the department's position on requests to distribute or share job offers from registered lobbyists among public servants?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the minister became aware of the email exchanges on October 28, 2020.

With regard to part (b), on October 28, 2020, the minister's chief of staff raised the email exchanges with the deputy minister of Canadian Heritage. As the official responsible for ensuring effective departmental management, including the conduct of departmental staff, the deputy minister informed the chief of staff of her intention to carry out a review of the circumstances surrounding the email exchanges.

With regard to part (c), the deputy minister, as the official responsible for ensuring effective departmental management, including the conduct of departmental staff, reviewed the matter pursuant to the values and ethics code for the public sector, the Department of Canadian Heritage's code of values and ethics, the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, the Treasury Board policy on people management, the Treasury Board directive on conflict of interest, and the Treasury Board directive on terms and conditions of employment.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to part (d), the deputy minister, as the official responsible for ensuring effective departmental management, including the conduct of departmental staff, reviewed the matter pursuant to the values and ethics code for the public sector, the Department of Canadian Heritage's code of values and ethics, the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, the Treasury Board policy on people management, the Treasury Board directive on conflict of interest, and the Treasury Board directive on terms and conditions of employment.

With regard to part (e), the department's review lasted from October 28, 2020 to November 3, 2020.

With regard to part (f), the deputy minister, as the official responsible for ensuring effective departmental management, including the conduct of departmental staff, reviewed the matter pursuant to the values and ethics code for the public sector, the Department of Canadian Heritage's code of value and ethics, the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, the Treasury Board policy on people management, the Treasury Board directive on conflict of interest, and the Treasury Board directive on terms and conditions of employment.

With regard to part (g), based on the information specific to this matter, the deputy minister of Canadian Heritage determined that sharing publicly available information was not a reprehensible act.

With regard to part (h), the results of the review were communicated orally to the minister on November 4, 2020.

With regard to part (i), the deputy minister determined that, based on the facts related to this matter, no further action was required.

With regard to part (j), each situation should be assessed based on their specific facts. While sharing publicly available information is not in and of itself a reprehensible act, departmental staff are expected to meet the highest standards with respect to conflict of interest, values and ethics. The Department of Canadian Heritage takes values and ethics very seriously, and has a solid framework in place to prevent and follow up on such matters.

Question No. 450—Mr. Corey Tochor:

With regard to the impact on the government's estimates of the importance of the Enbridge Line 5 project: (a) what are the government's estimates on the number of jobs at stake, both direct and indirect, dependent on the project succeeding; and (b) what are the government's estimates on the economic impact to the Canadian economy, both direct and indirect, which is dependent on the project?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is fully committed to the continued, safe operation of Line 5. According to Enbridge, the Line 5 Sarnia petrochemical complex supports over 4,900 direct jobs and 23,500 indirect jobs. It is also responsible for over \$65 billion in direct and indirect revenues, based on \$28 billion in direct annual trade between Canada and the United States. In Quebec, Line 5 is a critical source of supply for the province's refineries, supplying about two-thirds of the crude oil consumed in the province. This supports the refineries' 1,080 employees, and more than 200 contract workers.

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, furthermore, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 390, 391, 392, 393, 395, 399, 400, 401, 403, 404, 407, 408, 409, 410, 413, 415, 417, 419, 420, 421, 422, 424, 425, 426, 427, 429, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 439, 442, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449 and 451 could all be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 390—Mr. Pat Kelly:

With regard to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB): what are any statistics that the government has regarding demographics of CERB recipients prior to the pandemic, such as income level, employment situation (employed full-time, unemployed, student, retired, etc.), age, location information (geographic, urban vs. rural, etc.), or other similar type of statistics?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 391—Mr. Michael Kram:

With regard to federal government spending within the City of Regina, for each fiscal year since 2015-16, inclusively: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group, broken down by the (i) name of the recipient, (ii) municipality of the recipient, (iii) date on which the funding was received, (iv) amount received, (v) department or agency providing the funding, (vi) program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 392—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to public service and Crown corporation pensions: (a) what is the current account status on each pension; and (b) what is the discount rate used for each?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 393—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to free credit protection in relation to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB): (a) how many CERB recipients are currently under investigation; (b) of the number in (a), how many are under investigation for fraudulent claims; (c) of the number in (a), how many are seniors; and (d) how many CERB recipients had no income for the previous tax year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 395—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to the Canada Lands Company Limited (CLC), since 2016: (a) how many acres of land has the CLC turned over to municipalities or other jurisdictions for the development of low-income housing, broken down by municipality; (b) how many houses have been developed by CLC or in partnership with CLC; and (c) of those units in (b), how many are classified as low-income or low-cost housing?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 399—Mrs. Karen Vecchio:

With regard to government advertising during the Super Bowl on February 7, 2021: (a) what is the total amount spent by the government on advertising during the Super Bowl broadcast, including the pregame and postgame shows; (b) what is the breakdown of how much was spent by format, including (i) English television, (ii) French television, (iii) other language television, (iv) English radio, (v) French radio, (vi) other language radio, (vii) other types of format, such as streaming services, broken down by type; (c) what is the title and description or purpose of each government advertisement that ran during the Super Bowl; and (d) how many times did each advertisement run, broken down by format?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 400—Mr. John Brassard:

With regard to the Veterans Disability Program: (a) what is the oversight role of Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) employees; (b) what is the oversight role of VAC executives, including key performance indicators assigned regarding the disability program; (c) what are the details of the Medavie Blue Cross contract related to the disability program, including (i) the summary of the terms of agreement, (ii) the contract start and end dates, (iii) the costs to administer, (iv) the summary of the review clauses, (v) the key performance indicators; and (d) what specific process does each application go through from the initial application until a decision is rendered?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 401—Mr. John Brassard:

With regard to the medical cannabis program for veterans: (a) what is the oversight role of Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) employees; (b) what is the oversight role of VAC executives, including key performance indicators assigned regarding the program; (c) what are the details of the Medavie Blue Cross contract related to the medical cannabis program, including (i) the summary of the terms of agreement, (ii) contract start and end dates, (iii) costs to administer, (iv) summary of the review clauses, (v) key performance indicators; and (d) what specific process does each reimbursement application go through from the time of purchase through the reimbursement?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 403—Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:

With regard to Canada's constitutional system: has the Privy Council Office produced any documents, studies, opinion polls, memos or scenarios exploring the possibility of a fundamental change to Canada's constitutional system, including the abolition of the monarchy, and, if so, what are (i) the nature of the constitutional changes being considered, (ii) the anticipated timeline for such a change, (iii) the steps that might be taken to bring about such a change, (iv) the concerns of the Privy Council Office with respect to the constitutional demands of the provinces?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 404—Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncass:

With regard to government spending in the ridings of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Manicouagan, Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Papineau, Honoré-Mercier, Ahuntsic-Cartierville and Québec, since 2015 and broken down by constituency: (a) what is the total annual amount, broken down by year; (b) what is the detailed annual amount, broken down by department, Crown corporation, agency or body; and (c) what grants and contributions have been made, broken down by year according to the source of the funding?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 407—Mr. Garnett Genuis:

With regard to the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS): (a) what is the government's position on the proposal from South Africa and India to temporarily waive certain intellectual property rights under TRIPS related to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment until the end of the COVID-19 pandemic; (b) has the government conducted an analysis on the impacts of the proposal, and, if so, what are the details of the analysis, including methodology and findings; (c) what specific actions, if any, has the government taken to advance and promote its position; and (d) has the government made any representations to the World Trade Organization on this issue since the start of the pandemic, and if so, what are the details, including (i) the date, (ii) who made the representation, (iii) the position advocated by the government during the representation?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 408—Mr. Steven Blaney:

With regard to the National Shipbuilding Strategy and the Umbrella Agreement: (a) what are the total amount of contracts awarded or committed to (i) Seaspan, (ii) Irving Shipbuilding, (iii) Chantier Davie Canada Inc.; (b) what is the total backstop committed to each shipyard in (a); (c) what are the conditions which must be met to utilize the backstop provision under the umbrella agreement; (d) how many vessels are committed to each shipyard under their umbrella agreement and what are those vessels; (e) for each of the following programs, the AOPS program, the Off-shore Oceanographic Science Vessel, the Off-Shore Science Fisheries Vessels, the Canadian Surface Combatants, the Polar Icebreaker, the Program Icebreakers, and the Medium Patrol Vessels, what are the (i) projected costs (including taxes), (ii) expected delivery dates, (iii) costs for engineering and design, (iv) risks as identified by third party advisors around costs, budget and schedule; (f) what is the total number of AORs required to service a fleet of 15 surface combatants and the planned rotation schedule for each; and (g) on what date will the JSS 1 and JSS 2 (i) achieve full operational capacity, (ii) be outfitted or finished, and are there mitigating plans to provide resupply to the Royal Canadian Navy should these vessels not achieve Full Operational Capacity on the dates expected?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 409—Mr. Steven Blaney:

With regard to the government's planned upgrades to the Esquimalt Graving Docks (EDG) in Victoria, British Columbia: (a) what is the timeline for the proposed upgrades; (b) what are the total committed or project investments, expenses and revenue related to the EGD for (i) 2016, (ii) 2017, (iii) 2018, (iv) 2019, (v) 2020, (vi) 2021, (vii) 2022, (viii) 2023, (ix) 2024, (x) 2025, (xi) 2026; (c) what are the uses of the facility by percentage of space utilized and period reserved from 2016 to 2026, broken down by year; (d) what is the summary of the impact and benefits of planned upgrades; (e) what is the date that any and all upgrades were approved by the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and the date that funding will be released between 2019 and 2026; and (f) is there any known or unknown impact of these expansions on private shipyards in Canada and private businesses, including (i) Seaspan, (ii) Chantier Davie Canada Inc., (iii) Irving Shipbuilding, (iv) BC Shipyards?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 410—Mr. Joël Godin:

With regard to the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS) and the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) program: (a) how many businesses and organizations qualified for CECRA but were not eligible for CERS due to restrictions on groups under the CERS program; (b) why did the government decide to exclude businesses receiving CECRA from the CERS program; (c) did the government take into account whether or not organizations are considered completely separate for tax purposes when determining eligibility, and, if not, why not; (d) was this decision intentional, or to what extent did the government forget it or make a mistake, and, if so, will the government change the qualification criteria; and (e) is there an appeal mechanism or recourse for businesses or organizations that were denied CERS, and, if so, what are the details?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 413—Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:

With regard to government purchases of personal protective equipment: how many syringes has the government purchased, broken down by month and by type of syringe, since March 2020?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 415—Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:**

With regard to communications between the government and Honeywell related to procurement of surveillance technologies: (a) what are the details of all such communications with any department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity since November 4, 2015, including the (i) date, (ii) type of communications (email, in-person meetings, etc.), (iii) subject matter discussed, (iv) title of sender and recipients for all emails, (v) title of attendees for all other forms of communications such as meetings, conference calls, etc.; and (b) with regard to communications and purchases, what are the details of all purchases of Honeywell products the government has made since November 4, 2015, including the (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) description of products purchased, including volume, (iv) reason for or purpose of purchase, (v) whether or not contract was sole-sourced?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 417—Mr. Michael Cooper:

With regard to government expenditures related to Twitter since January 1, 2020, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity: (a) what is the total amount of expenditures related to Twitter; (b) what was the total amount spent promoting tweets; (c) what are the details of each tweet that was promoted, including the (i) handle or account, (ii) description of tweet, (iii) amount spent on promotion, (iv) date; (d) what was the total amount promoting hashtags; and (e) what are the details of all promoted hashtags, including the (i) handle or account, (ii) hashtag, (iii) amount spent on promotion, (iv) date?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 419—Mr. Mario Beaulieu:

With regard to the positions of deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers and associate deputy ministers, as of December 31, 2020: (a) what are the language requirements for the positions of deputy minister, assistant deputy minister and associate deputy minister; (b) what was the breakdown by first official language spoken; and (c) what was the breakdown of anglophones and francophones in positions that do or do not meet the language requirements of their position?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 420—Mr. Brad Vis:

With regard to the statement from the senior vice-president of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities on February 4, 2021, concerning the Rapid Housing Initiative – Projects Stream that “Over 765 applications went through a triage process to assess eligibility. We have reviewed and prioritized 678 applications, requesting over \$4.2 billion in funding”: (a) what are the details of each of the rejected 87 applications, including the (i) requester, (ii) location of the project, (iii) federal electoral constituency of the project, (iv) project description, (v) amount requested, (vi) reasons for the rejection; and (b) what are the details of each of the 678 eligible applications, including (i) the requester, (ii) the location of the project, (iii) the federal electoral constituency of the project, (iv) the project description, (v) the amount requested, (vi) the start and end date of the project, (vii) whether additional funds were received by the organization through the Rapid Housing Initiative – Major Cities Stream, and, if so, what amount was received?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 421—Ms. Louise Chabot:

With regard to the Canada Summer Jobs program: (a) for each of the 338 ridings in Canada, how much money, how many positions and how many hours of work were requested for fiscal year 2019-20; (b) for each of the 338 ridings in Canada, how much money, how many positions and how many hours of work were allocated for fiscal year 2019-20; (c) what is, in mathematical terms, and defining all variables, the formula that was used in fiscal year 2019-20 to determine the funding allocated to each riding; and (d) what is the share of overall funding, expressed both as a percentage and in dollars, that has been allocated to ridings in Quebec, broken down by fiscal year, since 2015-16?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 422—Mr. Garnett Genuis:

With regard to the Canada Service Corps initiative launched in 2018: (a) how much money has been spent on this initiative in total; (b) how many Canadian youth have participated, broken down by year and by province or territory; (c) how many volunteering projects (i) have been completed by the corps, (ii) are currently ongoing; (d) what is the (i) average number of youth volunteers involved per

project, (ii) number of projects per province; (e) how many applications for service-related project funding has the government (i) received, (ii) accepted, (iii) provided funding to; (f) what is the number of service-related projects that the government (i) has funded since the beginning of the Service Corps, (ii) is currently funding; (g) what is the number of service related projects funded which were (i) national projects, (ii) regional projects, (iii) local projects; and (h) what is the number of projects funded at each of the \$250, \$750, and \$1,500 fixed amounts?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 424—Mr. Tom Kmiec:

With regard to the First-Time home buyer incentive (FTHBI) announced by the government in 2019, from September 1, 2019, to date: (a) how many applicants have applied for mortgages through the FTHBI program, broken down by province and municipality; (b) of those applicants, how many have been approved and accepted mortgages through the FTHBI program, broken down by province and municipality; (c) of those applicants listed in (b), how many approved applicants have been issued the incentive in the form of a shared equity mortgage; (d) what is the total value of incentives (shared equity mortgages) under the program that have been issued, in dollars; (e) for those applicants who have been issued mortgages through the FTHBI, what is that value of each of the mortgage loans; (f) for those applicants who have been issued mortgages through the FTHBI, what is that mean value of the mortgage loan; (g) what is the total aggregate amount of money lent to homebuyers through the FTHBI to date; (h) for mortgages approved through the FTHBI, what is the breakdown of the percentage of loans originated with each lender comprising more than 5% of total loans issued; (i) for mortgages approved through the FTHBI, what is the breakdown of the value of outstanding loans insured by each Canadian mortgage insurance company as a percentage of total loans in force; and (j) what is the government's position on expanding the FTHBI to make eligible Canadians with incomes above \$120,000 a year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 425—Mr. Tom Kmiec:

With regard to the federal government's use of the Quarantine Act as part of measures taken to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, from March 1, 2020, to date: (a) how many locations in Canada have been designated isolation or quarantine sites or facilities by the government; (b) how many individuals have stayed longer than a day in these sites, for the purposes of quarantine; (c) what is the location of the quarantine sites, broken down by address, municipality and province; (d) how many federal government employees are at each location; and (e) how much has the government spent to maintain and fund each quarantine facility?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 426—Mr. Tom Kmiec:

With regard to treatments and therapies subject to approval for market by Health Canada, from January 1, 2016, to this date: (a) how many pharmaceutical drugs were granted market authorization by Health Canada, broken down by name of drug and date of approval; and (b) of the pharmaceutical drugs listed in (a), how many were for treatments and therapies for rare diseases, known as orphan drugs, broken down by name and date of approval?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 427—Mr. Arnold Viersen:

With regard to the Acting Ministers Minute (P.C. 2021-0073): what are the statutory responsibilities of the minister without Portfolio (styled Special Representative for the Prairies)?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 429—Mr. Matthew Green:

With regard to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), for fiscal years 2020-21, 2019-20, 2018-19, 2017-18, and 2016-17, broken down by year: (a) what is the net change in the number of regular members who (i) self-identified as visible minorities (persons of colour), (ii) self-identified as Indigenous persons, (iii) did not self-identify as a member of an Employment Equity Act group; (b) what is the number of regular member applicants who (i) self-identified as visible minorities (persons of colour), (ii) self-identified as Indigenous persons, (iii) did not self-identify as a member of an Employment Equity Act group; (c) what is the number of regular member applicants selected to attend the RCMP training academy (Depot) who (i) self-identified as visible minorities (persons of colour), (ii) self-identified as Indigenous persons, (iii) did not self-identify as a member of an Employment Equity Act group; (d) how many regular member applicants graduated from the RCMP training academy (Depot) who (i) self-identified as visible minorities (persons of colour), (ii) self-identified as Indigenous persons, (iii) did not self-identify as a member of an Employment Equity Act group; (e) how many of the regular members who applied for promotion, broken down by rank (Corporal to Staff Sergeant), (i) self-identified as visible minorities (persons of colour), (ii) self-identified as Indigenous persons, (iii) did not self-identify as a member of an Employment Equity Act group; (f) how many regular member promotion applicants, who reached the short list (top seven), broken down by rank (Corporal to Staff Sergeant), (i) self-identified as visible minorities (persons of colour), (ii) self-identified as Indigenous persons, (iii) did not self-identify as a member of an Employment Equity Act group; and (g) how many regular member promotions were awarded to regular members, broken down by rank (Corporal to Staff Sergeant), who (i) self-identified as visible minorities (persons of colour), (ii) self-identified as Indigenous persons, (iii) did not self-identify as a member of an Employment Equity Act group?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 431—Mr. Philip Lawrence:

With regard to online accounts being locked out by the Canada Revenue Agency after individuals' information was obtained or accessed by unauthorized individuals outside of the organization since January 1, 2021: (a) how many online accounts were locked; (b) during what time periods were the accounts locked; (c) if the accounts are still locked, when will they be unlocked; (d) what specific measures were taken to notify the individuals whose accounts were locked; (e) what type of information was obtained by the unauthorized individuals that led to accounts being locked; and (f) who are the unauthorized individuals that accessed the information and where are these unauthorized individuals located?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 432—Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:

With regard to federal spending in the constituency of Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, since October 19, 2015: what is the total amount of federal investment, broken down by (i) year, (ii) department, (iii) project?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 433—Mr. Steven Blaney:

With regard to the Victoria Class Submarines, since 2008 and, broken down by year, except for (f), (g), (l), (m), and (o): (a) how much has the government spent to maintain the fleet; (b) what are the details of each contract amended, including the (i) vendor, (ii) date, (iii) value of each amendment, (iv) reason for amendment; (c) what costs have been incurred by the Royal Canadian Navy to run the project office; (d) what was the cost to conduct independent reviews of the program; (e) what are the total number of sea days for each boat, broken down by vessel; (f) what are all risks identified by the government in relation to the upcoming contract tender and the possible award to another company; (g) what are all benefits and risks identified in relation to extending the current contract by more than one day; (h) what is the total number of Canadians who have been trained to maintain the submarines under the contract, broken by contractor; (i) how much was spent on transporting submarines from the east coast to the west coast and back; (j) how much was spent on submarine spares, broken down by vendor; (k) how many Canadian suppliers have been created to support the VISSC program, broken down by region and name; (l) what percentage of the current supply base is outside of Canada; (m) what are the risks related to accessing support and spares for the Victoria Class Submarines (i) presently, (ii) between 2023 and 2040, and proposed mitigation step for each by the builder and by Canada; (n) what is the total value of subcontracts awarded to Seaspan and Victoria Shipyards, broken down by the number of workers; and (o) who maintains the IP for the Victoria Class Submarines and what are the risks related to Intellectual Property for this orphan class submarine?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 434—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to the federal deductions that apply to the taxable income of individuals, between fiscal years 2012-13 and 2020-21, inclusively, broken down by each deduction and each fiscal year: (a) what is the number of individuals who claimed each deduction whose total annual income is (i) less than \$60,000, (ii) less than \$100,000, (iii) less than \$200,000, (iv) between \$200,000 and \$1 million, (v) more than \$1 million; (b) what is the average amount claimed by an individual whose total annual income is (i) less than \$60,000, (ii) less than \$100,000, (iii) less than \$200,000, (iv) between \$200,000 and \$1 million, (v) more than \$1 million; (c) what is the total amount claimed by individuals whose total annual income is (i) less than \$60,000, (ii) less than \$100,000, (iii) less than \$200,000, (iv) between \$200,000 and \$1 million, (v) more than \$1 million; and (d) what is the percentage of the total amount claimed by individuals whose total annual income is more than \$1 million?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 435—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) advertising since November 4, 2015: (a) how much has CRA spent on advertising (i) on Facebook, (ii) on Xbox, Xbox 360 or Xbox One, (iii) on YouTube, (iv) in sponsored tweets on Twitter, (v) on Instagram; (b) for each advertisement, what was its (i) nature, (ii) purpose, (iii) target audience or demographic profile, (iv) cost; (c) what was the media authorization number of each advertisement; (d) what are the reference numbers of the documents, reports and memoranda concerning each advertisement or its after-the-fact evaluation; and (e) does the CRA compare the cost of advertising placement in traditional media with the media in (a), and, if so, what is the difference in cost for each of the advertisements in (b)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 436—Mr. Arnold Viersen:

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency hiring private firms to assist with the 2021 tax season: (a) what is the total value of all contracts signed; (b) what are the details of each contract, including the (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) start and end date of the contract, (iv) description of goods or services provided; (c) what measures are in place to ensure that any information shared with these private firms is safeguarded and not subject to potential privacy breaches; and (d) for each contract in (b), did the government consider using existing government resources, including those in other departments or agencies, and, if so, why did the government decide to outsource instead of using government resources?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 439—Mr. Marc Dalton:

With regard to commercial space being rented by non-government clients (businesses, charities, etc.) from properties owned by the government and the impact of the pandemic: (a) what was the total amount of rent collected, broken down by month since January 1, 2020; (b) what was the total number of non-government clients as of March 1, 2020; (c) what is the current number of non-government clients; (d) as of February 1, 2021, how many clients' rent payments were (i) up to date, (ii) in arrears, broken down by how late the payments are (90 days, 180 days, etc.); (e) how many clients have been evicted since March 1, 2020; and (f) what is the breakdown of (a) through (e) by sector (retail, nonprofit, etc.), if known?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 442—Ms. Leah Gazan:

With regard to Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy and the target of 20 per cent reduction in poverty from the base year of 2015: has the government met its target, and, if not, by how much has the poverty rate in 2020 fallen from the base year of 2015?

(Return tabled)

S. O. 52

Question No. 444—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to Motion M-225, adopted by the House on June 13, 2019: (a) has the government set a goal to prevent and end veterans homelessness in Canada by 2025; (b) what progress has the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development made towards developing a plan to present to the House to end veterans homelessness, and, if so, when will this plan be presented to the House; (c) broken down by fiscal year since 2015-16, how much funding has been put towards preventing and ending veterans homelessness through (i) Employment and Social Development Canada, (ii) Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, (iii) the Canadian Armed Forces, (iv) the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; and (d) broken down by fiscal year since 2018-19, how much federal funding was directed towards the (i) Veterans Emergency Fund, (ii) Veterans and Family Well-Being Fund?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 445—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to the government's Blue Economy Strategy: (a) how does the government define a blue economy, and is land-based aquaculture a part of that definition; (b) what consultations has the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard attended or plan to attend, broken down by date; and (c) for each consultation meeting in (b), which organizations, companies, and individuals attended or plan to attend those meetings?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 446—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to the Marine Communications and Traffic Services, broken down by centre and year since 2012: (a) what is the annual budget for each centre; (b) how many full-time staff are employed at each centre; (c) how much overtime has been claimed at each station; and (d) what is the total number of distress and safety calls that each centre responded to?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 447—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to volunteer firefighter and search and rescue volunteer services: (a) broken down by line and fiscal year between 2015-16 and 2019-20, (i) how many individuals claimed amounts on lines 362 and 395 of their individual tax returns, (ii) what was the total amount claimed in (a)(i); and (b) broken down by line and fiscal year since 2019-20, (i) how many individuals claimed amounts on lines 31220 and 31240 on their individual tax returns, (ii) what was the total amount claimed in (i)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 448—Mrs. Marilène Gill:

With regard to federal spending in the riding of Manicouagan for each fiscal year since 2019-20, inclusively: what are the details of all grants and contributions, and all loans to every organization, group, business or municipality, broken down by the (i) name of the recipient, (ii) municipality of the recipient, (iii) date on which the funding was received, (iv) amount received, (v) department or agency that provided the funding, (vi) program under which the grant, contribution or loan was made, (vii) nature or purpose?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 449—Mr. Doug Shipley:

With regard to the multipurpose vessels (MPVs) announced by the Prime Minister in May 2019 for the Canadian Coast Guard: (a) what is the approximate cost of each vessel, as well as the total cost of the program; (b) what are the details of all contracts issued to date related to MPVs, including the (i) amount, (ii) vendor, (iii) date of the contract, (iv) date of amendment, if applicable, (v) description of goods or services; (c) what are the costs related to the management of the MPV program, broken down by department, supplier and year; (d) what are total costs or projected costs related to the design of the MPVs, broken down by year between 2019 and 2029; (e) what are the details of the competitive process for the selection of a design for the MPVs, including the (i) number of invited bidders or potential bidders for the design work, (ii) names of invited or potential bidders with whom the government or the builder have had discussions, (iii) expected timeline for a decision on the designer for the MPVs or the name of the selected designer, (iv) date the contract was entered into for the design of the MPVs, (v) requirements for the vessels, (vi) summary of the technical statement of requirements, (vii) deadline to complete design; (f) what is the expected timeline for the delivery of vessels 1 to 16, broken down by year; (g) what is the location where each vessel (1 to 16) will be (i) constructed, (ii) launched, (iii) outfitted, (iv) at the date when it reaches initial oper-

ational capability, (v) at the date when it reaches fully operational capability; (h) what are the anticipated or projected savings, per vessel, as the builder moves from ship 1 through to ship 16; (i) what considerations, if any, were given to a fixed price build contract; (j) what incentives were offered to encourage on time and on budget delivery of the vessels; (k) what risks were identified in the program during the (i) preliminary design, (ii) basic design, (iii) construction, (iv) delivery; and (l) what specific measures were taken to mitigate each risk in (k)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 451—Ms. Raquel Dancho:

With regard to jobs funded through the Youth Employment Skills Strategy in the 2020 calendar year: (a) what was the total number of jobs funded through the program in 2020; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by riding; (c) what was the total amount of funding provided through the program, broken down by (i) province or territory, (ii) riding; (d) how many of the jobs funded were disrupted or eliminated as a result of measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic; (e) what amount of funding does the number of jobs in (d) represent; and (f) what is the policy related to what happens to the funding when jobs related to the funding are disrupted or eliminated?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, finally, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

CLEAN DRINKING WATER ON RESERVES

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am asking under Standing Order 52(2) that we have an emergency debate in the House of Commons with regard to the government missing its self-imposed deadline to provide clean drinking water to first nations. We need this debate. This is the first opportunity to bring this into the chamber since the government's deadline was missed this past March, but it is more than that. We are now into April, which means that the government has fundamentally broken its commitment to indigenous people.

The fact that the deadline imposed by the government has come and gone without resolution is an emergency. The fact that the government refuses to set a date for when this will be solved is an emergency. The lack of clean drinking water is the emergency. There are still 58 emergencies in first nations as a result of decades of neglect on the part of Liberal and Conservative governments. The government will say it failed because of COVID, but we know this is not the case. In fact, the Auditor General was clear: "Indigenous Services Canada did not provide the support necessary to ensure that first nations communities have ongoing access to safe drinking water." It is utterly shameful and beyond cynical that the government will blame its failure on COVID when we know this is not the case.

Government Orders

Debating this is urgent. MPs who represent first nations know well the problem. Here in northern Manitoba, Tataskweyak Cree Nation does not have clean drinking water. The government refused to even test for the contaminant that was making people sick, forcing TCN to pay for independent testing. Stomach illnesses are widespread in the community. Children are covered in skin rashes and sores from bathing in the treated tap water. This is an emergency.

The government continues to fight first nations in court over its own failures. Having missed its own deadline, the government still will not commit to when this problem will be fixed, instead offering up a website as its only solution. First nations, and indeed all Canadians, deserve an answer and action now. An emergency debate would allow MPs to urgently address this situation and determine a way to move forward. It would allow the Government of Canada to hear the deliberations of MPs to develop a more robust strategy, identify where gaps exist in our water-testing system and develop a clear deadline for when all Canadians will have access to clean drinking water without further delay.

• (1525)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski for her intervention, however I am not satisfied that her request meets the requirements on the Standing Orders at this time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2020

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 30, 2020 and other measures, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford has five minutes remaining for questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to my colleague's remarks before question period began. He spoke about the opioid crisis in great detail, and I share with him the sense of urgency in needing to take action. I would also say that the urgency should direct us to make sure that the action being proposed is the correct action. It is not enough to take action if we are not relatively certain that the action proposed moves in the right direction. It would seem to me that there was a great risk in his proposal for decriminalization at the present time, especially when the treatment available simply is not adequate, as I think he would acknowledge. If we undertake measures that would make it easier for people to access dangerous drugs without having treatment in place, it could create much greater risk in terms of people being exposed and getting addicted.

Would the member agree that a better approach emphasizes public health as well as an opportunity for intervention when somebody

may be vulnerable? Intervention could encourage them to seek help and treatment.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my hon. colleague.

Decriminalization is not being called for just by the NDP. I made mention of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. I made mention of the provincial government of British Columbia. The chief medical health officer of British Columbia and countless experts in the field have all identified decriminalization as an important step out of many that we need to take.

The stigmatization with the ongoing criminality of drug use is a major barrier to people getting help in the first place. I agree that we need a lot of treatment options. This is one step in a continuum of care, but I would argue that it is a very important step, especially for people who are suffering from ongoing stigma and who may not get the help they need because of it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is regarding the issue of timing. This is a piece of legislation that has been before the House since last year. In fact, we can go back to when the Minister of Finance tabled the economic statement at the end of November last year. I wonder if my friend could provide his thoughts. Given the importance of this legislation and getting it passed through the system, why does he believe it has taken as much time as it has?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I am sure there are many reasons, but if I look at how the Liberals have been scheduling House business over the last couple of months, it has been a bit of a scattergun approach. There does not seem to be any rhyme, reason or logical following for which bills are being brought up for debate. As for delay, when the Liberals decided to bring in a motion accepting Senate amendments to Bill C-7, it led to a whole new round of debate on a bill that the House had already presented its opinion on. This, of course, sidelined many other important pieces of legislation.

I just wish that in the weeks ahead we would have a little bit more reasoning behind the scheduling of House business. I would agree with him that Bill C-14 has some important measures, and that Canadians would like to see some of the measures passed.

• (1530)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 1970, a national child care system was recommended by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. Moving forward to 1993, the Liberals, in their platform, promised a national child care strategy. We have now been waiting 28 years for something that has been called for by child care workers across the country.

Government Orders

How critical is it for the Liberal government to address this matter if we truly are going to honour the “she-covery” everybody is calling for?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's concerns with Liberal promises of decades that have gone by. Hopefully this is one promise that we will see an absolute commitment to, because it is incredibly important.

I speak to young families in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. Often the complaint is that it is simply not affordable or not worth it for a person to get a second job because they would not be bringing in enough money to deal with the cost of child care. Aside from the cost, availability is also a huge issue.

We really want both partners in young families to have an opportunity to join the work force and increase their economic opportunities. That is something that has been backed up by multiple chambers of commerce. The smart economic investment for families and their well-being is substantial investment in child care.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to see everyone virtually as we start the next few weeks of Parliament sitting. I hope all my colleagues are doing well, and I wish all the best to them and their respective families.

Today, I am speaking to Bill C-14, which we know contains many valuable measures to assist Canadian families as they continue to battle through COVID-19, just as the country and the world continue to battle through COVID-19. Thankfully the vaccines are arriving, and people are receiving their vaccinations. It is great to see the increase of the daily vaccination count here in the province of Ontario and to see people wanting to receive the vaccine.

Before I begin my formal remarks, I would like to say a quick thank you to all the front-line workers, including the individuals at Canada's Wonderland, and at the new Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital here in the city of Vaughan, who are getting people vaccinated, doing it for hours and hours a day, and doing it with a smile. It is great to see.

That is what Canada is about, our ability to rise to the occasion. That is what Canadians are doing on a daily basis, and what they expect from the 338 members of Parliament. They expect us to do the good work we are sent here to do and make sure we have their backs. We always need to think about that.

Bill C-14 would implement several measures from the 2020 fall economic statement that would provide critical support to Canadians and businesses during the pandemic. These measures are targeted and offer a lifeline to Canadians who need them most at this critical time in their lives, and at a critical time for the country.

Allow me to outline some of the key measures that this bill would put in place. There would be immediate support for families with young children. Families have been facing uncertainty with cancellations of in-person classes at schools, as well as day care closures. As a result many families with young children have had to find temporary alternatives to their regular child care arrangements. This is often at higher and unanticipated costs for Canadian families with children. It has also placed an undue burden on caregivers, the majority of whom are women.

The government is committed to helping the many families who have been struggling with a wide range of unexpected expenses. Bill C-14 would provide immediate relief for low- and middle-income families with young children who are entitled to the Canada child benefit, or CCB. We are calling it the young child supplement. For these families, we are proposing to provide up to \$1,200 in 2021 for each child under the age of six. This would represent an increase of almost 20% over the current maximum annual CCB payment and would have a meaningful impact for families in need of this support during the pandemic.

As I was about to begin today's speech, we received news here in the beautiful province of Ontario that the Minister of Education would be indefinitely postponing in-class learning for students across Ontario. My understanding is that means two million children will now be at home for an additional few weeks. It is the delayed spring break this week. My two daughters are at home, and I now anticipate they are going to be home for several more weeks.

I implore all members of the House to get this legislation passed. Let us get it to the Senate and let us get royal assent on it, so that we could provide assistance to all these families here in Ontario and, of course, across Canada, so they can ensure their kids are looked after and any additional expenses are covered. Frankly, individuals should not be faced with tough choices for their families, in terms of food or school supplies or anything of that nature that we do not even want to imagine or think about.

Again, I ask all members of Parliament, and I ask the official opposition, to join us in passing Bill C-14. Specifically, if there is one measure in here that we could all agree upon, it is the Canada child benefit. Let us get this entire bill done and through Parliament.

Families entitled to the CCB who have a net income above \$120,000 would receive a total benefit of \$600 for each child under the age of six. The support would automatically be delivered or deposited over the course of 2021 into the bank accounts of families entitled to the CCB. Those who have a net income at or below \$120,000 would receive the maximum of \$1,200. These payments would start to roll out shortly, after the passage of Bill C-14.

This temporary assistance would directly benefit about 1.6 million families, which represents about 2.1 million children, during a period when families are still grappling with the financial impacts of the pandemic and the recent third wave, which has closed schools and day care centres in some provinces and territories. Again, I am alluding to the news we had here today in the province of Ontario. It is clear that this important assistance to families in their time of need should be approved as soon as possible.

Government Orders

• (1535)

The pandemic has also been particularly hard on young people. We know that. We see that in the labour force statistics. We see the elevated unemployment rates for young men and young women, who are unfortunately not working at this time. We see it in the lower participation rates for these cohorts of people. Internships and summer jobs have become scarce, as Canadians did the right thing and stayed at home. The government is working to ensure the pandemic does not derail young Canadians' futures.

In addition to proposed measures from the fall economic statement that would provide more opportunities for young people to gain work experience, our government is also proposing to ease the financial burden on recent graduates. Bill C-14 would ease the burden of student debt by eliminating interest accrual on the repayment of Canada's student loans and Canada apprenticeship loans for 2021-22.

This important message and measure, which has received praise from the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, would bring \$329.4 million in relief to up to 1.4 million Canadians with student debt who are looking for work or are otherwise in the early stages of their careers. It would also help graduates from low- and middle-income families, who tend to have higher levels of financial need. The government also proposes to build on the employment job skills development and educational supports provided to youth and students over the summer.

I want to remind all members of Parliament that our support for students is not just this one-time measure. Since budget 2015, and really since budget 2016, I have received some questions in prior debates about what we have done for students. Budget 2016 alone provided \$2.7 billion over five years of investments into the Canada student loans program.

One measure that I want to make sure we all remember is that of increasing the repayment assistance plan eligibility thresholds starting on November 1, 2016, to ensure that no student had to repay their Canada student loan until they were earning at least \$25,000 per year. I can spend a few hours speaking about our supports for students, but I want to ensure that all parliamentarians are aware that we have supported students since the first time we were elected, in our first mandate, and we will continue to do so through COVID and as we exit the pandemic.

Let us speak about the Borrowing Authority Act. Beginning in 2017, in recognition that we needed to restore the requirement of parliamentary approval of government borrowing, the government enacted the Borrowing Authority Act. This important piece of legislation sets out a legislative maximum amount on total borrowing by the government and agent crown corporations and requires the Minister of Finance to update parliamentarians on how borrowing needs evolve on a regular basis.

In recognition of the impact of COVID on the government's borrowing, the Minister of Finance proposed in the fall economic statement to amend the Borrowing Authority Act to increase the borrowing limit. This proposed measure in Bill C-14 would increase the maximum borrowing amount to \$1.831 billion to cover projected borrowings out to March 2024 and include extraordinary borrowings made because of COVID-19. Including these extraordi-

nary borrowings in the new maximum will provide greater transparency on the government's debt program to Canadians.

I want to address something related to this, and I wish to be very precise here. It is something that the Deputy Prime Minister raised during FINA's consideration of Bill C-14. The increase in the borrowing authority is in no way a blank cheque. Every single expenditure by the government needs to be authorized by Parliament, by the 338 individuals who have the privilege of sitting in our Parliament.

The borrowing authority sets a transparent and accountable maximum limit as to how much the government can borrow. Passing Bill C-14 would allow the government to continue to take decisive action to provide the support to people, businesses, our friends, our neighbours and their families. This support is needed to weather this pandemic. The action the government has taken and plans to take will help Canada come roaring back from the COVID-19 recession and prevent the long-term economic scarring that would weaken our post-pandemic recovery.

We are seeing the benefits of the programs that were put in place. For example, the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which allowed us to maintain the attachment between employer and employee and has seen us through to the reopening throughout the country. Our March labour force statistics show over 300,000 jobs were recovered and created here in the country. That is something great. Our unemployment went down to 7.5%, if I remember correctly. Our participation rate went up and this is a direction we are happy to see, but we know how much the work continues and is needed.

• (1540)

We believe that we will return to recovery, but we are not there yet. The government will continue to provide support to Canadians and ensure the economy can get back on track. The measures I have mentioned are just part of the government's pandemic response and plans for recovery.

I wish to touch upon the long-term care situation that we have seen across the country. Thankfully, through the vaccine procurement and rollout, our long-term care situation has stabilized, and I thank the minister from the riding of Oakville on the wonderful job she has done. However, we know we need to continue to make investments, and part of Bill C-14 is to provide funding of up \$505.7 million as part of the new safe long-term care fund to support long-term care facilities, including funding in support of care facilities to prevent the spread of COVID-19 outbreaks and deaths.

I wish to thank the Canadian Armed Forces. They came to the riding I represent, Vaughan—Woodbridge. They went to the Woodbridge long-term care facility and stabilized the situation. It was a very drastic situation in the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, and many residents, unfortunately, lost their lives. The Canadian Armed Forces have been called upon again and again, and they have done their duties with exemplary service. I wish to thank them again.

Finally, Bill C-14 would enable the government to move forward with implementing the important measures from the fall economic statement, which will help bridge the country to the other side of the pandemic. I urge all members of this House to support this important legislation at this most extraordinary period of time we find ourselves in. The world continues to face this, as every country and all leaders continue the vaccine rollout and get the vaccines to their citizens. We are seeing it here.

I am so happy to see the millions of doses arriving in Canada on a weekly basis, and that Canadians are doing their part in getting vaccinated.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke much about part 7 and, as always, the devil is in the details. Part 7, the Borrowing Authority Act, would increase the amount of borrowing by an astronomical figure, but with a qualifier. In the Financial Administration Act, in paragraph 46.1, the wording permits the government to borrow any amount to pay back debt, and Canadians are very concerned that this is just a blank cheque.

Please tell us how you expect Canadians to believe you are not going to just continue spending on things we should not be spending on.

• (1545)

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind hon. members to direct their comments to the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, we as a government, in collaboration with all provinces, have put in place a number of programs to assist Canadians. I was looking at the numbers today. We speak about what the government is investing in for Canadians, and right now we have Canadians' backs. We have their backs during this most extraordinary period of time.

We must be able to utilize various measures to fund these measures, including the recovery benefits, and this includes the Borrowing Authority Act. That is at page 141 of the fall economic statement. It is very detailed in terms of what these borrowings are being used for. They are being utilized to support Canadians during this most extraordinary period of time.

Nearly two million Canadians have applied for the Canada recovery benefits during this time because they continue to be impacted due to COVID-19.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to my colleague a big issue with the Canada recovery benefit.

Government Orders

Hospitals in Quebec and Ontario are currently in triage mode, and surgeries have been pushed back because of the pandemic. As we know, EI sickness benefits were not extended to 50 weeks. There are people who are not eligible for the Canada recovery benefit, and since their surgery has been pushed back, they are left with nothing. People in my riding are being forced to dip into their RRSP to survive. This provides further proof that EI sickness benefits should be extended to 50 weeks.

What does my colleague think of that?

[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, as a nation going through COVID-19, our government has put in place a number of programs to assist Canadians at this very important period of time. If we look at the number of programs put in place, including the safe restart agreement, the flexibility we have afforded the EI system and the recovery benefits, we have strengthened our social safety net when it is most required and timely to do so. Those measures are assisting Canadians to the best of our ability today. We can look at how we can strengthen the EI system going forward.

I look forward to having that debate with my hon. colleague from the riding of Jonquière and all other members of Parliament.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about students and all the wonderful things the government had done for them. He mentioned that the government had forgiven \$2.7 billion, but he failed to mention the fact that in 2016, the government collected \$635 million; in 2017, \$662 million; and in 2018, \$862 million. Students owe \$28 billion to the federal government from which it is making a profit. Therefore, the forgiveness he talks about is ultimately coming off the backs of students.

We know that when we invest in education, we get \$7 for every dollar we invest. Could the member talk about something that would show some more political courage? The New Democrats are talking about eliminating student loans entirely. We are talking about making post-secondary education free, because we see the value that this has for our future. Maybe he could talk about that and show some political courage.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for London—Fanshawe for her passion and obvious advocacy for students across the country.

We know that Canadians are one of the most educated peoples in the world. Our education system is second to none. As a government, we will continue to fund education on the post-secondary level in terms of research grants and by investing literally hundreds of millions of dollars in our institutions. We will continue to do that.

Points of Order

We will also continue to assist students with respect to the affordability of receiving education. There have been increases in grants from the Canada students grant program. There have also been many actions to ensure that once students finish university or college, they can actually start working. Once they achieve a certain level of income, which is above the \$25,000 mark, then they can start to repay their student loans. That is a very diligent and judicious manner of investing in education, supporting our students and supporting our overall post-secondary education system.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does my colleague not think that the government's failure over the years to meet its responsibility to increase health transfers, as Quebec and the provinces have unanimously been calling for, and the fact that the health transfers have not been properly indexed contributed to the overall decline of health care systems in Quebec and the provinces during the pandemic, forcing the government to take measures that it probably could have avoided if the health transfers had allowed the provincial governments to do their job properly with their own health care systems?

It is very disappointing to me to see no mention of permanent, unconditional health transfers in the economic statement.

I would like my colleague's opinion on the effect this may have had on our health care systems during a crisis.

[*English*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, Canadians from coast to coast to coast very much cherish and value our health system. We need to continue to invest in it. We have worked with the provinces collaboratively through the safe restart agreement and through utilizing the Canadian Armed Forces to assist individual provinces in their time of need. We will continue to do so. We will continue to make those investments in individuals such as our seniors, but also directly in our health care system.

I look forward to those negotiations in terms of what the Minister of Finance lays out in the budget, with measures to assist all Canadians to grow our economy and fund our social safety net. We need to do so.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague across the way talked about child care. While the child tax benefit increase is seen as a good first step, it does not create any early education child care spaces. On average, parents pay \$800 to \$900 a month for child care, so \$1,200 for the entire year does not help parents effectively pay for one of the highest costs they have, which is second only to housing. The Liberal government promised in the House to immediately put in the \$2 billion that the child care sector required. I hope we will see that in the budget. When can we expect to see that immediate investment of \$2 billion in child care?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, as an economist, having accessible and affordable child care for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast is something near and dear to my heart. We know it increases labour force participation rates and is a very large benefit to our economy. I look forward to continuing this conversation about how we can improve the lives of all Canadian families, so

they do not have to make the decision to go back to work or to stay home.

I personally know about the costs of child care. Affordability aside, when we lived in the city of Toronto, the waiting period for us to obtain accessible child care was almost a two-year window. I know what Canadian families go through. Therefore, I will continue to advocate for continual investments in affordable and accessible child care for not only the residents in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, but for all Canadian families from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

• (1555)

POINTS OF ORDER

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS—BILL C-265

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order in response to your March 22 statement respecting the need for royal recommendation for Bill C-265, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act with regard to illness, injury or quarantine, sponsored by the member for Salaberry—Suroît. Without commenting on the merits of the bill, I suggest that the provisions in the bill to extend sickness benefits to 50 weeks would seek to authorize a new and distinct charge on the consolidated revenue fund not authorized in statute.

In instances when there is no existing statutory or appropriation to cover a new and distinct charge, a royal recommendation is required. The provisions of the bill amending the Employment Insurance Act would increase the maximum number of weeks for employment insurance regular benefits. This increase in the number of weeks of benefits is authorized once passed by royal recommendation attached to the bill.

The royal recommendation not only fixes the maximum charge on the consolidated revenue fund, but also the objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications of provisions subject to royal recommendation. Speakers have consistently ruled that bills seeking to increase the length of a benefit, change the qualifications or alter the conditions for employment insurance benefits need to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

Let me draw to the attention of the members a few germane rules on this matter.

On April 22, 2009, the Speaker ruled on Bill C-241, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act regarding the removal of a waiting period. The Speaker stated:

...the chair is of the opinion that the provisions of Bill C-241 would authorize a new and distinct charge on the public treasury. Since such spending is not covered by the terms of any existing appropriation, I will therefore decline to put the question on third reading of this bill in its present form...

On June 3, 2009, the Speaker ruled on Bill C-280, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act concerning a qualification for and entitlement to benefits. In the ruling, the Deputy Speaker stated:

Government Orders

On March 23, 2007, in a ruling on Bill C-265...the Chair had concluded that:

It is abundantly clear to the Chair that such changes to the employment insurance program... would have the effect of authorizing increased expenditures from the Consolidated Revenue Fund in a manner and for purposes not currently authorized.

Therefore, it appears to the Chair that those provisions of the bill which relate to increasing Employment Insurance benefits and easing the qualifications required to obtain them would require a royal recommendation.

Having heard no new compelling argument to reach a conclusion that is different than the one concerning Bill C-265, I will decline to put the question on third reading of Bill C-280 in its present form unless a royal recommendation is received.

A more recent and directly relevant case is to be found in the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities' consideration of Bill C-24, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act, additional regular benefits, the Canada Recovery Benefits Act, restriction on eligibility, and another act in response to COVID-19, on March 11. This bill sought, among other things, to increase the number of weeks of EI regular benefits available by up to 24 weeks to a maximum of 50 weeks through legislation for claims that were made between September 27, 2020 and September 25, 2021.

During clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, the member for Elmwood—Transcona proposed an amendment that attempted to increase the number of weeks of payments to an employment insurance claimant in the case of a prescribed illness, injury or quarantine from 15 to 50 weeks, therefore allowing people to access these payments for longer than they could currently under the Employment Insurance Act. In proposing the amendment, the chair of the committee ruled the amendment inadmissible because it required royal recommendation. The chair ruled:

Bill C-24 seeks to amend the Employment Insurance Act by increasing the number of weeks paid under part 1 of that act under certain circumstances.

● (1600)

This amendment attempts to increase the number of weeks of payments to a claimant, in the case of prescribed illness, injury or quarantine, from 15 to 50 weeks, therefore allowing people to have access to these payments for longer than they can currently under the Employment Insurance Act.

As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states at page 772, "Since an amendment may not infringe upon the financial initiative of the Crown, it is inadmissible if it imposes a charge on the public treasury, or if it extends the objects or purposes or relaxes the conditions and qualifications specified in the royal recommendation."

In the opinion of the chair, the amendment as proposed requires a royal recommendation since it imposes a new charge on the public treasury, and I therefore rule the amendment inadmissible.

A royal recommendation may only be obtained by a minister of the Crown on the advice of the Governor General. In the absence of a royal recommendation, Bill C-265 may proceed through the legislative process in the House up until the end of the debate on third reading.

In cases where the Speaker has ruled that royal recommendation is required and it has been provided before the third reading vote, the Speaker refuses to put the question at third reading and orders the bill to be discharged from the Order Paper.

I submit that this is the case for Bill C-265. Precedent clearly suggests that a bill or motion that seeks to incur new and distinct expenditures from the consolidated revenue fund in a manner and

for a purpose not currently authorized requires a royal recommendation.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands for these additional comments.

We will now resume debate and go to the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

* * *

ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2020

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 30, 2020 and other measures, be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I get started, I wish to offer my deepest sympathies to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the passing of her strength and stay, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, her husband of 73 years. Canada mourns for this tremendous loss in the royal family, and on behalf of my constituents, I wish them strength during this incredibly difficult time.

I am thankful for the opportunity to put words on the record today regarding Bill C-14, the economic statement implementation act, and I will be splitting my time with the member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

The bill, introduced this past fall, would implement a boost to the Canada child benefit, which we know is a popular program for Canadian families that originated under Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Our new leader, the MP for Durham, championed this boost when he was running for leadership of our party. I am glad to see the Liberals agreeing with our Conservative party leader on this provision.

The bill would also make changes to the rent subsidy, which the Conservatives have been calling for since it was first introduced last summer. In fact, I personally questioned the former minister of finance on the original program, which was deeply flawed and failed to support thousands of small businesses in need, including many in my riding.

Government Orders

The Conservatives agree that most of the financial supports contained in the bill are needed to continue to support Canadians while lockdowns and restrictions continue to ravage our private sector, drive our small businesses to bankruptcy and leave millions of Canadians unemployed. Unfortunately, Bill C-14 also includes some very worrying provisions. It seeks to increase the maximum borrowing authority from the current \$1.1 trillion to \$1.8 trillion for the next three years. This is \$700 billion of potential spending in the next three years, all of which would be financed through deficit. It includes \$100 billion for discretionary stimulus spending, but no one really knows what that means because details have yet to be provided. As a result, the bill has inspired very little confidence in Canadians that the Liberal government has a plan to get us out of this health crisis and recover our damaged economy. Ultimately, this increase is far greater than the government needs for getting through the next fiscal year and would authorize a massive expansion of the national debt without any fiscal anchor or scrutiny of the dangers this new debt would create.

Overall, the COVID deficit that Canadians are inheriting is truly astounding. At over \$336 billion in a single year, it will take a Herculean effort, a lot of hard work, to get it under control.

The C.D. Howe Institute, a highly respected non-partisan Canadian think tank, recently put out a strong warning to the Liberal government about the financial perils Canada faces if we cannot get the debt and deficit under control in the near future. In its report, it said the “Canadian governments’ deficits in fiscal 2020/21 will total about 20 percent of Canadian GDP, the highest among all advanced economies and seven percentage points higher than the average for G20 countries”. That is pretty shocking. The report goes on to say, “Year upon year of expenses exceeding revenues and the resulting deterioration of the federal government’s net worth—in other words, an accumulated deficit that keeps rising—signify an ongoing deterioration in Ottawa’s ability to deliver services to Canadians.”

The Conservatives have long sounded the alarm of the perils of unchecked spending. If interest rates go up, which we know they will, the more Canadians have to pay on our debts, which would mean less to spend on critical services like health and education transfers to provinces, defence and infrastructure, and the critical social safety net that the federal government provides to Canadians on behalf of taxpayers.

We know the entire world is facing the same issues that Canada is facing as we battle COVID-19. Canada has spent more money per capita than any other country in the world, yet at the same time as other countries like the U.S. and the U.K. have presented plans to reopen their economies safely and permanently based on data, Canada is entering its third wave of lockdowns. Furthermore, despite astronomical spending, we are hovering between 40th and 50th, and sometimes even lower than 50th, in the world for vaccinations. Only 2.1% of our entire population has received both doses of the vaccine to date. More vulnerable and elderly people will die as a result of the poor vaccine procurement strategy of the government. I cannot stress how serious this is. It is a national shame and a strategy that could have been avoided.

The Liberals wasted 100 days on the Chinese company CanSino before signing contracts with other vaccine companies. That is a

fact. They put all of our eggs in one basket. They bet the entire future of Canada on the Communist Party of China, and within a week of the Prime Minister announcing to Canadians the vaccine contract with CanSino, the Communist Party of China cancelled it, which left Canada scrambling to sign other contracts in August. This was months after the pandemic started.

● (1605)

By that time, other countries in the world had, long before us, signed contracts with Pfizer, Moderna and others. That is one of the reasons that we are so far behind our G7 allies and countless other countries for vaccination rates. The Liberals wasted 100 days betting on one contract.

Just this week, the director of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention admitted that some Chinese-made vaccines offered low protection against COVID. Those vaccines do not even work. The Prime Minister’s decision to waste time pursuing a vaccine partnership with the Communist Party of China will haunt Canada for generations and may cost thousands of vulnerable lives, but the government’s horrific mismanagement does not end there.

By and large, Canadians recognize this as a wartime effort. Although the Conservatives would have been much more respectful and considerate of the long-term damage of record deficit spending than the Liberals, we have fully and proudly supported the emergency spending measures for Canadians in their greatest hours of need, which have helped them get through these incredibly difficult times. We recognize how important those critical measures are. The difference, though, lies in how the Conservatives would have prepared Canada before the pandemic hit, as well as what we would be doing now and after the pandemic is over.

The Conservatives would not have shuttered Canada’s highly regarded international early warning pandemic system, which the Liberals did in May 2019. They broke their promise to run three modest deficits of \$10 billion annually and instead ran up a \$100-billion deficit, in a relatively stable economy, during their first term. They broke their promise, ran up the debt and spent the cupboards bare in the good times. They justified this spending by promising it would create incredible economic growth, yet Canadians experienced sluggish economic growth during the Liberals’ first term. The bottom line is that the Liberals left Canada vulnerable before the pandemic hit, and that is on them.

The question many people ask is what the Conservatives would do if they were in the driver’s seat. I would like to talk a bit about that as I wrap up.

In addition to calling on the federal government to bring forward a data-driven plan to support the provinces in a safe, gradual and permanent reopening, our Conservative leader was the first leader on the national stage to present a recovery plan to Canadians. He was the first and only leader on the national stage to present a plan to get Canada back on track, and he provided a top five list of priorities.

The first is to secure jobs. Our plan is to recover the million jobs that were lost during the pandemic. That would be priority number one for a Conservative government. By unleashing the power of our private sector, and using Conservative ingenuity and a can-do attitude, we will ensure that every region and sector of our economy is firing on all cylinders. That is priority number one.

Second is to secure accountability. After years of corruption, embarrassment and ethical scandals from the Liberal Prime Minister, such as the Aga Khan's billionaire island, SNC-Lavalin and the WE Charity, to name a few, Canadians deserve the strongest anti-corruption laws this country has ever seen, and we will deliver that.

Third is to secure mental health with a mental health action plan. I am particularly proud to see our leader bring this forward, because I have spent countless hours on the phone with constituents who are in very desperate situations. I have had parents call me to tell me their little children do not want to eat because they are depressed. I have had elderly women cry to me on the phone that they do not want to spend their last months or years on this earth locked up in their apartments away from their grandchildren and families. I could go on about how devastating this is. I am very proud to see mental health as the third priority on our top five priority list.

Fourth is to secure our country by creating a strategic stockpile of essential products and building capacity to manufacture vaccines at home. I know that every Canadian wants to see that and never again wants to see our people left vulnerable and dependent on other countries during a pandemic.

Fifth is to secure Canada's economy by balancing the books responsibly over 10 years. I spoke at length today of the perils of Liberal spending. I believe Canadians agree that we need a competent government to handle this and get our economy's finances back on track after recovering from the pandemic.

Ultimately, Canadians know that the Conservative Party is the party best able to manage jobs and the economy. It is what we are known for and have been known for for decades. We will provide steady, reliable and competent leadership in our country's greatest time of need. That is my commitment.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her speech.

I listened carefully while she explained a number of things, and I heard her say what the Conservatives would do. However, she did not mention whether the Conservatives would commit to increasing health transfers, something that is sorely absent from Bill C-14.

Government Orders

Will the Conservatives commit to increasing health transfers to 35% of health care costs, as the premiers of Quebec, the provinces and the territories are calling for?

[English]

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives by and large agree that health transfers must be stable and that they must meet the needs of Canadians, but the difference between Liberals and Conservatives is that we believe health care transfers should be provided to the provinces with no strings attached. We repeatedly see Liberal governments attaching various provisions to this spending. That is not something we agree with. We do not always agree that Ottawa knows best, and health care should be delivered by the provinces. We are looking to increase that autonomy for provinces with health care transfers.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague who spoke about how the Conservatives introduced the child tax benefit, a benefit with a discriminatory structure for families with precarious immigration status, including refugee claimants, who are prevented from accessing this critical benefit even if they are legally working and filing personal income tax.

The recommendation from the Campaign 2020 report states, "For some children, their parents' immigration status is a barrier to accessing the...[Canadian child tax benefit]." To address this, "Amend the Income Tax Act by repealing s. 122.6...which ties eligibility for the CCB to the immigration status of the applicant parent." It continues that, "Every parent in Canada who is considered a resident for tax purposes [should be eligible] for CCB regardless of immigration status."

Does my colleague agree with that recommendation?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I would have to further look into the provision she is talking about. It sounds very interesting. What I can say about refugees is that the Conservative Party strongly supports humanitarian efforts to support the world's most vulnerable. When I was shadow minister for immigration for the Conservative Party, I was most shocked to see that although the Liberals' narrative is that they are the party of immigration and the most compassionate party on this topic, under their watch in immigration was a lack of dignity, compassion and respect for new Canadians: for new immigrants and prospective Canadians trying to come to Canada to join their families. I was completely appalled by how they treat immigrants, and I will continue to stand up for new Canadians.

Government Orders

• (1615)

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been watching unhinged borrowing by the Liberals, which the finance minister has described as pre-loaded stimulus to cover up the fact that COVID support programs by far overpaid those who did not even need the help. Part 7 of Bill C-14 is an alarming black Amex card for the Liberals.

Does the member believe that Canadians should be concerned about the undisciplined spending that just seems to keep happening?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I am personally very alarmed at the spending. We recognize that in these difficult economic times with these shutdowns, because the government shut down small businesses and the private sector, that the government has the responsibility to support Canadians. My concern is that it is looking for unfettered access to increase the debt burden by \$700 billion in the next three years with very little parliamentary oversight. I think all Canadians are concerned about that.

Further to that, I am quite concerned that the Minister of Finance has never really indicated that she is at all concerned about her financial management of this country. I would expect a bit of humility and concern for the future on what is being done and how much work it is going to take to get us back on track.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-14, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 30, 2020 and other measures.

Every time I have the privilege of rising in the House, I make a point of reminding members of how diligent the Conservative Party of Canada has had to be, since 2015, in monitoring and critiquing this Liberal government, which was spending recklessly well before the pandemic hit. We have witnessed many ethical breaches, even though we have been in the grip of an emergency, the pandemic crisis, for months. We need to continue to be very critical of the COVID-19 spending measures and this Liberal government's lack of transparency.

The Conservative Party of Canada is much more than the official opposition party in the House. We are committed individuals with a sense of duty who take action. Not surprisingly, we support the main COVID-19 emergency programs, including the Canada emergency response benefit, the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency business account, which total nearly \$175 billion.

Let me be clear: We will make sure there is a solution for every vulnerable individual and every business during this pandemic. We have consistently said that seniors, who have been forgotten during this crisis, should get more help.

However, there comes a point when we have to take a firm stand against skyrocketing deficits that will end up creating an unprecedented crisis if we give this Liberal government a blank cheque. Giving it another term in office or, worse still, a majority in the House would be a fatal mistake for our country, which has been

more destabilized than ever since the Liberal government took office in 2015.

A sensible, realistic approach would be to give the government sufficient borrowing power to cover prior expenses related to COVID-19 and the proposed new measures that will take us to the next fiscal year. We should not blindly support \$100 billion worth of new debt-financed recovery measures. It would be irresponsible to believe we can have that money for free.

No voter who cares about the debt we will pass on to future generations would want Conservatives to support \$100 billion in additional debt for unspecified initiatives, even if the government says those initiatives will stimulate the economy. The Liberal Party is a master of corruption, favouritism, cronies and sole-source contracts, so we need to be prudent and find out what those initiatives are. The fact that the government refused to split the bill and take out part 7 clearly shows that it is acting in very bad faith. It is asking us for blind trust, which is totally unreasonable because it just does not deserve it.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the courage that each of us has shown, in our own way, since the beginning of the pandemic. At home, at work, in our sports and leisure activities, all areas of our lives have been disrupted for several months now.

I salute the courage of my constituents in the riding of Lévis—Lotbinière. They have managed to adjust, reinvent themselves and prioritize what is most precious to us: family, health and safety. I thank them for their trust. It is always with a sense of duty that my team and I come up with solutions to the challenges we face. We are all patiently waiting for the return of better days, which has become synonymous with being closer to one another, physically, in complete safety.

Many people in my riding have told me this and, like them, I miss their presence, our warm interactions, working closely with community stakeholders and with our businesses that were thriving. Nothing is the same anymore, and we have to accept that. Many people in my riding are also writing to me to denounce how slow the Liberal government is to act, if it acts at all, and of course the insecurity they feel. There are many concerns about the government's lack of foresight, vision and leadership.

• (1620)

As I was saying, Canada became much more vulnerable well before the pandemic as a result of the Liberal's new carefree and spendthrift ways with no sense of responsibility for the consequences.

Placing unconditional trust in the government has put us in the worst position ever in Canada's history, including the post-war period. Our level of debt is unfathomable, and it is imperative that we start investing in targeted measures that will pay a return on our investments in time, experiments and money.

There is no denying that, since 2015, Canada has been regressing and is no longer evolving. After two elections chock full of fine promises, the living conditions of our seniors has not changed at all. Seniors built and enriched our country with their hard work, and it is inconceivable that we are letting them live in poverty. They deserve to live with dignity and serenity given their unwavering dedication to our community. Those who lose their spouse, especially women, find themselves in a precarious situation that is unacceptable and that their family cannot always remediate. We must act.

In addition, violence against women and children is reaching alarming proportions, and then there are the pimps who go unpunished for exploiting child pornography. What about our young people since the government legalized marijuana? It still makes me sad to see the lines outside the Société québécoise du cannabis, often well before it opens.

I am also against the Liberal government's quiet attempts to decriminalize hard drugs and prostitution. We need to put ethics and common sense back into our values.

I want to see young people, who were paid to do nothing over the past few months, once again be able to have rewarding work experiences and opportunities to learn and grow in our communities. There is no greater accomplishment than finding a sense of purpose, contributing to our collective wealth and helping to strengthen our communities.

The environment has also seen lofty promises and no action. We must urgently create programs to secure our green shift, which includes expanding access to electric vehicles and finding new ways to market green and energy-efficient innovations.

The pandemic has also shown us that we need to focus on food sovereignty if we do not want to be short of resources. When we look at the chain of production and collaboration that puts food on our tables, we realize that transport is a key component of that. Transportation and travel mean fuel and gasoline. We cannot yet do without those things in our daily lives.

I am very invested in creating a large national commission on our energy future with the input of our youth, of course. They must be part of the equation. Our safety and security must never be threatened by our consumption, and, realistically, we need to come to a common understanding about the best way to transport the oil and gas delivered by pipelines.

We all have a role to play in future changes. I am confident that the third link between Lévis and Quebec City will be good for everyone in Lévis-Lotbinière and for our environment. Our future depends on our respect for the values that were passed down to us by our ancestors and our parents.

Our language and culture are part of that, and we need to continue to protect them so that our future still reflects who we are. French is our most precious right, and the right to be served in French is simply not negotiable. We need to continue to exist as a francophone nation within a united Canada, while respecting provincial jurisdictions.

Government Orders

Finally, there is a critical need for labour that cannot be overlooked and cannot be blindly entrusted to the Liberal government if we want our economy to recover. The global market is waiting for us, and we must continue to allow our seniors who wish to work to do so without being penalized financially.

For all these reasons, we must stand together and work together, with a responsible government. We cannot and must not give a blank cheque to the Liberal government, which refuses to remove part 7 of Bill C-14.

Now is the time to work together and work better for the future. My aim is to continue doing just that for a very long time for my constituents in Lévis—Lotbinière and for all Canadians.

● (1625)

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very fond of my colleague from Lévis—Lotbinière.

In his speech just now, I heard him speak about the French language and Quebec's traditional demands. On the issue of French, we know that there is a little problem that has tripped up the Conservatives. With respect to the single tax return, they supported it, but then voted against it. We do not understand why.

At this time, there is something that my colleague can do for me. He can tell me if he agrees that there must be an unconditional increase in health transfers. Does his party agree with an unconditional increase in health transfers demanded by the Legault government?

It is easy and very simple. The answer is yes or no.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, and I unreservedly accept his great fondness for me.

With regard to culture and the French language, the Conservative Party has made major advances. The difference between the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois is that we will act for Quebecers. We will give Quebec more power with respect to the French language. We will have federal institutions comply with Bill 101, as requested by the Government of Quebec.

We, the Conservatives can do it. The Bloc Québécois can talk about it and the Conservative Party can do it.

We just saw, here in the House, that the Bloc Québécois failed to move forward its EI bill because it required a financial effort. A private member's bill cannot be passed by the House.

It is unfortunate, but we see here the difference between the Conservative Party, which can take action, and the Bloc Québécois, which can only talk about taking action.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last few Conservatives to address the House have often referred to their concerns regarding the debt and deficit. On the one hand, they want to be very critical of the government on the debt issue, which seems to be the issue that will prevent them from allowing Bill C-14 to pass quickly, yet on the other hand, they seem to want to support the many programs being financed in good part by borrowing money.

I am wondering if my colleague could provide some clarification on whether he sees a disconnect there, where they are, on the one hand, supporting the need to borrow money and, on the other hand, criticizing the government for borrowing money.

• (1630)

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are also willing to help society's most disadvantaged, who have suffered heavy losses during the pandemic. However, we are not willing to give the Liberal government a blank cheque.

From an ethics perspective, when the Liberals have spending power, there are plenty of cronies who benefit, unfortunately.

If we give the Liberal government the power to borrow up to 1.8 trillion, and if interest rates climb to 3%, 4% or 5%, what kind of situation will we be in by 2025-26?

Conservatives do not want to hand over a blank cheque. We want to know what initiatives are in the next budget. Then we will vote on the ones that deserve to be passed in the House.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question for my colleague.

The parliamentary secretary, who just asked a question, said that we cannot say "yes" to the government for subsidies but "no" to the Liberals.

As my Conservative colleague said, the fact is that it is very hard to trust this government. By way of comparison, if a spouse asked to spend the equivalent of \$600 billion from the family budget, would the parliamentary secretary hand over that money no questions asked?

The government's job is to help people, and we help the government do that. However, the opposition parties' role is to make sure that money is spent properly.

Can my colleague give us some examples of improper things the government has done in recent years?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, my friend hit the nail on the head. Allowing the government to spend hundreds of billions more dollars without any oversight is unacceptable to this side of the House. I am sure that even the Bloc Québécois and the NDP would agree with us.

We are prepared to pay what was owed until the next budget, which is right around the corner. After that, we will take a close look at all the initiatives proposed in that budget for the post-pandemic economic recovery, one by one. We want this pandemic to end as quickly as possible for the benefit of all Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier today I was part of a wonderful Zoom discussion. It was a great recognition of the importance of some health care workers, while at the same time a celebration of Canada's diversity. We also had some special guests.

On the call we had our Prime Minister, health care professionals from coast to coast, and a number of other special guests, all there to recognize a couple of things. The first was the fabulous work that our health care providers are providing Canadians in all regions of our country, day in and day out. We also recognized something important to the people who were participating in that call, and in fact to many Canadians, and that is the celebration of Vaisakhi.

It was really quite nice to be a part of that discussion, where we recognized our diversity and, at the same time, the Prime Minister listened to first-hand experiences of what is taking place at the ground level of our health institutions dealing with the coronavirus.

Having said that, it is important to recognize that from day one this Liberal government has been listening to Canadians. It has not been making political discussions as much as it has been listening to what health experts have had to say and following that advice, so Canadians would in fact be protected. From day one, the Prime Minister has been there to assure Canadians that, as a government, we will have their backs. We have done that in so many tangible ways.

Nothing has changed. We continue day in and day out to look at ways to support Canadians, the people and their businesses, get through this pandemic. We have seen a lot of highs and lot of lows. We could talk about the wonderful people who have made life that much easier for us during this pandemic and the difficulties we have had to overcome, which at times can be very hard on a person, whether mentally or physically. Through this pandemic, we have seen life and death.

It is so encouraging that we could finally see, in the not-too-distant future, things coming back to a new normal. I suspect I speak on behalf of all members of Parliament when I say that we want things back to that new normal as soon as possible.

I want to provide some thoughts, and some of them are a little critical of my Conservative friends. I have been listening to what they have had to say today. I must say that I am not surprised. I am a little disappointed, but not necessarily surprised.

Government Orders

I gave a little tease when I asked a member about the deficit. The Conservatives are once again becoming preoccupied with Canada's deficit at a time when Canadians in parts of the country are in lockdown situations and are looking for the government to demonstrate ongoing leadership. What we have clearly demonstrated is that we are working day in, day out with Canadians. From a national perspective, we are there for Canadians in tangible ways.

● (1635)

However, before I get into that, I want to hold the Conservative opposition to task for some of the things they have said, this whole preoccupation of theirs. On the one hand, Conservatives say they like the CERB program, the rent subsidy program and the wage subsidy program, which account for billions and billions of dollars in spending. That is, in good part, borrowed money. They are telling us that this is good stuff and we need it. Then, on the other hand, they are talking about the debt and saying there is too much spending from the government.

I can envision two or three years from now, the Conservatives will forget about the pandemic, even the fact that it occurred, and focus 100% of their attention on the deficit. I would like to suggest to my Conservative friends that, had we listened to the Conservative Party of Canada and its leadership within the House of Commons, Canada would not be doing anywhere near as well as it is today in its position to recover from the pandemic. I genuinely believe that to be the case.

If we asked people to reflect on what has taken place over the last number of months, I believe we would find a fairly even consensus among Canadians about their fear for the manner in which the Conservative Party would have managed us through this process. This is based on the types of questions Conservatives have been asking and the type of support they have been providing to legislation. I argue that in the last seven months, they have been more of a destructive force inside the House of Commons, rather than providing a proactive, constructive critique of the government and the policies we were making.

The member for Kildonan—St. Paul made reference to the Liberal Party and the Liberal government doing a terrible job pre-pandemic on the deficit and that we had a sluggish economy. If one wants to get a sense of the Conservative spin out there, all one needs to do is read the member's speech and listen to some of the other points that have been made. In many ways, nothing could be further from the truth.

In the first four years of our mandate, going into the fifth year, we had record highs in employment rates. We very much had a manageable deficit situation. We had created well over a million jobs. It took Stephen Harper, the former prime minister, nine years to accomplish what we were able to accomplish in four and a half years. We did a much better job on the financing of Canada than Stephen Harper did.

The programs, initiatives and impact we were having by working with our partners, whether they were Canadians, businesses or members at the provincial level, were having a profoundly positive impact on our economy. The numbers clearly demonstrated that.

Prior to the pandemic, Canada was doing exceptionally well. Then when we were hit by the pandemic, we took specific actions to protect Canadians. As we have gone through the pandemic, we have brought in important pieces of legislation, including Bill C-14. I find it truly amazing that Bill C-14 still has not passed the House of Commons, whether it is because of the Conservatives and their filibustering tactics or even other opposition parties that are at times preventing this legislation from ultimately being able to receive royal assent.

● (1640)

The economic statement was presented by the minister of finance back in November of last year. The bill was introduced in December so that members would be able to go over the bill during the late December-early January break. There was plenty of time for Conservative members to have discussions and raise it with ministers or whomever they chose to have a dialogue with. They come up with so many ways to prevent the legislation from even getting to a vote. They did not even want it to get out of second reading. They had to be shamed into doing it.

I remember the day the Conservatives put forward a concurrence motion that I believe was on human trafficking, something that could have passed by a unanimous vote. Who in the chamber did not support it? There are so many reports, but they used that report and that issue to filibuster, preventing Bill C-14 from passing. Here we are, in mid-April, still debating a bill that was based on the Deputy Prime Minister's speech back at the end of November. It is not because we have not attempted to put it on the agenda. We do not have the same sort of luxury as opposition parties in terms of opposition days where, at the end of the day, there is a vote because there is a process that enables a vote to occur.

In a minority situation, we have to give a lot more attention to what the opposition is doing, and it only takes one opposition party to prevent something from passing. I remember well how the Conservatives resisted the bill passing. Today, as I listen to my Conservative friends speak, they say they do not like the debt and so forth. Is that going to be their excuse for not wanting to pass it today or tomorrow? Are they going to say it is a whole lot of money and they want hours and hours of debate?

Do members remember Bill C-3, a non-controversial piece of legislation? It was actually a Conservative bill. There were hours and hours of debate on that bill and we debated it for a number of days, when we could have been debating other legislation. It would have freed up more time, so that when Bill C-14 came up for debate, there could have been more time to debate it. How about the MAID legislation? My colleague from Ontario asked for leave on several occasions to extend the debate in the evening so we could, in essence, free up more time for other government legislation that had to get debated. The MAID legislation was life-and-death legislation. It was a Superior Court decision that had to be dealt with.

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The government has a number of pieces of legislation that have to be dealt with, yet the opposition continues to want to play games. Conservatives tell Canadians they are being a responsible opposition because, after all, it is worth billions of dollars. They are right that it is worth billions of dollars, but they are not recognizing the urgency. We have provided opportunities to get this bill through much earlier, and the Conservatives find one way or another not to, to the point that here we are debating it on April 12.

This legislation was brought in months ago, and the bill is finally in a position where it could pass. It has taken a long time to get this far, and I encourage Conservatives to pass it, as I did at second reading. It was not until the Conservatives started to feel embarrassed that they allowed the bill to pass. I think they need to be shamed into passing it at third reading or they will not do it. If they are not told to wise up and recognize that this bill is going to have a positive impact on the lives of Canadians during this pandemic, they are not going to pass it. They need to be held accountable for not recognizing how important this legislation is to Canadians.

● (1645)

We have indicated that our government will do whatever it takes. We are going to invest wherever it is necessary. We want to be helpful, and we will support Canadian families and businesses. This is very important legislation, and it would do all of that.

For example, this legislation introduces a temporary and immediate support for low- and middle-income families that are entitled to the Canada child benefit, over \$1,000 in 2021 for each child under the age of six. It would ease the financial burden of student debt. It would provide for over half a billion dollars as part of a new strategy to deal with safe long-term care, funding to support long-term care facilities, including funding to prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection, outbreaks and deaths in supportive care facilities. The vaccines have really helped, but these are the types of measures.

There is no reason this House could not have passed this bill back in February. It is not that the government did not want it passed, but every time the government would bring it up, the Conservatives would give some indication that it was not going to pass and would continue to be debated.

There is other legislation as well. I am the parliamentary secretary who is ultimately there to support the passage of Bill C-19, which is on the Canada Elections Act and the impact of the pandemic on elections, to ensure Canadians would be healthy. This is a minority government, and we never know when there is going to be an election. Bill C-19 is the responsible thing to do, but it is incredibly difficult to get legislation passed with the official opposition taking the approach it has during the pandemic, and it is unfortunate.

We understand and appreciate how difficult it has been for Canadians from coast to coast to coast over the last 12 months. The federal government, by working with Canadians and health care experts and listening to what is taking place, has done what is necessary in order to ensure that Canadians can have hope.

Contrary to the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, who was trying to marginalize it in terms of the number of doses earlier in her

speech, we should listen to what the Minister of Public Services and Procurement stated earlier today in question period: “Canada now stands eighth in the G20 in terms of doses administered per 100 people. We have received 10.5 million doses in this country to date. We are on track to receive 44 million doses by the end of June”. We are a country of 37.5 million people.

The Conservatives love to twist the facts and give misinformation to Canadians. However, we have been consistent. Members can go back to December, when we were saying that we have targets and a portfolio to ensure that we will get the vaccinations. We have compensated as much as possible for not having that immediate manufacturing capability here in Canada. We understand the importance of the issue, and we will continue to have Canadians' backs throughout this process.

● (1650)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to questions and comments, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Health; the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Ethics; and the hon. member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, Health.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do enjoy the fame and dignity that the member for Winnipeg North brings with every speech he delivers here in the House of Commons. I have a little bit of an update for the member. Do you know that he has spoken for a total of an hour on Bill C-14 himself?

For him to bring up that other members should not be allowed to come into this debate is beyond comprehension of what a member should or should not be doing. To have the audacity to talk down to members of the House of Commons because they want to bring forward their constituents' concerns when that member himself speaks for an hour on this bill is just unbelievable.

To the member for Winnipeg North, if you are able to speak for a total of an hour on a bill, why do you think you should be able to talk down to members from across the country when they bring forward their constituents' concerns, and tell them that they should not be able to stand and represent the people who voted them into the House of Commons?

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind hon. members to direct their questions and comments through the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it was an interesting time in this very chamber when the member for Carleton chose to speak on the federal budget. It was an entire budget, a major platform. More MPs will speak to that than to almost anything else. That is where the highest demand is, and the member for Carleton spoke for over 14 hours on that particular motion about a budget bill. He sat down at the very last minute so that the New Democratic member would be able to also say a few words.

We all play different types of roles. I like to think that, in part, I am trying to hold the Conservatives a little accountable for a lot of the irresponsible things they say inside the House. There are a lot of things that could be misleading or vary a little bit from reality. I take that role very seriously.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy debating with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

In my view, we cannot talk about Bill C-14 without talking about long-term care, and we cannot talk about long-term care without talking about health care funding. It goes without saying. I have had this discussion with the parliamentary secretary in the past, but I never got an answer. I will therefore ask him for a straight answer. Is he familiar with the concept of fiscal imbalance, yes or no?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do understand what a fiscal imbalance is. I have served for almost 20 years as an MLA, a good portion of that dealing with the issue of health care. I have also now served as a member of Parliament for just over 10 years, dealing with the same subject matter of health care.

I understand the difference, but I also understand that we need to recognize that there are Canadians from all regions of our country who want a national government to ensure that there are roles for us to play in health care, such as standards for long-term care homes. We saw that amplified in the last 12 months.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not often agree with the member for Winnipeg North here in the House, but I would agree with him in his analysis that the Conservatives have done little or nothing to help Canadians during the pandemic over the last year. I am happy to hear that he thinks Canadians have done reasonably well and have weathered this storm fairly well. Where I diverge from that analysis is his assumption that it has been the Liberals who have provided those supports.

At the start of the pandemic, when three million Canadians were suddenly out of work, the Liberals said, “We will tinker with EI to fix this.” It was the NDP who stepped in and said, “No, we have to provide real supports for all Canadian workers affected”, and CERB was born. When the Liberals wanted to bring in wage subsidies to help businesses, they suggested 10%. It was the NDP and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that said we need 75% subsidies, and the wage subsidy program was born. Programs to support seniors, students and people with disabilities were all

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forced on the government by the NDP. The government was dragged kicking and screaming to actually provide those supports.

Would he not agree with me—

The Deputy Speaker: We will have to go on to some other questions. I think the hon. member was just finishing up.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that within the Liberal caucus there was a very active discussion in the early days looking at ways in which we could support Canadians. The Prime Minister continued to challenge every member of Parliament, but in particular members of the Liberal caucus, to reflect with their constituents on ways in which we could improve programs because many of the programs that we brought in started from nothing. An immense amount of lobbying had taken place that went far beyond any one individual or any one minister, and I attribute a lot of the changes to members of Parliament and outside stakeholders.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member for Regina—Lewvan actually thinks that anybody believes what he was saying about needing to come here and properly give the word from his constituents on this very important piece of legislation, and that this has nothing to do with a political party playing games, I would encourage him to get on the phone and call his whip's desk and ask them if they plan on letting this go any time soon.

The reality is that we are seeing what we saw earlier from the Bloc Québécois and now we are seeing from NDP members. Members see the need for this: for getting supports out to Canadians. This bill was introduced on November 30 of last year. It is now April 12. This has been going on because the Conservatives have been playing this game. Rather than trying to hide behind this veil of pretending to be here to represent the word of their constituents, why do they not just stand up and say they are not going to support this because they do not want this piece of legislation to get through? That would be more honourable, in my opinion.

Would the member agree?

• (1700)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member brings up some valid points and I support what he is saying. As I said, in November of last year the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance brought in the need for this legislation, which followed in December and then began second reading in January. There is no justification, other than Conservative games being played, to prevent important legislation that would have a profoundly positive impact on lives during this very difficult and challenging time. The only way we had it passed last time was because we shamed them. The member who posed the question stood and challenged them to allow extended hours of debate on another piece of legislation, which would have freed up more time for this debate. That is a good example. That debate was flatly turned down. They introduced—

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The Deputy Speaker: We are going to try and get one more question in here.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the passion with which my colleague on the Liberal side of the House has addressed this issue and I see he did it without noticing he was going on about what was going wrong with this side of the House on that matter. I have been in the House as much as I can through this pandemic and I have not seen this bill advance as much as it should have. It has been here since November. I have been here a number of times since then, and I have not seen this bill coming forth in the form it should at the time it should.

I also appreciate that all members of the House have something to bring forward, but if somebody wants to tell me that, economically, running a \$27-billion deficit prior to this pandemic when we have full employment is success, frankly that person is not looking in the mirror and being honest with himself. I am going to question whether he was honest with himself throughout his speech. This whole issue is about buying jobs through the economy. I will ask him if he believes that the whole nature of an economy is that in good times we do not have to subsidize jobs. We have to make sure we put money away so we are prepared for a pandemic.

How much spending has been for pandemic-related issues and how much of the spending has been what seems like pre-election spending ad nauseam?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure how much time you would give me to answer that question. I might require leave. At the end of the day, the opposition parties have talked more about the election than Liberal members of Parliament. I can assure everyone of that. During this whole ordeal the Conservatives have been playing games. I would welcome a discussion with the member and maybe a university classroom, or we could even arrange something on Zoom. I have attempted to do that in the past. I know the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan and I have talked about it. It might be nice to have a political studies class and talk about what takes place in the House. I do not have enough time to explain it in more detail, but I do not have any problem looking in the mirror and saying that we are doing a good job by working with Canadians and we are having a real, positive impact.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

I am not sure if any of our colleagues from either side of the chamber remember, but I spoke to Bill C-14 in February while the bill was still at second reading. I am not going to repeat my speech from second reading, but all of my remarks from back then still stand.

The last time I spoke to the bill, I discussed a tendency that the government seems to have to procrastinate in moving bills through this place. I listed a few examples, all of which are from this session of Parliament, but I used those examples to hammer home the idea that the government left this bill on the back burner for a few months. I still stand by that assertion, and it should be pretty obvious why. In a week we are finally going to get our hands on a new budget, and I would not be surprised if this bill had not even

cleared the other place by then. I do not have any words for how utterly bizarre this is.

The last time I spoke on this, I thought I did a pretty good job of showing the delay by talking about how we only debated the bill about 10 times between when it was tabled in November of last year and February of this year. This is getting ridiculous. I do not want to sound like I am supporting the government on this, but this is for the fall 2020 economic update. We are almost a month into spring of 2021 and the bill has not passed third reading yet. We heard the member for Winnipeg North blaming the Conservatives for that. It is a shame.

The bill has seen more seasons than it has readings. We know that Canadians need support now, but the government's delay on the bill is not doing anything to help any Canadians across the country who were counting on the changes that the bill would make if it were implemented. I do not know what the government is thinking with this. I hate to say it, but when it comes to helping Canadians, it needs to start thinking a little less like the tortoise and a little more like the hare. Five months to get a bill like this through this chamber is not something to be inspired by. As a matter of fact, this is a shame.

Again, the budget is supposed to come out in a week. I have to wonder how long the implementation act will take to get through this place. Will it take another five months, or maybe longer? After all, it would cover a whole year of financial decisions. Maybe it would take 20 months, and we could all have gotten both of our jabs for the COVID-19 vaccine by the time we get the bill through third reading. I know that my colleagues in this place are familiar with the vaccine procurement issues that the government has had, so that is saying something.

I digress. I am here to talk about Bill C-14, not the upcoming budget. I know it has been the main part of a lot of my speeches recently, but I would like to stress how much the constant procrastination on these important bills is hurting Canadians. COVID-19 has been in Canada for about 14 months now. Tomorrow will mark month 13 of restrictions being present in Alberta. Not even two weeks ago, those restrictions tightened again because we were looking down the barrel of a third wave of this pandemic. I am obviously not as familiar with Ontario's restrictions as I am with Alberta's, but I know that the province of Ontario increased its restrictions on the same day as Alberta did. I think Quebec has increased its restrictions again.

● (1705)

Throughout all of this, businesses are still closing. Canadians are still being furloughed or losing their jobs. I have spoken with some of my constituents who have been laid off by their work three times now because of this pandemic, and they are not alone.

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I know I have mentioned this in previous debates, but over 200,000 Canadians have lost their jobs over the course of this pandemic. Two hundred thousand is equal to the population of two ridings in Alberta. That is equal to nearly 600 people per riding across Canada, and that is not counting all of the Canadians who have seen their hours cut, those who have gotten sick and had to take time off work or those who have balanced working, whether from home or not, with trying to figure out home-schooling or child care during this pandemic. It also does not count those who have left their jobs to take care of sick family members.

I really hope that, despite our many policy disagreements, the Liberals will finally realize the effect their dilly-dallying has on hard-working Canadians from every province and territory who are struggling during this pandemic for the reasons I just listed and countless others. I have said it before, and I will say it again: We need a plan to get out of this pandemic. We need a plan to safely relaunch our economy to support Canadians as life returns to normal, so that all of our constituents can get back to work and school and return to life, but the Liberals do not realize that.

As I said, COVID-19 has been in Canada for about 14 months now. That is 14 months in which the Liberals have not made a plan. That is 14 months in which they messed up buying rapid testing kits or vaccines. That is 14 months in which Canadians have struggled during the pandemic. The Liberal government has had to introduce a billion stopgap solutions, such as this bill and so many others, because it is more concerned with trying to figure out if it can get away with winning a snap election than in hunkering down and doing what is best for Canadians. That is why I honestly wonder if we will ever pass this bill, or if the government will be able to table a budget, because it clearly does not have a plan and is clearly trying to hide that fact. After all, why would we need to spend months debating stopgap measures such as this bill if the Liberals had a plan?

Canadians deserve better than this. They deserve better than waiting around for five months and hoping to see promised supports they were counting on to support them through the second wave and now through the third. Hopefully the government realizes this, and hopefully next week's budget will not turn into an unwanted sequel to this bill, because Canadians cannot afford for it to. We know the government is busy preparing for an election. It does not care about what is going to be coming or the finances of the country. The member for Winnipeg North mentioned that the Liberals have been financing Canada throughout their history. I hope we are not going to end financing for Canada at the end of this Liberal mismanagement.

With Bill C-14, it is in the hands of the government to figure out what it can do with it, and stop blaming the opposition and stop blaming the Conservatives. It is time for the government to stand and take responsibility for its actions and stop blaming others, because that is the right way to do it.

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my friend can tell us whether he believes this is like when

the Conservatives bring in a motion on supply or an opposition day motion. They know, whether it is three hours of debate or two hours of debate, that a small percentage of the members of Parliament will actually speak to it, but it will come to a vote on that very same day or the vote might get deferred for a couple of days. The same principle does not apply to government legislation, and the Conservatives have gone out of their way to prevent it. I saw it first-hand, as the member would have, earlier this year, when they just would not pass the bill out of second reading until they were shamed into passing it.

Will he provide his personal assurance that he is prepared to see this bill pass, whether it is today or tomorrow?

• (1715)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, it is very funny expecting the opposition to offer this to the government. Imagine this, a reverse action of legislation and of doing the job.

I said at the end of my speech that the government needed to take responsibility. It needs to stand like proper managers, like proper responsible CEOs of the country.

Regarding delays, the Liberals have been filibustering committees for the last months. This is a government standing in the way of itself to do business. At the end of the day, the irony of it is that its members blame the opposition. I do not think this is the right way. I know the member for Winnipeg North realizes and understands that and I hope he will start thinking differently.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I think we cannot talk about or debate Bill C-14 without addressing the elephant in the room. That elephant is the absence of health transfers in the bill. Quebec and the provinces have been calling for these transfers for a very long time now.

We know where the Liberals stand on this. We have long known that they do not agree, that they never will and will never increase transfers. They made idle promises that they have never kept.

As for the Conservatives, they tell us they are listening to the provinces when it comes to health transfers. The most fascinating part is that ever since I have started asking them questions, not one member of the Conservative Party is able to tell me whether they agree with increasing health transfers to 35% of the total cost of health care, as Quebec and the provinces have been calling for. Does my colleague agree with that increase?

[*English*]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, what is fascinating is that the Bloc Québécois cannot pull out any magic with the government, as it has been doing here and there to pass and serve the Liberal government on bills and other legislation.

Government Orders

To see a bill that is incomplete is something I spoke about in my speech. This legislation has dragged on and on for months and months. The elephant in the room is the government. If it had the will, the government could have done it a long time ago, but I do not think it has that will. This is something we have experienced in the last six years now. It seems to be the notion of how the Liberal government does business.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I share some of the member for Edmonton Manning's concerns about the delay in House business. The cynical part of me believes the government would like nothing more than to hold some of these bills back to run an election campaign on.

Aside from that, on Bill C-14, I want to ask the member about the section dealing with interest on student loans. The bill would only provide relief for a fiscal year, from April 1 of this year until March 31 of next year. Edmonton is home to a great university. Does he not believe the government should be bolder on this and maybe get rid of interest on student loans all together, so we give them the financial chance we can at what we expect is the most productive part of their lives?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken in support of our students. We have great universities in Edmonton, in Alberta in general, and the support has to be there. The problem is that the government speaks loudly but does nothing. It never walks the talk. It just wants to get the votes of the youth and students but does not want to provide anything.

I have spoken in support of our students the last month and that there is something that can be done to help them. As far as details in the bill on this, it is not clear how the government will move on it, but at least this should get the support as a matter of principle.

• (1720)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to join the debate on Bill C-14 for the first time. Unlike some other members who I see on the *Hollywood Squares* and who have joined this debate once or twice, it is the first time I am able to add my comments on the bill.

Despite what the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands said in his response to my question, it is my job to enter into these debates, talk about government bills and add some context on what people in Regina—Lewvan think of them, what they would like to see different and what they agree with.

As many of my colleagues have stated in their speeches, there are aspects of Bill C-14 with which we agree. There are programs that need to be funded. As the hon. shadow minister for finance from Abbotsford said, there are points on which we and colleagues on all sides of the aisle agree with the Liberal government, but we have some fundamental problems with it. One of them is that the debt ceiling will be raised by \$660 billion.

Despite some of the misgivings I had when I listened to my hon. colleague from Winnipeg North speak about spending money, I do not think there is a Canadian who does not believe the Liberals are very good at spending money. I do not think they have seen a dollar they did not want to spend.

Therefore, when it comes to that aspect, he and I are in total agreement that the government would spend every dollar it has. That is one of the concerns I have with the government raising the debt ceiling. I have talked with businesses and individuals across the country. The questions I am being asked in my riding are related to the concern they have with the Liberal government and its inability to control spending as well as the ability of the Prime Minister and finance minister to get our finances under control when we come out of COVID-19. That is a big concern. If I took a poll in Regina—Lewvan asking people if they wanted to give the government a blank cheque to spend what it wanted and raise the debt ceiling, there would be a resounding no. They would say that there needs to be checks and balances put on the government because it has an out-of-control spending habit.

I appreciate listening to the different aspects of other colleagues. Most of the day I have listened to the member for Winnipeg North and the questions from the member for Kingston and the Islands. When another parliamentarian stands up in the House of Commons and says that he does not think there is any ability for members to talk on behalf of their constituents, that this is not what this conversation is about, that political games are at play, that impugns the integrity of members, which is something we should not do as colleagues across the political divide. We are all here for the right reasons, trying to represent our constituents. Therefore, I would never call members out, saying that they are not trying to represent the views of their constituents.

I have some concerns with respect to Bill C-14 and the transparency of the government's spending. The PBO said that the government was not being transparent when it came to spending. We see it with the Infrastructure Bank. Thousands of projects are not accounted for. The PBO and independent offices have said that they have concerns when it comes to infrastructure spending by the Government of Canada at this time. There is a big concern with our ever-increasing debt and financial picture. Do not just to take my word for it. This is not a bashing of conservatism from the C.D. Howe Institute, whose chair was the former finance minister, Bill Morneau, the last finance minister to deliver a budget two years ago and counting. The report from the C.D. Howe says:

The 2020 Fall Economic Statement contained little to enhance Canada's growth prospects and much to raise anxiety about mounting debt and exposure to adverse events, notably rising interest rates...

• (1725)

For my Liberal colleagues, this is not coming from me; it comes from an independent body. The C.D. Howe Institute was chaired by the former finance minister. It is not as if it is spinning Conservative talking points. However, there is concern among businesses about the end goal of the government. When is there going to be a plan to get spending under control?

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Three weeks ago, I was able to speak to our opposition motion about a safe plan to reopen Canada, which is very important. The member for Winnipeg North has spoken about leadership and the leadership the government has shown to Canadians during this pandemic. Last fall, we all did get together to talk about bringing in programs to ensure people were getting through COVID-19. However, now that there is a third wave coming, it can be attributed to a lack of action by the Liberal government.

The fact is that the Liberal government signed a contract with CanSino for 100 days, and the Communist Party of China renege on that contract. We were 100 days behind in getting contracts with other companies. The fact is that the member for Winnipeg North said that we would have 44 million doses of vaccine by June, and he can correct me if I am wrong. However, there are 38 million Canadians and if there are two doses per Canadian, 76 million doses would be needed. By his own words, if we have 44 million doses by June, we are still quite far behind if each Canadian needs two shots of either Pfizer or Moderna. Therefore, there are some issues around the vaccine rollout, and we need to talk about that when we are trying to reopen our economy safely.

President Biden and Prime Minister Johnson have both talked about a safe plan to reopen. I believe President Biden said it would be by Memorial Day. Prime Minister Johnson talked about an irreversible plan to reopen the economy, and that is important. We need to have scientific data points to safely reopen our economy and ensure we can get Canadians back to work.

Canadians are looking for hope and optimism. They are looking for leadership, which is lacking right now, on when they can get their lives back to normal, when kids can get back into the classrooms and not do their learning online. Many families have told me that it is very hard to be at home. These are difficult times for mothers, fathers, children, caretakers, educators, friends and playmates. We need to have leadership on the national stage. I know that Liberal colleagues will say that it is provincial jurisdiction, but there needs to be a national plan on how we reopen.

When we are talking about Bill C-14, I am hoping that national plan does not mean that there is going to be more and more debt to be carried by the next generation. My wife and I have three young children, and we always work hard. We got into public service so we could make life better for that next generation. There have been reports that this is one of the first times in our country's history where there does not seem to be as much hope and optimism. People do not think their lives are going to be as good as the generation before them. That scares me as a father and as a public servant for people in Saskatchewan. We need to work hard and show that leadership at the national level, to show that we will make things better for people when we come out of the pandemic.

We have to work together. The Liberals have totally abandoned a team Canada approach and have not taken any reasonable amendments to legislation that the Conservatives have brought forward over the last couple of months. It is time for us to really look at ourselves and at the people around us, the people we represent, and ensure they know we have their best interest at heart, that we will bring forward a plan to safely reopen the economy. I call on our Liberal colleagues to do that. It is time for us to work together, safely reopen our economy, get the programs out there that are

needed and then get jobs delivered to people across the country. It is time that Canadians start earning paycheques, not receiving pink slips.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to provide some clarification for my friend. It is 44 million doses by the end of June. Ultimately the provinces will determine when that second dose will be given. Health experts say that it can range. I believe it is at least three months between doses. I have confidence and faith that the provinces will do what is in the best interest of their populations, knowing what health experts are saying and the number of doses available. For example, we will be getting millions of doses in July, which could also be applied if we want to try to stretch it out so that the majority get the maximum benefit.

I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on why the provinces play a critical role in the delivery of the doses.

• (1730)

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I think the member knows that I was an MLA for almost eight years, so I know that health is provincial jurisdiction. In Saskatchewan, there are currently many drive-through vaccination sites. They are waiting for more vaccines because the federal government has failed to secure and deliver the vaccines that the provinces have been waiting for.

The Liberals talk about the 44 million doses that should be here by the end of the June. I say "should be" because the government has made a living off of making promises and not delivering. It is very good at under-delivering. It did this when it promised to plant a billion trees and hardly any were planted. The government promised to have small deficits during the good years, and in 2015, 2016 and 2017 it did not deliver. The Liberals promised to end drinking water advisories in first nations communities and they did not deliver.

Forgive me if I take what the member for Winnipeg North and the minister are saying with a grain of salt. The Liberals have been fantastic at breaking promises in the first five years of their government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, earlier, I asked a Conservative member from Quebec a question. Since I did not get much of an answer, I will try again with my colleague from Saskatchewan.

As members know, Bill C-14 contains provisions regarding long-term care. There is no question that seniors' homes have had some issues during the pandemic.

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The appropriate solution here is health transfers. Could my colleague from Saskatchewan tell me whether his party agrees with the provinces' valid request for unconditional increases in health transfers? The importance of this cannot be overstated. After all, the Conservative Party claims to be a party that respects jurisdictions.

Does my colleague agree that health transfers should be increased to 35%?

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, my colleague's question is hypothetical, but I am sure when the Conservatives form government, and we have a prime minister who respects jurisdiction and health ministers can get together, there will be a collaborative approach to ensuring that long-term care issues across the country are looked at.

I know that long-term care issues have been top of mind for many provincial governments. When I was in government in Saskatchewan, there were a lot of long-term care concerns. We worked hard to try to make sure that we could provide the best service possible.

I know that all provinces are looking forward to having conversations and respectful dialogue with the federal Minister of Health and the Prime Minister. I do not want to foreshadow anything, but when a Conservative government is in place, that respectful relationship will continue.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned how difficult the pandemic has been on families. The National Union of Public and General Employees has called on us to put in place a national child care system for Canada that is accessible, affordable and high quality. This means investing in a national workforce strategy, ensuring that people have professional wages and so on.

Does the member's party support a national child care strategy that is accessible, affordable and high quality, as called for by the National Union of Public and General Employees?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, as has been talked about before, the Conservative Party of Canada takes child care very seriously. We did implement the child care program that the Liberals have now taken on as their own.

When it comes to child care and good-paying jobs, we need a plan to reopen our economy so that people can get back to work and can look after their families. The Conservative Party will have platform planks that look at making sure people get back to work and have the ability to care for their families.

• (1735)

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to rise today from the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation and to serve the community of Nanaimo—Ladysmith in the traditional territories of the Snaw-Naw-As, Snuneymuxw, Stz'uminus and Lyackson First Nations.

There are many things that I would have liked to see covered in the fall economic statement, but first I want to address some concerns about the Canadian response to the pandemic. The countries

that have done a good job of beating the spread of COVID-19 have all had a national approach. During an adjournment proceeding debate about the need for a more coordinated national effort, the response I received was that the government did not want to create a constitutional crisis.

More than 23,000 people have died. The economy has been driven into the ditch. We have racked up the deficit to astronomical heights. About 180,000 small and medium-sized enterprises across this country are on the verge of closing permanently. Millions of Canadians are financially stressed. We have a mental health crisis and a shadow epidemic of intimate partner violence and murder. I am hearing more about suicides. We are in the third wave of the pandemic, with new records being set for daily case counts. We have another series of lockdowns in Canada's biggest provinces and people are fed up. Our governments have done a poor job of working together to fight this pandemic, but at least we have managed to avoid a constitutional crisis. We are on the yo-yo "close, open, close again" plan rather than a "get to zero" plan, and it has been a huge mistake.

During the early days of the pandemic, members of Parliament worked together to get programs in place to help Canadians get through the economic lockdown. Early in the pandemic, the Green Party called on the government to look at what other countries were doing to successfully stop the spread of COVID-19, save lives and protect the economy, including mask mandates for indoor spaces, widespread testing and limiting travel. Multiple times, starting at the beginning of the pandemic, the Green Party advocated for the government to invoke the Emergencies Act and use the provisions meant for public health emergencies. It is a very reasonable and well-written piece of legislation, and it was drafted at a time when the government was not dealing with an emergency.

Invoking the Emergencies Act would have allowed the government to create a federally coordinated response with the provinces to close the border, mandate quarantines for people returning to Canada, control interprovincial and inter-regional travel, and create green zones for opening the economy and red zones to control areas where there was community spread, with lockdowns. These are all things that were done in New Zealand, Australia and a list of other countries, and they successfully stopped the spread of the virus. However, our calls to invoke the Emergencies Act were rebuffed.

When the variants arrived in Canada, we called for an emergency debate and for the development of a strategic plan to deal with the strains that are more virulent. There was no dice. Now we have three highly contagious variants spreading rapidly across the country.

Our dysfunctional federal system also affects our action on climate change, or lack thereof.

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to interrupt for a second. The member may have said he was sharing his time, but I am not quite sure. Maybe he could remind me.

Mr. Paul Manly: Yes, Madam Speaker, I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Madam Speaker, we have the worst record for climate action and emissions reductions in the G8 and in comparison with the European Union. We have increased our emissions by more than 21% over 1990 levels, while the U.K. has reduced emissions by 40% and, on average, all countries in the EU have reduced emissions by 25%. Canada has signed on to nine international agreements on climate change and agreed to a set of targets for each of those agreements. However, Canada has had only one plan to meet those targets, under the Martin government, and we have met none of the targets we agreed to.

Our response to climate change is pathetic, but at least we have not triggered a constitutional crisis. Climate change and pandemics do not understand jurisdictional boundaries.

Now I will get back to the fall economic statement.

There is a serious need for additional support for small and medium-sized businesses. According to the research done by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 180,000 companies are on the verge of closing their doors forever. Small and medium-sized businesses are the engine of our economy and hire far more private sector employees than big businesses do. They are asking for the government to extend and expand COVID relief programs for small businesses until the entire economy can reopen, including our borders, and small businesses can once again serve customers in person. The most recent lockdowns in Canada's four largest provinces are testing the limits of small business operators.

The same thing can be said for the non-profit sector, which also needs continued support. We know that women have been heavily impacted by this pandemic, and it has set back advancements in the workplace by decades.

We need a just recovery that begins with serious funding for early childhood education and a universal child care program. The Green Party has been calling for universal child care for years.

We need increased support for the organizations that work with women who are facing intimate partner violence. Funding for these organizations was inadequate to begin with, and the pandemic has demonstrated why they need more support.

The work-from-home and learn-from-home requirements that the pandemic created have shown that there is an urgent need for access to high-speed Internet for rural and low-income Canadians across the country.

Post-secondary students have had a difficult time during the pandemic and need far more support. For years the Green Party has been calling on the Canadian government to adopt the northern European model for post-secondary education and eliminate tuition fees. At the very least in this moment, students should be getting relief for tuition fees and should have current student loan payments written off.

Seniors have been hit particularly hard during the pandemic. They have lost the community services and supports they rely on to make ends meet. They need increases to old age security and to the guaranteed income supplement.

The tragedy in long-term care homes in Canada has laid bare the need for proper standards to ensure that our seniors are not warehoused in profit centres, but instead are provided with homes and the dignity they deserve. The Green Party has called for national standards for long-term care homes, including implementing a basic care guarantee and increasing the number of trained staff in long-term care facilities to ensure a minimum of four hours of regulated personal care per day for every resident. We have called for better standards for workers. We called on the government to take the profit motive out of long term-care and focus funding on non-profit community-based care facilities. Again on this issue, we were told that setting national standards would create problems with the provinces, even though some provinces have clearly failed to properly care for seniors.

Canada is the only country with universal health that does not include universal pharmacare, and as a result, Canadians are paying way too much for their essential prescription medicines. Too many seniors in this country have to make impossible choices between taking medications as prescribed and paying for other essentials. Seniors are ending up with health complications and hospitalizations because they cannot afford to take their medicines. People who have lost their jobs have also lost their benefits, and they are faced with increased costs for medications. It is time for a universal pharmacare program. We need to get this done.

All over the country, there are still many people who are in trouble because they lost their jobs because of the pandemic. The Financial Post reported last week that we are now at a five-year high for Canadians facing insolvency. This is a problem that will only lessen once the pandemic is in the rear-view mirror. Until then, we must ensure that we do not let people lose everything because of COVID-19, because when people fall into poverty, the odds that they will be able to recover from such a setback are diminished.

• (1740)

Many of the pandemic support programs left people falling through the cracks. Since 2006, the Green Party has been calling for a guaranteed livable income to set an income floor under which no Canadian could fall. A GLI would have been very helpful to have in place before the pandemic, but it is also something that will help with the changes we will experience with automation and artificial intelligence, eliminating jobs. It will also help us deal with the changes that climate change is bringing.

Government Orders

We have an affordable housing and homelessness crisis in this country, and a whole bunch of eviction notices that are going to be coming due when the pandemic restrictions are released. We need increased government funding to deal with these dual crises, but we also need structural changes to deal with the increased financialization of residential housing and predatory investment practices. Housing is a human right, and we need to make sure that right is met in this country.

The Green Party will be supporting this bill. We want and expect better for Canadians, and we will continue to work with the government to improve the services that Canadians want and need.

• (1745)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two quick questions for the member.

First of all, I was interested by the question he asked in question period with respect to monetary policy. In 1974, when the Bank of Canada changed its policy, the inflation rate was at 11%. Is he concerned that the policy he was advocating for in question period might lead to increased inflation? There is a lot of worry about the potential for long-run inflation already as a result of current government policy.

My second question is about housing. I heard him speak about housing. I know he tabled the petition on that earlier today as well. It seems to me that one of the key issues around cost of housing is housing supply. We can make all kinds of regulations and requirements, but if we do not increase the supply, the cost is going to continue to be very high. We could consider policies that incentivize an increase in housing supply as a way of trying to address housing availability and affordability. Does the member have ideas or a plan on what could be done in that respect?

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, in the past, the Bank of Canada managed inflation, particularly during those years, 1938 to 1974, by limiting the supply of money. It limits the supply of money that is created now through our fractional reserve system. It can be done. We just need to have policy built around that.

In terms of housing, what is happening in the housing market is that we need more affordable housing built. Companies are not building affordable housing. They are building market-rate housing, and so much affordable housing right now is being flipped into market-rate housing. We see investors coming into the market, buying up older housing stock that was affordable. Now that housing stock is being rented out at higher rates and where there is no rent control, so they can just increase—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, I do have to allow for other questions.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Drummond.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague for his speech.

Despite the third wave of the pandemic, we have come to the point where the government is starting to develop a post-pandemic

plan, or so I hope, for when the pandemic is behind us, as my colleague said in his speech.

I listened to my Green Party colleague, but I did not hear him talk about what should be his party's central focus, and that is the environment. For example, we are not hearing the members of the Green Party talk about the importance of a green post-pandemic recovery.

However, the Bloc Québécois recently presented a recovery plan that focuses on the forestry industry. My two brilliant colleagues from Jonquière and Lac-Saint-Jean carried out this excellent study.

Could my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith talk about how important it will be to focus on the environment after the pandemic?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, I agree that we do need a green recovery. I did not get a full 20-minute speech here, so I could not cover a lot of the issues I would like to cover. I did mention our lack of real climate action in this country. There is a lot we could be doing around that, and there is a lot that we should be doing around the crash in biodiversity as well. We have documents that we have presented for a green recovery and for a full recovery of the Canadian economy.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague for his speech. Frankly, I think every single thing he mentioned is core NDP policy as well.

I want to focus on housing, because it has been said that COVID has created many crises, but it has also exposed other crises that were pre-existing, and one is the housing crisis. There is nothing in this legislation that deals with the incredible existential, foundational crisis facing so many Canadians who cannot find an affordable, secure place to live.

Does the hon. member agree with me, as a New Democrat, that we should get the federal government to restart a national co-op housing program to build 500,000 units of affordable co-op housing in this country over the next 10 years? Is that something the member would support?

• (1750)

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, I would absolutely support funding for co-operative housing.

Co-ops are a great model. They create community. People can age in place. People who lose their job do not lose their home because the housing cost is based on income. I would absolutely support that. It is something I have been calling for in my motions, petitions and statements in this House.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak virtually today, and I thank my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith for this opportunity to split the time.

Government Orders

I want to acknowledge that I am on the traditional territory of WSÁNEĆ nation, part of the Coast Salish nations of the beautiful area of Saanich—Gulf Islands. Over time perhaps we could change the name Saanich to WSÁNEĆ to spell it in SENĆOŦEN, because that is the source of the name of the Saanich Peninsula. I am honoured to represent the wonderful constituents of this area.

I am taking a different approach to looking at Bill C-14, and I am afraid that I may end up being very boring. That is because we have before us really important legislation. I wish it had been passed long ago, when it first came forward, because it does provide important supports, as my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith just said, that we will support from the Green Party: supports for low and middle income Canadians; relief on student debt; more support for virtual care, mental health and substance abuse programs; and help for businesses with their rent. These are things that we would like to see passed, but that does not mean that we do not have some significant concerns about the fall economic statement and the upcoming budget.

This is where I am afraid I am going to perhaps be boring. I would love to give a speech to make the point that my colleague from the Bloc Québécois just made, that our recovery needs to be focused on renewable energy, on a green economic recovery and the need to actually hit our Paris commitment to hold to 1.5°. The current government legislation in Bill C-12 does not come close to ensuring that we have anything like accountability for this.

I want to focus on the question of what our role as parliamentarians is when we look at budgets. What is our role as parliamentarians when we look at the fall economic statement? What is our job? In theory, parliamentarians are responsible for the public purse, and some will know that when I start speaking in the House of Commons about what is supposed to be happening in theory, members can be pretty sure it is not what is happening in practice.

We are responsible, as one of our core jobs as members of Parliament, to control the public purse. If we are going to control the public purse, it suggests that we should actually know about the measures we are voting for, be able to analyze the budget and get enough information to be effective and responsible parliamentarians.

I will be speaking in general first and then zooming in on the specifics. In my experience of reading budgets, and that goes back to well before I was honoured to be elected in this place in 2011, I used to go to pre-budget lock-ups. This was when I was the executive director of Sierra Club Canada and was one of the founders of something called the green budget coalition, and I sat down with the minister of finance and worked through budgets after the fact. In pre-budget lock-ups I would usually bring previous years' budgets with me so that I could quickly reference which department was getting more money, which department was getting less money and what this looked like in terms of our accountability and where the money was going.

I have been trying to remember the last time I saw a budget that actually included the numbers. This will strike Canadians as odd. How can we have a fall economic statement or a budget that does not include the numbers? Well, there are numbers there, but they tend to unrelated one from the other.

In preparing for this speech, I found a column from December 2015 that was written by three friends of mine: Kevin Page, our former parliamentary budget officer; Bob Plamondon, a noted Conservative commentator; and former MP and friend, Pat Martin. They penned an article for the *Globe and Mail* on this very point. Members of Parliament do not have enough information to actually do the job we are supposed to do, which is controlling the public purse.

To quote my three colleagues, in the article they wrote, “It is well nigh impossible for mere mortals to follow money.” It is well nigh impossible. We used to have budgets where we could actually add up the various departmental budgets and get to the number that the government was going to spend.

● (1755)

Departmental budgets stopped appearing in the spring budgets some time after Stephen Harper became prime minister. I have been trying to remember the last time I actually got a budget to read that included what most people would consider a budget. For some time, I have said that we should stop calling it the budget, which we will see next week, April 19, or the fall economic statement, or the spring budget. Unless the new Minister of Finance is going to do something remarkable and actually give us the numbers, what we have had for many years now has been what I have referred to as “the big thick spring brochure”. It is about party policy. It is about governmental policy. It sometimes announces how much will be spent in an area, but there is nothing we can use for purposes of comparison. Is that new money? Is that from a departmental A-base that they had last year and is just being reallocated? Can we track what is being spent, where the priorities are and can we add this all up and get a number we can count on?

On top of that general statement of a lack of transparency around numbers, now we have gone from what was spent in the 2019-20 budget frame, which was \$363 billion, and in 2020-21 we are spending something in the order of \$642 billion. Now, this was all approved by us as parliamentarians and mostly by unanimous consent. Because of the nature of COVID, we worked fast, and goodness knows, I have nothing but praise for all the hard work of civil servants and I include our ministers. Everyone has worked very hard to roll out the programs. However, by this point, more than a year into the pandemic, we should know how those programs are doing and where the money has actually gone.

We now have, believe it or not, over 90 different new COVID emergency programs. Can we trace them? Can we track them? Do we know where the money is going? In big numbers, in the rough sense, we do, because we know how much went to CERB, wage supports and so on.

Government Orders

Again, I turn to Kevin Page, whom I referenced earlier. He was our first parliamentary budget officer and is now the president of the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy at the University of Ottawa. In December, he put forward an opinion piece looking at the fall economic statement and identifying the transparency gaps. Kevin Page said that "...There is limited disaggregated administrative data related to people, sectors and regions, and virtually no data and analysis on the monthly flow of supports."

My colleague for Nanaimo—Ladysmith mentioned other countries that have done better at getting to zero on COVID as opposed to trying to just flatten the curve to avoid having our emergency rooms overwhelmed. Other countries decided to actually try to eliminate the virus. Well, here we are. Some of those countries that did better than us have also done better on financial reporting. New Zealand publishes very clear visuals that any citizen can use to track and understand where the money is being spent. Australia publishes detailed monthly reports explaining their statistics, and so does the U.K. All of these countries provide more information. The United States provides a detailed dashboard so that any citizen can track all government programs from one place. Canada does not have any of that in place for people to track where the money is going by sector. We know in general that this kind of money went to individuals because it was the CERB, this kind of money went to businesses because they were employers, but we do not have details.

On the fall economic statement, our current Parliamentary Budget Officer, Yves Giroux, commented favourably on the fact that the fall economic statement does include clarity around some essential fiscal planning information, such as the detailed five-year fiscal outlook, but Mr. Giroux also commented, as had—

• (1800)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member that she is not to use names of individuals who sit in the House of Commons.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Did I use the name of anyone sitting in the House of Commons, Madam Speaker?

I am sorry, but I referred to Mr. Giroux, the Parliamentary Budget Officer. His comment was that "the Statement falls short on transparency in several areas, such as: the absence of a fiscal anchor; the lack of clear thresholds for the fiscal guardrails; and the lack of detail related to the Employment Insurance Operating Account".

So these are areas that I hope—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do want to apologize to the hon. member. I thought she had mentioned someone in the House of Commons. That is what it sounded like, but it was Mr. Giroux and not the Prime Minister's name I had heard.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Madam Speaker, it appears that Bill C-14 is specifically designed so that the government would be able to operate without tabling a budget, which seems to be how it seems to keep working.

We have watching unhinged borrowing by the Liberals, which the finance minister described as pre-loaded stimulus, to cover up the fact that COVID support programs by far overpaid those who did not even need the help.

Part 7 of Bill C-14 is an alarming blank cheque for the Liberals. Does my colleague believe that the government has the capacity to lead us out of this economic disaster without unnecessary new levels of debt?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I cannot agree with my hon. colleague that part 7 is a blank cheque. It is a borrowing limit, but it is not authority to spend. That is a very important distinction to be made.

I am troubled, as I think many MPs are, as many Canadians are, by the fact that we are in a third wave. I live in a province where the P.1 variant has become extremely prevalent. A member of my family was diagnosed with COVID today. I am extremely worried for all of us.

I have to have confidence in us as a people, which means I do not want to take potshots at my government. We can get through this, but we need financial transparency. We, as MPs, need to do our jobs. It has been a long time since we have actually studied the supplementary estimates before passing them by rote. We need to do our jobs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands. I always appreciate her speeches. They are always very interesting, and the arguments are sound.

I heard her say that, as parliamentarians, we are responsible for the purse of Quebecers and Canadians. That is true, and I agree with her. She also said that the government lacked transparency. Again, I agree with her.

However, we know where the money went these past four years, to which sectors. Take, for example, the oil and gas industry. The Liberal government's strategy was to invest \$24 billion in oil and gas when it injected just \$900 million into the forestry industry.

As Theodore Roosevelt said, it is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed. I would like my hon. colleague's take on that quote.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc Québécois.

I completely agree with him. The current government thinks it can become a leader in tackling the great challenge of climate change and still maintain the massive subsidies for the fossil fuel industries. One such example is the \$17 billion allocated to the Trans Mountain pipeline alone.

We need to abolish these subsidies, which are designed to protect industries that represent a real threat to our future.

Government Orders

• (1805)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question relates to Canada's vastness. It is a very large country with many different regions. There has been a very important role, and this is something quite different from other smaller European countries. There are provincial responsibilities, in terms of lockdowns, different warnings and so forth.

Could the hon. member provide her thoughts in regard to the importance of federal-provincial co-operation in combatting the pandemic?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, as my friend from Nanaimo—Ladysmith just said, we have real challenges in federal-provincial relations.

The European Union, with separate nation-states, does a better job on trade within individual nation-states than we do interprovincially. Those frictions have really lost lives in this pandemic, because the federal government and the provincial governments have not worked as well together as, for instance, the state governments in Australia worked with their national state government. That is a tragedy.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, can I just begin, just start speaking? I do not have to fill out a form or get permission from an agency or a department or some other authority? Are we not in Canada here? Do we not need to fill out a form or get permission before we make anything, even if it just making a speech? Well, we need permission for everything else and have to wait an awful long time to get it.

According to newly released World Bank data, Canada ranks 36 out of 37 nations for the time it takes to get a building permit. One cannot just go out and build something, create jobs and support one's local economy, one has to wait for the gatekeepers in order to get permission.

One does not have to ask the World Bank that, one could just drive 25 minutes from here and ask Tim Priddle, who runs a lumber mill near Manotick. That lumber mill opened a big warehouse about 40 years ago. Guess how long it took to get approved? One week, one form, one stamped document from an engineer; one and done and away we go. That big, beautiful building is still standing safely to this day.

Tim wanted to build another warehouse with similar dimensions and doing similar things. This time it took six years and 600 thousand dollars' worth of consultant fees, charges and other obstructions. In fact, he had to hire an arborist to write a report on each little poplar tree he cleared, which was actually just useless ditch brush that had never been used for anything before or otherwise and had not been planned to be used for anything else. It took six years, \$600,000 and 1,500 pages of paperwork for him to do that, money he could have spent creating real jobs.

He experienced what so many experience in this country: Life behind the gatekeepers. These are the people who are among the

fastest-growing industry in the country. They are the bureaucracies, lobbyists, the consulting class, the politicians and the agencies who make their living by stopping other people and charging them excess tolls to do anything positive at all.

In fact, the Liberal government personifies the gatekeeper economy. The very first decision it made on taking office was to veto the privately funded expansion of the Toronto downtown island airport, an expansion that would have allowed Porter airlines, a Canadian company, to buy \$2 billion of Bombardier jets and land them there, creating jobs for another Canadian company, but also reducing traffic by landing business people in the business district rather than having to travel between Pearson and downtown, adding to pollution and delay and killing jobs.

In this case, who were the gatekeepers? Of course the competitor airlines that did not want to add convenience to the customers who would go to the downtown airport if this were approved, and of course the wealthy waterfront condo owners, almost all of them millionaires, and by virtue of their wealth having an excessive amount of political power. They killed all the opportunity for the people who would have worked on that project, the customers who would have saved time and the people who now have to sit on the roadways between a distant airport and a downtown destination.

Not far from there are some more gatekeepers in a place called Cabbagetown. This is a well-off community, a leafy neighbourhood with beautiful old Victorian brick houses. Along came an entrepreneur who said that a day care would go well on a street corner in a very large brick building. It had enough space for 80 kids to go to that day care. He was prepared to put all of his own money in it and did not need a cent from the government.

Suddenly, the uber-progressive, wealthy elite Cabbagetowners who were against this construction rose up in protest. One man said, "This is standard-issue capitalism run amok." This man, it turned out, was a mining executive. Columnist Chris Selley actually called him a "Marxist mining executive", hilariously.

• (1810)

One can imagine this gentleman trying to get a mine approved if he thinks that a day care is "standard-issue capitalism run amok", but I guess mines are in someone else's neighbourhood. Another neighbour said that this is a slippery slope for this iconic neighbourhood. What next, a playground, children laughing? One other person complained about the noise. One lady said that these kids will be walking within two metres of her house, and she signed her submission with "Ph.D." Quiet, children, there is a genius at work in that house.

Government Orders

Another signatory was a gentleman named Tiff Macklem. He happens to be the Governor of the Bank of Canada, who has been lecturing Canadians on the need for taxpayer-funded day cares, the same kind of day cares that he made a submission to the City of Toronto to try to block. This is typical of the progressive left. They want government to block the provision of a service, and then they claim that the government needs to provide that service directly.

However, it is not just day cares, airports and lumber mills. It is more essential than that; it is the houses in which we live. A C.D. Howe report produced recently showed that government barriers add between \$230,000 and \$600,000 per single detached unit of housing in this country. While the government brags that it is spending \$70 billion of taxpayer money on housing, governments are blocking the very construction of that housing.

I want everyone to think about how insane it is that we live in one of the least densely populated nations on planet earth. There are only four Canadians for every square kilometre in this country, and yet we have some of the most expensive real estate. There are more places in Canada where there is no one than there are places where there is anyone, and yet Vancouver is the second and Toronto is the sixth most expensive housing market in the world when we compare median income to median housing price. It is more expensive than New York, more expensive than L.A., more expensive than London, England and more expensive than a tiny island nation called Singapore. All of these places are vastly more populated and even less expensive to live in. Why? It is because while our central bankers print money to goose demand, our local governments block the construction and, therefore, constrain supply. With demand up and supply down, the price rises. It is pretty straightforward.

What are the consequences? It is good for the rich. For those who already own a mansion, they are getting wealthier every day because their house price is going up. They can sit back and have rocking-chair money. Their house makes more than they do. However, for those who are poor and cannot find places to live, like the young people who just told a survey that came out today that one-third of them have totally given up on ever owning a house in their life, those people are out in the cold. In Toronto, a social services organization said that 98% of homeless shelter space is occupied. Over 300,000 people in one city are on a waiting list for subsidized housing. There are 10,000 people in that one city who are homeless.

A lot of people worry about what happened to the homeless in Toronto during this pandemic. In fact, one carpenter took matters into his own hands. Khaleel Seivwright, a carpenter, said that these people are going to freeze to death because they cannot stay in a shelter where they will catch COVID, so they are out on the street. With his bare hands, he built mini-shelters for them. He put in insulation, a smoke detector, a carbon monoxide detector. He said plainly that this was not a solution; it was just something he was doing to save people's lives until we can finally find a way to house people in this, one of the wealthiest countries on planet earth.

What did the city say? It did not say, "We are going to give this guy a hand. Let's give him a round of applause and let's see how we can help him do even better." No. It did not say, "Boy, this guy is taking action that we should have taken long ago. He is making us

look bad. We had better perform better than we have before." No. It hired lawyers and got an injunction against him.

● (1815)

All of a sudden, the one guy who is selflessly trying to help solve the problem caused by city hall and by the bureaucracy is the villain. How typically this is of the story we see in our country.

Another poverty fighter is Dale Swampy, the head of the National Coalition of Chiefs, which has as its mandate to fight and defeat on-reserve poverty. That is its mission. It came up with a plan to support a brand new natural resource project that would ship western Canadian energy to the coast where it could be delivered to the fast growing and energy hungry markets of Asia, thus breaking the American stranglehold on our energy exports, creating jobs for steelworkers, energy workers, logistics and transportation workers and delivering \$2 billion of wages and benefits to indigenous communities. The CEO of the project was going to be an indigenous person, and 31 of the 40 indigenous communities along the route supported it. That is more than 75%.

The environmental agency responsible took a look at it. It spent three years, heard from 1,500 witnesses and read 9,000 letters. It reviewed over 100,000 pages of evidence. It went to 21 different communities. It concluded that the pipeline was safe and in the public interest. However, the Prime Minister took office and he killed the project, denying those first nations communities their constitutional right in the charter to be consulted. He did not consult with any of them. What happened? Those indigenous communities lost the \$2 billion. Now we are keeping toll. There will be these green jobs that the government will deliver. I asked Mr. Swampy how many of these green jobs had shown up since the pipeline was killed. It was zero, nada, nothing. In fact, he said that the so-called environmentalists did to him what they did to his father's generation 20 or 30 years ago. They came then and campaigned against hunting, trapping and fishing. Once they were done with their politics and they had won their political battle, they were gone. They left behind impoverished communities with less opportunity than they had before. That was the result.

One of the gatekeepers who comes to mind is Gerald Butts. He made hundreds of thousands of dollars working for the World Wildlife Fund, which is a supposedly an environmental organization. Instead of spending money on the environment, on preserving wetlands and so forth, it was paying him a multi-hundred-thousand dollar severance for quitting his job and coming to work for the government, where he has helped to block pipelines ever since.

Government Orders

We live in a country where we cannot even trade with ourselves. Maybe our friends in the Bloc, who want to create their own separate country, like it that way. I do not know, because we do not even treat our own interprovincial trade the way we treat foreign trade. Someone can be arrested or charged for bringing alcohol across an interprovincial border.

I will quote from our Constitution, “All Articles of the Growth, Produce, or Manufacture of any one of the Provinces shall...be admitted free into each of the other Provinces.” That was promised us back in the time of our Constitution, yet to this day someone can be charged for bringing liquor or maple syrup in from another province. They can be charged for working in construction in the wrong province.

According to Statistics Canada, the effect of these barriers on trade between Canadian provinces works out to a tariff of about 7%. According to the World Trade Organization, the tariff that Canada charges on foreign imports to Canada is 4%. In other words, we charge 7% on goods that travel between provinces and only 4% on goods that come from abroad. If people order something from Alibaba to be delivered to their doorsteps, it is likely tariffed at a significantly lower rate than if they went and bought a product that was made in their neighbouring province. This is economic hara-kiri that we would punish our own businesses with higher tariffs than we would apply to Chinese businesses that sell within Canada.

● (1820)

It raises the question, could we even build the Canadian Pacific Railway today? I am not sure we could. What about our national highway system? Could we build that today? There would be some gatekeeper wanting to block it. If we cannot even transit goods across our borders without some parasitical interest group claiming there needs to be a tariff or regulation keeping it out, why would anybody allow a railway or a highway to be built? Forget transmission lines or pipelines; I am not sure we could get anything done as long as this gatekeeper economy continues to stand in the way.

We forget that there was a time when we got things done in this country. This is the country that discovered and isolated insulin, for God's sake, saving the lives of millions of diabetics. We discovered stem cells, which treat cancer and countless other conditions, and have the promise to repair spinal cords and bring sight to the blind. We created a mechanical arm that can go into outer space and move hundreds of thousands of kilograms of weight with a remote control, the Canadarm.

We conquered Vimy Ridge. We liberated the Dutch. We fought and succeeded at Juno Beach. Of course, that was at a time when if people said they had been triggered, it did not mean they heard a comment that hurt their feelings. It meant they had been shot at by enemies on the battlefield. That was the generation of that time.

We are a country that once had a government that would stand up and lead the world against apartheid. Now we have a government that is too terrified to speak out against the genocide of the Muslim minority in China. We have, today, a country where some people seriously talk about banning local kids' sports organizations from keeping score for fear of hurting the losing team's feelings. This is the country of Paul Henderson, who scored the winning goal in the

summit series with less than a minute left to electrify the world and send a signal in favour of freedom and against communism, back in 1972.

One day, I believe we will knock down these gates and remove these gatekeepers altogether, to make Canada a place that is the easiest place on planet Earth in which to build a business, the fastest place to get sign-off to build something, the freest place on Earth in which to do commerce, to buy, sell, work, build, hire, take risks and, yes, to even win.

How about a budget bill like that?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really hope the member for Regina—Lewvan was watching that, given our conversation earlier.

This member did not even speak about the bill that we are talking about. He went on and on. This last 20 minutes served no other purpose than for the member to take that clip and put it on Facebook. That is all he wants out of this. He did not spend any time talking about the bill.

The member talked about building permits, which are run by municipalities, under the municipal affairs department that sets the rules and regulations for that. When I was mayor, we put together a task force to look at how to increase the speed of things going through the building department. I do not know if the member is putting out a call that he is going to run for city council in Carleton or maybe for MPP so that he could try to fix those regulations, or perhaps, more likely, he is trying to position himself with a good speech so that he could prepare, maybe thinking somebody is not going to be lasting much longer.

I would love to hear if the member has anything to contribute to Bill C-14.

● (1825)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, first of all, the member condemns me for talking about municipal obstructions to business, and then he quickly turns his attention to municipal politics in his own backyard.

If the member does not understand the relationship between the time it takes for a business to get started and to get anything built in this country, and the finances of the nation, then maybe that is why we are in the mess we are in. If the member does not understand it, yes, actually building permits are federal in nature; anything that crosses interprovincial borders requires a building permit.

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The Teck Frontier mine and countless other mines that are even within one individual province require federal building permits. There are countless projects, far too many, that require federal sign-off. The fact that the member does not know that or understand the financial impact that is had when these projects are blocked is exactly why we have a \$400-billion deficit today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I must admit that I am a big fan of the member for Carleton.

Red tape, bureaucracy. I agree with all of the things that he mentioned. I can even point out to him the worst example of red tape and bureaucracy: the Canadian federation.

The federal government has never run a hospital, but it wants to tell us what to do with health transfers. What is worse, since the member spoke about pipelines, 50% of my taxes go to the federal government and get added to the \$24 billion. All I have to show for it is a damaged economy. That is a phenomenon known as Dutch disease, and it has been happening for years. The member for Carleton is saying that we need to add another layer and finance pipelines, to go full throttle and build the pipeline, as I have often heard people say here.

If my colleague agrees with me about red tape in the Canadian federation, would he agree to make transfer payments that meet the demands of the provinces and perhaps reduce that red tape? I look forward to hearing what he has to say about that.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, we absolutely have to reduce the burden on all our entrepreneurs, our workers and the Canadian economy.

However, I often see a contradiction with the Bloc Québécois. Every time Bloc members rise, they say they do not want to be part of Canada, but they want the federal government to spend more money in Quebec.

My personal view is that Quebec should be part of Canada. Every time Bloc Québécois members rise, their goal is to increase their power and the federal government's burden. Only the Conservative Party wants to cut the cost of and power wielded by politicians, bureaucrats and the federal government in this country as it stands. We, the Conservatives, are the ones who want to give the provinces and Canadians more autonomy.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Carleton for that, I guess, entertaining speech. It was completely irrelevant to the subject at hand, but I will try to run with it.

He mentioned that there are a lot of interprovincial barriers to trade in Canada. My riding makes the best wine in the country and his friend, the Premier of Ontario, stopped those shipments from going to Ontario. We cannot send wine to Ontario. Doug Ford said no. He even upped the ante recently with legislation that threatens a 10-year jail sentence for someone shipping wine into Ontario. His friend and former colleague, Jason Kenney in Alberta, could regain a lot of his lost popularity. He is at rock bottom right now. He could

become much more popular if he changed the rules so that we could ship British Columbia wine to Alberta.

Could the member make those calls and help us improve inter-provincial trade in Canada?

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Carleton is going to have some time left over for questions and comments. I will let him answer briefly so we can get on to the next business.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, that was a fantastic question. Yes, I will make those calls. Every premier should knock down interprovincial trade barriers. I should tell him the good news, though: Alberta has already done it. Alberta knocked down the barriers and does import tariff-free British Columbia wine. Every province should do that and we should let this beautiful British Columbia, Niagara and Nova Scotia wine flow freely right across the land, as the founders of this nation originally envisioned.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have four minutes left for questions and comments the next time this subject is before the House.

[*Translation*]

It being 6:30 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 30(7), the House will now proceed to the consideration of Bill C-262 under Private Members' Business.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC) moved that Bill C-262, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (capture and utilization or storage of greenhouse gases), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the House today to present this private member's bill at second reading: Bill C-262, an act to amend the Income Tax Act regarding carbon capture, utilization and sequestration.

I want to start by acknowledging all the people in the riding I represent, Calgary Centre, who gave me the honour of being their representative in the House of Commons 18 months ago. Many of those Calgarians joined my campaign or lent me their support in the hope that there would be better options for the way in which our country deals with the myriad challenges we face together.

Greenhouse gas accumulation and its effect on the world's environment are large and complex issues we need to address as a society and as a world.

[Translation]

The accumulation of greenhouse gases and its effects on the global environment are among the vast and complex issues that we need to address as a society and as a planet.

[English]

I sought to represent my constituents in this place with the belief that Canadians were not well served by politicians who dwelled on trite slogans or divisive attribution, and avoided real solutions to these difficult and complex problems. This month I have heard the gross misrepresentation of my party's position on the necessity of lowering greenhouse gas emissions. I have heard the cheap, unconstructive and divisive repetitions of this misrepresentation from shallow voices, including in the House, as well as from members of the cabinet. Perhaps Canadians need to roundly tell the current government that the division it has created, and continues to create, in this country on this fundamental issue should be curbed. Climate change is an issue not to be addressed in a partisan and divisive fashion. That approach of division, regionally and sectorally, must stop.

[Translation]

Climate change must not be regarded as a partisan issue and cannot be dealt with in a confrontational manner.

[English]

It is not an issue that we can shrug our shoulders on and be smug toward Canadians whose lives and livelihoods are being ruined as the government chooses an approach, selectively and inadequately, to address this matter.

At the risk of sounding trite, which I would detest, I speak here today on behalf of 120 colleagues on this side of the House, all of whom are of one mind in our approach to tangibly address the underlying causes of climate change. Canadians have experienced over five years of broken environmental policies. The government is long on studies. It is long on expensive and connected insider consultants, virtue-signalling and extending regulatory timelines. It is long on pretend solutions: the latest expensive, subsidized, fad-dish non-solutions and new taxes wrapped in virtue, but it is short on any results for accomplishing reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

I am not here now to dwell on the current government's failures, but I question the failed approach. As with its record on a multitude of projects, talk is cheap. Sooner or later we need to see results. In 2018, Canada emitted the highest amount of greenhouse gases since 2007. I will not give any previous government credit for the 9% reduction in GHG emissions in this country between 2007 and 2009, as the economy also shrank by 7%. As the Government of British Columbia has clearly learned, and the Government of Canada is learning now, a carbon tax has no discernible effect on greenhouse gas emissions despite notable academic input to the contrary, particularly when the carbon tax is a wealth-distribution mechanism and not a true tax on the use of carbon.

I would say the same for any reduction that occurred in 2020-21. I expect the numbers reflect a reduction, but it is not our actions that will have reduced these emissions. It is the pandemic that has

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shut down our economy. Bill C-262 is not about another speculative approach to greenhouse gas emissions. It is not another unaccountable money pit for taxpayer funds to provide another non-solution to climate change. It is not another mechanism to transfer funds from taxpaying, contributing, employment-generating, sustaining scientific sectors of the Canadian economy. It is not another mechanism to transfer funds to connected, virtue-signalling, speculative, non-transparent, ineffective, subsidized, self-interested actors with no accountable stake in the environmental outcome, who are protected from the devastating economic outcomes of the proposed new solutions.

● (1835)

Bill C-262 is about a real, tangible approach to address the causes of climate change. The bill is about obtaining real results in carbon reduction. The bill is about leadership: national leadership, financial policy leadership and environmental leadership.

Eleven days ago, I had the pleasure, along with five colleagues, to visit a CO₂ utilization and sequestration facility in Clive, Alberta, hosted by my colleague from Red Deer—Lacombe. The Alberta Carbon Trunk Line is one of Canada's projects that has shown the world how we will lead in carbon reduction. That is the objective of Canada's commitment to the Paris Agreement: to reduce our carbon emissions. It is not to reimagine the economy, tear down what we do, displace productive Canadian jobs in key industries or ignore how Canadians can contribute best to the world's efforts to decarbonize.

This is how we contribute. We will lead the world in a technological approach in which we led the world for a decade until 2018. How did we lose this environmental leadership?

The United States recognized the need to move forward on carbon capture utilization and sequestration, and implemented a tax credit known as 45Q to move these investments forward. Such was the success of the tax measure that the sectors participating in capturing and sequestering carbon increased significantly. The tax measure effectively allows a sharing of the tax credit associated with the expenditures required for the successful capture, utilization and sequestration of carbon. Economic modelling shows that for every dollar of tax revenue that the government would forgo through this tax credit, it would see \$4 of added economic activity. This is crucial as Canada looks toward economic recovery post-pandemic.

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Illustratively, one can see that carbon emitters, industrial entities that contribute to Canada's economy, are not always the same entities that have the ability or the option to utilize and store carbon, or transport it to utilization or storage, or verify permanent sequestration, yet they are the entities that must obtain the equipment to capture the carbon. Captured carbon is not worthwhile unless we utilize it or sequester it effectively. Hence there is an ability to split the credit among various entities.

This tax innovation led entities that had started and advanced in Canada to move to projects in the United States. With one piece of smart legislation, the U.S. effectively led an industry, which Canada had led for a decade, to its jurisdiction, all with the objective of reducing carbon emissions and contributing to the world's efforts to decarbonize.

I should point out that the United States has met its Paris targets, whereas Canada has not. I admit there were different starting points between our countries and much of the U.S. success has been the result of moving away from using thermal coal for its power. Canada needs to step back into the lead and ensure that Canadian entities have the opportunity to retake their leadership in this technology and contribute to the world's decarbonization efforts with Canadian leadership.

The International Energy Agency recognizes carbon capture utilization and storage as the third most important measure for the world to attain its Paris Agreement targets. I will also note that the legislation and approach embodied in the bill align with the U.S. in an era when Canada's approach to climate change needs to be in lockstep with our trading partners, or it will lead to the concept of carbon leakage. This will mean no reduction in carbon, but a clear reduction in Canadian jobs. This reality should be at the forefront of our concern.

I will close by telling the House that this legislation is over two years late. Losing two years of economic and environmental leadership to our major trading partner means that we have been asleep at the wheel on advancing climate solutions and leading the world as we once did. The economic benefits are clear. The environmental benefits are proven and clear.

● (1840)

The leadership needs to be clear. Let us wait no longer.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I just wondered if the member for Calgary Centre could comment on the fact that his bill makes no differentiation, as far as I can tell, between the amount of tax credits that a company would receive if it just simply stored the carbon dioxide underground, as it should be done, versus that of using it for enhanced oil recovery.

In the United States, those 45Q credits are different. They get more credit if they do the right thing and simply store the carbon dioxide underground, rather than using it for enhanced oil recovery. All the data show that enhanced oil recovery actually creates more carbon in the atmosphere through the burning of that extra oil being pumped than if we had just left it there.

I am just wondering if he can comment on why there is no differentiation in those credits.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, yes, the United States has a difference in the way its application works toward the 45Q tax credit when it is utilized in actual enhanced oil recovery. The data actually shows that the reduction from wells to wheels, as we call it, or the full life cycle of oil and CO₂, actually reduces by between 57% and 100%, depending on the way the sequestration happens.

Enhanced oil recovery is going to be part of the utilization effort. We are moving toward a better method of producing oil in this respect, and it is much better than so many of the oil production methods around the world.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague gave a very exciting presentation. I have to say, as a farmer, I know how important it is to produce without causing harm and also how important it is to be good stewards of our precious planet that we are living on. It is of paramount importance.

New Canadian technologies that help reduce our impact on the environment are super exciting, so can my colleague share with us new innovations that Canadians are bringing to the table?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, there are all kinds of new technologies Canadians are bringing to the table. Carbon capture, which we are talking about here today, was actually something that originated in Alberta and Saskatchewan, because we have the reservoirs here that are available for it. It is really ideal for us to actually lead in this respect.

Companies are coming from around the world because they want a zero-emission type of infrastructure, and the ability to put that underground permits that to happen. As much as virtue signalling can happen, it happens really well where we capture this carbon in Canada, in the reservoirs that we already produced from, and store them effectively. So many of our industrial processes that we advance in Canada have an emission footprint, and now we have the ability to take that emission footprint, whether it is from concrete, steel or fertilizer, and make it move underground. All of these would contribute, of course, to our ability to move forward environmentally.

I will also talk about Carbon Engineering, which is in my colleague's home province, where they have actually started a process of taking carbon from the air. These are great advancements in technology, as a result of how we used to lead in Canada, and we are hoping to get that leadership back.

● (1845)

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to my colleague's bill on the important issue of carbon capture and utilization or storage. He is a fellow member of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

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I would like to begin by recognizing the news from a few weeks that the Supreme Court of Canada dismissed the challenge of Jason Kenney, Doug Ford and Scott Moe in a clear ruling that it is within the ability of the federal government to put a backstop price on pollution if the provinces and territories fail to act. This is important because, as written in the decision, “The evidence clearly shows that establishing minimum national standards of GHG price stringency to reduce GHG emissions is of concern to Canada as a whole. This matter is critical to our response to an existential threat to human life in Canada and around the world.”

It is well settled by climate policy experts, and particularly economists, that any credible climate plan needs to price pollution. It is necessary, but alone it is not sufficient. Investing in technology alone is a gamble, at best a calculated gamble, the results of which can be speculative, while to rely on regulations alone is known to be a significantly more costly approach to achieving the same levels of emissions reductions.

Utilizing market-based mechanisms is a conservative idea by origin, one adopted by a Conservative-leaning government in my home province of B.C. over a decade ago and accepted by Conservative governments in places all around the world. It bears questioning why any party that believes in the free market and is honest in its commitment to addressing climate action would reject it.

I raise this because Bill C-262 lives within this policy context in seeking to provide a tax credit for carbon capture utilization storage, which I will refer to as CCUS henceforth. While a majority of focus of carbon pricing in Canada has been situated on a consumer-facing pollution fee and dividend model, industry faces a price on pollution through the output-based performance standard, which approximates a cap and trade model.

If companies exceed the level of emissions established for their sector, they need to buy credits from counterparts that have been able to reduce their emissions through offsets from the market more widely. Carbon leakage of emitting projects moving to jurisdictions without carbon pricing systems is mitigated by how these standards are set. These standards get stricter over time, providing an incentive to cut pollution in the most affordable way possible. The proceeds collected from industry are used to support industrial projects that cut emissions and use cleaner technologies and processes, so it reinforces this transition.

The clean fuel standard rounds out these market-based systems by requiring liquid fuel suppliers to gradually reduce the carbon intensity of the fuels in Canada by 2030 or else purchase carbon credits from the market. Given that the oil and gas industry is the largest source of Canada's emissions, at about 25%, with transport coming in at second, it is critical we have measures like these to have any hope in meeting our 2030 goals and to set ourselves on a path to get to net-zero emissions by 2050.

These market-based mechanisms are the stick, so to say, but they can also be the carrot. With the Supreme Court's affirmation a few weeks ago, businesses have the certainty there will be a steadily increasing cost associated with polluting in Canada, so they can plan appropriately to reduce their emissions through actions they can take within their own operations or by procuring more affordable emissions reductions elsewhere.

There are many ways emissions reductions can take place within our largest emitting sector such as switching to renewable energies to power operations, tightening leaks from facilities of methane and other pollution, and the subject matter of today, CCUS. We need to focus on the cheapest and best way of pursuing all of these angles and do so in a way that promotes Canadian ingenuity.

Innovation here can also create technologies and services we can sell to the world. This is why our government proposed to level the playing field for all technology by cutting corporate taxes in half for companies that make net-zero emissions technologies. Until these breakthrough technologies mature, commercialize and become cheaper, there is a role for Canada to support the most promising examples.

This is the approach in our government's strengthened climate plan, which is called “A Healthy Environment and a Healthy Economy”. This plan was released in December. In this plan, we reaffirmed our promise to develop a CCUS strategy and further reiterated our commitment to exploring every opportunity that will help keep Canada globally competitive in this growing industry.

Some of the actions will include launching a net-zero challenge for large emitters to support Canadian industries in developing and implementing plans to transition their facilities to net-zero emissions by 2050, making investments to support decarbonization through the strategic innovation fund's net-zero accelerator fund with an investment of \$3 billion over five years, and investing \$1.5 billion in a low-carbon and zero-emissions fuel fund to increase the production and use of low-carbon fuels.

● (1850)

More recently, on March 8, we announced a joint steering committee with Alberta on CCUS. Canada was an early mover in CCUS with the Boundary Dam carbon capture project, where many lessons were learned. Canada has made significant strides in this sector, which in part have been funded by Natural Resources Canada. The Alberta Carbon Trunk Line system, one of world's newest integrated large-scale CCUS systems, currently sequesters about 1.6 million tonnes of CO₂ per year, and the Shell Quest facility has already sequestered over five million tonnes of CO₂ to date.

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The strategic innovation fund has funded Canadian clean tech companies that are world leading, most notably, Carbon Engineering, located in Squamish of my riding, which has been directly capturing CO₂ from air since 2015. Carbon Engineering also recently partnered with Canada's largest company by market capitalization, which is Ottawa-based Shopify, to reduce its own emissions.

Carbon Engineering is now constructing the world's largest direct air capture plant in the Permian Basin of west Texas. Once operational, this plant will directly capture up to one million metric tonnes of atmospheric CO₂ annually.

Other countries around the world are launching CCUS projects. In Norway, the \$2.6-billion Northern Lights project will capture and sequester up to five million tonnes of CO₂ per year, which was overwhelmingly funded by the Norwegian government. The U.K. is also investing about \$100 million in its HyNet North West project, which will create hydrogen from natural gas and capture the carbon underground. I mention these projects to highlight that we are operating in a very competitive international environment.

It is important that we take advantage of the human capital from our existing projects, our infrastructure assets and the natural assets that we have. This is what informs the hydrogen strategy that we announced in December of last year. This strategy will pursue non-emitting, green hydrogen from renewable energy that can be produced from the 82% of our grid that is already non-emitting, and from future projects that will be built. For the purposes of today, it also seeks to leverage the natural gas resources we have throughout the west, the geology throughout sedimentary basins for capturing carbon, as well as the expertise of our energy sector workers to create low-carbon, blue hydrogen. In total, this sector could represent 350,000 jobs by 2050 and help ensure that Canada can provide the low-carbon energy resources that the world increasingly demands.

I believe the end goal in growing the economy and supporting innovation while cutting emissions is one that I share with the member for Calgary Centre. However, Bill C-262 is fundamentally flawed in its approach. As written, the bill would undermine Canada's pollution pricing regime and would therefore undermine the stated purpose of the bill, which is fighting climate change. This is because Bill C-262 would create a situation where the government is heavily and perhaps fully subsidizing a project by tying the rate of tax credit to the pollution price, and as our pollution price steadily rises and our industry pricing becomes more strict, the tax benefit would grow disproportionately.

The bill would give an unfair advantage to CCUS as the choice for emissions reductions, whereas there may be much cheaper ways of achieving the same emissions reductions. I do not believe that is the most responsible use of the public purse. Rather than prejudice what the most efficient solution is, our approach is to utilize the market to decide for us. It may be CCUS, and we are developing a plan for that, but it cannot and will not be the whole plan.

Our approach is utilizing the stick of increasing the cost of pollution to encourage business to invest in greening their operations or to invest in emissions reductions elsewhere, and we are using the carrot through the competitive challenges to find the best solutions to reduce emissions from our biggest point sources. We are making calculated investments through the most promising technologies,

through the strategic innovation fund's net-zero accelerator program, and our approach will ensure that we achieve the greatest results in emissions reductions at the lowest cost, while supporting Canada's clean tech sector to continue to punch well above its weight domestically and internationally.

For that reason, Bill C-262 would undermine this system and economical climate action overall and, as a result, I will be voting against it.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Calgary Centre for his bill, C-262, which gives me another opportunity to talk about the environment and impress upon members that climate action is urgent.

On March 8, Natural Resources Canada announced the creation of an Alberta–Canada carbon capture, utilization and storage, or CCUS, steering committee. My colleagues who spoke before me have mentioned it. According to the news release, the steering committee “will leverage Alberta's early CCUS leadership to advance climate goals”. It goes on to say that “Canada's strengthened climate plan calls for the development of a comprehensive CCUS strategy”, a technology that was developed thanks to 20 years of federal support.

The minister is also quoted as follows: “Carbon capture technology creates jobs, lowers emissions and increases our competitiveness. It's how we get to net zero.” I have to say, I have my doubts.

We will continue to be vigilant with respect to the government's official line, as the government continues to claim that it is green and supports the environment while it spends billions in public money to finance and support energies of the past. The Conservative bill we are debating is a positive response to the pressure of the oil and gas industry, which made no effort and took every possible step to maintain the influx of public money in its business model.

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With Bill C-262, the Conservative Party is proposing to socialize the environmental costs of economic activity while retaining the profits and benefits in the private sector, and portraying this as fighting climate change, which the party does not acknowledge exists. The Bloc Québécois will not be fooled especially since the 47 signatory organizations represent two million Canadians and Quebecers who wrote to federal ministers about this issue the very day the steering committee was announced. They clearly signalled their opposition to the tax measures to expand access to subsidies for enhanced oil recovery, which is what this is really about.

Although certain subsidies can be an effective way to combat climate change, the tax benefits proposed in Bill C-262 are not. The bill would do three things, all with public money. It would make it easier for the oil industry to go back to its dirty, carbon-intensive processes; it would discourage the industries that produce CO₂ from adopting clean technologies; and it would extend the lifespan of aging reservoirs.

Sad to say, if there is one area in which Canada is a leader, it is in promoting the oil industry in every way with all kinds of economic and regulatory measures. There is no shortage of unfortunate examples. The government needs to stop with these cynical anti-democracy practices, these public actions that hurt the environment, jeopardize climate action, compromise biodiversity, and are ultimately aimed at keeping the oil industry alive.

Bill C-262 contains four clauses, and I will speak specifically to clauses 2 and 4. Clause 2 reads as follows:

The greenhouse gas stored for the purposes of the storage project must be captured, transported and stored in accordance with the laws of Canada or a province or the laws of the United States or any of its states.

It is one thing for Canadian oil industry lobbyists to copy tactics first used in the United States, but it is quite another to propose a bill that would be enforced on the basis of the laws of another country. The Conservatives' enthusiasm for U.S.-style deregulation is concerning, especially since the climate crisis did not get nearly as much consideration as it deserved over the past few years of Republican rule.

We know that Bill C-262 is inspired by the U.S. 45Q tax credit, which the member spoke about. This tax credit could increase oil production in the United States by 400,000 barrels a day by 2035, which equates to an annual increase of 5.7 million tonnes of CO₂. As if we needed more CO₂ in the atmosphere.

• (1900)

The other clause, which establishes the tax credit and how it is calculated, speaks for itself. It would appear that what the credit actually does is cancel out the price of the carbon tax levy. If that is the case, this confirms the true intent of Bill C-262: to attack the carbon tax, which has now been declared constitutional, and render it ineffective.

The Conservative Party is openly opposed to the carbon tax and lacks the credibility to claim that Bill C-262 will help fight climate change. The green veneer is not convincing, I am sorry to say. The fact is, the majority of delegates at the Conservative Party convention voted down a resolution calling for the party to acknowledge the very existence of climate change.

I will never stop repeating that the Bloc Québécois supports the polluter pays principle, the cornerstone of environmental policies. Quebecers should not have to bail out Canadian oil companies.

The Canada Energy Regulator's numbers do not lie. Six of the seven carbon capture and storage facilities are primarily used for enhanced oil recovery. Just one of these facilities is dedicated to permanent CO₂ sequestration.

As with any technology, this one can be used as part of a plan to reduce emissions, but it does not have to be. Experts have not proven these technologies to be effective, nor is there a consensus in the scientific community. People say that they want to make decisions based on the science, but that is not the case here. These facilities are astronomically expensive. Furthermore, there are fewer than 30 such projects around the world, and more than 80% of them are designed to help increase oil production. To put that into perspective, the International Energy Agency estimates that it would ideally take 2,000 facilities to meet the Paris targets.

As though what I just said were not enough, we must not forget the biggest risk associated with promoting these facilities, that of diverting attention away from the most important part of the collective effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve net-zero emissions. I will just mention the need to reduce sources of emissions, to affect demand, by reducing it, of course, and to promote a 100% renewable energy supply. In short, we must take the necessary action to quickly and significantly reduce emissions.

The World Health Organization has said that the climate crisis is the greatest threat to health in the 21st century. I will repeat that over and over again. That is what we should be introducing bills about.

I must admit that I am bothered by the way words are manipulated and certain phrases are repeated in press releases in an attempt to make Canadians believe that Canada is taking measures to fight climate change, when the reality is that the fossil fuel industry is guiding the actions of both the government and the official opposition.

With the ear of the official opposition, the industry set everything up so that such facilities are able to accommodate increased production at taxpayer expense. This bill is a case in point.

The government itself has been giving the industry what it wants with ongoing federal subsidies since 2015, including a 200% increase from 2019 to 2020. Subsidies also went up from 2018 to 2019, and, judging from its convention this weekend, the Liberal Party certainly does not want to reduce fossil fuel subsidies.

Private Members' Business

The Bloc Québécois stands with Canadians when proposed solutions are reasonable and transition-oriented. The Bloc Québécois will firmly and resolutely speak out against government power and public funds being used to protect private interests at the expense of the environment and climate action.

All of Canada clearly has the potential to develop renewable energy. Mixed messages and fossil fuel subsidies need to end, and climate action needs to start right now.

• (1905)

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to speak this afternoon on Bill C-262, a measure that proposes to provide tax credits for the capture, storage and use of carbon dioxide put forward by the member for Calgary Centre. Under this bill, companies that capture carbon, for instance, at a coal power plant or oil refinery would get a credit equal to the amount of carbon dioxide stored multiplied by the current carbon tax price.

Off the top, I will say that I am not against carbon capture and storage in general. Many experts, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, say that some form of carbon capture will be essential in the long run for the world to keep the global rise in temperature below 1.5° C, but the problem with carbon capture in this case is that it will almost entirely involve using that carbon dioxide storage for enhanced oil recovery. That is to say that the carbon dioxide that is captured will be stored by forcing it underground into underperforming oil wells, forcing oil to the surface that would otherwise not be recoverable.

Once again we are faced with the rather Orwellian view that we cannot fight climate change without subsidizing the oil industry. It is like the Liberal Party's line that the Trans Mountain pipeline is an essential part of a climate action plan, when it is a pipeline project designed to significantly increase oil production in Canada. We have to shake our heads because enhanced oil recovery is very profitable for the oil industry: more oil from the same well, more profits. On top of that, as I will expand on later, the oil produced through EOR will produce more carbon dioxide when it is burned than if it is stored underground to produce it. It is one step forward and two steps back.

The tax credits the bill proposes are similar to the 45Q tax credits given industry in the United States, so it is useful to look at their experience. First, I will point out that one difference between the U.S. credits and the proposal before us today is that the U.S. tax credits for carbon capture projects that do not involve enhanced oil recovery are \$50 per tonne, while those that involve enhanced oil recovery are given credits of \$35 per tonne. In Bill C-262, there is no difference for the two processes in the credits proposed.

Oil production in some parts of the U.S. oil patch have been using carbon dioxide for 50 years to get more oil out of the ground. Findings there show that these operations are carbon negative, i.e., that they store more carbon than they produce for the first few years of production, but within a few years go carbon positive. There is a good article in Vox online written by David Roberts in 2019 that I think presents all sides of the enhanced oil recovery debate very well and I will read a lengthy quote from it. It states:

...this kind of analysis depends on quantifying exactly how much new EOR oil will displace other, dirtier forms of oil — versus simply adding to the amount of oil consumed. Those kinds of predictions are notoriously dodgy; no one truly knows how much boosted oil supply from EOR might simply increase the world's oil addiction.

Until [life cycle analysis] becomes more standardized and reliable, policy crediting EOR for [carbon dioxide] reductions involves a fair amount of hope and faith.

He goes on to say:

But the core of the climate case against EOR is simple: Climate change is an emergency. We need to bury lots of carbon, but it is crazy to let the oil and gas industry set the pace and the terms. EOR under certain rarified circumstances may be carbon negative, but you know what's always carbon negative? Burying CO2 without digging up a bunch of oil to burn.

Sooner or later, we're going to have more carbon to bury than EOR can handle anyway. We're going to have to figure out how to bury it in saline aquifers. From a climate perspective, it makes sense to figure that out, and start doing it, as soon as possible.

Rather than slowly luring private capital into the enterprise by subsidizing oil and gas production—putting one foot on the accelerator and one on the brake—we should just cough up the public money necessary to do [carbon capture and storage] at scale, just like we did with public sewer systems to dispose of a different kind of waste.

Blending carbon capture and storage and enhanced oil recovery is basically another narrative that to fight climate change, we have to pump more oil out of the ground when actually that added oil will put more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere when burned than the amount put underground. Let us look at that in more detail.

• (1910)

According to the International Energy Agency and other expert analysts, between 200 and 600 kilograms of carbon dioxide is stored in enhanced oil recovery per barrel of oil produced. In Canada, an average barrel of oil produced and burned results in roughly 600 to 750 kilograms of carbon dioxide in total emissions. If we consider that, it is clear that the full life-cycle budget of carbon dioxide for enhanced oil recovery will always be negative.

There is a strong opposition in Canada to any proposal that subsidizes enhanced oil recovery. Last month, 47 groups sent an open letter to the Minister of Finance asking the government not to subsidize this technology. The groups included Environmental Defence Canada, The Council of Canadians, the Canadian Public Health Association, Canadians for Tax Fairness, Équiterre, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Amnesty International, the Wilderness Committee, the West Coast Environmental Law Association and many more.

Private Members' Business

The letter cites an analysis of the impact of enhanced oil recovery tax credits on the environment and the cost to American taxpayers. It could result in at least an additional 400,000 barrels per day of carbon dioxide enhanced oil production in the United States in 2035, which would directly lead to as much as 50.7 million metric tonnes of net carbon dioxide emissions annually, and possibly far more. The portion of the bill that benefits the oil industry could alone cost American taxpayers as much as \$2.8 billion U.S. every year.

Furthermore, the fossil fuel industry has attempted to gain the tax credit in the U.S., where 87% of the total credits claimed, amounting to nearly \$1 billion U.S., were found not to be in compliance with the Environmental Protection Agency, according to an investigation by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. Meanwhile, oil companies in the U.S. have successfully pushed back against monitoring, reporting and verification, making it impossible to know which companies have claimed credits and to what extent.

Enhanced oil recovery is obviously a benefit for the oil and gas industry. More oil means more revenue. Using captured carbon dioxide in enhanced oil recovery is indeed a way to reduce the carbon intensity of Canadian oil. It works out to about 37% per barrel. However, do we need to subsidize the oil industry to accomplish this?

If we are going to spend Canadian taxpayer dollars to incentivize carbon capture and storage, we should stick to projects that simply put carbon dioxide into the ground and store it forever. There are projects in Canada that are doing this. Norway is planning to do this on a big scale with its Northern Lights long ship project. It will provide the infrastructure to take carbon dioxide from European industrial sources and store it safely underground. When asked whether enhanced oil recovery would be a similar solution, a proponent of the Norwegian project said that enhanced oil recovery is not carbon capture and storage; it is just oil business 101.

Canada's price on carbon dioxide pollution is scheduled to rise to \$170 per tonne by 2030. With that significant price on carbon, industry will have real incentive to cut down on carbon emissions. We should not have to spend more taxpayer dollars to add to the profits of fossil fuel industries in an initiative that could easily simply delay our climate actions.

Successive federal governments have consistently failed to eliminate inefficient fossil fuel subsidies. The present government has yet to even define what an inefficient subsidy is. The proposal in the bill would be yet another taxpayer subsidy for the oil and gas industry. For that reason alone, I will not be supporting the bill.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to my friend and colleague from Calgary Centre's private member's bill, Bill C-262, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, capture and utilization or storage of greenhouse gases.

I am so curious; why do we care about human atrocities and abuses when it comes to where our coffee is sourced, but not our oil and energy? I have listened to my friends and colleagues speak about the energy sector. I thank my NDP colleague for his speech. I am a proponent of the Canadian energy sector and the oil and gas that is produced in Canada because I believe it is done in a more

environmentally friendly way than anywhere else in the world. I believe the workers in our energy sector are treated better than anywhere else in the world. I will continue to be a proponent of Canadian energy as long as I have the honour to represent the people of Regina—Lewvan because I believe that Canada and the world need more Canadian energy not less, despite what the NDP member just said.

Canada is a country where respectful laws have been enacted by the government, where human rights and dignity are enjoyed by all individuals. When oil is extracted in Canada, it removes a need for oil from other countries that have no environmental regulations and no respect for human rights. On a global scale, Canadian oil is the cleanest and most sustainably sourced oil available.

Saskatchewan is a leader in carbon capture and storage. In 2014, the Boundary dam carbon capture project located near Estevan was brought online and became the first power station in the world to successfully use carbon capture and storage, CCS, technology. My Conservative colleagues and I will continue to highlight the incredible work that is being done in our home province of Saskatchewan, as well as in the rest of Canada.

Bill C-262 would harness the ingenuity of Canadian individuals and companies. The positive economic and environmental impact will be felt for decades to come. Just one CCS project over four years would generate \$2.7 billion in GDP across Canada and support over 6,100 jobs. At a time when we are looking at economic recovery and how we can create more jobs for Canadians, this is not the only answer, but one of the answers that could be used by the government.

When the Canadian energy industry succeeds, we all stand to benefit. I believe in green innovation and in technological solutions to fight against climate change. This private member's bill does exactly that. This bill would return Canada to the international stage as a leader and innovator in GHG reduction initiatives. It will simultaneously incentivize individuals and companies to explore ways to reduce their own emissions to make everyday life more affordable. This is a made-in-Canada solution to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

Private Members' Business

This bill incentivizes investment and gives due recognition to our companies that are making an effort in caring for the environment. These companies do not need government telling them what their environmental goals and targets should be. They realize how important it is to be environmental leaders and also how it affects their bottom line when taxes come into play, like the carbon tax, clean fuel standards and other regulations. These companies are making these moves on their own because it is the right thing to do, not because they are being punished by more and more taxes by the Liberal government.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, I have had the pleasure to meet with many stakeholders from the agriculture sector. On every occasion, the individuals, companies and associations I had the opportunity to meet with were already actively engaging in modernizing and innovating. Those in the agriculture industry are working hard to come up with transformative and technological solutions. This is not, nor should it ever be, an “Ottawa knows best” approach. Individuals, provincial governments and companies are working hard on their own to create solutions. The ranchers, farmers and dairy producers know their land and are the best caretakers of their environment.

We need a government that will harness that knowledge and incentivize innovation. We need a government that will champion industry-driven solutions, a government that will use CCUS technology to lead the world without the economic burden. In other words, we need a Conservative government.

• (1915)

I am and always will be a champion and advocate for our energy sector. The carbon capture and storage of greenhouse gases will result in 30 million tonnes of CO₂ being removed from our atmosphere. The technology is effective and will lead to real world emission reduction in the short term if we embrace it. Shell Canada has analyzed its quest project on carbon capture. It is using this new technology in the province of Alberta to build and grow its energy industry.

In Saskatchewan, an estimated nine million tonnes of carbon is sequestered each year. The boundary dam project does use CCUS technology and it leads the way in expanding the measures allowing the industry to increase the number of participants in carbon capture and utilization. This will, as I said before, create jobs and have a truly meaningful impact on our climate and our environment. It will keep our air cleaner, our water fresher and our environment more pristine.

These CCUS projects demonstrate Canadian leadership in technology and put Canada in a competitive position for future CCUS investments. It also addresses a specific barrier that may be hindering the private sector investment. This is in opposition to the Liberals' carbon tax plan. We cannot afford to be a country that self-sabotages ourselves on a global scale. We all know that the Liberal government's plan is to raise the carbon tax to \$50 per tonne in 2022. By 2030, Canadians are looking at living with \$170 a tonne of carbon tax. What is the result of this? It results in penalizing innovation and uses of technology of our businesses and individuals across the country.

The Province of Manitoba's Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate, Sarah Guillemard, in a statement said:

The federal government's high carbon tax plan will penalize Manitobans for having invested billions of dollars in clean hydro-electricity. We will continue to pursue our made-in-Manitoba climate and green plan with a low, flat carbon price — not a high and rising carbon tax...

That results in companies leaving and technologies being developed in other countries. Canadians, as a result of the federal government, will continue to be left behind by higher and higher taxes on companies and these companies will continue to leave our country.

We need a government that will recognize the work that continues to be done by our agriculture and energy industries. We need a government that will recognize the efforts of our farmers who are leading the way in solutions to reduce their environmental impact. This bill would allow co-operation from those entities that are unable to capture carbon dioxide and storage. The energy industry needs the support of their federal government.

Canada should be a country that others look to for viable green energy solutions and we can be that leader again on the world stage. Canada has a science-based solution that will help meet our environmental goals, a plan that will align our industries with those of our largest trading partner.

Canada has been a leader in countless green innovation projects before. I am proud that this bill would allow us as a country to continue to do so. This bill, utilizing CCUS technology, would build on Canadian strengths, increase economic growth and job opportunities.

I am happy to second the private member's bill of my colleague, the member for Calgary Centre. I ask all my hon. colleagues to support it. When it comes down to it, Canada and the world need more Canadian energy and this is one of the bills that would lead us to be even more innovative and use technology to reach our climate goals. One thing that needs to be said is that this shows that we can incentivize people to be even more environmentally friendly. We do not need punitive taxes that make life more costly for all Canadians like the carbon tax that has been implemented by the government.

Once again, the constituents of Regina—Lewvan cannot afford \$170 carbon tax in 2030. It just makes life much too expensive.

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● (1920)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was interested in listening to my friend from Regina's comments regarding the price on pollution. I find it surprising that the Conservatives continue to oppose a policy that is viable and well-received not only in most regions of our country, but around the world. When we talk about reducing emissions, one of the issues that is raised, no matter where in the world, is the price on pollution as we see more and more countries moving toward it. However, the national Conservative Party seems to say "no", and members are consistent on that. It causes me to reflect on the Conservative annual meeting where there was a motion to recognize climate change as being real. The grassroots of the Conservative Party were not prepared to acknowledge the fact that climate change was real.

When the member spoke about his whole anti-price on pollution, I could not help but reflect on that particular motion from the Conservative membership. There is a sense that the Conservative Party leadership, and the party as a whole, is not a friend to the environment. It leaves everything to the private sector. I must say the private sector is doing quite well on its own, and the government has been supportive. In fact, our government will continue to fight climate change and support innovation.

There are many examples. The member from Regina has cited some himself, where we can make our energy sector more sustainable than ever. We have seen within the energy industry how the private sector has said that it can do better and it is striving to do better. Quite frankly, I think that we lead the world in some private sector initiatives toward innovation and ensuring that we are minimizing future emissions. I applaud them for doing that.

The Government of Canada recognizes that our role is to support and encourage. When we look at the government's climate plan, which many Liberal members of Parliament have contributed to immensely, we find that there are multiple incentives for large emitters to lower their carbon outputs. Some of those include investing literally hundreds of millions in the low-carbon and zero-emissions fuels fund to increase the production and use of low-carbon fuels. Examples include bio-crude, renewable gas, hydrogen, diesel and more fuels dealing with ethanol. They also include launching a net-zero challenge for large emitters to support Canadian industries that have responded exceptionally well in developing and implementing plans to transition their facilities to net-zero emissions, by legislation that we made reference to previously, and establishing the goal of 2050. We are asking these facilities to come up with transitional plans to achieve net-zero by 2050.

The Government of Canada has made huge investments to support decarbonization through the strategic innovation fund, again referencing the net-zero accelerator fund. We are talking about hundreds of millions going into several billion dollars over a five-year period. We recognize just how important it is to work with these large emitters and by doing that we are—

● (1925)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member's time is up, because we are at the end of Private Members' Business, but the hon. member will have five minutes left the next time this matter is before the House.

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.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

● (1930)

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, home to Canada's largest army base, it is my privilege to represent the women and men of Garrison Petawawa. My question to the Prime Minister was about providing protection from COVID-19 for soldiers being deployed overseas on Operation Reassurance. I ask the same question for soldiers deployed outside Canada on operations Impact, Naberius, Snowgoose, Driftnet, Soprano, Projection, Presence, Unifier, Jade, Proteus, Calumet, Kobold, and Neon.

Since the start of the COVID pandemic, almost 1,300 members of Canada's armed forces have contracted the virus, an infection rate that is almost double the rate among all Canadians. Soldiers are at higher risk.

The decision to deploy soldiers overseas without being vaccinated first is another bad decision by a Prime Minister with an abysmal record of making bad decisions when it comes to Canada's military. This vaccine policy failure of the Prime Minister and his government is similar to his failure to deal with sexual harassment in the military. That failure can be traced to his treatment of women, like the reporter he groped.

The subsequent order from the Prime Minister to scavenge a vaccine from the country where the soldiers are being sent is beyond outrageous. Many, if not most, of the countries where Canadian soldiers are deployed will try to obtain doses of a COVID-19 vaccine from COVAX. COVAX is the global vaccine-sharing initiative jointly coordinated by the World Health Organization, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance. Without COVAX, many of the world's poorest countries would have no vaccines at all. If the world is expected to get a handle on COVID, it will depend on a global effort to vaccinate as many willing citizens as possible.

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Canadians are embarrassed by the Prime Minister's decision to access vaccines from a program primarily designed to help developing countries. Forcing deployed military members to source medical vaccines from the local supply puts soldiers and their families at unnecessary risk.

The situation faced by our deployed soldiers was brought to my attention by the families of serving soldiers. The following letter was written to the Minister of Defence: "To whom it may concern, I thank you for your response, although, since it has taken more than two months to respond, the situation has drastically changed. Since writing to you with my concerns, my partner has spent more than half his deployment in some form of isolation as a precaution, close contact and finally, after he contracted COVID-19, along with many other CF personnel, sent to communal living during an outbreak. Your response was also not helpful in that it's a carbon copy of the information published months ago by the Department of National Defence and disseminated publicly. I am an intelligent person who can read the news. My issue is not one of being uninformed, but of bringing attention to a policy that puts our—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member's time is up, but she will have time during her rebuttal.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member opposite cited a figure for the number of cases of COVID-19 within the Canadian Armed Forces, but it is nowhere near accurate. In fact, the number of cases within the Canadian Armed Forces is much lower than the number in the general population.

• (1935)

[*Translation*]

The health and well-being of Canadian Armed Forces members have always been our top priority. That is why Canada's defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged", offers clear direction on our defence priorities over a 20-year horizon.

[*English*]

That is something no other government has done. Chapter 1 of our defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged", spells out our desire for well-supported, diverse, resilient people and families. People are at the core of everything the Canadian Armed Forces does to deliver on its mandate. That is why we are taking concrete steps to ensure the safety and well-being of our members, regardless of location.

The Canadian Armed Forces has taken unprecedented measures to protect the health and well-being of members, prevent the spread of COVID-19 and preserve the ability to conduct essential military operations at home and abroad. At the outset, National Defence quickly changed its work posture, adhering to advice from Canadian health authorities and the CAF surgeon general.

[*Translation*]

Members were instructed to work remotely, and activities were reduced to essential operations. We implemented measures to

reduce the spread of COVID-19, such as timely testing, training, quarantine requirements and contact tracing. This also includes providing the necessary personal protective equipment to our members so they could carry out their duties safely.

[*English*]

The Canadian Armed Forces is aware that some members deployed on Operation Reassurance in Latvia tested positive for COVID-19. For operational security reasons, specific numbers of affected members will not be released.

That said, we knew that we needed to move quickly on providing vaccines to our members. That is why the Canadian Armed Forces began its COVID-19 immunization campaign in January. The Canadian Armed Forces is allocating vaccines to its members according to its vaccine prioritization framework, beginning with priority group one. Vaccines are currently being prioritized toward members working with vulnerable Canadians in high-risk settings across Canada as part of Operation Laser and members who have health conditions that place them at increased risk of severe COVID-19 infection.

The CAF will receive additional doses in the coming weeks. Over the course of the next three months, we are planning to receive 150,000 doses of vaccine. We will continue to work hard to administer the vaccine to Canadian Armed Forces members posted outside of Canada.

[*Translation*]

National Defence will continue to protect the health of its members and preserve our ability to conduct operations at home and abroad.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, I will continue the letter.

"My issue is not one of being uninformed, but of bringing attention to a policy that puts our Canadian soldiers in an impossible situation of being deployed and being exposed to COVID-19 with little protection. Vaccines have been available to CF personnel serving in Canada as well as Canadian citizens for months now. I do not see the value in vaccinating soldiers at home with chronic diseases who are living and working from home in green zones, versus vaccinating the soldiers we are asking to defend our country and sending them into a known outbreak in communal living. COVID-19, as you are aware, can have serious, lifelong complications. It's my hope that none of the soldiers currently sent overseas to defend our country has to experience health issues because their government was too short-sighted to amend a policy that puts them at risk."

That is the end of the letter.

As of today, Canadian soldiers serving in Operation Reassurance have still not been vaccinated for COVID-19.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Madam Speaker, we will continue to ensure that our soldiers are supported physically and mentally and that they have access to safe, modern health facilities. Throughout this period, we have maintained health services for our brave women and men in uniform.

[*English*]

This includes mental health support services and maintaining operations for all 37 primary health care clinics for Canadian Armed Forces members. We also gradually resumed individual and group training in the summer of 2020, and this is done in the safest way for our members. Significant changes were subsequently implemented to minimize the transmission of COVID-19 as we restarted our training system. Training is critical to maintaining the operational readiness necessary to respond to national and international operations, even in a pandemic environment.

• (1940)

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal government has completely defied an order of this House, and yet again, disregarded the will of Canadians.

The House of Commons directed key players in the Prime Minister's WE scandal to testify before committee and help complete the picture as to how an organization that paid members of the Prime Minister's family half a million dollars ended up receiving half a billion dollars from the Liberals. Instead of doing what they are obligated to do, the Liberals ordered these key witnesses to stay home and disobey an order of the House. What does that say to Canadians, when their government will stop at nothing to cover up the Prime Minister's corruption? Does it increase Canadians' confidence in their governing institutions? I do not think so.

We have orders of the House of Commons that have simply been tossed aside in the name of a cover-up. It has been scandal after scandal, and the government's arrogance and contempt in response has been nothing short of astounding. Canadians deserve better. They deserve to know that their government will put their needs first and not be focused on lining the pockets of the Liberal elite. Canadians deserve to know that their institutions are secure and the rules of this place will be followed. Good, ethical governance is possible, just not under the sunny ways of this unscrupulous Prime Minister.

After witnesses were ordered to appear at the ethics committee and at the national defence committee, and the government ordered those witnesses to stay home and sent ministers in their place, who knew very little of the matter at hand and certainly were not part of the conversations that would have allowed committees to do their work, conclude their studies and report back to the House, we find ourselves in a position where the Liberals have decided that the rules do not apply to them. We heard from ministers, the government House leader and the Minister of National Defence, that min-

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isterial accountability is the rationale for this defiance of an order of the House of Commons.

However, the motion put forward by the opposition clearly allowed for ministerial accountability. It specifically listed that the Prime Minister could take that accountability in place of political staff, but the government opted not to do that, even when given the opportunity to do the right thing. Instead of having the full picture come forward to shield themselves with ministerial accountability, Liberals opted not to do that and, instead, sent in ministers who knew very little of the matter at hand.

When the government is not sending the ministerial staff responsible to the ethics committee and the national defence committee, looking to prematurely end those studies, and failing to have documents delivered to committee as ordered by this House in a timely fashion, Canadians are left to wonder what the government is so desperately trying to hide. It has dragged this scandal out through prorogation, multiple filibusters and now through this affront to an order of the House of Commons.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that the Government of Canada and the Prime Minister are not hiding anything. It is the imagination of my friend and the Conservative Party's unholy alliance, which is the best way I can describe it, between the New Democrats and the Bloc. The opposition parties said that they wanted more information, and they received a pile of information.

The government has been saying it is the ministers who are responsible for accountability. That should not be anything new to the Conservatives. I do not necessarily like to read quotes, but I will read a specific one that comes from a former Conservative government House leader, Jay Hill. On May 25, 2010, he said:

In our system of government, the powers of the Crown are exercised by ministers who are, in turn, answerable to Parliament. Ministers are individually and collectively responsible to the House of Commons for the policies, programs and activities of the government. They are supported in the exercise of their responsibilities by the public servants and by members of their office staffs.

He goes on to say, "Accordingly, responsibility for providing information to Parliament and its committees rests with [the] ministers." He is not the only Conservative who has said things of that nature.

It is amazing. When we really stop and think about it, the Standing Committee on Finance had appearances by the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister's chief of staff, the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, the former minister of finance, the Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion and the Clerk of the Privy Council. Approximately 5,000 pages of documents were provided to the finance committee back in August 2020 regarding the CSSG and WE Charity.

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That member has been charged to lead the battle to try to uncover something that is just not there. We spent literally hundreds of millions, going into the billions, of dollars of new monies to fight the pandemic and to try to deliver a team Canada approach. Some members of the opposition are actually more concerned about other things than what is on the minds of Canadians in terms of their first priorities.

This government has been transparent and accountable and is prepared to have ministers go before committees, and the member knows that. Members say that they want certain staff to appear, but that they will settle if we give them the Prime Minister. They do not need the staff if we give them the Prime Minister; they just do not want any other ministers. That is not the way the system works.

It is not just Liberals who are saying that. Past Conservatives have said that, including former prime minister Stephen Harper. It seems to me that the Conservative official opposition party is more concerned about partisan politics than it is about what is happening today in Canada and the need for us to have more focus on minimizing the negatives of the pandemic. If only its members put that same energy into that, I think—

• (1945)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary will have another minute to respond in a few minutes.

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

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, if the parliamentary secretary took a look at those Hansard excerpts he is reading, he would also find comments from the member for Papineau saying that the political staff need to testify or the member for Malpeque saying the same.

In 2015, we were promised by the Liberal government openness by default, transparency and sunlight being the best disinfectant. Never have Canadians seen a government pull the curtains faster to hide what is going on in the PMO than we have seen with the Liberal government. It really is disappointing for a number of Canadians.

It is not an inconsequential matter. On issues that matter to Canadians, they got unanimous support from all parties in the House to give financial assistance to Canadians when they needed it. When we saw half a billion dollars go to insiders who paid members of the Prime Minister's family half a million dollars, we asked tough questions. What are they trying to hide?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is just not true. I spoke earlier today on Bill C-14. Bill C-14 is all about providing direct financial support to Canadians. The Conservatives continue to play their games in regards to that. As a government in a minority situation, we need the opposition to at least play ball at times to allow us to get this important legislation passed so that we can directly support Canadians.

I think that the Conservatives have kind of hoodwinked the other opposition parties to buy into the need to search under every rock they can find to see how they can paint some scary scenario of corruption when the corruption is just not there. I would recommend

that if my Conservative friends spent just as much time and focus on minimizing the coronavirus, and showed their actions in doing that, they would be farther ahead.

• (1950)

HEALTH

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, on February 16 of this year, I requested that the government provide the data used to support its public policy decisions regarding its failed pandemic response and its plan for recovery. This data is either being intentionally hidden or it is not available because the government failed to collect it.

No one expected perfection in this kind of situation, but we all expected better. The lack of data might explain the government's erratic and incoherent response to this pandemic. It is failing in everything from travel screening and rapid testing, to vaccine procurement and vaccine rollout and lockdowns, all of which continue to plague our country's ability to recover. Strangely, Canada was not even ready for the pandemic. Besides missing information and outdated IT systems, our strategic stockpiles of PPE and other supplies had been destroyed or given away, and our Global Public Health Intelligence Network's early warning system had been disabled.

Many are asking if better was possible. Yes, it was and it is. Experts have told us that Canada had emergency pandemic plans at the ready. In fact, Canada, along with the World Health Organization, had laid out recommendations from clear lessons learned from SARS. Canada even created the Public Health Agency in response to SARS, so it seems impossible to fathom that the organization specifically created to respond to a SARS crisis had no planning or preparation for a SARS-like crisis. Where is that previously developed plan? Canadians understand that not every decision is perfect, but they deserve to know what the plan was and why it changed. What information was used to make the decision to deviate from those emergency plans?

Plans are essential, not only for providing a step-by-step process but to provide reassurance, allow for proper allocation of resources and empower people to be part of the solution. To be clear, staying at home is not a plan. Daily infection rates and death counts are not a plan.

All emergency management pandemic plans have four basic and clear goals: one, control the spread to reduce illness and death; two, minimize societal disruptions; three, minimize economic impacts; and four, support the efficient use of resources. This government has failed Canadians on all four of these goals. Canada acted slowly to limit the spread and has failed repeatedly to minimize it, and still there is no plan. Liberal failures have created societal disruptions that are unprecedented. Jobs, livelihoods, businesses, homes, families and lives have all been lost or destroyed. These losses cannot be easily replaced by government cheques and empty platitudes, and still there is no plan.

Economic impacts on Canada are huge and much worse than on many peer countries. Our economy is teetering as a result of Liberal failures. Canada has massive job losses, high unemployment and the highest per capita spending during this crisis, yet it has little or nothing to show for it, and still there is no plan. The Liberals have also failed Canadians on the effective use of resources as we have lacked access consistently. Vaccines are an example of this, and still there is no plan.

All of these impacts will last for generations. The mental health impacts, business losses and job losses will have long-term consequences. Canadians are rightly questioning the Minister of Health and her government's decisions, and are realizing that the Liberal government has no clear plan for recovery.

The question to the minister is this: Where is the data used to support the government's public policy decisions, and what is the plan for recovery?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is pretty sad, in this country, in a pandemic, when partisanship takes over the clear public health measures that have been taken from day one. The fact is that the members opposite really have nothing of substance to talk about themselves or ideas that could actually help Canadians get through this pandemic. They make up things that are simply untrue.

From day one, our government has taken action to work with all Canadians and with provincial and territorial governments to deal with this pandemic: early on with acquiring PPE or rapid tests, and then throughout the procurement of vaccines that are now rolling out.

The Conservatives continue to raise this issue that there is no plan, when in fact the plan has been outlined from the beginning. The Conservatives cannot stand the fact that we are moving ahead during this pandemic. They seem to not be able to grasp the plan because they do not have a basic understanding and support of science. Through the science, evidence and data are collected. With this virus, as new things are learned, that requires a re-examination of the data and adjusting accordingly. That is something we have done every step of the way, based on the evidence and advice of public health officials.

I want to remind the House that it was Conservatives who, just a few weeks ago, were saying that provincial and territorial governments should ignore the public health officials and just open up. Now we are seeing a third wave. In my home province of Ontario, we are seeing places like the SickKids hospital preparing for

COVID patients because we are running out of room with ICU beds.

The federal government has been there to help support provinces in the delivery of health care. If the Conservatives had their way, they would just pretend the virus did not exist, and we would see more and more Canadians die.

If the member opposite would like data and epidemiological reports, he need look no further than the Public Health Agency of Canada website. There have been enormous amounts of data about tests performed, positivity rates, rates of intensive care usage and so forth, which is all part of the larger plan, reaction and support from the federal government.

If the member opposite would like data around lockdown decisions, as he well knows, those are decisions that are made at the provincial and territorial level. However, we continue to support what provincial and territorial leaders need to keep their citizens safe.

In terms of data, there have also been thousands of pages produced to various committees, as well as sitting sessions and members of the government and ministers being available to answer questions.

Just to conclude on this point, the data exists and is readily available. The Conservatives just need to look at it and understand science and the evolution of this data, and the outcomes that come from it.

• (1955)

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my friend on her recent appointment as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health. Good for her.

The reason Canadians, and not only Conservatives, cannot grasp the plan is that there really is not one. The fact remains that the government seems incapable of being honest and clear with Canadians. It appears unable to deliver a plan or even targeted guidelines for when Canadians can expect things to return to some semblance of normal.

Canada's failed pandemic response was perhaps all the Liberals could manage, but it is not what Canadians needed or expected. By ignoring emergency management pandemic plans and following failed lockdown responses, the Liberals have caused massive collateral damage in terms of deaths and long-term effects on our population, collateral damage largely ignored by the mainstream media.

Adjournment Proceedings

The government's lack of leadership has undermined the trust Canadians require in times of crisis. The government needs to be honest with Canadians about what the pandemic plans were before the pandemic, why those plans were abandoned, and what information is still missing in order to make appropriate recovery decisions moving forward.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, that is the point. The government has relied on the best available science and data. We cannot just transmit one plan to the next. We have to be able to adjust based on, in this case, the virus to ensure that the plan and the process that we are moving forward with is the most relevant to the pandemic with which we are dealing. That is why relying on the best science, the best data and listening to experts is the best ap-

proach for Canadians. As a result, we have seen jurisdictions adjust accordingly. We are always going to rely on evidence, science and innovation and techniques of data collection, which is going to help get us out of this pandemic.

• (2000)

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 8:01 p.m.)

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