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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 26, 2021

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

• (1105)

[*English*]

ORDER PAPER

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that, in accordance with representation made by the government pursuant to Standing Order 55(1), I have caused to be published a Special Order Paper giving notice of a government bill and government motion.

[*Translation*]

I therefore lay the relevant document upon the table.

It being 11:03 a.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S ACT

Mr. Simon Marcil (Mirabel, BQ) moved that Bill C-271, An Act to amend the Governor General's Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill that I have the honour of introducing in the House is not complicated and the reasoning behind it is quite simple. If Canada wants to keep its monarchist symbols, then it should only pay them a symbolic salary.

It seems to me that one dollar per year to live in a castle, eat like a king, sit on a throne and travel at the taxpayer's expense is enough to make ends meet, particularly when there are no other bills to pay.

The ideal scenario would be to have no monarchy at all. If we are all equal, then I think that the concept of being the humble subjects of Her Majesty the Queen no longer has its place today. However, in order to make that change, we would have to reopen the Constitution, which the Liberals have locked up tight over the years. Since Canada is not going to separate from the British monarchy any time soon and since Quebec will likely be independent before that happens, we could at least make the symbolic nature of that relationship more clear.

Under the Governor General's Act, the position comes with an annual salary of \$270,602, which is indexed as of 2014, meaning that salary could go up to roughly \$300,000. It also includes a pension for life afterwards, regardless of the length of the term. That is a lot of money to most people. This means that Ms. Payette, who served in the role for only a short time, will get a pension for life and will be reimbursed for all her expenses. This is like winning the cash-for-life lottery.

Ms. Payette, who was not a good boss, began her reign of terror at Rideau Hall after being appointed in 2017. According to a recent investigation report on the terrible work environment, witnesses reported yelling and screaming, aggressive behaviour, degrading comments and public humiliation. I think we would all agree that such behaviour should not be rewarded with a life-long pension.

Adrienne Clarkson, who was governor general from 1999 to 2005, has claimed over \$1 million in expenses since her departure, in addition to her full pension. The reason given, according to a La Presse article from October 31, 2018, deserves a long, hard look. Here is what it said:

Besides their pensions, former governors general get lifetime public funding for office and travel expenses through a program that has existed since 1979, on the premise that governors general never truly retire.

Oh, sure, governors general never truly retire. No doubt their schedules are packed after retirement because, as we all know, everybody wants a chance to see these superstars, these former governors general of Canada. Seriously. Nobody even knows the point of their existence while they are in office. Are we supposed to believe they serve an even greater purpose after their term in office?

Michaëlle Jean found another job, and it is a real job that does not involve speechifying while going ballistic about a lack of hot water in a hotel.

Other than acting like monarchs and pretending they have any political importance whatsoever, governors general play a purely symbolic role, so the Bloc Québécois suggests that they receive a symbolic salary of \$1 per year. They do not need more than that anyway. Our proposal is actually moderate considering that Quebeckers want to get rid of the monarchy altogether.

Even Canadians are waking up to the fact that the monarchy is pointless. According to a Leger poll, 74% of Quebeckers want to abolish the monarchy and just 12% want to keep it. That means 88% of Quebeckers feel zero attachment to this symbol of submission. According to another survey published in La Presse, three out of five Canadians want to abolish the position of governor general or at least scale back the responsibilities associated with it.

Private Members' Business

What responsibilities are we talking about? All a governor general has to do is sit down, listen to speeches, receive the prime minister when he announces an election, and assent to legislation that does not even concern the Crown. This ridiculous protocol that is out of step with reality could even seem amusing if it were not that we pay for all the pomp and ceremony.

This position is far from being symbolic because there is a lot of money, \$67 million a year, allocated for an unelected official whose main role is to remind us that we are humble subjects of the British Crown. That is the price tag of our relationship with the Crown, which comes out to \$2 per person. We pay \$2 to kneel before the monarchy. If we could cut this absurd expense a bit, it would be better than nothing. We could at least do something useful.

In the government's recent budget, \$50 million is allocated to the forest bioeconomy over two years. The annual amount of \$25 million for forestry is a little more than a third of what goes out for the monarchy. That is rather ridiculous.

The government is investing \$25 million a year in the forestry sector and gives \$67 million for the Governor General. The forest is a powerful symbol. It is rather current and represents the future. The forest and the wood it provides allows us to create nice things, more than the monarchy does.

Speaking of symbol and speaking of the forest, there is also the symbol of the maple leaf. It is a symbol that Canada stole from Quebec because there are hardly any sugar maples in the rest of Canada. Imagine if the Quebec flag bore a symbol representing oil. That would make no sense. Anyway, it is not the only thing Canada has ever stolen.

Some \$67 million annually is allocated to the Crown. How much money has been allocated to our sugar shacks, which have lost two seasons to the pandemic? Not one cent has been allocated to save the symbolic maple leaf. The money that should be going to our sugar shacks goes to the British Crown instead because there is always enough money for that.

We have a good, real opportunity here to clean up these completely ridiculous expenses for an outdated and unequal position. It is completely arbitrary. The governor general resigned and no one else has been appointed. The chief justice of the Supreme Court inherited the Crown.

If ever there was a time to reflect on whether we need a governor general, now would be the time. Nothing has changed. No one seems bothered. There has been no revolution and people are not protesting in the streets demanding that a new governor general be appointed quickly, since no one wants that. Because it would take a constitutional amendment to get rid of the position of governor general, we can at least remove some of the benefits by paying a symbolic salary with no pension. That is what I am proposing in my bill. I would propose getting rid of the position altogether, erasing any reference to the monarchy, cutting wasteful spending, like the little prince and princess did when they went to live in California. They were able to cut ties, and I do not see why we could not do the same. The Constitution does not allow us to do so, and that is a problem.

I went into politics because I believe in Quebec. I believe in its independence. I advocate for its independence, and I will be there the day it becomes independent. I believe in a francophone Quebec that is free and that has no king or queen. The British monarchy and Canada's attachment to it also serve as a reminder of the conquest. The symbol that Canada is so fond of is the symbol of the British victory over the French. The song *God Save the Queen* and the unicorn on the coat of arms are symbols that mean very little to me. Perhaps they are a nice symbol for Canada and many members of the House, but for me and many of my colleagues, it is a symbol of colonization and stolen land.

Without the monarchy, there is only one true master and that is the people. We will never be a real and complete democracy as long as the people have to ask the royal representative whether they can vote, to recognize the validity of the results and to sanction our laws. Some members will say that the role is strictly symbolic. If that is the case, then they should vote in favour of my bill.

Barbados cut ties with the British Crown, but it is still the kingdom of tax havens. Australia is still thinking it over. Canada seems unable to do it, but we have an opportunity to send a clear signal. If we do not do it, we will miss an excellent opportunity. A vacancy in the position of governor general does not come along every day. Let us take advantage of it and cut these extravagant expenses.

Before I wrap up my speech, I want to say that this will probably be my last speech in the House of Commons. Against all odds, I was elected in 2015 thanks to voters who care about Quebec. It has been an honour to serve my country, Quebec, as the representative of a patriotic riding. It is an honour I will cherish for the rest of my life.

I want to thank my wife, Johanie, who has made many sacrifices because she knows our cause is just. I am grateful for her tireless support, and I want her to know that I love her. I also want to thank my children and tell them that this is the last time. From now on, I will be home for good.

• (1110)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I applauded the member for his words at the end. That is very touching, and I can see the emotion in him delivering that. It is definitely difficult on personal lives and families, being here. A decision to spend more time with family truly is an important one to make, and I applaud the member for that.

In regard to his speech and his intervention today, when he talks about removing these benefits from the Governor General, would he be suggesting that be done from this point forward, or is that retroactive? If so, would it be retroactive just to the past Governor General, or all Governors General past? I am just curious, if the member can expand on that.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

Mr. Simon Marcil: Madam Speaker, Bill C-271 calls for this to apply in the future because the Governor General's Act already exists and is established law. I therefore hope this can be done for the future.

As for the former governor general, the problem is that the institution itself is so flawed. Funding is being used to support an archaic institution. If I had my druthers, not one red cent would ever have been given to the British Crown, but that is what the bill calls for going forward. From this point on, governors general would no longer receive a salary or a pension. Some former governors general have won the jackpot.

• (1115)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it comes as no surprise that the Bloc Québécois wants to destroy our Canadian democratic system.

I understand that the Bloc does not like Julie Payette, but does the member not think that an excellent candidate, like the Right Honourable David Johnston, who worked hard and did a great job, deserves an annual salary of more than \$1?

Mr. Simon Marcil: Madam Speaker, anyone working for the British Crown should not receive a salary. The British Crown should not even be represented here. It does not matter whether the former governor general did a good or bad job. In my opinion, the position is obsolete.

The member said that the Bloc Québécois wants to destroy the democratic system. That is not true. Quebec is a great democracy. Quebec will be a great democratic country and not a constitutional monarchy.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his great and memorable speech.

The position of governor general also entails swearing-in ceremonies and related costs, as well as unjustified expenses, as you explained earlier.

Why grant so many powers that end up making the country dysfunctional?

I would like my colleague from Mirabel to elaborate on that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the hon. member to address her questions and comments to the Chair and not directly to the member.

The hon. member for Mirabel.

Mr. Simon Marcil: Madam Speaker, Julie Payette's swearing-in ceremony cost \$625,000. That is more than the cost of a house and it was paid for by taxpayers. Should we be paying for fancy trappings, caviar and limousine rides? I think that is pointless.

It was said that there was no partisanship in the case of David Johnston. However, we must not forget that he was on the “No” side in 1995 when the referendum was stolen from us. It is not a useful position and it serves no purpose. We must stop paying for that.

[English]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for Mirabel for bringing forward this legislation. Of course, as was articulated just before he finished his speech, that very well could have been his last speech in the House, so I would like to congratulate him for his time and his service on behalf of his constituents and, indeed, his family for the sacrifices they have made to allow him to be in this place.

This private member's bill, Bill C-271, an act to amend the Governor General's Act, really deals with the constitutional monarchy and the traditions we have in this country. Let me start by recognizing the important role that our monarchy has played in our history, including our democratic functions here in the House and across the board. I am going to take a different tack with a type of appreciation for our shared history. That is not to say that the member does not have his own points and values on this, but I hope that by the end of my 10 minutes he might come to appreciate that there is an important role for the governor general's office and for our shared ties to the United Kingdom.

I recently had a conversation with a constituent of mine, Sir Graham Day. For my colleagues who may not know, he is an excellent Canadian. He has served on many corporate boards, has had a lot of leadership roles in the charitable non-profit sector and was the last Canadian ever knighted for his service to two different United Kingdom governments during the 1970s and 1980s. We had a conversation at his house and talked about the important role the governor general plays.

As the member opposite for Mirabel mentioned, sometimes Canadians see the role that the governor general's office plays as being simply symbolic. I would admit that this role over time has become more symbolic, but it still has important underpinnings for our democracy. I will get to those in a moment. In my conversation with Sir Graham Day, we talked about the important role that this office plays and what it means to Canadian democracy.

I would also highlight conversations I have had with the hon. member for Sydney—Victoria, the first Mi'kmaq parliamentarian in the House. He talks about the importance of the role of the Crown and of the treaties established across the country. These all tie back to the United Kingdom and, in some cases, predate Canadian Confederation.

While the member opposite suggests that this role is symbolic or does not necessarily resonate across the country, I disagree. This is the foundation of how our country came to be. It is our shared history, both with its bright points and darker points. Hopefully, my colleagues will agree that if we come from the premise that the ties we share with the Commonwealth and with the British Crown are important for our country, then so is the role of the governor general.

Private Members' Business

My concern with the private member's bill that has been put forward is that it seems to erode the importance of that role. I will get to that in a moment, but the suggestion is that this role is worth \$1 per year. That is the crux of it. Of course, it is not surprising. The member spoke quite passionately as someone who wants Quebec to be an independent country, and sees this as problematic. I do not. That is not to say that there should not be a conversation around remuneration, or about how perhaps the governor general's office could be reformed. However, the role is not just symbolic. It has legitimate purposes in Canadian society. The suggestion that the role is worth \$1 a year is tantamount to saying that it is not important, which I would disagree with.

I want to talk about the role today. Canadians watching at home need to understand exactly how the governor general's office is remunerated. My hon. colleague touched on this to a certain extent. Under the Governor General's Act, it is about \$270,000 a year, indexed for inflation. As I understand it, that means the governor general receives about \$330,000 a year in base salary, with a pension indexed to inflation of about \$150,000 a year and, of course, expense accounts that are at the discretion of the office of the secretary to the governor general. That is the remuneration offered to the individual we choose to place our faith in as the governor general.

• (1120)

Do I think the role is worth \$1? No. Does it need to be exactly what I just outlined? Not necessarily. We can have conversations around that, because it comes down to the types of individuals we want to draw into this profession: this public service to our country. I am not sure we cannot find quality individuals who would take on this role and its functions in earnest for less than \$330,000, with perhaps not the same type of pension. Perhaps an expense account is not needed at this time, although it has been provided in the past as a benefit to governors general.

I jumped at the opportunity to speak to this piece of legislation because when Ms. Payette, the outgoing governor general, resigned, I got a lot of calls in my constituency. Kings—Hants can be described generally as blue-collar. The median income in my riding is probably on the second half of the 338 ridings across the country. For individuals living paycheque to paycheque, or seniors who do not have a lot of money at the end of the month, the type of behaviour that was reported did not warrant a \$150,000 annuity pension for the rest of Mme. Payette's life. Constituents certainly raised it with me. I generally countered on the phone that I appreciated where constituents were coming from and that we had to understand that this role is important, but maybe there were ways we could reform it.

This remuneration to the governor general is on par with other jurisdictions in our Commonwealth, such as Australia and New Zealand. As a parliamentarian, I believe this role is not just symbolic. If we have a hung Parliament, the governor general has to decide who has the ability to govern. Yes, conventions help to dictate that, but it comes down to an individual. If the prime minister walks over to the governor general's office and asks for an election or to dissolve Parliament, that is something an individual has to decide. A constitutional role comes into play.

My hon. colleague did not really touch on the separation between the head of state and the government. That is unique in our Commonwealth and has served us very well. Although the governor general's role includes a lot of dialogue, engagement and events with Canadians, it serves a serious function that warrants serious and thoughtful consideration about how we make decisions, in terms of the legislation that is being proposed.

As a parliamentarian, I would propose that we look at reform, rather than abolishing the role or giving it a symbolic salary, which is a slap in the face to the role the British monarchy has played in the history of this country. We can look at getting rid of things such as the expense account. I do not know if average Canadians deem that as important, but I would agree with them. We could look at what is an equitable salary to attract individuals of character and integrity who could serve the office well. Perhaps it would be at the current amount, or perhaps that could or should be reviewed over time.

I compare this with the Senate. I do not want to speak for all of my colleagues in the House, but generally the position of the New Democratic Party has been that we should abolish the Senate because it does not play an important role, despite the fact that it is the chamber for sober second thought. It certainly plays an important role in regionalism: for Nova Scotia and the Maritimes, the Senate plays an important role in regional representation. The government went about reforming the Senate in a way that makes it more functional. I do not want to speak for all parliamentarians, but I think it has created intrinsic benefits.

It would be beneficial to apply this same type of thinking to how we can make changes and reform the governor general's office and the act. The intent of the hon. member for Mirabel is perhaps good, but I am not sure the mechanism is the right piece to move forward.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-271, which seeks to amend the Governor General's Act.

The Bloc Québécois member wants the Governor General to be paid an annual salary of \$1 and not be entitled to a pension. I cannot support that.

[*English*]

The more important question regarding the Governor General is why this bill has even been brought forward, and it is clear to me the reason is that Canadians are angry. They are angry the Prime Minister failed to vet Julie Payette. He failed to follow what had been done in previous parliaments, which was to have a committee that selected and vetted the candidates, so we could be sure the candidate for Governor General was actually able to perform the duty well.

Private Members' Business

There was plenty of evidence that Julie Payette was not going to meet that criteria, just from the stories of what was happening from the United States and her previous places of employment, where there were clearly issues similar to the harassment allegations that were brought forward when she was here. The Prime Minister totally failed to vet her, and so Canadians are rightly angry.

I see now that going forward the government has recognized that we do need to have a selection committee. Even though it has a selection committee of the Prime Minister's Liberal friends, at least it is a committee that will vet the candidate, which is important.

The other thing that is clear is that the Prime Minister failed to quickly respond to the allegations of serious harassment that were being made from the time the Governor General was put in place. This behaviour was allowed to go on for years before it was finally addressed. I am not surprised to see that. I am currently at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women studying the sexual misconduct in the military, where, for three years, the Minister of National Defence took no action on allegations against General Vance and many of the other sexual misconduct allegations.

It is a chronic behaviour, a failure to act, on the part of the Liberal government. Obviously, when it comes to issues of employee performance, there is a documentation process that is usually put in place so one does not have employees who have been a disaster leave the position and receive a pension of \$150,000 a year and expenses of \$200,000 at the discretion of the government. That is another failure, and Canadians are rightly outraged about that.

That said, the Governor General's role is an important role. I have attended many of the honouring ceremonies at Rideau Hall, where the Order of Canada is presented, as well as many of the recognitions for excellence in arts and science and the number of the medals of honour that are presented. To recognize excellence in our country is something that is important to Canadians. It is also important to have that role represent our monarchy.

Although the Bloc member who spoke earlier is not a fan of the Queen, there are many in Canada who love being part of the Commonwealth, love the Queen and love being part of an institution that has, as the previous speaker pointed out, been essential in the treaties that have been put in place in many of the systems of our democracy that exist.

When it comes to picking a future Governor General, I would really hope the Prime Minister's committee would consider that the Governor General is here to represent the Queen within Canada. The Queen is the head of the Church of England. It was an absolute affront that the previous Governor General mocked Canadians who believe in God, when she is supposed to be representing the Queen, who is the head of the Church of England. I would hope that, when vetting the next candidate, due consideration is given to a person who can at least respect and represent our monarchy here in Canada.

In terms of salary, we want to attract an excellent candidate, and a dollar is actually rather insulting for the amount of time the Governor General is required to attend various events, such as the honours I mentioned, and in light of the fact we want somebody who can represent Canada and represent us to the world. It is a very im-

portant role, and to get that kind of candidate, we need to have a salary that is commensurate with that.

• (1130)

I understand that the salary of \$330,000 is what is currently merited. I think that is open to discussion, as the previous member said, but certainly a dollar is far too low for the kind of candidate that we would want. I will also note that the salary is commensurate with other Commonwealth places such as Australia and New Zealand, so it is in line with that.

In terms of the pension, it is good to have a discussion about pensions. I find that often in government pensions are not commensurate with the private sector. It would not be acceptable in the private sector, after working for five years, to get a pension of \$150,000 a year. That would be outrageous. This is something worthy of consideration.

At the same time, in order to attract a good candidate, the salary has to be high. I know there are a lot of discussions about even MPs should not be receiving a pension, but on the other hand, many people taking this position are taking a salary cut in order to serve the public. There is that to consider, and I certainly would be open to discussions about what should happen there. To me, a full pension of \$150,000 a year after being in any role for five years is really excessive.

In terms of the expense account, it depends what Canadians want the Governor General to do once the Governor General is out of that role. There are some examples where they have taken up charitable causes, but should the taxpayer really be funding that desire of a person to have a charitable cause? As was rightly pointed out, Adrienne Clarkson did spend a million dollars of taxpayer money. There is not a lot of auditing of what is in that expenditure. Canadians have clearly expressed that they are not really willing to continue the pomp and splendour of the Governor General after they have left their position. That should be a consideration when the government considers what it is going to give.

I would say that a better bill would be Senator Claude Carignan's bill, Bill S-232, which is hoping to be before the Senate. It has been presented, but with the pandemic, the Senate is consumed with government bills and is not able to pay as much attention to Senate Private Members' Business.

That bill says that if the Governor General leaves their position before their term is done for any reason other than a medical reason, that person would not then be eligible for pension or for the expenses that are at the discretion of the government. That is a very good bill because it would correct things going forward to make sure that people serve their role, and if they do, then they receive what is due. However, if the same thing happened that happened with Julie Payette, that person would not be eligible for pension or expenses. In fact, if that went into law, it would not take away the money she has received to date, but it would take away any money in the future.

Private Members' Business

That is a very good bill brought forward by the senator. Hopefully, we will see the discussion and debate in the Senate, and then it will make its way over to this place, so we could have a discussion. That is where Canadians are. They realize the Governor General's position is important and that it is worthy of pay and worthy of some remuneration, but not in a situation where the Governor General leaves in disgrace and the person is equally meriting that compensation.

For those who may not be aware, there is a petition my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable has put forward, e-petition 3314. It essentially does what Senator Carignan's bill is asking for. It calls on the government to implement the new requirement that, if one does not serve their full five years and leaves for reasons other than medical, they would not receive a pension and would not be eligible for the expenses. I encourage everyone to sign that petition.

I am very happy to have been able to speak today about the value of the role of Governor General and to give honour to the many who have served well in that role, such as the Right Hon. David Johnston.

• (1135)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, as always, it is a great honour to rise and speak in the House.

The discussion regarding the Governor General could have been such an important one for Parliament. Certainly, things went terribly wrong with Madam Julie Payette. The issues of the toxic work environment, the harassment and the incredible amount of financial funding she will be receiving from the taxpayers for the rest of her life are legitimate discussions.

I think there is also a legitimate discussion to have about Canada's role with the monarchy. That would be a very good discussion, but we are not having that discussion because we are dealing with a bill that is essentially a stunt. It is really unfortunate. This is the member's last speech in the House, and he decided that he wanted it to be a stunt. He is treating the Governor General's office as though he has watched too many Disney cartoons and it has the coachmen, the horses and all of that. That is not the reality we are talking about. We are talking about an institution that has a specific role to play within the constitution of Canada. I would like to speak to that this morning.

I come from a long line of people who are very opposed to the monarchy in Canada. I am proud that I grew up in a family that has deep reservations about Canada's ties to it. I think a conversation about the monarchy is a very fair conversation. However, it does not mean the role of the Governor General is not an important position.

We recognize the Governor General's role of separating the Prime Minister from the notion of the Crown, however we conceive of the Crown, is an important division of powers. It is very important, and it distinguishes us from how the United States is set up. I think it can serve us well. The issue with Madam Payette is that obviously things went very wrong. This is a woman of extraordinary abilities and skills, but the vetting process was not done properly.

I disagree with my colleague in the Conservative Party that the Governor General is here to represent the Queen, who is the head of the Anglican church in England. That is fine for the U.K. I do not care what the Queen represents over there. I do not care what its church and state relations are. For me, one of the roles of the Governor General is to represent Canada on the international stage and to be a voice as our head of state in a symbolic manner. We have to very wisely and carefully choose people who reflect and understand the diversity of the country.

In defence of Madam Payette, I saw her speak on the international stage, and she was extraordinary. The 75th anniversary of the landings at Normandy was a very powerful time because the international community was gathered there. When we were in Europe, in the French and German media, there was definitely a big question about what the future of the alliance that freed Europe in 1944 and 1945 would be. This was with Brexit and Boris Johnson pulling the U.K. out of Europe. At that time we also had Donald Trump and the scene that America was walking away. There were a lot of questions when we were over in Normandy about what the vision would be for a unified common front to address our issues.

Madam Payette gave a speech that was extraordinary. I think it really moved people from the international community, and certainly the people of Normandy. She talked about what enormous sacrifices it took to build the post-war order of peace and the number of deaths and the amount of suffering the Second World War entailed to get us to a place where we understood that international norms and standards had to be the code. She also talked about how easy it would be to let that all slip away.

I mention that because it is worth recognizing that Madam Payette brought enormous skills to her capacity as Governor General. Her problem was the toxic work environment, the abuse of staff and the harassment. There are many famous and powerful people who treat staff in a brutal and unacceptable manner. We have the #MeToo movement because of it. In 2021, it is very important to say, and it does not matter how talented public officials are or what role they serve, that the issue of toxic work environments needs to be addressed.

• (1140)

Out of what happened with Madam Payette, I was hoping we would have heard the government lay down some ground rules for how we would deal with the Governor General, and that has not happened. I was hoping that the government would lay down some ground rules for proper vetting, to make sure that we are never in this situation again.

It raises a serious question, in terms of the remuneration that Madam Payette is going to receive, in terms of a pension for life and an expense account for life. My belief is that if someone left their post because they failed in the obligations they had, they should not be in a position to simply expect a cheque for life. To me, that is a breach with the Canadian people and the trust that the Canadian people put into this.

Private Members' Business

Canadian people do not pay much attention to the salary, pension and expenses of the Governor General because we assume that they are going to do the right thing. The right thing in this situation is that Madam Payette was forced to step down because of the toxic work environment that happened on her watch, and she was not eligible. We could have had that discussion today, but we did not. That is unfortunate. A bill in the House to talk about the terms that we sign a Governor General up for would be very helpful and positive, and would reassure the public.

In 1999, I followed the Queen on a national tour working as a journalist, and as I said, I come from a long line of Scottish anti-monarchists. One of the issues that really struck me was that the Queen worked very hard. Another one of the things that really struck me was the relationship that indigenous people in Canada had with the notion of the Crown and the Queen.

We have historic connections with the U.K. We could choose to change those arrangements, and that is perfectly within our rights. We could modernize them, and that is perfectly within our rights. We could have better systems of accountability, and that is something we are obligated to do. However, I do not think it helps to treat this as some kind of stunt and say that we are going to just pay the Governor General \$1. Maybe the Bloc is perfectly fine with billionaires like Galen Weston being able to step up, but if we are going to have a Governor General, they have to be paid and they have to be paid a pension, because they have changed their lives, representing Canada. They can never just go back to being who they were.

This idea of paying them \$1 is a joke. It is not serious. It is why I do not take this bill seriously. I am not going to spend much more time talking about it, because I think it is a waste of parliamentary effort.

I do want to say that it is really unfortunate that the member referred to Madam Payette as the “little lady”. These are forms of degrading women in public life that have no place. She has certainly done a hell of a lot more in her life than the member opposite.

Whether we agree with the Governor General or not, whether we have problems with how the Governor General operated, it is about showing respect. As I said, I come from a long line of anti-monarchists, but I show respect for the institution because it is the institution we have. The voters sent me here to work within the institutions we have, to build them up or to change them. Changing some of those institutions is much the work of Parliament right now. This bill, unfortunately, is not.

If there had been changes to the bill, if the bill had been about the vetting process, the pension or expenses, I would certainly have been more than willing to support it going forward. At this point, I see this bill as little more than a publicity stunt.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened to the comments of my colleagues from the other parties about the bill introduced by my colleague from Mirabel. I must say that I was disappointed, but not necessarily surprised.

The purpose of Bill C-271 is to amend the Governor General's Act to primarily do two things. The first is to set the annual salary of the Queen's representative at \$1. If this could be done for the Queen, that might not be a bad idea either. The second is to repeal part II of the act in order to remove the Governor General's right to a retiring annuity.

The role of the Governor General is to represent Queen Elizabeth II, Canada's sovereign and head of state. We have to wonder if we really need that. We already know that the answer is no, but for now we are stuck with it.

Some will say that we absolutely do need a governor general and that they will lose sleep if we do not have one. I do not get it at all, because I do not know many people in Quebec who think about the Governor General on a daily basis other than to rage about how much it all costs.

The Governor General is appointed by the Prime Minister. However, they say there is a separation of powers. In general, prime ministerial appointments are somewhat political because prime ministers do not appoint their adversaries. In any event, that is what happened in the past. The people who were appointed were highly partisan, highly federalist types, people who had chaired the “No” campaign during the referendum, including David Johnston and Lise Thibault. So much for being a non-partisan position. The facts show that that is not really the case.

When an individual is appointed by the Prime Minister, they are somewhat beholden to the Prime Minister. They cannot forget that it is thanks to the Prime Minister that they have a fat pension and a big salary. In return, that person tries not to make any trouble for the Prime Minister.

Unfortunately, even if the Governor General wanted to cause trouble, they do not have much power. On paper, the Governor General's roles are to serve as commander-in-chief of the army, grant royal assent to acts passed by the House of Commons and the Senate, sign official documents, read the throne speech, swear the Prime Minister, the chief justice of Canada and cabinet ministers into office, and appoint lieutenant governors, who represent the Queen in the provinces and Quebec.

I do not see why all of these roles are so important or why they should be played by the Governor General. We can get back to this later.

Julie Payette was asked whether her position was relevant. Curiously enough, she, the Governor General, was unable to justify the existence of her own job. When she was asked this question in 2013, she responded that she did not think it was appropriate for her to answer the question. Essentially, she was so uncomfortable saying that this position she held was pointless that she evaded the question.

Private Members' Business

The Governor General receives an annual salary of over \$270,000, which is a lot of money, plus an expense account. However, that is not all. There is also a pension of \$150,000 a year for life. Furthermore, the role of the Governor General is not limited to the person of the Governor General. There is a whole support team. Royal duties come with plenty of royal pageantry. The Governor General's ostentatious swearing-in ceremony can cost millions of dollars. Receptions are held at the drop of a hat and, obviously, the Governor General is not serving guests Kraft Dinner and hot dogs, but food that is probably a lot more sophisticated and costly.

The Governor General also gets a limousine and an official residence. The Queen's representative needs somewhere to live, but not just any place. It has to be a royal residence. The Governor General's residence is costing us a lot of money in upkeep. The government has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars, sometimes more, in maintaining it. The Governor General also goes to lots of cocktail parties here, there and everywhere, so they need a car or even a plane for transportation. Since Canada is a big country, sometimes the Governor General has to travel long distances.

• (1150)

All that ends up costing a bundle. In addition, the Governor General also needs security guards. Money is being spent all over the place. For fiscal year 2019-20, which was a normal year, the operating costs amounted to \$34 million, and that was for a Governor General who did not go out much or do very much, according to recent media reports. I would like to see the numbers for her predecessors, because I can imagine that being quite a hefty bill.

For a person who serves a symbolic function, I find that pretty pricey given that their main job is signing bills. I feel like maybe we do not need to spend \$34 million on that.

In addition, as I pointed out earlier, former governors general receive a pension of \$150,000 a year. Moreover, the spending does not end when the individual leaves the position, because former governors general have the right to quietly continue billing up to \$100,000 a year. At some point, someone noticed that these expenses were hidden in a section of the Public Accounts of Canada labelled "temporary help services", and it does not even say who requested this help. The best part is that these expenditures are referred to as temporary help services, yet former governors general receive their pensions for life and they have access to these help services for life. I just do not understand why this would be classified as temporary. Perhaps we will get an answer to that question one day.

On top of costing us \$150,000 a year, former governors general gladly continue to invoice us for all kinds of office and moving expenses, in addition to expenses that may or may not be connected to their former duties as governor general. Imagine that a baseball club wants to invite a former governor general to hand out medals. There were media reports that former governor general Adrienne Clarkson has no problem invoicing the maximum \$100,000 every year. That is how it works.

We have seen other similar cases in Quebec, including a former lieutenant governor, a position that is basically pointless and similar to the governor general's but at the Quebec level. A previous office

holder, Lise Thibault, made a name for herself hosting a television show called *De bien belles choses*, or "very nice things". In one episode, interestingly enough, she taught people how to entertain on a small budget. People were surprised by what happened later.

In my youth, throughout the 1990s, 2000s and even the early 2010s, I remember seeing reports on television and in the newspaper about all the overspending and excesses of people who served in roles similar to the lieutenant governor's. There were reports of misspending, auditor general investigations, National Assembly investigations, perhaps even House of Commons investigations. The individuals under investigation managed to get away with it every time.

Lise Thibault did not manage to get away with it, though she tried her best in court. She even went so far as to invoke the principle that "the Queen can do no wrong", arguing that lieutenant governors are so royal that they too can do no wrong. Unfortunately, it did not work. She was sentenced to 18 months in prison for her 10 years of swindling taxpayers.

In the end, however, she never paid anyone back. The hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars she wasted were gone for good, even though that money belonged to the people working at McDonald's, at the local canteen, at the corner store or in shops. I am upset and frustrated by that. In my opinion, when we are looking for savings, we need to pay attention when spending that kind of money and think about the people working hard to pay for it.

It did not stop there, because then it was Michaëlle Jean's turn. She also made headlines for her expensive tastes and startling lifestyle, such as taking a limousine to travel just down the street. However, that was not enough, because after leaving office, she had to maintain her lifestyle. In addition to her pension, the government also decided to appoint her Secretary General of the International Organisation of La Francophonie, allowing her to travel the world by ship with some young people. I do not know whether that accomplished much in the end, but the government wanted to keep her active, at taxpayer expense once again.

• (1155)

Supposedly, she made Canada look good. Personally, I am not convinced that a person whose job is to organize parties, spend money and wave to people makes anyone look that good—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member's time is up.

[*English*]

Before I go to the next speaker, I do want to remind him that unfortunately I will have to stop him during his speech, and he will be able to continue the next time this matter is before the House.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

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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, the former governor general's annuity will be dealt with in accordance with the Governor General's Act. The—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but I am going to interrupt. There seems to be an issue. Is the hon. member's mike plugged in to his computer? That is much better.

The hon. member.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the former governor general's annuity will be dealt with in accordance with the Governor General's Act. It is important to recognize that reimbursement of expenditures to former governors general is the responsibility of the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General. On an interim basis, the Chief Justice of Canada has been, in fact, sworn in as the administrator and will be fulfilling the duties of the Governor General.

At times it can be a little telling when the Bloc members use this as an extreme as they try to make it a highly charged emotional issue. They say certain things to try to make that be the case.

For example, they will talk about the salary in comparison to the many constituents we represent, who may be making \$40,000 or \$50,000 a year, saying the Governor General makes \$300,000 a year, to try to give the impression of that elitism. There are many in society who make \$150,000 or \$200,000, whether it is people in sitting in the chamber, or doctors or many other professions all over the country.

This does not necessarily mean there is not some validity being raised in some of the comments. The idea of looking for ways in which we can modernize, whether it is compensation or roles, is worthy of exploration—

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, there seems to be a problem with the interpretation. We cannot hear what my hon. colleague is saying at the moment.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have been advised that there seems to be a problem with the microphone, and it is difficult for the interpreters to interpret. Could we try again?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the idea of the role for our Governor General goes far beyond what is being implied by members of the Bloc. For example, I see it as performing four major functions: on the international stage; on the domestic platform; recognizing excellence; a role in Parliament, signing bills into law. There is so much more. To try to marginalize—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is working now. Unfortunately, we are out of time, so we will add a little time, to nine minutes, the next time the member will be before the House, because of the difficulties we have had.

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.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from April 22 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we continue, because this is not the first time we have had issues, I would remind members to ensure that they test their microphones before they are scheduled to speak to ensure they work and that their booms are down as well. It has happened on a number of occasions where members have had their headsets on, but they are not physically plugged into their computers. That does not help the interpreters.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Laval—Les Îles.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to share my time with the member for Oakville North—Burlington.

It is a privilege for me to rise in support of budget 2021, "A Recovery Plan for Jobs, Growth and Resilience". I would like to use my time to highlight how the budget will invest in Canadian youth, which is an issue that matters very much to me.

This budget will help young Canadians recover from the COVID-19 recession through easier access to post-secondary education and good jobs. In many ways, COVID-19 has been a sacrifice of younger generations to protect their elders. Many young people have lost their jobs, and many have had to stay home at a time of life when they would normally have been studying, enjoying time with friends, and getting a foothold in the job market. Young people were among the hardest and fastest hit when the pandemic struck. They have experienced more job losses than any other age demographic and the worst decline in mental health of any age group.

We cannot let them be a lost generation. Young Canadians must be at the centre of our recovery. Their future depends on it, and so does the future of all Canadians. The future success of today's young Canadians will be critical for Canada's success tomorrow.

Budget 2021 proposes \$5.7 billion in government investments to help young Canadians. There are many examples, and I would like to highlight a few of them.

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For example, budget 2021 proposes more than \$4 billion in investments to make student debt easier to pay down and provide support to students with the greatest need. First, waiving interest on student loans for an additional year will help 1.5 million people. Second, increasing the threshold for repayment assistance means that nobody earning \$40,000 per year or less will need to make any payments on their student loans. Third, the budget proposes to double the Canada student grants for an additional two years. Fourth, the budget expands access to disability supports for students whose disabilities are persistent but not permanent.

Education is the smartest investment anyone can make. Naturally, we are helping young people make that investment, and it begins well before college or university. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has made life especially difficult for students at risk of dropping out of school. They rely on local programs for counselling and tutoring, but because of the pandemic, donations to local organizations have dried up.

To help these groups fulfill their mission, budget 2021 proposes to invest \$118 million to pilot after-school programming. This would support national and local organizations that help the most vulnerable youth graduate high school.

That being said, the support that the budget is offering to young Canadians is not limited to education. We are also proposing measures to make it easier for graduates to join the workforce. As I was saying earlier, young Canadians have been hit hard by job losses due to COVID-19. Measures included in the budget will help young people and students connect with employers and gain the job skills that will serve them all their lives.

● (1210)

The new funding would increase the number of work placements available through the student work placement program to 50,000. It would also increase the wage subsidy available for employers and increase employers' ability to access the program.

The budget also proposes to invest in the youth employment and skills strategy to better meet the needs of vulnerable youth. This would support 7,000 additional job placements for youth, on top of the 30,600 placements that will be created with the funding announced in last fall's economic statement.

In addition, the budget proposes funding for 75,000 job placements in 2022-23 through the Canada summer jobs program. In total, this budget would create 215,000 new job skills development opportunities for young Canadians.

The budget proposes measures for education and employment, but it also includes measures to improve quality of life. As I said, young people have experienced the worst decline in mental health during the pandemic.

The budget proposes to provide \$100 million to support mental health interventions for populations disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, including youth, as well as health care workers, front-line workers, seniors, racialized and Black Canadians, and indigenous people.

Speaking of indigenous people, budget 2021 would help advance reconciliation with first nations, Inuit and the Métis nation. The

funds allocated would enhance transportation for first nations students and increase first nations control over first nations education. The funding would also extend COVID-19 support so children on reserve can continue to attend school safely.

We are also proposing to enhance the Inuit and Métis nation post-secondary education strategies and the post-secondary student support program for first nations students. This would help offset the income that many students lost because of the pandemic and would help them pay for tuition, textbooks, housing and other living expenses. The money would also support indigenous-led post-secondary educational institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unemployment among young people is now 14%, compared to 7.5% among Canadians as a whole. We need some concrete action, and this will start with budget 2021. This budget will make college and university more accessible and affordable. It will help young Canadians launch their careers. It also proposes measures to address an issue that is very important to young Canadians, and that is the fight against climate change. The budget proposes to invest towards a green recovery to create jobs and build a clean economy. This green economy is our legacy to the youth of today and tomorrow.

For all these reasons, I support budget 2021, and I urge all members to support it too.

[English]

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about a lot of spending. Obviously, this budget is big on spending, which is par for the course for the government. However, one thing that concerns me with all of the spending is that there is no path back to a balanced budget. As the youngest member of the House and the first member to be elected from generation Z, I am quite concerned about what this spending will mean for future generations in terms of public services. Tax hikes might be needed to pay for it.

I wonder if the member could speak to that. Is he not at all concerned about what the government's endless spending is going to mean for future generations?

● (1215)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Madam Speaker, we are in an unprecedented situation. We are facing a terrible pandemic. Concerning the spending, can we ask parents how much money they would pay to save the life of their child at the hospital? Can we ask a firefighter why they used too much water to put out a fire and save the country?

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We are investing in this country because we would like every single Canadian family to have bread on the table. We have to support all Canadians, from coast to coast to coast, and this necessarily means spending. We should spend to help children, students, families, vulnerable communities and all elements of society so they are able to fight the pandemic and get back to a normal life—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is time for the next question.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague was saying that concrete action needs to be taken. Right now, in Quebec, housing is an area in which concrete action really needs to be taken.

I am pleased that my colleague is from Quebec. Every day, we see articles in the paper about the housing crisis in Quebec.

Two weeks ago, in Verdun, people were lining up to see an apartment. Right now, in Quebec, 450,000 households are in urgent need of housing, 250,000 households spend more than 50% of their income on housing and 82,000 households spend more than 80% of their income on housing. That is outrageous.

The government announced a \$1.5-billion investment in the rapid housing initiative. That is not a bad thing, but the Federation of Canadian Municipalities was calling for a \$7-billion investment in that program. There are 40,000 households waiting for low-income housing in Quebec.

Is it not time for a real, meaningful program to put an end to the pandemic housing crisis in Canada and in Quebec?

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I doubt anyone realizes just how proud I am to be a Canadian MP from Quebec.

I can tell my colleague that the government is giving the Province of Quebec all the tools and funding it needs to advance.

We just announced a high-speed Internet access project. Here in my riding, we announced several million dollars to build affordable housing units. We also invested in major green infrastructure projects.

The government is giving Quebec everything it needs to get to work, create jobs and grow its economy. That is what we—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I will allow another brief question.

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, students are faced with crushing debt loads. Nearly half a million Canadian students turn to student loans each year to cover their student costs. An average undergrad student's debt is over \$30,000.

The offer of waiving the interest is not enough. Would the member support forgiving at least part of the loan, say \$20,000 per student?

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Madam Speaker, no previous government has given students the help this government has. We are supporting students. We are supporting post-secondary students. We are supporting students who are children. We created a child benefits program to support students who have to stay home to take care of seniors.

We have been there for students, and we will continue to be because we in this government believe that students are the future of Canada. Students who are better educated and receive more help will be better able to build a better Canada. As the Prime Minister said, better is always possible.

• (1220)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I resume debate, I want to remind members to pay attention to the signals we are giving them. That way, we will not need to cut off the questions and answers. We should be able to get in at least three questions during questions and comments.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to budget 2021 today.

In 2019, our government was elected for a second time, with the commitment to invest in the things that matter most to Canadians: healthcare, child care, affordable housing, creating good well-paying jobs, support for seniors and families, and protecting the environment. Budget 2021 makes important investments to deliver on our commitment and continue to build on the work we have done to support Canadians during the pandemic.

This past year has been an extraordinarily difficult time for Canadians and people around the world. COVID-19 has changed the way we do everything, including how the House of Commons operates. Over the last year, there has been a historic flow of federal aid to brace the financial foundations of businesses and households across Canada. Budget 2021 lays the groundwork for a strong post-pandemic recovery and outlines spending for critical measures aimed at getting our country through the third wave of the pandemic and stimulating the economy.

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Canada entered the global pandemic in a strong fiscal position, which has allowed our government to provide unprecedented support for Canadians. Budget 2021 is a progressive budget that lays out a clear plan to ensure that Canada builds back better by focusing on three main fundamental challenges: keeping Canadians safe, recovering from immediate pain and rebuilding for the long term. I cannot possibly speak about all the investments in the budget, so I will highlight just a few.

Our government has been there to support Canadians through the pandemic from day one, and we know there is a need for more immediate spending to address the third wave of COVID-19, which is hitting hard. This will be done through the extension of key subsidy programs. With variants of concern spreading and COVID-19 case counts on the rise, budget 2021 includes a three-month extension of the federal wage and rent subsidies. Set to expire in June, the supports will now be available through September, at a cost of approximately \$12 billion.

The pandemic has been called a “she-cession” because women have been disproportionately impacted. It has shone a light on the need for safe, affordable child care and early learning. This need is not new. We have known since 50 years ago that the number one thing holding women back in the workforce is access to child care. In the last Parliament, as vice-chair of the status of women committee, I too recognized that child care would allow women to participate fully in the economy.

Thirty-one years ago, when my son was born, I had three months of maternity leave. I worked in real estate investment banking, and when it came time to return to work, I realized the cost of child care was too expensive to make it worthwhile. I called my boss and told him that while I wanted to return to work, it did not make financial sense. He said he would double my salary to start and told me that I could take whatever time I needed if my son was sick. I recognize that I was incredibly privileged to have a boss that was willing to do that, and even though he was incredibly generous over the years and was always true to his word about time off work, child care was a constant worry. That is why our investments in early learning and child care are so important to me.

As part of a feminist economic policy, budget 2021 proposes to provide \$30 billion over five years, and \$8.3 billion per year thereafter, to build a high-quality, affordable and accessible early learning and child care system across Canada. This funding will allow for a 50% reduction in average fees for regulated early learning and child care in all provinces outside of Quebec, to be delivered by the end of 2022. It will also ensure annual growth in quality and affordable child care spaces across the country, ensuring high-quality early learning and child care, for an average of \$10 a day. This is social infrastructure that will drive jobs and growth. It is feminist economic policy. It is smart economic policy that will increase Canada’s GDP by 1.2%, allowing more women to return to the workforce.

Cancer is a leading cause of disease-related death in Canadian children. More targeted research is needed to help save lives. Budget 2021 proposes to provide \$30 million over two years to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to fund pediatric cancer research that can lead to better outcomes and healthier lives for these young patients. The funding will support promising research

projects with the greatest potential for fighting pediatric cancer. I know too many children like Ayverie Caster, Carson Clapham and Teagan Walsh, who were lost to this terrible disease. I am so proud of the work being done at SickKids by Dr. David Malkin, who is fighting childhood cancer, and look forward to what he and others can do with this new funding.

• (1225)

A recommendation that came out of the Halton round tables on youth vaping I have hosted over the last two years was the need for a tax on vaping products. Budget 2021 proposes to introduce a new taxation framework for the imposition of excise duties on vaping products in 2022. The federal government will work with any province and territory that may be interested in a federally coordinated approach to taxing these products.

I have had the pleasure of working with Diabetes Canada and Mike Swartz from my riding to advance the need for investments in a national framework for diabetes. Budget 2021 proposes to provide \$25 million over five years, starting in 2021-22, to Health Canada for additional investments for research on diabetes, including in juvenile diabetes, surveillance, prevention and to work toward the development of a national framework.

Budget 2021 also proposes to provide \$10 million over five years for a new diabetes challenge prize. This initiative will help surface novel approaches to diabetes prevention and promote the development and testing of new interventions to reduce the risks associated with type 2 diabetes.

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, I am pleased to see the historic investments for indigenous peoples and their businesses included in budget 2021. Through this budget, we are proposing historic new investments of over \$18 billion over the next five years to improve the quality of life and create new opportunities for people living in indigenous communities. Working with indigenous partners, these investments would make significant strides in closing gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples; support healthy, safe and prosperous indigenous communities; and advance meaningful reconciliation with first nations, Inuit and the Métis nation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating for Canada's seniors. Many have spent the past 13 months isolated from family and friends. For far too many seniors who live in long-term care, this year has been tragic: They have been the overwhelming casualties of the pandemic. Budget 2021 proposes to provide \$3 billion over five years to Health Canada to support provinces and territories in ensuring standards for long-term care are applied and permanent changes are made.

To keep seniors safe and improve their quality of life, the federal government will work collaboratively with provinces and territories, while respecting their jurisdiction over health care, including long-term care. This work will ensure seniors and those in care live in safe and dignified conditions. The budget also proposes to increase old age security by 10% for seniors 75 and over, beginning in 2022.

Budget 2021 builds on Canada's investments in youth, with over \$5.7 billion over five years to help young Canadians pursue and complete their education, to provide additional relief from student loan debt for young graduates, and to create 215,000 new job skills development and work opportunities. To ensure youth and students can access valuable job skills and experience, budget 2021 is proposing to invest \$721 million in the next two years to help connect them with employers and provide them with quality job opportunities.

This budget mentions Black Canadians an unprecedented 122 times. I heard from individuals in my riding like Colin Lynch and Evangeline Chima about the need for investments in Black communities and businesses. The budget proposes \$200 million to endow a philanthropic fund dedicated to supporting Black-led charities and organizations serving youth and social initiatives, as well as \$100 million for the supporting Black Canadian communities initiative. It also proposes to invest an additional \$51 million for the Black entrepreneurship program.

Budget 2021 takes on reasonable and sustainable debt. Not only can we afford these investments, it would be short-sighted of us not to make them. There is so much in this budget: a national autism strategy, funding to support our efforts to tackle climate change and so much more. Budget 2021 will continue to support Canadians, help Canada to build back better and grow our economy safely for years to come.

● (1230)

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for the work she does to support indigenous communities across the country, which is a very important issue for me and many in my riding.

One of the things she mentioned was child care. The Liberals have committed \$30 billion over five years for child care in the budget, as I understand. Also, as I understand, we would be paying nearly \$40 billion a year on interest payments on the debt, which represents \$40 billion that could be going toward many other programs.

I am wondering if the parliamentary secretary would agree that in future budgets we should be working to reduce our deficit and

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paying down our debt so we can provide more services for future generations?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member for his work. I had the pleasure of working with him on the indigenous and northern affairs committee and I know he is quite passionate about the indigenous communities in his riding.

Now is not the time for an austerity budget. It is important to recognize the good fiscal shape that Canada is in. I had the pleasure of recently sitting in on the finance committee when the OECD appeared. It said:

Your public debt burden is relatively low compared to many other OECD countries, and borrowing costs are fairly low. In a way, this is partly why in good times, it's good to be aiming for creating that kind of fiscal space. It's to deal with situations such as this one so that you can, for instance, increase your debt-to-GDP ratio in a short space of time... You can do it, and you still haven't got an astronomical debt burden.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for her speech.

This is lavish spending at a time when we are accumulating hundreds of billions of dollars in deficit. Does my colleague not think that there are things missing from the budget, such as the health transfers, money for seniors as of age 65, and the agriculture sector?

My question for the parliamentary secretary has to do with that last point in particular, but it might take me a minute to get there.

A few hundred million dollars in compensation is on the table for processors. That is not a lot. As far as foreign workers are concerned, the biggest investment is in inspections. That is not what the sector needs. It needs support. The government should be increasing money for foreign workers, rather than decreasing it starting in June.

That brings me to farm succession planning. Since we are talking about the future, economic recovery and ensuring food security in this country, can my colleague explain why the government put absolutely nothing in the budget about transferring farms or transferring small businesses in general, even as it seems to be getting ready to vote against Bill C-208?

I would like her to say a few words about that.

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[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I think it is important to recognize that what the government did with this budget was to focus on the sectors that have been hard hit. I commend the finance minister for the work that she had done to make sure that we are supporting businesses and Canadians who need it most, as we see our way through this. I know I have received overwhelmingly positive support for this budget, recognizing that mine is an urban riding. The finance minister did an excellent job of putting forward a budget that will do a tremendous amount of good for Canadians, for Canadian business and for farmers.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have time for a brief question.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned both being on the finance committee and also the importance of having a feminist budgetary approach. She would know from finance committee what we have seen repeatedly is people coming before finance committee talking about the importance of having public universal pharmacare in place. Women are disproportionately impacted by the fact that we do not have universal pharmacare in place now. Particularly, with COVID-19, we are seeing more and more women who do not have access to a drug program and cannot pay for their medication. We had the Liberals vote against the Canada Pharmacare Act and we see a complete abandoning of public universal—

• (1235)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I did ask for a brief question.

I will allow the parliamentary secretary to respond with a brief answer.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, it is difficult to give a brief answer when talking about pharmacare because it is a very complicated issue. While the member had a private member's bill in front of the House talking about pharmacare, the hard work is negotiating with the provinces and making sure that they are the ones delivering health care. Our commitment to pharmacare was in the throne speech. He is absolutely right, it does disproportionately impact women and we remain committed to pharmacare. There was funding in the budget for a rare diseases strategy. I will wrap it up there.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to say, in appreciation, that I am speaking to the House today virtually from the traditional territory of the Qayqayt first nation and the Coast Salish peoples. I am honoured to share my time with the terrific member of Parliament for London—Fanshawe.

I want to start by talking, sadly, about the appalling loss of life we have seen through COVID-19. Today we passed a sad milestone of 24,000 Canadians who have died as a result of COVID-19. We will underscore later in the day, in the House, the death of Emily Victoria Viegas, 13 years of age, who died on April 22 from COVID-19. That death toll of 24,000 is climbing as the third wave hits across this country.

Many industrialized countries were able to put in place both vaccine distribution and measures that lowered their death rates remarkably. Canada, sadly, as we see the death toll climb, has not been putting into place the measures that are so essential to ensure that we try to avoid as many deaths as possible during this appalling pandemic.

The question around the budget really is what does the budget do to match the size and scope of the pandemic, a crisis that we have not seen in scale, size and scope since the Second World War? How does the budget put in place the important provisions for building as Canadians, hopefully in the coming months and years, will come out of this pandemic?

The instruction of the Spanish flu pandemic is something that we must all heed. The Spanish Flu pandemic, which lasted well over a year and a half, had financial and economic ramifications that took over a decade to attenuate. When we are talking about COVID-19, we are talking about measures that not only must work in the coming months as we struggle with this third wave, as frontline workers struggle with this third wave, as health care workers and first responders with all their bravery and courage, often unvaccinated, struggle to save as many lives as possible.

As we go through this, we also need to underscore the importance of having policies in place that are sustainable in the coming years to provide supports for Canadians. Sadly, this budget does not do that. It is tragic to us. The member for Burnaby South, the NDP leader, and members of the NDP caucus repeatedly raised a clear direction that would have made a huge difference in terms of putting into place that infrastructure, that ability to invest to help Canadians both through this pandemic and afterward.

We talked about a wealth tax. We talked about putting in place a pandemic profits tax, in the same way that during the Second World War we were all in this together and there was an excess profits tax that assured not only the battle to be won against fascism and Nazism, but also the rebuilding afterward; the hundreds of thousands of housing units, hospitals; education and transportation, all built because we had put into place measures that meant that we were all in this together.

Sadly, this budget fails miserably in this regard. There is no wealth tax. There is no pandemic profits tax. There are no meaningful measures that actually combat the offshore tax havens that suck \$25 billion every year out of our country, \$25 billion that could be put into place for housing, vaccination, education, improving our health care sector and ensuring that all Canadians across the country have the wherewithal to go through the pandemic. The government chose not to put in place any of those measures, despite the fact that the revenue that is lost or the revenue that is taken overseas is substantial. What we see in this budget is a free ride given to the ultrarich in this country. What about the COVID measures?

The Budget

• (1240)

Sadly, the Prime Minister and the government seem to be saying “Mission accomplished,” when we know that this is far from the case, as this third wave crashes on our shores, as we see ICUs and emergency wards filled with Canadians.

Instead of putting into place measures that will continue to extend throughout the summer, in a few weeks' time the government will start slashing emergency response benefits and supports that were given to small businesses. The government will say that it put in place a measure for all those large businesses, which used the wage subsidy for dividend payments, for executive bonuses and stock buybacks. It will close that barn door in July, but it will not ask for any repayment. However, if they use the wage subsidy in the final waning weeks of when it is available, then there may be consequences.

At a time when so many Canadians are struggling, this is absolutely unacceptable that we are wrapping up all the programs, starting in weeks, that would serve to provide support as the third wave hits our shores.

There is nothing in the budget that addresses what people with disabilities across the length and breadth of the country have been facing for well over a year now. The NDP fought, and we fought vigorously, half a dozen times to push the government to finally implement a partial payment to some people with disabilities. Of the many struggles that the NDP caucus has undertaken over the course of the past year, it was probably the one where the government was most resistant, most refusing to provide support to people with disabilities.

We know that within days of the pandemic hitting, the Liberal government was willing to basically unleash cash, \$750 billion given to Canada's big banks, and liquidity supports within days. Contrast that \$750 billion, an unprecedented amount that pales other supports ever handed to the banking sector and pales in comparison to what we have seen from the government in this pandemic, to people with disabilities who have struggled for a one-time \$600 payment that only went to some people with disabilities, by no means all. Then we are being told in the budget that the government is going to study the question in the next three years. Maybe, eventually, there will be some supports given to Canadians with disabilities.

The NDP member for Winnipeg Centre brought forward a guaranteed livable basic income proposal that the Liberals voted against. Now the Liberals are saying to Canadians with disabilities, who compose half of the people who are lining up at food banks to make ends meet, and the growing number of homeless in our country that they have to wait three years and maybe they will do something for them.

Students are being forced to pay back student loans, while the banks get \$750 billion in liquidity supports. The homeless are being offered a scant number of housing units, yet we know, from the Second World War and the instruction of having in place measures that made sure we were all in this together, that the federal government was capable of building 300,000 units of affordable housing within three years of the conclusion of World War II. In this budget, there is scant provision for the homeless in our country.

There is also the pharmacare program. At a time when 10 million Canadians have no wherewithal to pay for their medication, at a time when health care should be top of mind, the Liberals killed the Canada pharmacare bill. They have abandoned any commitment to putting in place public universal pharmacare with this budget.

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

What the Liberals have decided to do is basically copy part of Thomas Mulcair's 2015 election platform. They are promising child care, which is significant, but we do not know whether they will keep their word. They are also promising to introduce a federal minimum wage.

We know that these promises, like all the promises the Liberals have made over the past six years, will probably not be kept.

[*English*]

This is a rhetorical question for my Liberal colleagues. Why do they always put the interests of banks and billionaires before those of all other Canadians?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's intervention today. What I find especially confusing is how he started it off. I wrote it down because I thought it was odd to hear him say that Canada sadly did not put in place measures to reduce the death rate. Canada's death rate is the second lowest in the G7. We put in place incredible measures back at the beginning of this to encourage people to stay home. We drove up the unemployment rate, to the criticism of the Conservatives, because we wanted to keep people at home and we helped them do that through the CERB and other programs like that.

Could the member explain why he thinks that? Not one more death is ever good and we want to keep that as low as humanely possible, but among our counterparts we are the second lowest.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I am saddened by the member's comments. He does not acknowledge the 24,000 Canadians who passed away so far in the pandemic or the incredible frustration we see from front-line health care workers across the country as ICUs and emergency wards fill up. People in his home province of Ontario are now dying at home. For the member and the Liberal government not to acknowledge the slowness of the acquisition of vaccines and that they should have put in place domestic vaccine production capability a year ago saddens me. It tells me that they have not learned the lessons for which so many Canadians have paid such a horrible price.

The Budget

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I share some of the frustrations my colleague has with the Liberal government. In speaking with business owners, workers and people across my riding of Kenora, there are a lot of concerns about the slow pace of the vaccine rollout and the government's mishandling of the procurement process. We were hoping to see more details on that in the budget, but it is very short on those. I wonder if the member has any comments with respect to that.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, we know that paid sick leave would make a phenomenal difference right now. Workplace infection rates are the biggest concern. Yes, the NDP caucus forced the Liberal government to adopt legislation around paid sick leave and, although it had the regulatory ability to make that work, it chose not to. On the regulations, which is the government's purview, it basically gutted a paid sick leave program, which the NDP continues to propose and which is absolutely essential.

These are the kinds of measures that would make such a difference to save more lives in Canada, yet the Prime Minister and the government seem to want to do a victory lap, which is simply inappropriate when we see the size, scale and amplitude of this deadly third wave now crossing our country.

• (1250)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I share my colleague's dismay about the spending and where it is going.

I am also concerned about the fact that this budget could be summed up in one word: intrusion—intrusion into Quebec and provincial jurisdictions.

I would like to hear my colleague comment on these intrusions.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the issue is health care funding. I know my colleague agrees with the NDP on this.

Health care spending has been cut. For years now, the federal government has been giving less and less, taking into account the increased needs in the health sector. The government needs to immediately bring in measures like a wealth tax in order to adequately fund our health sector.

It is a matter of life and death.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, the people of London have gotten a bad deal through years of Liberal and Conservative governments. Well before the pandemic, many neighbourhoods in London—Fanshawe were left behind by government policies. We would hear about rising GDP and economic prosperity, but many in my community did not see that directly. That is only because the ultra-wealthy, the 1% of Canada, do not live on Hamilton or Southdale Roads, Dundas Street or Jalna Boulevard. Many in my community have been directly impacted, of course, by COVID-19, and the people I have spoken with in London—Fanshawe are worried that they will again be left behind in the recovery.

During the pandemic, the Liberal government offered Canadians the least help possible. The NDP had to force it to do better. This

budget is no different. The Prime Minister has chosen to continue to give his rich friends a free ride. He has chosen to continue to fail young people who are facing crushing debt. He has chosen to continue to protect the profits of big pharmaceutical companies and for-profit, long-term care providers, and he has not addressed the housing crisis.

My constituency office staff and I have tried every day to do our best to help the thousands of people who have reached out for help. The challenges and supports offered by the government are inconsistent for different people and are consistently being scaled back. This budget will leave many more still struggling, struggling with rising bills and how unaffordable everything has become, and that includes housing and drug coverage.

For two decades, Canadians struggling with the cost of medication have been promised a pharmacare program. Instead of taking bold action, the Liberals keep breaking their promises and making people wait. Millions of Canadians are without affordable prescription drug coverage. Even more people have lost their jobs and benefits because of COVID-19, including tens of thousands of people in London. At a time when the need is so great, it is inexcusable that the Liberals refuse to give Canadians the affordable, life-saving medicines they so desperately need.

The New Democrats have repeatedly asked the federal government to establish a public drug manufacturer in Canada to address the vaccine shortage, but the Liberals continue to put the interests of multinational pharmaceutical companies and foreign governments ahead of the health of Canadians.

As a third wave of the pandemic rages on, Canadians, including Londoners, are depending on public health care as never before. COVID-19 case counts approach record highs in the London-Middlesex region, with ICUs now setting record case counts. COVID-19 has revealed serious gaps and long-standing problems in our health care system that budget 2021 does not address.

Following the budget, I have heard about the unfair treatment from people living on fixed incomes, specifically seniors and people living with disabilities in my riding. They, too, have been hit by this pandemic financially. They have seen a rise in the cost of prescriptions, food, food delivery and housing.

This summer, seniors received an addition \$1.50 as a result of indexing; wow. Now only those over the age of 75 will get a one-time payment of \$500 and small increases thereafter. I have constituents aged 65 to 74 telling me that they do not feel the government cares about them, that they do not matter. That is tragic.

People living with disabilities also got nothing. During the debate on Bill C-7, people living with disabilities made it very clear that they were on the brink. They have been ignored for too long, pushed to extreme poverty and disparity and without the choices that others have. Instead of direct assistance, they will also get a task force. Again, my constituents have told me that they cannot pay their bills or buy food with a task force. They cannot afford skyrocketing rent with a task force.

As the NDP's critic for women and gender equality, like so many of my colleagues have, I want to acknowledge that this is the first federal budget presented by a woman. This is an excellent step, there is no doubt, and it is about time.

What is also about time is the delivery of a universal, affordable, early-learning and child care system. Of course, after having sat on the Standing Committee for the Status Women and hearing 99% of the witnesses from all different sectors talk about the need for child care; after repeatedly hearing the statistics that women had been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, not being able to return to work in staggering numbers because they could not access safe and affordable child care; and after being a member of a political party who has fought for child care for longer than the Liberals have promised to create it, I was pleased to hear the minister's plans to create that national system. Of course, fool me once, shame on you, fool me for 28 years, that is another story. Suffice it to say that I will watch, with scrutiny, what is presented on child care from this government. However, I am more than willing to work with the government to ensure that the wait it over. We must create that universal and affordable system.

● (1255)

I will insist that this system be publicly funded. I also sincerely hope that child care will not share the same fate as electoral reform or pharmacare. We have too often heard promises of task forces, committees or focus groups, or whatever the Liberal term of the day is, and there is an election with more promises. Then there is a new government that will come forward with a new mandate that cannot possibly move ahead with child care.

As a New Democrat, I come to this place with a lot of hope, but as a Canadian woman I have watched for decades and seen the Liberals' shell game in action. If there is a way to make child care a reality, let us work together and get it done because it is about time.

Child care is not the only thing women need to help them recover from the pandemic, so I was happy to see the recognition and funding for gender-based violence organizations. However, again, despite the evidence showing how vital core operational-based funding is, the government has still only provided two years of funding to these organizations and only five years of funding to a secretariat for the national action plan to end gender-based violence and to crisis hotlines for gender-based violence.

I will also note that the Minister for Women and Gender Equality still has not come forward with an actual national action plan to end gender-based violence. I think that is a bit odd, but it has only been six years. It has not been 28, so I suppose women will continue to wait.

The Budget

Another group I consistently hear from is young people, who have been among the hardest hit by COVID. They had to make fundamental shifts in their education, employment and financial situations. However, instead of helping young people during the first wave of the pandemic, the government rushed to give almost \$1 billion to its well connected friends at WE, and the money still has not made it to students.

Despite the second and third waves, the government will not extend the Canada emergency student benefit. During their studies, students are the ones working in the restaurants and the service sector. They hold retail jobs too. However, these businesses are still closed, and because of the poor vaccine rollout, they are unable to open. Students were also unable to collect the hours, although reduced by the government, required to obtain supports like the recovery benefit. This budget could have taken a New Democratic lead, and we could have put forward a very bold plan to ensure that students thrive instead of being buried in debt.

We believe the federal government must work with the provinces and territories to create tuition-free post-secondary education. We want to ensure that the federal government stops profiting from student debt, by permanently removing interest on all federal student loans and by giving new graduates a five-year head start without having to repay any federal student loans. Let us let them get ahead in their careers by cancelling up to \$20,000 per student of federal student loan debt.

These are the ways that a federal government can show leadership. They are tangible ways to invest in people, who then invest in the long-term viability of our economy.

There is so much more to say about housing, the environment and the end of the recovery benefit, but I know that I am at the end of my time, so I will conclude with this. Governing is about choices. This budget was about choices, and the government has made some choices that only help some people. However, it is not too late. The choices that bring people together and raise up all people equally are the choices we must make now and together.

The Budget

• (1300)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned on a couple of occasions the 28-year wait for child care, and she talked about choices. The NDP had a choice 16 years ago to support Paul Martin's budget, which had child care in it, or side with Stephen Harper and bring down the government. The NDP chose the latter and Stephen Harper was elected. The budget that Paul Martin introduced failed and Stephen Harper did nothing for child care. Here we are 16 years later with another choice to make.

What will the member choose this time? Will she choose to vote in favour of the budget and support this government, or will she choose not to and perhaps see history repeat itself?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I am always fascinated when the Liberals will not take responsibility for their actions. They insist upon blaming everybody else for their action or inaction.

Yes, the New Democrats made a choice at that time. They chose to try to salvage a budget and make deals with the Liberal government that were going to slash housing and make significant cuts to people. Was it the choice we wanted to make? No. If it were an NDP budget, would we have put forward housing supports and child care? Absolutely. Those are the choices the New Democrats make, because they are for people. The Liberals like to make choices at the expense of people.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I share with my hon. colleague the hope that the ninth time is the charm.

Does she share the vision of the government that a one-size-fits-all child care policy, where Ottawa knows best, is the proper form, or are parents in a better position to determine the form of child care?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, a universal child care program, when it is truly affordable and provided publicly, can provide those choices to parents, no matter their position. Those parents who have the option of going the private route have always had that option. We need to ensure that the people and those parents who cannot afford the ridiculously high skyrocketing prices of child care have access, so that there is universal access. This will be by ensuring that it is publicly funded and that money does not just funnel into a very specific profitable group of people like it continually does, because of Liberal and Conservative choices. That is where I have problems, but providing parents choices and that affordability is key, and it is the government that needs to play a key role in the leadership to do that.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from London—Fanshawe for her speech. It was a feminist speech, and that is really in keeping with my values.

I have a very specific question for the member. I am disappointed that the Bloc Québécois and the NDP often find themselves on opposite sides. Most of the time, our two parties should be on the

same side because we share many of the same values with only the centralization of power in Ottawa being problematic.

The Prime Minister said that the transfers would have “almost” no conditions, which scares us. The national child care program is modelled after Quebec's program, which we are very proud of because it changed many people's lives, including many women's lives, which is important. Will the member pledge to have her party support Quebec unconditionally receiving its fair share of the transfers under this national program as requested by the Bloc Québécois? Does the member pledge to support our request?

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, we believe absolutely in working with the provinces and territories equally to ensure the best goes forward, and of course Quebec has been a leader in child care. It is that example we draw from to ensure that those women and parents in Quebec are examples, and that other parents across the country can have that same opportunity as those in Quebec. It is the same with a lot of students. There are models we can take from, but of course, in terms of those health transfers, I know it is key to ensure, as my hon. colleague before me from New Westminster—Burnaby mentioned, equality and fair taxation, and getting the money to make those national supports a reality.

• (1305)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (FedDev Ontario and Official Languages), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to be speaking today, and I would like to inform members that I will be sharing my time with the member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

At the beginning of this crisis, the government took swift action to protect people from a devastating illness. The government members knew their efforts would need to protect not only their physical health, but their economic health. They said it best: “No Canadian should have to choose between protecting their health, putting food on the table, paying for their medication or caring for a family member.”

The Budget

In the last 13 months, as residents of Orléans have faced an unmatched crisis, I have heard heartbreaking stories of people who have had to make enormous sacrifices to get through this, including some who have lost loved ones. I have admired the resilience of the essential workers, whether they are retail workers, medical professionals, teachers, or beyond, who have had to face every day with bravery, not knowing what risks they may encounter; the business owners who have wondered when they will be able to make a profit again; the students who face rotating waves of in-person and at-home learning; and the parents who often have had to become teachers. Many seniors have gone through a lonely year of only seeing family through a window. All of them worry about what comes next after the pandemic.

That is why I stand here today in favour of budget 2021. When the first female Minister of Finance, the member for University—Rosedale, presented her budget on April 19, she shattered barriers, but she also presented a credible plan for growth and a vision for the future of the Canadian economy that is built from the ground up. I wanted to highlight some of the initiatives that have stood out to my residents.

[Translation]

As a former businesswoman who ran my own business, I can tell you that the many meetings and discussions I have had with business owners in Orléans struck a nerve. I know what it means to take the risk and juggle fixed costs such as rent and salaries while trying to grow a business. Today, I can only admire the strength and tenacity of businesspeople who are doing this under the worst conditions possible.

[English]

Business owners have said to me, loud and clear, that budget 2021's proposed extension to the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency rent subsidy is essential to getting them through to the end of the pandemic.

The Canada emergency wage subsidy has allowed them to hold on to the workforce and talent that allowed them to flourish before 2020. They knew they had to do right by their workers, and with Canada's help many were able to do so when they otherwise might have failed. So many of our small businesses, the core of communities like Orléans, continue to keep their workers employed as they endure a rotation of lockdowns that keep customers away from their doors and demand low.

Meanwhile, the Canada emergency rent subsidy has kept our bricks and mortar businesses in place. This means a start-up restaurant can continue to offer delivery, an independent florist can offer curbside pickup or a gym will be able to resume from where it left off as soon as public health measures relax.

With the help of these subsidies, businesses have more freedom to make the moves they need to adjust to health measures and endure lockdowns.

There has rarely been a darker time to run many businesses than right now, but budget 2021 is investing in a brighter future. The Canada recovery hiring program only furthers these efforts. Aimed at helping the businesses that continue to see a decline in revenue,

the CRHP encourages them to invest in their workforce and bounce back strong.

● (1310)

The budget also proposes major investments, \$1.4 billion in skills training and digital adoption technology. It will allow Canadian private corporations to immediately expense up to \$1.5 million of eligible capital investments made between April 19 of this year and 2024. The government is priming Canadian businesses to adjust for the future and it gives them the tools they need to fuel growth. By supporting this budget, we are assuring the very people who keep our economy moving that we have their backs and that we believe in what they do for our communities.

My constituents also make it clear time and time again that the environment and a transition to a green economy is a top priority for Orléans. Canadians are concerned for the future of our planet. They worry about the impacts of climate change and how they will affect life for their children and grandchildren. The Orléans Youth Council, who I meet with every month alongside my provincial and municipal counterparts, echoes this. They will inherit whatever we leave behind today and they cannot wait for their generation to be in power before action is taken. We need to move now.

The government's plan for a green recovery is the kind of action they can believe in. Budget 2021 proposes investing \$5 billion over seven years in Canada's net-zero accelerator to help to decarbonize large emitters. It proposes investing \$319 million in the research and development of carbon capture technology and a tax credit to incentivize capital investment in carbon capture projects. It proposes slashing tax rates in half for businesses that manufacture zero-emission technologies, making green jobs and new technology a central focus for our economic recovery.

The Budget

As someone who saw the devastating impact of flooding in my community in 2017 and 2019, I am relieved to see the budget propose \$63.8 million over three years to create updated flood maps for high-risk areas. However, for so many of our homeowners, environment and climate change has also become an everyday pocketbook issue. That is why I am pleased to see that budget 2021 wants to give homeowners interest-free loans of up to \$40,000 so they can make energy-efficient home improvements. By replacing old heating systems, drafty windows and doors or inefficient insulation, these loans give residents the power to make an investment in their own property that pays off in reduced costs every month. It addresses a long-overlooked impact of emissions on everyday Canadians, even those who may not yet feel the impact of a climate emergency still bear the burden through their monthly bills.

Interest-free loans for retrofits will provide much-needed relief. Since budget day, my team has already received several inquiries from enthusiastic residents about this incredible incentive. The greatest relief would come from one very important program: the government's plan to establish a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. For years, this has been raised with me as a top priority among parents, grandparents, educators and anyone with a stake in the well-being of our children. The budget's plan to provide \$10-a-day child care by 2026 would give more parents the flexibility they need to participate in the workforce and massively reduce one of the largest costs that families incur.

[Translation]

We also know that the heavy burden of child care is often borne by women. This plan is a revolutionary step toward the economic empowerment of Canadian mothers.

[English]

When I speak to my constituents of all political stripes, they remind me that, above all, the government works for them, both as individuals and as members of the community. I take pride in being able to show them a budget that takes their needs seriously and believes that the government has a stake in ensuring their growth. It is presenting serious investments in small businesses, the green economy and day care, but also in students, housing for veterans, racialized communities, official languages and biomanufacturing.

• (1315)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary, in her speech, said that the government has the backs of Canadians. One group of Canadians that the government has not had the backs of are men and women who have opened new businesses, who have been completely shut out of the government's emergency support programs. These are men and women who invested considerable capital and risk before COVID.

Why has the government continued to allow small businesses that are new businesses to fall through the cracks?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, our government has been working hard to find the right balance and solution on this. I have to remind my hon. colleague of all the actions this government has taken since early on in this pandemic. Without those measures, many businesses would not have been able to stay afloat. I want to remind the hon. member of all the leadership we took, al-

most as a team Canada approach, early on. At this point, we may not be there anymore, but I am proud to sit on this side of the House when we are talking to businesses about the supports that this government has brought forward and will continue to go forward with in this budget. They see we do have their backs.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to address two topics.

First of all, until the 1970s, the federal government funded 50% of health care expenses. Today it funds only 22%. Instead of imposing standards, if we could re-establish health transfer payments, the health care systems in Quebec and the other provinces would not always be at the breaking point.

Why does the federal government still refuse to increase health transfer payments?

Second, we know that seniors' purchasing power is declining. In 1975, OAS was equivalent to approximately 20% of the average salary. Today it is equivalent to 13%. If this trend continues, there will be nothing left for millennials.

Why not increase the old age security pension automatically at age 75?

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about these two issues.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity to discuss a bit of my history before I entered politics. I worked with seniors for 20 years.

I would like to remind my colleague about the Liberal government's efforts and its commitment to helping seniors in recent years. The budget increases old age security for seniors aged 75 and over by 10%. They will receive a \$500 cheque in August. We recognize their importance. They built our economy.

In terms of health, I have worked in the health sector and was also an MPP. I know that our government is concerned about health and that it respects provincial jurisdiction. We will always respect provincial jurisdiction.

That is why, from the very start, we committed billions of dollars, including an additional \$3 billion, to come to the table, talk with the provinces, and contribute to health care in collaboration with them. I think that all Canadians agree that the federal—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I have to proceed to the next question.

I will remind the parliamentary secretary to watch for the signal.

The Budget

[English]

Questions and comments, the hon. member for North Island—Powell River with a brief question.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge the work that I do with her in the veterans committee. One of the things that really concerns me is that there was nothing in this budget to eliminate the clause about marrying after 60 for veterans and for the RCMP. This was called the “gold-digger” clause. It is extremely outdated and is very sexist.

Could the member speak to why this is still not being addressed after being in multiple mandate letters?

● (1320)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I too respect my colleague on the veterans committee. I know this is something that she has brought up time and time again. I certainly appreciate her perspective. I would somewhat echo what she is saying. The government needs to come together. We need to find the right balance and the right solution, and I am happy to work with her.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to the official opposition on the budget for the last few days, and it is difficult to ascertain, at least for me, if they are Keynesians or proponents of Reaganomics.

They say that they support the emergency measures our government quickly put in place when the pandemic broke, programs that helped so many Canadians, families and businesses, but at the same time they decry the deficit while saying they would not eliminate it, nor do they specify what kind of deficit they could live with and for how long.

International experts are urging governments around the world to stay the course, to maintain the stimulus, urging all governments to learn from the 2008 financial crisis. As we know, governments put the brakes on too soon back then and it took about 10 years for economies to recover.

The government’s economic plan is working. The Bank of Canada predicts our economy will grow by 6.5% this year, an upward revision of its forecast of 4% back in January. What is more, the bank’s optimism outstrips the government’s, which expects the economy to grow by 5.8% in 2021.

We hear a great deal from the opposition about how the government’s stimulus, which obviously is contributing to the debt, is hurting future generations. However, let us not forget that a deep recession hobbles the career prospects of those about to enter the job market, not to mention of those already in the job market who have lost their jobs. This career drag can last a lifetime, and when a career gets off to a slow start, this could delay people starting a family. It could also mean lower lifetime contributions to an RRSP, which then translates into a lower future retirement income stream.

Our government is investing in the future at a time when interest rates are low. These investments, including in early learning and child care, will make Canada more productive, more competitive internationally and more prosperous. I will come back to child care in a moment.

The returns from investing in the future will be high, and what better time to invest in high future returns than when the cost of capital is low? That is business 101. Incidentally, we can also expect a better quality of life because, in addition to child care, the government is also investing in the green economy.

I would like to take a moment to bring some perspective to the deficit and debt. At the end of World War II, which preceded a period of great technological innovation and historic economic expansion, the deficit-to-GDP ratio was 21%. For 2020-21, the deficit will be \$346 billion or 16.1% of GDP. This is below what was predicted by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who forecast a deficit of \$382.6 billion, and below what the government itself predicted in the fall economic statement, namely a deficit of \$381.6 billion or 17.5% of GDP.

The difference between today’s deficit and the one the Conservatives left us in 1993-94 is that today’s is not structural. In other words, it is not based on long-term commitments that are politically difficult to reverse. Unlike the 1993-94 deficit, today’s will begin to fade quickly. The deficit will drop in 2021-22, to 6.4% of GDP, and then to 2.3% of GDP in 2022-23. What this means is that in 2022-23, the deficit-to-GDP ratio will be one-third of what it was at the end of the Mulroney government.

Some perspective is in order on the debt as well. At the end of World War II, the debt-to-GDP ratio was 100%. The debt-to-GDP ratio in 1993-94 was 71.9%. By contrast, the debt-to-GDP ratio for 2020-21 will be 49%, rising to 51.2% next year, and then declining as the economy grows and the pandemic eases. It is worth noting that Canada has the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. This includes combined net debt of all three levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal.

Now, let us turn to inflation. The member for Carleton spoke a great deal about monetary policy and inflation in his budget day speech. First, let us be clear, the government does not control monetary policy. Everyone knows that. Those who suggest that quantitative easing is Liberal government policy are being disingenuous, and it is disingenuous bordering on fearmongering to suggest that the Bank of Canada’s quantitative easing will bring Canada to the brink of German 1930s-style hyperinflation.

● (1325)

The budget forecasts inflation of 2.2% in 2021, 2% in 2022 and 2.1% in 2023, which is closer to a risk of deflation, I would think. The Bank of Canada, for its part, predicts inflation will ease back to 2% over the second half of 2021 and remain there on a sustained basis.

The Budget

The risk of inflation is low because the money supply does not work the same way as it did in the past. The Conservatives have not caught up with that fact. Today, for example, quantitative easing involves encouraging banks to extend credit, which increases capacity and supply, and that works against inflation.

Judging from what members of the official opposition are saying, the Bank of Canada should have kept money tight, yet at the same time they agree that deficits were needed to support Canadians in a time of crisis, so what would a combination of emergency deficits and tight money look like?

Well, it would look a lot like the 1980s, a lot like the era of Reaganomics: namely, deficits with skyrocketing interest rates. What would that have done to Canadians struggling through the worst of the pandemic, lining up at their financial institutions for mortgage relief and loan extensions for their businesses? It would have meant disaster. Unfortunately, that appears to be the economic prescription of the party opposite: Reaganomics 101, to the detriment of the middle class.

I would like to turn to productivity growth and international competitiveness. Namely, I would like to turn to child care. Over the last 40 years, the rising number of women in the workforce has accounted for about a third of Canada's real GDP per capita growth. Experts agree that our prosperity will depend on greater equality between women and men. RBC Economics has estimated that adding more women to the workforce could boost Canada's GDP by as much as 4% and even offset expected economic declines associated with an aging population.

[*Translation*]

Any measure that would help increase women's participation in the workforce would have a beneficial effect on the economy.

Canada's strength and beauty lie in its federative structure. It creates a sort of laboratory where each province can implement programs that take its regional values and priorities into account, often with the federal government's support. If one province has a good idea, the others can follow suit.

Quebec's child care program is a good example of this type of cross-pollination, if you will. For many years, it was thought that the \$7-a-day child care program was a luxury paid for through equalization payments. Thanks to an analysis performed in 2013 by renowned Quebec economist Pierre Fortin, in collaboration with Luc Godbout and Suzie St-Cerny, we now know that this is not true. I will quickly summarize the findings of the analysis, which confirms the merits of the Quebec experience that inspired the proposals in the recent budget.

According to Professor Fortin, the \$7-a-day child care program allowed Quebec to increase the participation of women in workforce. In 1996, before the program was implemented, women's participation rate was 2.5% lower than the Canadian average. Fifteen years later, it was 2.5% higher. Professor Fortin's analysis estimated that, in 2008, approximately 70,000 working mothers were able to work specifically because of the \$7-a-day child care program.

It is also estimated that this influx of women into the workforce resulted in an increase of approximately \$5.1 billion in Quebec's

GDP that same year. Overall, the program had a positive effect that led to a \$919-million budget surplus in 2008 for the Quebec and federal governments, thanks to an increase in individual and corporate income tax, as well as a reduction in government transfer payments in the form of tax credits and deductions for child care expenses.

In short, both the economy and taxpayers will benefit from a child care program based on the Quebec model. This is a progressive budget in terms of social justice that will also benefit Canada's economy.

• (1330)

[*English*]

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the comments from my hon. colleague where he said that the government deficits are not the problem; inflation is, and as long as inflation is low, then deficits are the right thing to do. He rested his case on inflation being low last year, this year and into future years.

However, I speak to young families in my riding for whom home ownership has always been a dream, and now it has become an impossible dream because house prices are going up so much. For them, inflation is a real problem.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, I did not say that inflation is not a problem. What I said was that the current policies are not risking inflation above what really is the target for the Bank of Canada. Yes, house prices are going up, but from what I have read, one of the reasons for this is the new entrants into the market. Those are new families buying homes.

As the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said last week, the problem when it comes to housing prices, as it is always a question of supply and demand, is the supply of housing. It will be important to increase the supply of housing. I believe that once the pandemic is over and the pace of home construction picks up, the supply will expand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are in the middle of a serious health crisis, but there is also a social crisis on the horizon.

This morning I spoke with representatives from Réseau SOLIDARITÉ Itinérance du Québec. Homelessness experts predict that the consequences will continue to be felt for years, perhaps as many as five or 10 years. People made vulnerable by the crisis will become homeless.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, funding was announced to deal with the major problem of homelessness. In my riding, a wonderful 24-7, low-barrier shelter called La Halte du coin opened during the pandemic.

Funding was announced in the economic statement and the budget, but no one knows what is going to happen after July 1.

Will these resources continue to exist? The need is there, and it is dire. The government is announcing funding, but it is not meeting expectations.

When will we find out whether these resources will remain open after July 1?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, the issue of homelessness is a priority for our government.

We unveiled a housing policy. Over the years, we have added more money. I think we are now at \$70 billion or more.

A shelter will also be opening in my riding for youth at risk of homelessness.

All I can tell my colleague is that it is a priority for the government. I am certain that the government will meet expectations.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the ultrarich are becoming richer, while the people who need help continue to struggle. Budget 2021 failed to bring in a pandemic profiteering tax or a wealth tax. It continues to subsidize the oil and gas industry.

My question to the member is this. When will the government do the right thing, stop the expansion of the TMX pipeline, stop the subsidies for the oil and gas industry, and bring in a wealth tax and profiteering tax for the ultrarich?

• (1335)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, the TMX is well on its way. That decision has been made, so it has been dealt with. There are people who work in the oil industry in Alberta and other places. Many are without jobs. They are suffering and that is creating social problems in certain parts of the country.

In terms of a profiteering tax, over a number of years the government has brought in measures to reduce home speculation and so on. Anyway, we are on it.

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with my colleague, the member for Lethbridge.

I am honoured and pleased to rise today, albeit virtually, on behalf of the good people of Simcoe—Grey to share their concerns about this budget. I have to say that after waiting two years, there were great expectations for what it would perhaps contain, but I am sad to report that the budget has not been received very positively here in my riding. It is unbelievable how lukewarm the response to this budget has been so far. Of every person I have talked to, every person who has called my office and every person who has emailed me, not one has given glowing reviews so far.

The Budget

Some are relieved that some of the COVID support programs are being continued, but residents of Simcoe—Grey would have preferred to see a plan to reopen our country. However, this would mean that the government has a plan for rapid testing and increased vaccine procurement. We know that, unfortunately, this is not the case, so we have to make do with the existing programs that support lockdowns and not having a plan to reopen our country.

In addition to being underwhelming, this budget contains some real problems.

Let us start with a very important issue for many here in Simcoe—Grey: support for our seniors, a group that has faced huge challenges during this pandemic. A 10% increase in OAS is something, at least. It is about \$62 a month. A \$500 one-time payment is certainly better than nothing. It is more than the current Liberal government provided seniors all this past year, but it is certainly less than what the House of Commons called for on March 8, when it passed the member for Shefford's motion calling on the government to increase OAS for every senior by \$100 per month.

When the Minister of Seniors voted against that motion, I honestly had hopes that the government was planning a bigger increase. Like the seniors in Simcoe—Grey, I was disappointed to learn this was not in the government's plan, but I was astonished to learn that the government's mediocre plan does not even include all seniors.

Everyone knows by now that the Liberal government is making the wedging of provinces against each other a priority. In fact, the Prime Minister spent much of the last campaign, un-prime ministerially, slugging Ontario and Alberta to desperately gain votes. Who would have thought he would stoop so low as to wedge seniors against one another? The Liberals have created two tiers of seniors in this country: seniors who get the additional 10% OAS support and the \$500, and those who do not. In effect, we have created two classes, junior seniors and senior seniors.

Marlee Workman from Wasaga Beach felt so betrayed by the current government, she told me she thinks the Prime Minister's plan for seniors is to hope that the vaccine failures ensure that no seniors will hit the age of 75. Imagine feeling that betrayed by one's own government. It is rare to hear seniors hope to get older, but that seems to be their only hope to get help from the current Liberal government.

My constituent Lloyd Lancaster told me about his friend who called him the other day, all excited to tell him that the government was finally doing something for seniors. Lloyd said, "Read the fine print." After reading it, he certainly was not very excited.

The Budget

Another constituent, Annette MacDonald, told me she voted twice for this Prime Minister, but then shared with me a copy of a letter she wrote to him after reading the budget: “To add insult to injury, your new Budget contains nothing for me. Somehow seniors aged 65-74 are not considered seniors anymore! This is the final insult!”

It is just so puzzling to make this distinction. Why create two tiers of seniors? I wonder whether the Minister of Seniors even speaks up at the cabinet table, because the Liberals seem to have money for everyone and every group—in fact, the Liberals even announced \$1.4 billion in new funding for developing countries—but they cannot spare a penny for those aged 65 to 74 here in Canada. The budget even explicitly states on page 114, “We owe our elders a great debt.” I must have missed the asterisk that says it is only applicable to those 75 and over. The legacy of this minister will be of one who created Canada's two-tier system for seniors, and that should not be anyone's legacy.

What about farmers, the ones who feed us? Farmers in Simcoe—Grey were looking forward to this budget for a long time, but they are disappointed too. There is no exemption on the punitive carbon tax, which so many of them were calling for. Many local farmers have called my office frustrated with the Liberal carbon tax. I had a farmer tell me that the rebate is an absolute joke and it does not even come close to covering the additional cost.

Because the Liberals want to charge farmers more to produce our food, the average farmer is left with two choices. First, they can eat the thousands of dollars in additional costs, which means less money for their families, less money going to RESPs for their kids, or having to work a few extra years before retirement, and that is not fair.

• (1340)

The other option is to pass these costs along to Canadians. This is the option that most farmers will be forced to choose.

We know the Prime Minister will not care about a few extra bucks here and there, but do members know who will end up feeling the pinch? It will be the average working families living in the suburbs and our small towns. They cannot leave their condo to stroll to the market, nor can they take a subway to work. Their carbon rebate does not cover what they pay already, and when the increased cost of food is factored in, they will be further alienated from the government.

We need to ensure that our Canadian farmers will continue to be prosperous and ensure that their children, and the next generations, will be able to follow in their footsteps and continue to make sure that we have food security here in Canada. This budget does not do that.

What about small businesses? Small businesses across my riding have been struggling for over a year now. While many were able to get assistance, it took months of pressure from this side of the House and from Canadians from coast to coast to force the government to make programs easier to access and available to most. Even now, there are many small business owners who still cannot get assistance.

The government's failure to procure vaccines means that these lockdowns need to continue across Canada. Our businesses are forced to stay closed while those around the world begin to reopen.

My constituent Laura-Lee Gambie of Mountain Men's Barber-shop in Collingwood had saved her money, signed her lease in February 2020 and opened in August. She has had to temporarily close a number of times since then, and if members can believe it, she is not eligible for any supports. I have raised this problem, which she and others like her are facing, regularly in the House of Commons. My colleagues have all done the same.

I, along with Laura-Lee and others, had hoped that the government would correct this glaring flaw in this budget, but the government has failed her and others like her. “I feel abandoned by my own government”, she told me. “What do we have to do to get help?” It is not fair that new businesses are not eligible for any supports, and quite frankly, the government should not be picking which businesses will succeed or fail based on the date they opened.

While COVID has put a hit on businesses across Simcoe—Grey, it is not like this was a pro-small business government before this pandemic hit. We all know this government thinks that small business owners are tax cheats.

We know we need to reduce taxes for small businesses. Businesses that will be lucky enough to reopen when Canada finally gets back to normal will have missed over a year of regular sales. A targeted reduction on taxes for small businesses would have been a boost to the bottom line and an expression of confidence that things will be getting back to normal soon, but the government gave small business owners neither. They gave them no tax reductions, and they have given them no confidence that businesses will be back to normal any time soon.

Mike and Terri Jerry own two small clothing stores in my riding. Mike told me that while they have been able to squeak by with limited openings and the Liberal government assistance, getting their sales back to normal will take time. He was hoping for targeted tax relief. He told me that every 1% or 2% makes a huge difference, and that it all adds up. It sure would have been welcomed after the year that they have had.

The Budget

What worries most of my constituents is what will happen to the tax levels if the Liberals win a majority government. There are no increases in taxation in this budget per se, as the Liberals would not put a tax increase in a budget that they want to campaign on, but despite what members have heard, we all know that budgets do not balance themselves. While the Liberals made promises that taxes are not going up, can we really believe that?

Carbon taxes were not going up either. Do members remember that? It is terrifying to think what the government would do if it had a majority government. With every man, woman and child in this country now owing \$33,000 in federal debt, how long will it be before the Liberal tax collector comes calling?

The Prime Minister likes to say that he took on debt for Canada so that families did not have to, but servicing the debt surely will not be coming out of his trust fund. It will be coming out of our pockets, our kids' pockets and their kids' pockets. That is how bad our debt is now.

No one begrudges the spending made to fight COVID and to provide supports, but the Liberals foolishly ran billions of dollars in deficits before COVID, so when COVID came, we were ill prepared as a country. Now we are worse off with absolutely no plan at all to return to balanced budgets or to get the economy back on track. Supporting Canadians is essential, but if the government had its act together, we would be getting back to work, not in our latest and, so far, worst lockdown.

• (1345)

This is nothing more than an election budget that caters to the Liberals' targeted electoral groups and leaves the rest of us behind. I, like so many other Canadians, am disappointed—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member's time has expired. He will have time during questions and comments to add to this debate.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I, like the member opposite, understand the importance of agriculture, but I want to correct the record. There were almost \$400 million in the fall economic statement for greening initiatives in agriculture to support the work that is already going on, and there are almost \$400 million more in the budget, so I was a little disappointed in his remarks.

The member mentioned our price on pollution. I am curious as to what he says to his constituents when he talks about the Conservative carbon tax. Does he think that is a program that will actually help individuals. They are focusing on larger emitters. Who does he think those costs are going to get passed on to? It will be the average person and the average farmer.

Why does he think it is a good idea for a Conservative government to tell individuals how to go about spending their own money? Our plan returns the money to individuals. Ironically, the Conservatives want a big government plan where they have savings accounts for every individual.

Could the member opine on what he tells his constituents?

Mr. Terry Dowdall: Madam Speaker, in my riding there are many farmers with many types of farming operations and each and every one of them is frustrated. As many members know, Conservatives had a couple of bills before the House to assist farmers, whether it was to get rid of the carbon tax for farmers or to pass farms on to family members, hopefully making it a little more enticing and keeping people in the industry.

I do not know where he is getting his facts that people are happy with the supposed funding that farmers are getting. A lot of it does not seem to be trickling down to the farmers in my area. However, I can say that when farmers get their bills, the increase because of the carbon tax is astronomical. As I said in my speech, farmers have two options. Sometimes they are tied into the price—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to allow time for more questions.

Continuing with questions and comments, the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, as my colleague pointed out, large sums of money are earmarked for distribution in the budget, yet some sectors seem to have been forgotten.

The budget seems to leave out SMEs, especially those in the arts, culture and tourism sectors.

What does my colleague think about the abrupt, unilateral termination of support measures like the wage subsidy, when these businesses need them to continue until 2022?

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Dowdall: Madam Speaker, I agree that certain industries have been hit extremely hard during this pandemic. We will have to make sure we find a way to continue to take care of them. That is very important.

Part of the problem today is that it took so long to change the commercial rent subsidy so that tenants could receive it. A lot of businesses are no longer around because they had to wait so long. As I said in my speech, another big problem, which I am sure you are hearing of in your riding, and which Liberals should be hearing about in their ridings, is the number of businesses that opened in the past year that are getting no funding. I do not know how any government could feel good about the fact that we are picking winners and losers.

The Budget

• (1350)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that he is to address all questions and comments through the Chair and not to the individual member.

We have time for a brief question. The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, what we have learned during the pandemic is that, when we do not look after all people and when we fail to address social inequality and inequities, we place the whole population at risk. People are falling through the cracks. We know this. It is exacerbating the severity of the pandemic. This includes seniors, yet the Liberal government let their rich friends off the hook and chose not to include a GLBI, a guaranteed livable basic income, in the budget. According to the PBO, a GLBI would lift over half of the population out of poverty, including many seniors.

Does my hon. colleague support implementing a GLBI as a way to lift seniors out of poverty?

Mr. Terry Dowdall: Madam Speaker, the number one calls I consistently receive in my office, even pre-pandemic, are those from seniors who are falling behind. I believe we are not doing enough. We need to do more for our seniors moving forward. The seniors in my riding are all extremely frustrated. Certainly, we, as a country, have to look after them. They have paid into taxes for years and years, and they made this country as great as it is today.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague on being the first female Canadian finance minister to introduce a budget in the House of Commons. Though we are on opposite sides of the House, it is phenomenal. I do want to acknowledge that.

Although I am glad the government finally decided to introduce a budget after more than two years, it must be pointed out that we are the only country in the G7 that went this long without one. Despite the unprecedented amount of government spending that has taken place, it is only now that we are being presented with a spending plan. This, I believe, is absolutely unacceptable.

It certainly does not speak of a government that is striving for openness, transparency and accountability, as it often advertises. I recognize there has been a pandemic, but nearly every other government in the country, whether provincial and municipal, has put forward a budget during this time. If they were able to do so, then surely the Liberal government was also able to do the same.

Before the budget was tabled, constituents shared with me that they were hoping to see a real plan for economic recovery and for reopening society as we know it. They were hoping for a restoration of hope and confidence in our future. Those who are unemployed shared with me that they were hoping to see a plan to create new jobs and economic opportunities for their families.

Those in the oil and gas sector shared with me that they were hoping to see some support for this world-class industry. Those who own local businesses and create jobs were hoping they would no longer have to be on the verge of permanently closing their doors. They were hoping that proper supports would be offered to them and that we would go back to normal.

Sadly, what the Liberal government delivered was a 700-page budget that will increase Canada's debt load by \$1.3 trillion by 2022 and includes very little for those who call Alberta home. This is not stimulus spending focused on creating jobs, but rather spending on Liberal partisan priorities. Although there are some necessary support measures contained in this budget for Canadians who are still getting through the economic challenges due to the pandemic, it goes well beyond what is necessary. This is like the government going to Gucci when it really should be going to Walmart. It is not going with its own credit card. It is going with ours, the Canadian people. This is the deal: The government racks up the debt, and Canadians foot the bill.

A strategic budget would have targeted revenue-generating industries in our country so that one dollar would turn into three dollars. Instead, we see massive amounts of cash being flushed through the country in a manner that benefits the current government's partisan interests, rather than the well-being of Canadians as a whole. The budget will extend the pandemic economic recession longer than necessary due to its exorbitant spending.

Canada is in a rough situation right now. People are hurting emotionally, psychologically, economically and physically. That must be acknowledged. Canadians are looking for a way out, a change, not more of the same. Sadly, that is what this budget is.

It is a perpetuation of our current fiscal state where unemployment rates are high, government handouts are a primary source of income and the human spirit is severely damaged. It is a superficial solution that does not fix the real problem of a struggling economy and a struggling people. This was an opportunity for the government to chart a course toward a return to pre-COVID times. Of course, I would propose 2014 to take that opportunity, but that said, I would take 2019 at this point.

Instead, we see a Liberal government that is extending the pandemic economic recovery efforts with this budget. This will put us at a serious competitive disadvantage globally, especially when we see other countries returning to normal. Their economic engines are running again and ours is being flooded with no hope of a jump start. It is hard not to be envious of countries such as the United States, where concerts are taking place on Fridays, sports stadiums are full on Saturdays and churches are bustling with life on Sundays. In Taiwan, life is basically back to normal and has been for a long time due to its rapid response to the virus. It had a total of 1,100 cases and only 12 deaths. That is amazing.

The current government seems to wear federal debt as a badge of honour. It is bizarre and troubling. More borrowing and spending does not equate to good governance. Under the Prime Minister, Canada has incurred the largest per capita deficit and hit the highest unemployment rate in the G7, which means Canada has spent the most to achieve the least. Money spent is not a measuring stick for success as much as the government would like to use it as such. Lowering the unemployment rate or growing our national GDP are things that are worth celebrating and using as measures of success.

Just a few weeks before the Liberal budget was tabled, the Deputy Prime Minister said, “I really believe COVID has created a window of political opportunity”. This mentality is truly shocking and troublesome, but it also explains how the Liberals view this pandemic. They see it as an opportunity to re-engineer society according to their value set. It is exploitive and wrong.

• (1355)

The Prime Minister's “reimagined economy” is a risky Ottawa-knows-best approach that picks winners and losers by design. He is dictating which jobs, sectors and regions of our country will stay afloat and prosper and which will be left to perish. Never before has there been such a divisive prime minister in this nation.

Canadians know the government has no money of its own. Anything the government spends comes from taxes and borrowing. What the government borrows, Canadians pay back through taxation. There is no such thing as a free lunch, regardless of how the government tries to package it. The thing about government spending is that it always comes back to the people at a significant cost. It is common knowledge that when taxes go up, an unfriendly or even hostile environment is created for business. High taxes result in businesses leaving the country for other jurisdictions where they are not taxed to fill government coffers. The problem with businesses leaving the country is that they take jobs with them. When they take jobs with them, they also take the revenue that the government relies on for the social safety net that Canadians enjoy so much. This results in higher unemployment and more Canadians being dependent on the government for support, as opposed to being independent and self-sufficient because they have jobs. This pattern is extremely detrimental to the Canadian people, but highly beneficial for a political party that only maintains power when Canadians are dependent on government.

Instead of working to get Canadians out of the dole line, it seems as though the Liberals are doing everything in their power to prolong the current situation and to capitalize on an obliged and increasingly indebted electorate. So much federal money has been spent on COVID-19 benefit programs that, on average, Canadians now have more personal income than they did pre-COVID, even though the average employment income has fallen dramatically.

Let us talk about big government. This is not a budget that a responsible government would put forward: It is a budget that sets up an opportunistic Prime Minister for success in the event of an election. Notably, despite the massive debt incurred, this budget failed in a few key areas. There is no plan to fight the pandemic. This is interesting, because the Prime Minister touted this budget as his pandemic response. There is no new money for health care trans-

fers, no fiscal anchor or debt-management strategy. That is atrocious for a national budget.

Canada needs a prime minister who sees the solution to our country's current challenges and where they truly lie. It is not the government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to interrupt the hon. member. She will have two minutes to continue her speech before questions and comments afterward as we have run out of time at this point.

Statements by Members, the hon. member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize a long-serving, much-loved physician in Mississauga, Dr. Edric Sum and to congratulate him on his retirement.

Dr. Sum was born in Wuhan, China after World War II and moved to Hong Kong with his family. He graduated from the University of Hong Kong's Medical School, and came to Canada to pursue further training in pediatrics. Like so many of us, Dr. Sum decided to make Canada his home. He began to practise medicine in Mississauga in 1974, and later served as Secretary of the Department of Family Medicine of the then Mississauga Hospital.

Dr. Sum looked after my family and me for many years, alongside thousands of other Mississauga residents for whom he cared over the decades. His younger daughter followed her father's passion and is practising psychiatry in Scarborough.

I extend my sincerest thanks to Dr. Sum for his extraordinary service to our community. I ask all members of the House to join me in wishing him a long, healthy and fulfilling retirement.

* * *

• (1400)

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Madam Speaker, my constituents are angry. They are angry because the Prime Minister and his Liberals have done a terrible job of fighting COVID. They have failed.

Statements by Members

Let us count the ways. First, they failed from the get-go to recognize COVID as a pandemic. Second, they refused early on to stop flights from COVID hot spots. Third, they shipped 16 tonnes of vital PPE to Communist China, when Canadians needed it. Fourth, they gambled that a deal with Communist China would get us vaccines. It failed. Now we are still way behind other countries on vaccinations. Fifth, they failed on contact tracing. Sixth, they failed on rapid testing.

There are real consequences for these failures: massive unemployment, constant lockdowns, sickness and death. Canada is renowned for world-class health care, but the Liberals have failed us. Canadians deserve better.

* * *

FOR OUR KIDS

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I recently had the great privilege of meeting with members of For Our Kids, including Ms. Emily Gray, Dr. Tonja Stothart and Dr. Sarah Sloan.

For Our Kids is an Ottawa-based climate advocacy group representing hundreds of parents across the Ottawa-Gatineau area. It is associated with a network of thousands of other mothers, fathers and grandparents across Canada. Together, they are rightly concerned with the well-being of their children and grandchildren due to the climate emergency that faces our country and the world.

I was inspired by their message that with all these crises, we need to build political will. We need to work together as politicians and as leaders to avert the climate crisis.

I thank For Our Kids again for its continued advocacy.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DR. PIERRE LAPOINTE

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I want to pay tribute to Dr. Pierre Lapointe from Val-David, in the wonderful Laurentides RCM.

Dr. Lapointe has been a rural physician for nearly 40 years, playing an invaluable role in the community. He started his career in Rivière-Rouge, before moving to Labelle, in my beautiful riding of Laurentides—Labelle. Everyone appreciates his dedication and sympathetic ear. Dr. Lapointe is active and involved in the community, having served as mayor of Val-David.

He has been practising medicine at the Val-Morin health care cooperative for the past 10 years and is the only doctor for more than 1,800 people. I wish him many more years of good health, since he wants to remain active for a long time.

I want to express our support, on behalf of all of his patients. Thank you, Dr. Lapointe, for continuing to care for us.

* * *

APPALACHIAN CORRIDOR

Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Thursday was Earth Day. I want to mark the occasion by acknowl-

edging the excellent nature conservation work being done in Brome—Missisquoi.

Since 2002, the organization Appalachian Corridor has been working to increase the acreage of protected natural areas in the Eastern Townships. The group recently finalized the purchase of 125 hectares of Mont Foster to protect it in perpetuity. This land will be added to the 15,000-plus hectares the organization has already saved over the years. Thanks to this purchase, no less than a dozen species at risk will be able to maintain their natural habitat.

Fortunately, the achievements of Appalachian Corridor have not gone unnoticed. The organization earned an Eastern Townships environmental award of excellence. Its conservation efforts are a true gift to future generations and I will always be there to support initiatives that preserve the wonders of our region.

In closing, I want to thank Mélanie Lelièvre and the entire Appalachian Corridor team for their excellent work.

* * *

● (1405)

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal budget is a massive lunch box letdown for York—Simcoe residents.

The budget raises taxes on families, with no plan to create jobs or support small businesses. It lets down pensioners in Pefferlaw, who are on fixed incomes and struggling to overcome the rising costs of living. It lets down young families in East Gwillimbury, whose dreams of owning a home are being pushed further and further away. It lets down farmers in the Holland Marsh, who are taking on immense financial risks with no measures in place to protect them or safeguard our food supply.

The budget also fails to fund critical infrastructure projects and to support environmental initiatives such as the Lake Simcoe cleanup fund. It is also shameful that in the middle of the pandemic there was no increased support for health care. It is clear with this budget that the Liberal plan is not working for York—Simcoe residents. That is why Conservatives are focused on ensuring that all Canadians can create better lives for their children.

* * *

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me tremendous pleasure today to recognize Newfoundland and Labrador's chief medical officer, Dr. Janice Fitzgerald. She has worked tirelessly to help our province navigate safely through the COVID-19 pandemic, has prevented many widespread breakouts from happening and saved countless lives.

Because of her work ethic and quick responses to situations, Dr. Fitzgerald is being honoured in her, and my, hometown of Centreville-Wareham-Trinity. Mayor Gibbons and the town are naming a popular lookout in Blacks Brook Park in her honour.

I cannot think of anybody more deserving of this dedication than Dr. Fitzgerald, especially since the lookout is just above her childhood home. Soon residents and visitors alike will be able to visit Dr. Fitzgerald Hold Fast Lookout and always remember the service and dedication she has given to our province.

Please join me in sending our sincere thanks and congratulations to Newfoundland's hero, Dr. Janice Fitzgerald.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CHILD CARE

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House virtually to commend our Minister of Finance for her efforts to ensure that parents in Canada are able to fully participate in our economy.

Too often, because of a lack of resources, new mothers have to put their careers on hold to take care of their children. My mother had to go back to work after a three-month maternity leave, and I was lucky enough that my grandmother was able to care for me. However, I know that is not an option for every mother.

Budget 2021 will correct that injustice. An early child care program that will cut the cost of child care in half by next year and that will bring the average cost of child care down to \$10 a day by 2025 is a policy that will transform our society.

When we invest in measures that enable everyone to participate in the development of our country, we end up with not only a feminist budget but also a more just and equal society.

On behalf of parents in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, I want to thank the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister.

* * *

MARIO GRENIER

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to my friend Mario Grenier, an extraordinary man who left us far too soon.

It was a shared passion for politics that brought us together as friends. Mario was the mayor of Saint-Sylvestre, in the Lotbinière RCM, for 25 years, and a municipal councillor for 10 years before that. He therefore dedicated 35 years of his life to municipal politics.

He was, without question, the leader of a dynamic and committed community. At work in his business, he always had a friendly smile and cherished the daily interactions he had with the people of his community.

On behalf of the entire community of Lévis—Lotbinière, I extend my sympathies to his wife Angèle, his children Stéphanie and Vincent and their spouses, as well as his grandchildren. Mario was a caring husband, and a devoted father and grandfather to his fami-

Statements by Members

ly, whom he loved dearly. Mario left a significant tangible mark on his community through his achievements and determination, not to mention his great *joie de vivre*. Now it is up to us to keep a special place in our hearts for him.

In memory of Mario, rest in peace, my friend.

* * *

ARMENIA

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 24, Armenians in Canada and around the world participated in a solemn commemoration of the 106th anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

In a matter of two years, the Turkish Ottoman Empire's systemic ethnic cleansing campaign took the lives of around 1.5 million people and forced around one million others to flee their homes.

● (1410)

[*English*]

Like many Canadians, I have close, personal ties to the Armenian community. Growing up, I learned of the Armenian genocide through stories shared by many best childhood friend, Nivarat Mardikyan, and family members who had seen the impact of these atrocities first-hand. These stories remind us of what human beings are capable of when driven by hate.

Today and everyday, let us reflect on the lives lost to genocide and recommit ourselves to standing against human rights abuse in all forms. We must never repeat the mistakes of the past. Let us not forget.

* * *

[*Translation*]

“SECURE THE ENVIRONMENT” PLAN

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our leader recently presented our ambitious environmental platform. The independent analysis by Navius Research confirmed that this plan would both create jobs and help us meet the Paris Agreement targets.

Instead of taxing Canadians and putting the money into government coffers, we are creating an open savings account for Canadians, who will be able to take concrete action for the environment and will incentivize everyone to adopt a greener lifestyle. There are also measures to increase the number of electric vehicles on our roads, reduce industrial emissions, protect our forests and waterways, ensure sustainable agriculture and more.

Statements by Members

The Conservatives have a concrete and realistic plan that will have a real impact on our planet and on people's lives. I invite Canadians and Quebecers to learn about our environmental plan. Together, we can make a difference. Together, we can take action for the environment.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected every Canadian across our great country. We as parliamentarians have a responsibility to be thinking ahead to how best to position Canada to thrive coming out of COVID.

The Conservatives understand the importance of jobs. Many have lost their jobs or have seen a reduction in their work. Canada has so much to offer. We grow and produce some of the best and safest food. We have tremendous manufacturing capacity that can put people to work and produce high-quality Canadian products to be sold both here and around the world. We produce some of the cleanest and most efficiently harvested natural resources in energy that can supply the world's needs. We have a healthy and sustainable fishery that can supply an ever-growing demand for high-quality and sustainably sourced seafood. We have the infrastructure and the vital personnel in our truckers to get our goods to market both in Canada and abroad.

Canada has so much potential to thrive coming out of COVID if the proper steps are taken now to secure Canada's jobs, to secure Canada's economy and to secure Canada's future. That is exactly what we as Conservatives plan to do.

* * *

FORMER LEADER OF THE ONTARIO NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, it is with great honour that I am able to share some words with the House about an incredible fellow New Democrat, a leader, someone who is a humanitarian, a diplomat and a scholar.

Stephen Lewis has lifted the lives of millions of people and someone who continues to inspire future generations of progressive leaders. He right now is battling a very serious illness, but he does not want us to talk about that illness. He does not want us to talk about him. He wants us to do what he has always advocated for, speaking about people who need help the most.

Recently, Stephen Lewis has indicated exactly who those people are: people who come from low-income countries that are not able to afford the vaccines to fight this global pandemic. We stood shoulder to shoulder recently, fighting against big pharma and urging the Liberal government to give these countries a fighting chance against the pandemic.

The same way Stephen Lewis throughout his life has shared love and compassion for others, the same way he has stood for people, today I want Stephen Lewis and his family to know that we stand with them.

[Translation]

MOBILES NEWSPAPER

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 2004, a new community paper called *Mobiles* was published for the first time in Saint-Hyacinthe. Now, in 2021, *Mobiles* is a monthly paper that reaches 55,000 readers in print, 114,000 readers online and 20,000 Facebook followers. *Mobiles* covers a broad range of topics and is a fixture in our community. The people of Saint-Hyacinthe are proud of their dynamic local paper.

Last week, three of *Mobiles*'s finest were honoured at the Association des médias écrits communautaires du Québec gala. Guillaume Mousseau, the paper's marketing director, won the digital engagement award for the second year running. Reporter Roger Lafrance won first place in the interview category, and Carl Vaillancourt took third in the reporting category.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to extend my hearty and sincere congratulations to *Mobiles* for its latest accolades at the AMECQ gala.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

GARRETT CUMMING

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to speak of an extraordinary individual and constituent who left us on March 5. He lived life to the fullest and accomplished more than most would in 35 years. He lived his life with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, which provided challenges but never defined him. He managed to complete two degrees, travel the world and was an enormous inspiration to many.

This remarkable young man's name is Garrett Cumming, and he is our son. He wrote a piece years ago that is framed on my desk about me as his role model, but he did not realize that he had it backward.

Today, I would also like to recognize a physician, a Dr. House of sorts. Dr. Lyle McGonigle started as a vet, realized after having kids that he could provide better care and returned to school to become a pediatrician. Dr. M. told Garrett, "I will see you for as long as you want", and that is what he did. He and his team offered Garrett straight, no-nonsense talk, always combined with compassion and care.

Garrett had a team of caregivers over the years who not only provided for his personal care, but assisted with his courses, travel and, most important, caring and companionship.

I thank the front-line workers.

Garrett is missed.

* * *

CLOTILDA DOUGLAS-YAKIMCHUK

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Cape Breton has lost one of its trailblazers and a pillar of the community. Clotilda Douglas-Yakimchuk was the first Black graduate from the Nova Scotia Hospital School of Nursing. She would go on to become the first and only Black president of the Registered Nurses Association of Nova Scotia. She served as director of the Education Services at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital and played a key role in bringing a nursing program to Cape Breton University.

Clotilda was an accomplished woman and an advocate for social justice in Whitney Pier and across Cape Breton. She has been recognized by her province and her country, receiving both the Order of Nova Scotia and the Order of Canada. A mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother, our province is brighter for having had her in it.

To her family and community, I offer my sincere condolences.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cover-up of General Vance's conduct went to the very top. The Minister of National Defence knew; the former clerk of the Privy Council, Michael Wernick, knew; the Prime Minister's senior adviser, Elder Marques, knew; and now we know the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford, knew, but the Prime Minister insists he did not, which leaves us with two options, when it comes to the Prime Minister's attitude toward sexual harassment in the military.

The Prime Minister is either grossly incompetent or he is complicit. Which one does he want Canadians to believe?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has absolutely no tolerance for misconduct. We followed the proper process, the same one the previous government followed.

The current leader of the official opposition was made aware of misconduct rumours in 2015. It was serious enough that he asked his staff to notify the former prime minister's chief of staff at that time, who then took it to the Privy Council Office for review. In other words, the same steps were followed.

Could the leader of the official opposition seriously have his party stand here and decry that process, the same one that he took?

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will answer my own question. The Prime Minister is both grossly

Oral Questions

incompetent and complicit when it comes to cover-up of sexual harassment in the military.

Once again, the Prime Minister was late at the border, and his measures are not strong enough to make a difference. The Prime Minister has never taken flights coming from hot spots seriously. In fact, today, somebody could fly in from India to Buffalo, New York, hop in a cab and cross the border into Canada. With that comes more COVID variants.

Canadians do want stronger measures. Will the Prime Minister protect our borders?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has one of the strongest border measures in the world. Travellers coming into Canada today need to get a COVID test prior to departure; then they need to be tested upon arrival; then they need to stay at a hotel for three days; then they need to finish their quarantine and get a test on day eight; and, if they are found to be infected while arriving, they are asked to spend the remainder of their quarantine period at a government facility.

Last week, we took extra measures and suspended flights from India and Pakistan.

• (1420)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is just not true, and that minister does not know his own file. People can fly into the U.S. from India or Pakistan, get in a car and drive across the border. There are no rapid tests at the border.

COVID-19 and double variants have been reported all around the world, including 50 countries, and the Prime Minister is just playing whack-a-mole when it comes to COVID-19. We need to stop flights from all hot spots now and we need to get rapid testing at the border now.

Is the Prime Minister going to wait a day, a week or never to make the right decision?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, far be it from me to correct the hon. member, but I will try. Travellers who come through the U.S. need to get a test in the U.S. prior to arriving at the border and then when arriving at the border, they have to get tested again.

Were her colleagues not asking for the suspension of the hotel quarantine just a few weeks ago? Thank goodness we did not listen to them.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is really appalling to see the Prime Minister and his government refusing to take any responsibility. When asked what he thought of the way he has handled this pandemic, the Prime Minister said that he had no regrets.

Oral Questions

Hundreds of thousands of Canadians are currently grappling with the pandemic. There were delays in managing the border and with rapid testing, and most importantly, there were supply failures. This Liberal government should take full and complete responsibility for that.

Does the Prime Minister agree with the idea of requiring rapid tests for all those arriving in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we have been there for Canadians, leading with science, evidence and with the advice of our chief public health officers and officials.

While we are talking about rapid tests, let us just talk about the rapid tests we have sent. We have sent over 25.4 million rapid tests to provinces and territories, over 4.7 to Quebec alone, and we did not stop there. We have also provided expertise, guidance and support to deploy those tests.

We will stop at nothing to ensure Canadians have the tools they need to protect themselves during this pandemic.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the same old bad Liberal approach. They keep saying that they are doing their job and that it is the provinces that are not doing their job. They have such contempt for our provincial partners.

The reality is that in January and February, Canada went 10 days without any vaccine deliveries, and that had nothing to do with the provinces. The government and the Minister of Health should take full and complete responsibility.

Does the Minister of Health agree with our proposal to require rapid tests for everyone crossing the border? Yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we have managed to provide provinces and territories and, indeed, Canadians with the tools they need when they need them, including rapid tests. We will stop at nothing.

As my colleague has said, we have some of the strongest measures at the border, including at the land border. In fact, international travel represents 1.4% of infectivity in this country, and they are caught by our border measures. They are quarantined.

In fact, what we see is infection rates in communities posing the greatest risk, and that is why we are going to continue to be there for PTs with health human resources, with testing, with expertise and anything else they need to get through this third wave.

* * *

[Translation]

LABOUR

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the program *Tout le monde en parle* yesterday, regarding the strike at the Port of Montreal, the Prime Minister said that companies were diverting their ships because Montreal was unreliable.

It is not Montreal that is unreliable, but rather the Liberal government, which has let the conflict drag on for eight months. Now the conflict is really getting out of hand.

The Minister of Labour said that all possible solutions have been exhausted, but she has not even tried the most obvious one, namely getting the parties to the table and talking before introducing special legislation. Time is running out.

What are the Liberals going to do to make up for eight months of inaction?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois likes to say that it will defend Quebec. The Bloc does not have to be all talk, because it can take action now.

Quebec is suffering greatly as a result of the closure of the Port of Montreal, and the city is not alone in that suffering. Quebec families are worried about their jobs and their futures.

Will Quebec be able to count on the Bloc Québécois to support the resumption of operations at the port? Will the Bloc turn its back on Quebec or will it join us in moving forward together?

• (1425)

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is the result of eight months of Liberal inaction.

The Prime Minister is incapable of acting under pressure. There are plenty of examples. Last year, the Liberals let the CN labour dispute drag on until a propane shortage threatened farmers' crops. They let the Wet'suwet'en conflict drag on to the point where the Prime Minister even asked the police to deal with indigenous protesters. Now, Ottawa has let the Montreal port strike drag on to the point where it has to propose special legislation. This is a government of laggards.

Why does every labour dispute involving the Prime Minister deteriorate to the point of threatening our economy? He needs to wake up.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for once, the Bloc Québécois has the opportunity to act, but it is refusing to do so.

The Bloc Québécois is very good at talking, but when it comes to taking action, supporting the government and making a difference for all Quebecers, just like that, it starts twiddling its thumbs.

What does he think about what Minister Pierre Fitzgibbon, Minister Jean Boulet, Michel Leblanc, François Vincent and Stéphane Paquet are saying? Whether they are from the Quebec government or from industry, all stakeholders are telling us that we need to resolve this problem.

The Bloc Québécois has the opportunity to stand up for Quebec. Will it do so?

HEALTH

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

These are tough times. Essential workers are getting sick. All their family members are getting sick. Even young people are getting sick now.

Thirteen-year-old Emily lost her life. Her dad works in a factory. That is exactly why we need to act right now to improve access to paid sick leave and to vaccinate the people who need it most.

When will the Prime Minister take action to save lives?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2021 contains historic investments for workers, for training, for job creation and for employment insurance, as well as support measures to help us get through this crisis.

Paid sick leave has been a key public health measure since the onset of the pandemic. Workers have access to four weeks of benefits for the Canada recovery sickness benefit. In budget 2021, we will extend EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks, which will provide additional support to approximately 169,000 Canadians.

The government will help Canadians get through this crisis.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just spoke about a 13-year-old girl who lost her life to COVID-19. What kind of response was that? We have people dying in this country, and workers are going into work sick because they cannot access paid sick leave. That is not good enough. We need to save lives. We know the answers. The experts have made it clear. We need better access to paid sick leave, and we need to vaccinate the communities that need help the most. The most vulnerable people in our society are the ones who are dying.

When will the Prime Minister take action to save these lives?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course our hearts go out to the families and friends of every single person lost in the COVID-19 pandemic, and especially to the family of that 13-year-old girl.

We have made paid sick leave a key public health measure since the onset of the pandemic. Workers have access to four weeks of benefits for the CRSB. We have raised EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks. We are working with the provinces to complement the support they can and are, thank goodness, starting to provide.

Make no mistake. We know how important it is for workers to have access to paid sick leave. That is why we have done it since day one of this pandemic.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

LABOUR

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, dock workers at the Port of Montreal have been without a contract since 2018. The government has allowed uncertainty to hang over this highly strategic port for more than two years.

As I said last week, the Liberals are slow to make decisions, and they are slow to act. Instead of being proactive, they wait until the problem is too obvious to ignore. Now the dock workers have started an open-ended general strike. Why did the Liberals take so long to act?

● (1430)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been there from the very beginning, more than two and a half years ago, to help the parties negotiate. In the past 100 days, we provided a federal mediator.

There is a consensus in Quebec that we need to intervene to get the port running again. The Government of Quebec is asking for this, as are all of the stakeholders, because thousands of jobs and the supply chain are at risk, as are the Port of Montreal's credibility and reputation. I would like my colleague to tell me whether the Conservatives will support us.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Because of this situation, companies in Canada and around the world now consider the Port of Montreal to be so unreliable that they are taking their business to other North American seaports. We are basically a laughingstock.

Quebec minister Pierre Fitzgibbon said this morning that the situation is critical for our businesses and that two strikes in one year is not acceptable. The other thing that is not acceptable is the Liberal government's inaction. Why are the Liberals content with their failure and weakness?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we have been there from the start of the negotiations. I am fine with listening to my Conservative colleague lecture the government and the entire planet, but he has a chance to do something.

He can complain and criticize everyone else, but this is a minority government, and we need the support of an opposition party. Will my colleague continue to complain, or will he stand up for Quebec and support the government?

*Oral Questions**[English]***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the former senior adviser to the Prime Minister, Elder Marques, told the defence committee that the Prime Minister's chief of staff was directly aware of the allegations against General Vance three years ago. It was Katie Telford who directed Mr. Marques to contact the defence minister's office and report back to her on multiple occasions. The Liberals cannot seriously expect Canadians to believe that Ms. Telford withheld this crucial information from the Prime Minister.

When will the Prime Minister take responsibility and quit misleading Canadians?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated before, our government has absolutely no tolerance for misconduct. We followed the proper process, the same one the previous government followed. The current Leader of the Opposition was made aware of the misconduct of members in 2015. It was serious enough that he asked his staff to notify the Prime Minister's chief of staff, who then took it to the Privy Council Office for review; in other words, the same steps were followed. Can the leader of the official opposition seriously have his party stand here and decry that process, the same one that he took?

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has no tolerance, but he has taken no action.

The Prime Minister's stories keep changing on when he was aware of these allegations against General Vance, but the Clerk of the Privy Council knew, the Prime Minister's Office knew, the defence minister knew, the defence minister's office knew and the Prime Minister's chief of staff knew. It is impossible to believe that everyone around the Prime Minister knew, but somehow he did not.

Will the Prime Minister finally admit that he was aware of these allegations of sexual misconduct three years ago and explain why he failed to act?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, we have absolutely no tolerance for misconduct of any kind. In this matter, we followed the process that has been laid out by previous governments. I instructed my staff to get in touch with the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office and for the Privy Council Office to take action in this matter. A similar path was taken in 2015 by the leader of the official opposition, who learned of a rumour and then had his staff reach out to the PMO and the Privy Council Office. Does it sound familiar? It is. It is beyond belief that the Leader of the Opposition cannot see this now.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former senior advisor to the Prime Minister, Elder Marques, testified Friday before a parliamentary committee that the Prime Minister's chief of staff was aware of the allegations of sexual misconduct against General Vance. He added, and I quote, "Everyone had the same information."

The Minister of National Defence was aware, the former senior advisor was aware, military ombudsman Gary Walbourne was

aware, and Katie Telford, the Prime Minister's chief of staff, was aware. Will the Prime Minister finally admit that he, too, was aware, and that he misled Canadians by saying he was not?

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always taken the process very seriously. We actually saw the same process in 2015 for the same individual as we learned from Prime Minister Harper's former chief of staff. The leader of the official opposition heard of a rumour of misconduct, told his staff, who then told the PMO, which then told the Privy Council Office. Perhaps the leader of the official opposition knows more than he has been willing to say.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence can reread his notes 42,000 times, no one believes him.

The other problem with the Prime Minister is that, when he talks about women, he always presents himself as a great feminist prime minister. No one who knows what he did with the former justice minister and with the former health minister believes him.

Can the Prime Minister please stop misleading Canadians, tell the truth and admit that he knew about General Vance?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, we have no tolerance for misconduct. The same process was followed as the previous government. When the leader of the official opposition heard of a rumour in 2015, he told his staff to contact the PMO, which then contacted the Privy Council Office to launch an investigation. It was the same process, and that is exactly what we did.

We are going to be taking greater action to make sure that we root out sexual misconduct from the Canadian Armed Forces.

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*[Translation]***HEALTH**

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal budget does not include a recurring increase in health transfers for the next five years: not a penny for health for five years.

However, it contains \$3 billion to create Canada-wide standards for long-term care homes. I wonder how many thousands of nurses we could hire with \$3 billion. The federal government prefers using that money to produce reports and create more bureaucracy. Why will they not use the money to provide health care for people?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we have been there for provinces and territories during this pandemic and, indeed, we will be there after the pandemic, as the Prime Minister has committed. Nonetheless, let me run through the money with which we have supported Quebeckers and all Canadians through provincial and territorial transfers. There were \$19 billion as the first down payment on the expenses for the pandemic, and then an additional \$7 billion recently. Let me just say that we have provided all the PPE, all the testing, all the vaccines and, indeed, rapid response surge support with the Red Cross and other supports. We will be there now and after the pandemic.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is making the same mistake with mental health, allocating \$45 million to develop pan-Canadian standards. Once again, what the health system needs is workers and psychologists, not standards. What we need are people who provide care to people.

People who are experiencing mental health issues right now need to talk to health professionals, not Health Canada bureaucrats. Why is the government stubbornly refusing to increase health transfers now?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to say that we understand that Canadians are struggling during this pandemic and, indeed, were before, but of course living through a global pandemic is incredibly stressful and very distressing. That is why we created Wellness Together, because we knew that provinces and territories would need additional support to reach people in their time of need. All Canadians have access to this amazing resource that provides direct support from a variety of different measures in both official languages and with translations into 60 others.

We will be there for Canadians and Quebeckers during this difficult time.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa wants to create universal child care, like the program we created in Quebec 25 years ago. Obviously, Quebec wants to receive its share of the funding with no strings attached.

Last week, the Prime Minister said he would impose further improvements on Quebec's program. Yesterday on *Tout le monde en parle*, he said that the agreement would be "pretty much unconditional".

Oral Questions

"Pretty much unconditional" is pretty much a useless thing to say that sets the stage for an equally useless fight.

Why not simply transfer the money with no strings attached?

• (1440)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we see that once again the Bloc is picking a fight.

Quebec is a pioneer of child care, so much so that we are using Quebec as a model for the rest of Canada because the Quebec model works.

The Prime Minister was very clear yesterday on *Tout le monde en parle*: the government will not tell Quebec what to do and will discuss all the details with Quebec.

There is no dispute between the government in Ottawa and the Government of Quebec, no matter how much the Bloc Québécois would like to manufacture one to boost its poll numbers.

We are collaborating with Quebec, it is working, and we will keep it up.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Robert Asselin is a former aide to the Prime Minister. Commenting on the budget last week, he said that the government was adding \$1 trillion to our national debt and had doubled our debt without creating any jobs or economic growth.

Will the government finally realize that what Canadians need are paycheques, not more national credit card debts?

[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 hon. member neglects the importance of the measures that we have put in place to keep businesses and households afloat through this pandemic. As we move forward, we are going to continue to make the kinds of investments that will specifically target job creation and economic growth, including hiring incentives for business owners, low-cost financing that will allow them to boost productivity, and other measures that will ensure that businesses and communities across Canada can take their place in the market to create jobs right here at home. The hon. member can rest assured, going forward, that our plan will support Canadian businesses and workers as long as it takes.

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister has been making the bizarre claim that back during the debt crisis of 2008-09, the big mistake countries made was not adding enough debt. In fact, the countries that did what she suggested and what she is doing now, including France, Spain, Greece and Italy, all experienced massive double-digit unemployment because they kept piling up debts in the middle of a debt crisis; whereas, Canada, Israel, Switzerland and Germany, which had small deficits and returned to balanced budgets, kept unemployment low. Will the government not admit that the best way to get people back to work is to have strong finances for the nation?

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, from the very beginning of this pandemic, I have been taking questions on our support for Canadians, and every single time the Conservatives ask a question, they seem to be focused on the dollars we spend rather than the people we have helped. From the very beginning, we have advanced benefits that have supported nine million Canadians to help them keep food on the table. Over five million workers have kept a job because of the wage subsidy.

I will not apologize for being there for Canadians in their time of need. As we go forward, we will continue to do what it takes so those same Canadians have the opportunity to take part in the economy and earn a paycheque to support their families.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary should apologize for such a terrible record on jobs, with the highest unemployment in the G7 for most of this crisis. Canadians want paycheques, not more national credit card debts.

Robert Asselin, former aide to the Prime Minister, agrees. He said:

A budget that needs 700 pages of (red) ink says a lot about government motivations...

After doubling our federal debt in only six years, and spending close to a trillion dollars, not moving the needle on long-term growth would be the worst possible legacy of this budget.

Would the parliamentary secretary agree with his former adviser?

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 will not take lessons on economic management from the member who was part of a government with the single worst economic growth record since the Great Depression. The reality is we have been there to support Canadian workers and businesses from the beginning, and we will continue to be there for Canadian workers and businesses through to the end of this pandemic.

The one thing for which the Conservatives can be counted upon is to oppose any measure that seems to support households and businesses throughout this pandemic as our leader continues to do today.

[Translation]

LABOUR

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 1872, workers have had the right to organize and to use pressure tactics to defend their working conditions. It is a system that works well when there is a balance of power between the parties.

The Liberals have upset this balance in the Port of Montreal strike. As usual, the Liberals have threatened workers with special legislation even before the strike gets under way. It takes some nerve to do that before the strike even happens.

The Liberals are showing their true colours. How can they be the party of the middle class when they are trampling workers' fundamental rights like this?

• (1445)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Port of Montreal is essential to the economy not only of Montreal, but also of Quebec and Canada. This issue is affecting industries that have been suffering as a result of COVID-19, the first strike and the rail blockade. Many jobs are extremely fragile. The port has suffered tremendously.

There is a clear consensus in Quebec, Ontario and elsewhere that operations at the port cannot be interrupted. We need the Port of Montreal. The Government of Quebec, businesses and workers all agree. We need to deal with this issue. The NDP could help.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government claims to be a feminist one, but actions speak louder than words.

A feminist government would not sit on the Deschamps report since 2015, or the Auditor General's Report of 2018, which both highlighted the urgent need to address the toxic culture within the armed forces.

The Minister of National Defence would not refuse to hear sexual misconduct allegations if he was a feminist. A feminist Prime Minister would not allow his office to bury reports and drop files regarding sexual misconduct. A minister of this feminist government would not say, "Oh, we were just following a former process." He would fix the process.

Canadians can no longer tolerate people in positions of power and privilege who refuse to act honourably. When will they take the action necessary?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a lot more has to be done, and it will be done. When it comes to sexual misconduct, when it comes to Madam Deschamps report, we know that greater action needs to be taken.

More will be said in the coming weeks. We are working towards an inclusive environment for all Canadians who serve and to rooting out all types of sexual misconduct.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, seven years ago, Russia invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea.

Canada has been very supportive of Ukraine through a number of measures, including through public statements that repeatedly state that Canada's support for Ukraine's sovereignty is "unwavering".

Recently Russia amassed 80,000 troops on Ukraine's borders and continues to be a threat to invade at any time. An invasion would have consequences, not just for Ukraine but for Canada and our allies.

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us what Canada is doing, and will do, to defend Ukraine's sovereignty?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for his question and his advocacy.

Since 2014, we have provided over \$800 million in international assistance to Ukraine, as well as military training and institutional-level defence reform support via Operation Unifier. We have also sanctioned more than 440 Russian individuals and entities.

We are aware of reports that Russia has ordered the withdrawal of troops from the area, and we continue to follow these developments very carefully. Canada will always remain a steadfast friend and ally of Ukraine.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Iran has just been elected to the UN Commission on the Status of Women, where it will be able to join Saudi Arabia in contributing to international discussions on advancing the rights of women and girls.

This elevation obviously makes a mockery of the important work that the commission should be doing. What is the position of the Government of Canada on the appropriateness of Iran's leaders holding a seat at the UN Commission on the Status of Women?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada will always be unequivocal when it comes to the protection of women's rights around the world. Canada also firmly believes in the United Nations and multilateralism.

We recognize that the UN, including the women's rights commission, is not perfect. However, let me be clear, our strong position on the human rights situation in Iran, including women, has been expressed repeatedly, both in public and in private, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the government is not hesitating in stating its position, it should do so right now with respect to the presence of the Government of Iran on the UN women's rights commission. We have all seen the images of courageous Iranian women standing up to the regime, a regime that the government unfortunately continues to try curry favour with. It is another slap in the face for these opp-

Oral Questions

pressors to be on that commission and the government should clearly state the problem here.

Now that the Security Council bid is over, will the government recognize the need for UN reform? Will the minister simply denounce this ghastly outcome at the UN women's rights commission?

• (1450)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to repeat myself, but we have always been unequivocal when it comes to the protection of women's rights around the world and we will continue to do so at all times. As members know, votes at the United Nations on these kinds of appointments are done by secret ballot.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the day the inquiry into the death of Lionel Desmond and his family was announced, the Minister of Veterans Affairs pledged full co-operation to the Desmond family so members can imagine the surprise and anger that Lionel's sister, Cassandra, and the family felt when they found out that more than a year after the inquiry began, lawyers for Veterans Affairs told the inquiry it would not provide a crucial internal review of how Veterans Affairs had handled Desmond's case, despite the minister's pledge.

Instead of burying the report, why do the Liberals not want to help the Desmond family understand what went wrong to help prevent further tragedies?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to the families involved in this tragedy. We have always committed to co-operating fully with the inquiry launched by Nova Scotia. I would like to clarify that the review in question has been, in fact, provided to the inquiry for the judge's determination of whether it will be used or not used. This is a horrific tragedy and we will work together to make sure that it never happens again.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, Cassandra came to Ottawa and called for a joint public hearing. The minister met with her and pledged full co-operation. Cassandra left Ottawa thinking that she had his word. If it had not been for a leaked email that the internal report existed, the Liberals would have buried it. The family wants answers, Canadian veterans want answers and it looks like the answers are in the internal review, but for some reason, the minister is covering it up.

Oral Questions

Will the Minister of Veterans Affairs make the internal review a matter of public record so that the inquiry can consider it and make recommendations to prevent further tragedies like this?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. colleague we are always committed to fully co-operating with the inquiry launched by Nova Scotia. Again, I said we have provided this information to the inquiry for the judge's determination and that is the appropriate thing to do. This is a horrific tragedy and we will work to make sure this never happens again. We will work to provide everything we can to help in this inquiry.

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[Translation]

LABOUR

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is still one way to avoid enacting special legislation regarding the conflict at the Port of Montreal. The Minister of Labour has not fulfilled her duties. She claims that the government believes in the collective bargaining process, but that all other efforts have been exhausted.

That is incorrect. How many times since August has the minister personally engaged with all of the parties? Is the minister in the process of negotiating a way out of this crisis?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us tell it like it is. For once, the Bloc Québécois has the opportunity to make a real difference.

There is a consensus in Quebec. The Government of Quebec and the various sectors of the economy are calling for it. Montrealers and Quebecers are suffering economically, and the Port of Montreal plays a key role. Rather than talking non-stop and asking questions, will the Bloc Québécois stand with us in supporting Quebec's economy?

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is a master class in the art of evading basic questions.

The government needs to show leadership. No, we do not want to paralyze Quebec's economy, but we also cannot hand special legislation to the employer on a silver platter, since that means the employer no longer has any obligation to negotiate.

The government needs to use common sense and get the parties back to the table. Special legislation is not a solution, it is a sign that the federal government has failed. Is the Prime Minister on the phone right now to resolve—

The Speaker: Order. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

• (1455)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government would always rather see a negotiated solution. We want both parties to continue to negotiate and discuss. It is important to understand that the Port of Montreal plays an essential role in the economy, not only of Montreal, but of all of Quebec and even of Canada.

There was the initial strike, plus COVID-19, the economic crisis and the railway blockade. These all have major consequences. For once, the Bloc Québécois can do something. Instead of standing up here to criticize and pick a fight, it could stand up and push for consensus in Quebec.

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CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Lucie Va-chon, a tax preparer from Saint-Gédéon, reached out to me on April 19 and 23, 2021, regarding how impossible it is to speak with a Canada Revenue Agency employee. She is coming up against interminable delays, full voice mailboxes and dropped phone calls. This was already a problem last year, but it has gotten worse.

Tax returns are sometimes sent without obtaining any information for the client, which will result in subsequent adjustments, and therefore an additional workload. What does the minister have to say to my constituent and others in the same situation?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Revenue Agency appreciates all the work its call centre employees have done over the past year. Call volumes are up 83% since 2020 and show no sign of slowing as we head into next tax season.

Hiring an external firm to help manage call volumes during tax season is a temporary measure that will ensure quality service for Canadians. The agency is in the process of hiring more call centre employees in addition to introducing other client service measures.

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[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it happened in broad daylight, right in front of the Langley Sportsplex where my grandkids play hockey, right beside a day care where moms and dads were dropping off their kids for the day. It was a gangland-style killing, the third last week in Metro Vancouver. Clearly, organized crime is not paying any attention at all to the government's ban on firearms.

When will the minister shift his focus away from law-abiding citizens, hunters and sport shooters and get to work on the hard job of tackling gang violence and keeping our streets safe?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we promised Canadians we would strengthen gun laws. One of the things we are doing is we have examined the three ways in which criminals gain access to guns. They are smuggled across our border, they are stolen from lawful gun owners or they are criminally diverted, where people buy them legally and sell them illegally.

That is why we have introduced Bill C-21, which would bring in new strong measures and new resources for law enforcement and for communities to prevent guns from getting into the hands of criminals.

Frankly, I would urge my colleague from across the aisle to stop advocating for those who manufacture guns and start concentrating on public safety.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two years ago, Canada lost its lead in carbon capture technology to the United States. My colleagues and I have been pushing the government to introduce a tax credit that will level the field with our U.S. competitors.

The Liberals responded last week when they included this environmental tax credit in their budget. However, they specifically excluded enhanced oil recovery, a strange approach trying to play catch-up and excluding a key piece of the successful part of the U.S. tax credit.

Could the government tell the House how its approach accomplishes anything?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are supporting oil and gas workers. They built the country and they have done the same to lower our emissions. These are the same people who built renewables, the same people who built climate targets. We are investing in them with the carbon capture utilization storage, \$319 million of investment tax credit, accelerating adoption of the proposed technology. We are investing in clean fuels like hydrogen and biofuels, using the determination and skills of our oil and gas workers, and also \$2 billion for workforce development programs, so we leave no energy worker behind.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a little over a month ago, the Minister of Official Languages shared her vision for modernizing Canada's official languages legislation. In the budget, this government announced plans to invest over a quarter of a billion dollars in our official languages.

Would the minister please tell us how these new investments will support the proposed modernization, strengthen our official language minority communities and set the stage for French and English across Canada for decades to come?

• (1500)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question and especially for her great work on official languages, especially at the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Oral Questions

What we did recently in the budget is strengthen our vision for the official languages. We presented this vision in our blueprint a little earlier in this session.

We are investing in post-secondary education for our official language minorities, we are supporting French as a second language across Canada and we are creating more community space for our official language minority communities in Canada.

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[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently the Blackfoot Nation in Montana set up a free mobile vaccination clinic for Canadians at a border crossing in my riding using its excess vaccines. In two days, over 450 people from the entire Cardston community went through the clinic, some even receiving their second dose that they could not get in Canada.

If the government's vaccine rollout is going as well as the Liberals claim it is, why are my constituents having to rely on the generosity of Montanians to get their vaccine rather than their own Prime Minister and his government?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, let me say how excited I am that the constituents of the member opposite have access to vaccinations and, indeed, with such a strong friend and partner in the United States.

This is how we get things done as the world. It is something that I think Conservatives fail to recognize. We work together with traditional partners and with non-traditional partners. When countries like Canada and the U.S. work together as long-standing friends and neighbours, that is how we best protect each other.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been speaking with CBSA officers at the four border crossings in Niagara who have informed me that they still do not have access to vaccines. This jeopardizes the health of these essential front-line federal workers. Furthermore, an outbreak could shut down some of the busiest border crossings in North America and threaten our already fragile supply chain. This is yet another glaring example of the Liberals' failed vaccine program.

When will the minister take action to provide vaccines to these essential federal CBSA workers in Niagara?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would simply remind the member opposite that the Province of Ontario recently announced last week that it was going to now prioritize our border service officers. I would like to mention the excellent work done by the Windsor area health authority that began just last week ensuring that all the CBSA officers were vaccinated.

We have provided vaccines to the Province of Ontario and guidance on how they should be prioritized. We have advised it that we believe, very strongly, that CBSA officers should be prioritized, and the Ontario government has agreed to do that.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have blamed everyone but themselves for their failed pandemic response. First it was the provinces, then it was former prime minister Brian Mulroney, who has been off the job for 28 years. The truth is that there is no one to blame but themselves: too slow to limit international travel, too slow to procure vaccines. With record cases in B.C., we are all paying the price with more lockdowns and more crippling stress.

Is the Prime Minister really sure he has no regrets about his pandemic response?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the member I have no regrets about is being there for Canadians and, indeed, for provinces and territories every step of the way.

No country has had a perfect pandemic. It is not possible. It is a global pandemic. People are suffering and people are struggling, but this government has been there for people. We have been there for workers. We have been there for workplaces. We have been there for provinces and territories. We have been there with therapeutics, with vaccines, with tests, with the devices that Canadians have needed. We will continue to be there no matter what COVID throws at us, because that is what a country does. It sticks together; it works together. We will get through this together.

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● (1505)

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, economic recovery is tied to the vitality of our communities. However, certainly for the past year, for many communities like my own, town halls, main streets, hockey rinks and farmers markets have been quiet for quite some time as Canadians have taken precautions to stay safe.

Could the Minister of Economic Development provide further information on how budget 2021 will invest in these small but vital communities?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, we believe in hard-working Canadians and want to support them as they want to create jobs. We stand side by side with them. We are investing

across the country, in all regions of the country. That is why we are putting into place a \$500 million community revitalization fund to help build and renovate those spaces to which my colleague refers.

From small towns to big cities across the country, we will be there to help Canadians to ensure that we can bring all of us together and build Canada for the future.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are waiting patiently for their turn to get the COVID-19 vaccine, but we know that the vaccine rollout is nowhere near full capacity. Many provinces in the middle of the third wave are left waiting for batches of vaccines to be delivered. We are seeing people turned away from clinics in hot spots because they ran out of doses. Every day that vaccines are delayed means more people getting the virus, more hospitalizations for already overburdened health care systems and more avoidable tragedies.

What is the government doing to increase vaccine supply to Canada's hardest-hit communities?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to see the leader of the NDP have his shot of AstraZeneca recently as well as the leader of the opposition. In fact, from a procurement federal perspective, we have received 13.8 million doses. We have seen administered by the provinces and territories 12 million of those doses. We are third in the G20 for doses administered per 100 people. That is 29% of Canadians who have had at least one dose.

There is much more work to do. We will continue bringing in doses by the millions for all Canadians.

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FINANCE

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Vancouver Granville, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, the debt-to-GDP ratio was 30% and the Liberals campaigned on dropping it to 27% by 2019-20. This year, it will be about 50%.

Debt to GDP appears to remain our fiscal anchor in budget 2021. The government is still saying that it will moderately decrease, but this time starting from a number almost twice as big as predicted. Do we really have a credible fiscal anchor? Perhaps we should consider using a new one, maybe a debt-to-service ratio. This is easy to understand.

Could the minister please tell us what other fiscal anchors the government has considered?

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, we will take the hon. member's suggestion under advisement.

I will point out, however, that Canada entered this pandemic with the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. The pandemic created immense costs, and not responding was simply not an option to keep food on the table for households and workers on the payroll.

As we emerge from this pandemic, it is essential that we continue to manage our finances in a responsible way. To do so, maintaining a downward track on the debt-to-GDP ratio is an intelligent and thoughtful response, so we ensure that for generations to come we can protect the fiscal capacity of our country to continue to respond to emergencies that may arise in the future.

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EMILY VIEGAS

The Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand that there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence in memory of Emily Victoria Viegas, who passed away from COVID-19. I now invite the members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1510)

[English]

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 responses to 29 petitions.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs in relation to Bill C-15, an act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities entitled "Main Estimates 2021-22". The committee

Routine Proceedings

has considered the estimates referred by the House and reports the same.

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SOIL CONSERVATION ACT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-290, An Act respecting soil conservation and soil health.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud not only as the member of Parliament for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, but also the NDP critic for agriculture and agri-food, to introduce this private member's bill. Healthy soils are the foundation of sustainable food production, enhanced biodiversity and clean air and water. Healthy soils are also key to our fight against climate change, as good agricultural practices can unlock their huge carbon sequestration potential.

The bill I am introducing today sets up a national strategy to promote efforts across Canada to conserve and improve the health of our soils. The strategy will help maintain, enhance and rebuild the capacity of soils to produce food and fuel for years to come, and it will encourage farmers and other land users with research, education, training, knowledge transfer and best practices. The bill would also recommend the establishment of a national advocate for soil health and will formally recognize both World Soil Day on December 5, and National Soil Conservation Week in the third week of April each year.

Finally, I want to acknowledge and thank my neighbour and colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, for seconding the bill. I invite all of my colleagues to join me in making this strategy a reality for our hard-working Canadian farmers.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

SRI LANKA

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens and residents who are deeply worried about the increased discrimination against and marginalization of Sri Lanka's minorities, particularly the Tamil community. The petitioners urge the Minister of Foreign Affairs to work with other members of the Co-Group to guarantee justice. The petitioners call on the Canadian government to influence allies such as Malawi and others to refer Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court and do what can be done to ensure that there is a referendum to determine the Tamils' political future as remedial justice.

Routine Proceedings

In June 2019, the NDP's unanimous consent motion regarding atrocities committed in Sri Lanka against the Tamils was passed. I present this petition on behalf of those who are urging the government to stand in solidarity with the Tamil community and to ensure democracy prevails in Sri Lanka.

• (1515)

BUSINESS EVENT SPACES

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of commercial event spaces, including trade shows, consumer shows and exhibitions, which have been severely impacted by the pandemic. Petitioners in my riding call for a sector-specific recovery plan, because they believe more specific support is needed to support this industry. They believe that giving a hand up to this industry, whose members are active participants in their communities, would provide a golden opportunity to simultaneously support local economies, including sparking the creation of well-paying jobs and making it possible for small businesses across the supply chain not just to survive, but to succeed.

The petitioners, including members of the Canadian Association of Exposition Management, are calling on the government to expand CERS eligibility, to establish a specific business events funding stream and to amend the current highly affected sectors credit availability program.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I present petition number 43-2, signed by 1,169 constituents in my riding. Bill C-6 causes great concern. The term “conversion therapy” is vaguely defined in the bill. Under the bill, Canadian parents, religious leaders and teachers would be subject to prosecution under the Criminal Code. Children would be given an irresponsible amount of latitude to make major sexual and medical decisions that would have lifelong implications. The bill would discriminate against LGBTQ individuals seeking guidance and counselling toward heterosexual or cisgender behaviour, and would regulate choices that Canadian citizens should be permitted to make for themselves. Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House to protect the moral, religious, philosophical and sexual interests of the citizens of Canada by preventing the passage of this bill into law.

TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanic—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise virtually in the House today to present a petition from petitioners concerned about public spending on the Trans Mountain pipeline. Petitioners point out that the pipeline project is a significant threat to Canada meeting its Paris target commitments. It asks for the government to have no federal funding spent in working on the Trans Mountain pipeline.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting three petitions in the House today.

The first petition is about Bill S-204, a bill that would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad to receive an organ for which there has not been consent. This bill seeks to combat the horrific practice of forced organ harvesting and trafficking. Petitioners

want to see the other place, as well as the House, pass Bill S-204 as quickly as possible.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights the human rights situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. It calls for greater action by the government, including increased engagement with the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments on the human rights and humanitarian issues raised by the conflict and also engagement around short, medium and long-term elections monitoring in Ethiopia.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third and final petition highlights the ongoing genocide facing Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China. Petitioners call on the government, as well as the House, to recognize that what is going on constitutes a genocide. Petitioners also want to see greater use of the Magnitsky Act to target those officials responsible for these horrific acts of violence.

I commend all three petitions to the consideration of my colleagues.

• (1520)

TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to table a petition signed by people concerned about public funding being spent on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion during the climate emergency. The cost of this pipeline is now estimated to hit \$18 billion, and expert reports state this investment will not be recouped unless the government ignores its own climate targets and allows greenhouse gas emissions to continue to increase from the oil and gas sector. The petitioners are concerned about the risk of spills of diluted bitumen on the west coast as well as the violation of indigenous rights along the route and in the coastal communities that rely on the marine environment for their livelihood and cultural practices.

The petitioners call on the government to halt any support for the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline.

The Speaker: Presenting petitions, the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. There is a rule that, in order to present a second petition, we would need unanimous consent. I will ask the member to move the motion, and then we will see if we have it.

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the House provide unanimous consent for me to present a second petition today.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was an honour to move my first motion in the House of Commons.

The second petition I am presenting today is on behalf of my constituents in the Agassiz and Harrison Hot Springs areas of my riding. They are concerned about grow ops in residential neighbourhoods and the negative impact these are having on the health of nearby residents.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to reform the licensing and oversight of the production of cannabis for personal medical use and to grant resources in authority to the provinces in regulating and enforcing the production of cannabis for personal medical use, in turn empowering municipal governments to have the bylaw capacity needed to address this problem.

* * *

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. 484, 487, 490, 493, 494, 496, 497, 499 to 502, 504, 515, 519, 523, 524, 526, 527, 529, 530, 532, 540, 541, 543 and 550.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 484—**Mr. Ben Lobb:**

With regard to reports that more than 8,500 Canadians have higher tax bills after being the victim of identity theft related to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) program: (a) how many CERB payments does the government estimate were made to individuals committing identify theft; and (b) why is the Canada Revenue Agency requiring these victims of identity theft to pay income tax on the amount thieves swindled from the government's CERB program?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the above-noted question, what follows is the response from the CRA. In response to part (a), as analysis and verification work is still under way, the CRA cannot confirm how much fraud related to CERB there has been.

The vast majority of Canadians are applying correctly and are making good efforts to comply. The CRA is committed to protecting the integrity of programs that provide financial support for taxpayers using Canadian tax dollars.

In response to part (b), taxpayers who are victims of identity fraud will not be held responsible for any money paid out to scam-

Routine Proceedings

mers using their identity. The CRA remains dedicated to resolving these incidents. Taxpayers' T4A slip or RL-1 slip will be corrected as required. Once the issue has been resolved, an amended slip will be issued. In the event that individuals need to file their return before the corrective measures have been completed, they should only file using the income they actually received.

As noted above, affected individuals will not be held liable for unauthorized claims made by fraudsters using their account. Where appropriate, the CRA works with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian anti-fraud centre, CAFCC, financial institutions and local police to investigate the incident. In many cases, the CRA will also provide the taxpayer with credit protection and monitoring services.

The CRA is committed to taking action to assist those whose accounts have been compromised due to incidents of fraud or identify theft. It takes the protection of taxpayer information very seriously and has robust safeguards in place to identify fraudulent applications for emergency and recovery benefits, including the CERB.

The CRA recognizes that waiting for a response in these situations can be stressful and aims to resolve such issues quickly by addressing cases as fast as possible.

Question No. 487—**Mr. Phil McColeman:**

With regard to the Department of Justice's use of outsourced legal agents, since October 21, 2019: (a) how many times has the Department of Justice retained outsourced legal agents; (b) when were said these contracts awarded; (c) what was the value of each contract; (d) for which cases or other matters were these contracts awarded; (e) to which firms or legal agents were these contracts awarded; and (f) who approved the awarding of these contracts?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Justice's policy on contracting for legal services and legal agent appointment establishes the principles and requirements to ensure that contracting for legal services and legal agent appointments are conducted in a diligent and accountable manner, with rigorous and detailed selection and assessment criteria.

Legal agents are private sector law practitioners appointed by or under the authority of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to provide defined legal services to the Crown.

The department publishes all legal agent contracts as part of its proactive disclosure. Information on legal agent contracts can be found here: https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/trans/pd-dp/contra_leg/rep-rap.aspx.

The information requested in parts (c), (d) and (f) is protected by solicitor-client privilege.

Question No. 490—**Mr. Phil McColeman:**

With regard to security equipment currently being used in Canada's diplomatic missions, broken down by location: (a) which brands of security equipment, including closed-circuit television cameras and X-ray scanners, are currently in use; and (b) for each location, what are the (i) brands used, (ii) type and quantities of equipment, broken down by brand?

Routine Proceedings

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.

In response to (a) and (b), in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the principles set out in the Access to Information Act. As such, information that could reasonably be expected to facilitate the commission of an offence has been withheld to protect the vulnerability of particular buildings or other structures or systems, including detection and monitoring systems, e.g. X-ray, CCTV, etc., or methods employed to protect such buildings or other structures or systems.

Information on contracts worth more than \$10,000 that does not fall under the national security exemption is available on the Open Government site, under “Proactive Disclosure”: https://open.canada.ca/en/search/contracts?f%5B0%5D=org_name_en%3AGlobal%20Affairs%20Canada.

Question No. 493—**Mr. Rob Moore:**

With regard to An Act respecting the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, since October 21, 2019: (a) how many times has the director of public prosecutions informed the Attorney General about any prosecution, or intervention that the director intended to make which raised important questions of general interest, as per section 13 of the act; (b) what was the nature and content of those prosecutions or interventions; (c) what was the rationale for these prosecutions or interventions; and (d) how does the director of public prosecutions determine what prosecutions or interventions raise questions of general interest?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to An Act respecting the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, in response to (a), the Director of Public Prosecutions informed the Attorney General 79 times about prosecutions or interventions that raised important questions of general interest as per section 13 of the act from October 21, 2019 to March 9, 2021.

In response to (b) and (c), this information is confidential; it is covered by solicitor-client privilege and may also contain personal information.

In response to (d), the information can be found in chapter 1.2 of the Public Prosecution Service of Canada deskbook at the following link: <https://www.ppsc-sppc.gc.ca/eng/pub/fpsd-sfpg/fpsd-sfp/tpd/p1/ch02.html>.

We note that in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the principles set out in the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act. Information has been withheld on the grounds that it constitutes solicitor-client privilege and personal information.

Question No. 494—**Mr. Rob Moore:**

With regard to An Act respecting the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, since October 21, 2019: (a) how many times has the Attorney General intervened in a prosecution in first instance, as per section 14 of the act; (b) how many times has the Attorney General intervened in a prosecution on appeal, as per section 14 of the act; and (c) for which cases did the Attorney General intervene, and what was the rationale for his interventions?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to An Act respecting the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, there has been no intervention from the Attorney General as per section 14 of the act from October 21, 2019 to March 9, 2021.

Question No. 496—**Mr. Tako Van Popta:**

With regard the service costs on the national debt: has the government analyzed how much the debt service costs will go up based on an interest rate increase of (i) one per cent, (ii) two per cent, (iii) three per cent, and, if so, what are the projections for how much the debt service costs will increase?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the most recent projections for Government of Canada debt charges can be found in the fall economic statement 2020, which was released on November 30, 2020 and is available at the following link: <https://www.budget.gc.ca/fes-eca/2020/home-accueil-en.html>. Specifically, the projection for interest paid on the federal debt for the current year and the following five years can be found in table A1.5 on page 126, in the row labelled “Public debt charges”.

These public debt charge projections have been calculated using interest rate projections provided by private sector forecasters through a survey conducted in September 2020. Further details and the results of the September survey can be found on pages 119-121 of the fall economic statement 2020, including the private sector projection of the Government of Canada three-month treasury bill and the 10-year bond rates, which are projected to rise by 100 and 130 basis points, respectively, over the five-year forecast horizon. An update of the government’s public debt charge projections will be provided in budget 2021.

Question No. 497—**Mr. Tako Van Popta:**

With regard to the government’s economic advisory panels: (a) which taxes has each advisory panel recommended that the government raise in order to sustain higher levels of federal spending; and (b) at what levels did the advisory panels recommend the taxes be raised to?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government’s approach to tax policy is to build on its record of making life more affordable for the middle class and those working hard to join it, while promoting greater fairness in the tax system. As part of this approach, the government regularly seeks feedback from Canadians and various advisory panels.

The government reduced the rate of the second personal income tax bracket from 22% to 20.5%. This tax cut for the middle class, which has been in effect since 2016, is benefitting more than nine million Canadians. Single individuals who benefit are seeing an average tax reduction of \$330 every year, and couples who benefit are seeing an average tax reduction of \$540 every year.

The government also introduced the Canada child benefit in 2016, which has meant more money for the families who need it most. The Canada child benefit has helped lift nearly 300,000 children out of poverty, giving them a better start in life.

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In addition, the government's proposed increase in the basic personal amount would lower taxes for close to 20 million Canadians. By 2023, single individuals could save close to \$300 in taxes each year, while families, including those led by a single parent, could save nearly \$600 in taxes each year. Nearly 1.1 million more Canadians will no longer pay tax in 2023. A detailed breakdown of the net impact of these measures is available on the Finance Canada website: www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2020/02/annex-net-impact-of-measures-to-make-life-more-affordable-for-canadians.html.

At this time, the government's top priority is to help families and businesses get through the challenges they face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. When COVID-19 is under control and Canada's economy is ready to rebound, the government's focus will be to make smart, targeted investments to jump-start the country's economic recovery and begin to repair the damage done by the pandemic.

Question No. 499—Mr. Tako Van Popta:

With regard to the impact that government tax increases have on Canadians: has the government done an analysis on how Canadians will be impacted by future tax increases, and, if so, what are the details, including findings of any analysis conducted, broken down by type of future tax increase?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's approach to tax policy is to build on its record of making life more affordable for the middle class and those working hard to join it, while promoting greater fairness in the tax system.

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Question No. 500—Mr. Blake Richards:

With regard to government tax increases: has the government done an analysis of how much taxes will need to increase in order to sustain expected higher levels of federal spending, and, if so, what are the details, including findings of such an analysis?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's approach to tax policy is to build on its record of making life more affordable for the middle class and those working hard to join it, while promoting greater fairness in the tax system.

The first action of the government's second mandate was to introduce a measure that would increase the amount of money Canadians can earn before paying federal income tax to \$15,000 by 2023. To ensure that this tax relief goes to the people who need it most, the benefits would be phased out for the wealthiest Canadians.

This measure builds on the success of key initiatives during its first mandate, including the middle-class tax cut announced in 2015, higher personal income taxes for the wealthiest Canadians, as well as the introduction of the Canada child benefit and the Canada workers benefit. The government has also improved tax fairness by closing loopholes, eliminating measures that disproportionately benefit the wealthy, and cracking down on tax evasion so that every Canadian has a real and fair chance at success.

At this time, the government's top priority is to help families and businesses get through the challenges they face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. When COVID-19 is under control and Canada's economy is ready to rebound, the government's focus will be to make smart, targeted investments to jump-start the country's economic recovery and begin to repair the damage done by the pandemic.

Question No. 501—Mr. Blake Richards:

With regard to the government's analysis conducted on the financial situation of Canadians: has the government conducted any analysis of how many Canadians would experience severe financial hardship if they lost their job, or had their taxes increased, and, if so, what are the details, including findings of the analysis?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, data from the 2016 survey of financial security was used to assess how sensitive Canadian households could be to short-term income loss. While this survey was carried out a few years ago, the distribution of wealth evolves slowly over time, and as such, the survey is likely a reasonable approximation of the potential financial vulnerability of Canadian families going into the COVID-19 pandemic. The department estimated that over half of working households had insufficient liquid assets to fully replace a two-month interruption in after-tax income. As such, these households could see a significant deterioration in their living standards and would face difficulties in meeting their financial obligations or essential needs.

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Financially vulnerable households are found across the country, with the highest shares in Atlantic Canada, Quebec and the Prairies. Younger households were at higher risk of financial vulnerability: 54% of younger households are financially vulnerable to a two-month work interruption, compared to 46% of older households. In a similar analysis, using the 2016 survey of financial security, the Bank of Canada found that households in the occupations most at risk from the pandemic, e.g., sales and service, had the weakest financial positions: <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/2020/06/staff-analytical-note-2020-8/>. Similarly, based on low-income cut-off thresholds, Statistics Canada reported that one in four working households would not have enough liquid assets to keep them out of low income during a two-month work interruption: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00010-eng.pdf?st=DG2ZxWGC>.

These results suggest that a sizable number of Canadian households had limited financial buffers to cope with temporary income losses during the pandemic. This finding underlines the importance of Canada's COVID-19 economic response in targeting people who need it most and bridging Canadians through the shock: e.g., Canada emergency response benefit, Canada emergency wage subsidy and mortgage payment deferrals, among others. This support has been critical to helping minimize financial difficulties of households thus far during the pandemic.

Question No. 502—Mr. Blake Richards:

With regard to the escalator tax on alcohol introduced by the government in the 2017 budget: what is the total amount of revenue collected from the tax in each year since 2017?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the above-noted question, what follows is the response from the CRA. Excise duty revenues reflect the impact of the escalator tax. The latter, effective April 1, 2017, refers to the annual increase in the excise duty rate. Excise duty revenues are reported in volume II of the public accounts, "National Revenue", under the "Revenues" section.

Please find below total excise duty revenues for the fiscal years 2017-18 to 2019-20.

According to the Public Accounts of Canada 2018, available at <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2018/vol2/rn-nr/rev-eng.html>, for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2018, from April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018, total excise duty revenues were \$3,504,206,215.

According to Public Accounts of Canada 2019, available at <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2019/vol2/rn-nr/rev-eng.html>, for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2019, from April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019, total excise duty revenues were \$3,727,618,734.

According to Public Accounts of Canada 2020, available at <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2020/vol2/rn-nr/rev-eng.html>, for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2020, from April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020, total excise duty revenues were \$3,510,617,737.

Question No. 504—Mr. Dan Albas:

With regard to the government's commitment to plant two billion trees and an initial focus on urban trees: (a) how many plots of land have been identified for

planting the trees; (b) what are the details of each plot, including the (i) location of the land, (ii) type of landowner (municipality, private owner, federal government land, etc.), (iii) cost of acquisition or projected cost of acquisition, if applicable, (iv) species of trees to be planted on the land; (c) which municipalities have been contacted about urban tree planting; (d) what is the projected cost per tree of trees planted in an urban environment; and (e) and what is the percentage of the total program that is expected to be taken by urban trees?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is fully committed to delivering on its commitment to plant two billion trees over the next 10 years.

Natural Resources Canada is looking to engage those interested in growing Canada's forests as a nature-based solution to support national climate change actions. The growing Canada's forests program has recently launched two new processes, an expression of interest and a request for information, to identify the desire and capacity of organizations to plant trees across Canada over the coming years.

A future participants request for information launched recently to identify interested organizations and learn about their vision and capacity to implement or contribute to large-scale, single- or multi-year tree-planting projects across Canada. This will help to determine the design of the growing Canada's forests program, develop future processes to maximize program participation and strengthen collaboration.

The growing Canada's forests program will allocate approximately 16% of the contribution funding towards urban and peri-urban tree planting, collaborating with municipalities and organizations that can engage broad community groups: e.g., school boards, indigenous communities and others. Tree-planting opportunities include the expansion, maintenance and diversification of urban and other forests, which may also help communities to become more climate change resilient, mitigating risks such as increased forest fire danger.

Existing federal programs are already supporting tree planting, with approximately 150 million seedlings expected to be planted by 2022 through the low-carbon economy fund in working with provinces and territories, as well as trees planted through the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund in working with local communities. The Government of Canada also continues to support the Highway of Heroes tree campaign, which has planted more than 750,000 out of a planned two million trees in Ontario between Trenton and Toronto.

As part of its commitment to supporting Canada's forests and forest sector, the Government of Canada took early action in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic by providing up to \$30 million to support small and medium-sized forest sector firms, including tree-planting operations, and defray the costs associated with COVID-19 health and safety measures. This funding helped ensure a successful 2020 tree-planting season and the planting of an estimated 600 million trees, while protecting workers and communities.

Question No. 515—**Mr. John Williamson:**

With regard to the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) since January 1, 2018: (a) how many times have Her Majesty's Canadian Ships of the RCN transited the Taiwan Strait in the South China Sea; and (b) what were the dates of these transits?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of its defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged" Canada committed to being a reliable player in the Asia-Pacific region through consistent engagement and strong partnerships.

The Canadian Armed Forces plays an active role in the region, through regular training and engagements with key allies and partners. These efforts enhance Canada's ability to promote multilateralism and the rules-based international order, and demonstrate our steadfast commitment to stability and security in the Asia-Pacific region.

As part of deployments to the region, Royal Canadian Navy vessels will periodically sail through the Taiwan Strait.

Canada is committed to promoting maritime peace and security, and maintaining the rules-based international order.

During all international deployments, Canadian Armed Forces vessels operate in a manner that is consistent with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

With regard to parts (a) and (b), Royal Canadian Navy vessels transited the Taiwan Strait in the South China Sea five times between January 1, 2018, and March 10, 2021.

The date of these transits are as follows: October 4-5, 2018; June 17-18, 2019; September 9-10, 2019; September 23-24, 2019; and October 2-3, 2020.

Question No. 519—**Mr. Dave Epp:**

With regard to financial analysis conducted by the government: has an analysis of the increase in household debt been conducted since 2016, and, if so, what did the analysis conclude are the greatest contributors to the increase in household debt?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada released the results from the 2019 Survey of Financial Security, December 22, 2020. The survey showed that almost one-third, or 30.2%, of Canadian families were debt-free in 2019, virtually unchanged from the 2016 results. For those who held debt, the median value of debt in 2019 stood at \$79,000 per family which was about \$6,400 less than in 2016 after adjusting for inflation.

Families overall reported holding more mortgage debt in 2019, up \$7 billion from 2016. However, the median level of mortgage debt for those with mortgages fell over the same period

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from \$201,200 to \$190,000. The level of non-mortgage debt was unchanged between 2016 and 2019. The median was \$20,000.

Please see www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/201222/dq201222b-eng.htm.

Question No. 523—**Mrs. Kelly Block:**

With regard to government employees, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: how many and what percentage of employees worked from home as of (i) March 1, 2020, prior to the pandemic, (ii) March 1, 2021?

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 physical and psychological health and safety of employees remain an absolute priority for the Government of Canada. The Government of Canada continues to be guided by the advice and guidance of public health authorities, including Canada's chief public health officer, and the direction of provinces/territories and cities. While the COVID-19 pandemic presents ongoing challenges for Canadians and for the public service, the government has been moving collectively and successfully towards managing COVID-19 as part of its ongoing operations and the continued delivery of key programs and services to Canadians.

Public health authorities have signalled that physical distancing requirements must remain in place. As such, many federal public service employees across the country will continue to work remotely and effectively for the foreseeable future to continue delivering key programs and services to Canadians. The information regarding public servants who are working from home is not systematically tracked in a centralized database.

Deputy ministers and other heads of federal public service organizations make decisions regarding access to worksites and necessary safety protocols based on government-wide guidance, taking into consideration the local public health situation, individual organizations' operational requirements and the nature of the work. Access to federal worksites for employees varies from organization to organization, based on operational requirements.

The Government of Canada is committed to supporting employees, whether physically in the workplace or at home. Together and apart, the government will continue to deliver information, advice, programs and services that Canadians need.

Question No. 524—**Mrs. Kelly Block:**

With regard to government statistics related to the effect of the pandemic on the number of women in the workforce: what are the government's estimates on how many women, in total, (i) were employed prior to the pandemic, as of March 1, 2020, (ii) are currently employed, (iii) have left the workforce since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?

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Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to Labour Force Survey, LFS, estimates, there were 8,733,600 employed women in Canada in February 2021, compared with 9,082,500 12 months earlier in February 2020, a decrease of 348,900, or 3.8%. Over the same period, the number of women in the labour force, either employed or unemployed, fell by 73,700, or 0.8%.

The source is Statistics Canada, Labour force characteristics, monthly, seasonally adjusted and trend-cycle, last five months, at www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb11/en/tv.action?pid=1410028701.

Question No. 526—**Ms. Jag Sahota:**

With regard to the statement printed in the Toronto Star from the director of communications to the Minister Labour "ESDC-Labour has put a team in place dedicated to this work and has taken steps to build its capacity" in relation to stopping the importation of products made with forced labour: (a) who is on the team; (b) on what date was the team established; (c) how many meetings has the team had and on what dates did those meeting occur; (d) what is the team's mandate; (e) how many proactive assessments of supply chains have been initiated by the team; (f) how many reactive complaints have been received and investigated; and (g) what was the finding in each investigation in (e) and (f)?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), a number of ESDC-Labour officials are working on the issue of forced labour. Those officials are part of the international and inter-governmental labour affairs, IILA, directorate. The team working on forced labour includes policy officers, policy analysts and managers, under the supervision of a director.

With regard to part (b), the forced labour import prohibition flows from an obligation in the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement that came into force on July 1, 2020. The team that conducts the research and analysis of problematic supply chains is housed within an existing division of IILA. They are developing an approach and establishing the mechanisms that will allow Canada to address the issue of imports of goods produced with forced labour. Other members of the IILA team have since been undertaking research and analysis of problematic supply chains.

With regard to part (c), meetings and conversations on the issue of forced labour and problematic supply chains have been taking place regularly for several months, in a variety of formats and at various levels. Given that this is a novel initiative, meetings have taken place and continue to take place to operationalize the forced labour import prohibition, to coordinate with other implicated federal departments, and to discuss approaches to research and analysis.

With regard to part (d), the team's main responsibility is to review allegations of forced labour being used in supply chains. After reviewing an allegation, the ESDC-Labour team conducts research and analysis, and prepares factual reports with a view to establishing the likelihood that a specific shipment contains goods produced by forced labour.

With regard to part (e), please refer to the response from part (g).

With regard to part (f), please refer to response from part (g).

With regard to part (g), while ESDC-Labour is proactively conducting research on supply chains in the Xinjiang region, the department is committed to examining and completing its due dili-

gence research and analysis on all allegations received by the CB-SA.

Question No. 527—**Ms. Jag Sahota:**

With regard to government statistics related to the impact of the pandemic on unionized employees in Canada: how many unionized employees, in total, (i) were employed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic or as of March 1, 2020, (ii) are currently employed, (iii) have left the workforce since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to Labour Force Survey, LFS, estimates, there were 4,992,000 employees with union coverage in Canada in February 2021, compared with 4,930,700 in February 2020, an increase of 61,300, or 1.2%. The Labour Force Survey does not collect information about the former union coverage status of people who are no longer in the labour force, that is, who are not employed or unemployed.

The source is Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0069-01 Union coverage by industry, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality (x 1,000) at www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb11/en/tv.action?pid=1410006901.

Question No. 529—**Mr. John Barlow:**

With regard to government statistics on the effect of the pandemic on the workforce, since March 1, 2020: how many Canadians have had their (i) work hours reduced, (ii) income reduced, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to Labour Force Survey, LFS, estimates, in February 2021, compared with 12 months earlier, there were 406,000, or 50%, more people working fewer than half their usual hours for reasons likely related to COVID-19. The LFS does not collect information on whether an individual's earnings have changed over time. However, the following information about the number of employees in various wage brackets was reported with the release of February 2021 data from the LFS.

Immediately before the pandemic in February 2020, about one-quarter of all employees in Canada earned \$17.50 per hour or less, while one-quarter earned more than \$36 per hour. These wage brackets are helpful in understanding the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on lower-paid and higher-paid workers.

The number of employees making \$17.50 per hour or less increased by 203,000 in February. This number is not seasonally adjusted. This partly offset a decline of 321,000 in January and coincided with a February rebound in employment in the retail trade, and accommodation and food services industries, where lower wages are more prevalent.

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There were 791,000, or 19.7%, fewer employees in this wage bracket in February 2021 than 12 months earlier. Nearly two-thirds, or 63.6%, of the losses were among women, with similar declines in all age groups. Young men were far less affected by the decline, 82,000 fewer, or 11.4%, than were young women, 178,000 fewer, or 20.9%. This number is not seasonally adjusted.

In contrast, there were 410,000, or 10.3%, more employees making more than \$36 per hour in February compared with one year earlier. This number is not seasonally adjusted. The number of people in this highest-earning wage bracket followed an upward trend during the summer and early fall of 2020 before flattening in recent months, and was little changed in February. This is not seasonally adjusted.

For Chart 6, Employment among employees earning the lowest wages far behind in the recovery, please see www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210312/cg-a006-eng.htm

The source is Labour Force Survey, LFS, February 2021, The Daily www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210312/dq210312a-eng.htm and LFS supplementary indicators used in February 2021 analysis.

Question No. 530—Mr. John Barlow:

With regard to government statistics related to the impact of the pandemic on post-secondary students: how many post-secondary students, in total, (i) were employed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic or as of March 1, 2020, (ii) are currently employed, (iii) have left the workforce since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to Labour Force Survey, LFS, estimates, there were 1,019,000 employed students aged 15 to 24 in February 2021, compared with 1,199,700 in February 2020, a decrease of 180,800, or 15.1%. This figure is not seasonally adjusted. Over the same period, the number of students in the labour force, employed or unemployed, fell by 77,300, or 5.8%. This figure is not seasonally adjusted. These data do not distinguish the type of school, secondary versus post-secondary.

The source is Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0021-01, Unemployment rate, participation rate and employment rate by type of student during school months, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality, at www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410002101.

Question No. 532—Mr. John Barlow:

With regard to the government statistics related to the impact of the pandemic on the employment of professionals working in manufacturing in Canada: how many manufacturing professionals, in total, (i) were employed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, or as of March 1, 2020, (ii) are currently employed, (iii) have left the workforce since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to Labour Force Survey, LFS, estimates, there were 1,746,900 people employed in the manufacturing industry in February 2021, virtually unchanged from February 2020, when there were 1,747,200.

The source is Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0355-01 Employment by industry, monthly, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted, and trend-cycle, last 5 months (x 1,000), found at www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410035501.

Question No. 540—Ms. Leah Gazan:

With regard to the payment of a one-off sum of up to \$300 per child and the subsequent temporary change in the formula for calculating the Canada Child Benefit: (a) has the government assessed the additional number of families who would receive the payment whose net family income is above the threshold established in the previous formula, and if so, what is the result of this assessment; (b) has the government estimated the additional cost of paying the maximum of \$300 per child to families whose net family income is above the threshold in the old formula, if so, how much is the estimated cost; and (c) what was the methodology used for the temporary change in the formula?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the CRA's analysis determined that an additional 265,000 families with a net family income above the threshold from the previous formula received the one-time payment of up to \$300 per child.

With regard to part (b), the same analysis described in part (a) also determined that those families with a net income above the threshold in the old formula received payments totalling almost \$88 million.

With regard to part (c), the Canada child benefit, CCB, is governed by section 122.6 of the Income Tax Act, ITA. Section 122.6 of the ITA is amended from time to time to reflect changes in the benefit calculation. The legislation was amended in 2020 to add section (1.01) to include the CCB one-time payment to the calculation for the month of May 2020:

COVID-19 — additional amount

(1.01) If the month referred to in subsection (1) is May 2020, each amount expressed in dollars referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) of the description of E in subsection (1) is deemed, for that month, to be equal to that amount (as adjusted under subsection (5)) plus an additional amount of \$3,600. For greater certainty, the adjustment in subsection (5) shall not take into account this additional amount.

The total annual maximum amount per child, regardless of age, was increased by \$300 for children eligible for the May 2020 payment.

Amounts were increased for the month of May as follows: per eligible child under six years old: \$6,639 plus \$3,600, for a total of \$10,239; and per eligible child age six to 17 years old: \$5,602 plus \$3,600, for a total of \$9,202.

The \$3,600 divided by 12 months results in the \$300 calculation for May 2020.

There was no change to the phase-out threshold or rates.

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Question No. 541—Mr. Matthew Green:

With regard to the CRA's decision to temporarily suspend, as of March 2020, the programs and services of "high-risk audits", "international large business", "high net worth compliance", "GST/HST audit of large businesses", "audit of complex transactions", "audit of flow-through shares" and "foreign tax whistleblower program", broken down by each of the programs and services mentioned, by month, since March 2020 to the re-establishment of the service of audits, and by risk level of non-compliance: (a) how many audits were suspended as a proportion of total audits; (b) of the audits in (a), how many are still suspended as a proportion of total resumed audits; (c) what duties were performed by the auditors during the suspension period; (d) how many files were closed; (e) of the files closed in (d), what was the average amount of time spent processing each file before a decision was made to close it; (f) of the files closed in (d), (i) how many have been assessed (ii) how many have been transferred to the criminal investigation program; and (g) what was the change in the number of auditors, in terms of full-time equivalent?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what follows is the response from the CRA to the above-noted question since March 1, 2020. With regard to parts (a), (b), (d), (e), (f) (i), and (g), due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several programs were temporarily suspended during the time period requested, as they were considered non-critical services. Therefore, employee workloads were shifted to reflect critical services. The CRA is unable to provide the data that is being requested, as the CRA did not create a system indicator to determine which files were put on hold due to the COVID-19 suspensions. Throughout the pandemic, the CRA has worked to design and implement COVID-19 related benefit programs. The CRA has also redeployed many auditors to assist with the verification activities associated with these new programs. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and redistribution of workloads, the CRA's volume of files under audit is lower than expected

With regard to part (c), due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several programs were temporarily suspended as they were considered non-critical services. Employee workloads were shifted to reflect critical services, such as the COVID-19 benefit programs, COVID-19 related call centre activities and operation activities. Audit activity continued throughout the pandemic, but was limited to high-risk audits and exceptional circumstances.

With regard to part (f)(ii), between April 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020, the latest data available, there were 40 referrals from all CRA audit programs to the CRA's criminal investigations program. The CRA cannot provide a breakdown of referrals from each program in the manner requested, since CRA systems do not track this level of detail.

Question No. 543—Ms. Leah Gazan:

With regard to the compliance monitoring of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy since its inception, broken down by level of risk of non-compliance with tax laws and by industry sector: (a) how many applications have been (i) approved, (ii) denied; (b) of the applications in (a), how many companies have a subsidiary or subsidiaries domiciled in foreign jurisdictions of concern as defined by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA); (c) has the CRA verified that the companies in (b) have a subsidiary or subsidiaries in foreign jurisdictions of concern, and, if not, why; (d) how many businesses have been identified as having benefited from overpayments; (e) of the businesses in (d), what is the total value of these overpayments; and (f) has the CRA cross-referenced the data between companies that have benefited from an overpayment and that have one or more subsidiaries domiciled in foreign jurisdictions of concern, and, if so, what is the total value of these overpayments of companies that have one or more subsidiaries in foreign jurisdictions of concern?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, audit data on the Canada emergency wage subsidy, CEWS, program is highly sensitive information. Providing de-

tailed information regarding the specific number of audits planned/ conducted for a given compliance program could embolden some taxpayers to cut corners and take aggressive positions in the hopes that they will avoid detection.

With regard to parts (a)(i) and (ii), the total number of Canada emergency wage subsidy applications that have been approved is available on the CRA website on the "Claims to date: Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy" page at www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/subsidy/emergency-wage-subsidy/cews-statistics.html. As of March 7, 2021, 10,670 initial CEWS applications were cancelled/disallowed, i.e., denied. Of that figure, 7,020 were cancelled whereas 3,650 were disallowed.

With regard to parts (b), (c) and (f), the CRA does not capture the number of corporate CEWS applicants that had a subsidiary or subsidiaries in foreign jurisdictions of concern in the manner in which the information is requested for this benefit program. The majority of taxpayers that are likely to have a subsidiary or subsidiaries in foreign jurisdictions of concern have not yet filed their current corporate income tax return and all related information returns covering the qualifying periods for which CEWS claims were made. As such, the CRA will be applying its risk assessment systems to these required tax filings, and will identify the highest risk taxpayers for its core compliance programs and for its CEWS post-payment audit program, which can include an examination of subsidiaries in foreign jurisdictions of concern, depending on the compliance risks identified.

As a general matter, the CRA does use the presence of subsidiaries in foreign jurisdictions of concern as a risk factor in selecting files for audit.

With regard to part (d), compliance activities are still ongoing. A notice of determination will be sent to the taxpayers when, as a result of a post-payment audit, it is determined that the taxpayers' claims should be reduced or denied.

With regard to part (e), as noted above, compliance activities are ongoing and it is premature to report on this, however, the total amount that has been denied through claims either fully or partially disallowed is just over \$800 million as of March 22, 2021.

Question No. 550—Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:

With regard to the government's 2019 election commitment to plant two billion trees: (a) how many trees have been planted to date; and (b) what is the number of trees planted to date, broken down by (i) province, (ii) municipality or geographical location?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is fully committed to delivering on its commitment to plant two billion trees over the next 10 years.

Natural Resources Canada is looking to engage those interested in growing Canada's forests as a nature-based solution to support national climate change actions. The growing Canada's forests program has recently launched two new processes, and expression of interest and a request for information, to identify the desire and capacity of organizations to plant trees across Canada over the coming years.

A future participants request for information launched recently to identify interested organizations and learn about their vision and capacity to implement or contribute to large-scale, single or multi-year tree-planting projects across Canada. This will help to determine the design of the growing Canada's forests program, develop future processes to maximize program participation and strengthen collaboration.

Existing federal programs are already supporting tree planting, with approximately 150 million seedlings expected to be planted by 2022 through the low-carbon economy fund, working with provinces and territories, as well as trees planted through the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund, working with local communities. The Government of Canada also continues to support the Highway of Heroes tree campaign, which has planted more than 750,000 out of a planned two million trees in Ontario between Trenton and Toronto.

As part of its commitment to supporting Canada's forests and forest sector, the Government of Canada took early action in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic by providing up to \$30 million to support small and medium-sized forest sector firms, including tree-planting operations, and defray the costs associated with COVID-19 health and safety measures. This funding helped ensure a successful 2020 tree-planting season and the planting of an estimated 600 million trees, while protecting workers and communities.

* * *

[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, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 479 to 483, 485, 486, 488, 489, 491, 492, 495, 498, 503, 505 to 514, 516 to 518, 520 to 522, 525, 528, 531, 533 to 539, 542, 544 to 549 and 551 to 553 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 479—**Ms. Rachel Blaney:**

With regard to consultations held by the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages since January 2021 to launch a regional economic development

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agency for British Columbia: (a) how many meetings were held; (b) who attended each meeting; (c) what was the location of each meeting; (d) excluding any expenditures which have yet to be finalized, what are the details of all expenditures related to each meeting, broken down by meeting; (e) what is the itemized breakdown of the expenditures in (d), broken down by (i) venue or location rental, (ii) audiovisual and media equipment, (iii) travel, (iv) food and beverages, (v) security, (vi) translation and interpretation, (vii) advertising, (viii) other expenditures, indicating the nature of each expenditure; (f) how much was spent on contractors and subcontractors; (g) of the contractors and subcontractors in (f), what is the initial and final value of each contract; and (h) among the contractors and subcontractors in (f), what is the description of each service contract?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 480—**Mr. Brad Redekopp:**

With regard to communications, public relations or consulting contracts signed by the government or ministers' offices since January 1, 2018, in relation to goods or services provided to ministers' offices: what are the details of all such contracts, including (i) the start and end date, (ii) the amount, (iii) the vendor, (iv) the description of goods or services provided, (v) whether the contract was sole-sourced or tendered?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 481—**Mr. Brad Redekopp:**

With regard to meetings between ministers or ministerial exempt staff and federal ombudsmen since January 1, 2016: what are the details of all such meetings, including (i) individuals in attendance, (ii) the date, (iii) agenda items or topics discussed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 482—**Mr. Brad Redekopp:**

With regard to the relationship between the government and Canada 2020 since January 1, 2016: (a) what is the total amount of expenditures provided to Canada 2020, broken down by year, for (i) ticket purchases, (ii) sponsorships, (iii) conference fees, (iv) other expenditures; and (b) what is the total number of (i) days, (ii) hours, government officials have spent providing support to Canada 2020 initiatives or programs or attending Canada 2020 events, broken down by year and initiative or event?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 483—**Mr. Ben Lobb:**

With regard to contracts provided by the government to McKinsey & Company since November 4, 2015, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: (a) what is the total amount spent on contracts; and (b) what are the details of all such contracts, including (i) the amount, (ii) the vendor, (iii) the date and duration, (iv) the description of goods or services provided, (v) topics on which goods or services were related to, (vi) specific goals or objectives related to the contract, (vii) whether or not goals or objectives were met, (viii) whether the contract was sole-sourced or tendered?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 485—**Mr. Ben Lobb:**

With regard to meetings between the government, including ministers or ministerial exempt staff, and MCAP since January 1, 2019, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: what are the details of all such meetings, including the (i) individuals in attendance, (ii) date, (iii) agenda items or topics discussed?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 486—Mr. Rob Moore:

With regard to An Act respecting the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, since October 21, 2019: (a) how many directives has the Attorney General issued to the director of public prosecutions as per (i) subsection 10(1) of the act, (ii) subsection 10(2) of the act; and (b) broken down by (a)(i) and (a)(ii), what (i) were those directives, (ii) was the rationale for these directives?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 488—Mr. Phil McColeman:

With regard to Canada's relationship with the Government of China, since October 21, 2019: (a) what is the total amount of official development assistance that has been provided to the People's Republic of China; (b) what are the details of each project in (a), including the (i) amount, (ii) description of the project, (iii) goal of the project, (iv) rationale for funding the project; (c) what is Global Affairs Canada's (GAC) best estimate of China's current annual military budget; and (d) what is GAC's best estimate of the total annual budget of China's Belt and Road Initiative?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 489—Mr. Phil McColeman:

With regard to the government's announcement of \$2.75 billion to purchase zero emission buses: (a) what is the estimated median and average amount each bus will cost; (b) in what municipalities will the buses be located; and (c) how many buses will be located in each of the municipalities in (b), broken down by year for each of the next five years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 491—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to the Highly Affected Sectors Credit Availability Program: (a) how many applications have been (i) received, (ii) approved, (iii) denied; (b) what are the details of all approved fundings, including the (i) recipient, (ii) amount; and (c) what are the details of all denied applications, including the (i) applicant, (ii) amount requested, (iii) reason for denial?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 492—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to the government funding of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the genocide of the Uyghurs in China: does the government know which of the projects currently funded by the AIIB and located in China are using forced Uyghur labour, and if so, which ones?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 495—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

With regard to how the Canadian Armed Forces deal with sexual misconduct: (a) since November 4, 2015, what is the total number of alleged incidents of sexual assault; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by type of allegation (for example male perpetrator and female victim, male perpetrator and male victim, etc.); (c) what is the breakdown of (b) by type of force, (for example Royal Canadian Air Force, Royal Canadian Naval Reserve, etc.); (d) for each breakdown in (c), in how many cases did the (i) Canadian Forces National Investigation Service assumed jurisdiction, (ii) local military police detachment assumed jurisdiction, (iii) local unit assumed jurisdiction; (e) for each breakdown in (c), in how many cases (i) were charges laid, (ii) were cases proceeded by a summary trial, (iii) were cases proceeded by a courts martial, (iv) was there a finding of guilt, (v) were administrative actions taken, (vi) was the complaint withdrawn or discontinued by the victim; (f) since November 4, 2015, what is the total number of alleged incidents of sexual harassment; (g) what is the breakdown of (f) by type of allegation (for example male perpetrator and female victim, male perpetrator and male victim, etc.); (h) what is the breakdown of (g) by type of force (for example Royal Canadian Air Force, Royal Canadian Naval Reserve, etc.); and (i) how many of the incidents in (h) resulted in (i) an investigation, (ii) a finding of harassment, (iii) administrative actions or sanctions, (iv) disciplinary actions?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 498—Mr. Tako Van Popta:

With regard to government statistics related to small businesses: (a) how many small businesses have debt levels that put them at serious risk of insolvency or closure; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by sector?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 503—Mr. Blake Richards:

With regard to the government's statistics and estimates related to small businesses: (a) how many small business have filed for bankruptcy since March 1, 2020, broken down by month; and (b) how many small businesses have either closed or ceased operations since March 1, 2020?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 505—Mr. Daniel Blaikie:

With regard to call centres across the government, from fiscal year 2019-20 to date, broken down by fiscal year, department and call centre: (a) what is the rate of inaccurate information provided by call agents; (b) what is the annual funding allocated; (c) how many full-time call agents have been assigned; (d) how many calls could not be directed to a call agent; (e) what is the wait time target set; (f) what is the actual performance against the wait time target; (g) what is the average wait time to speak to a call agent; (h) what is the established call volume threshold above which callers are directed to the automated system; and (i) what is the method used to test the accuracy of responses given by call agents to callers?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 506—Mr. Daniel Blaikie:

With regard to the compliance monitoring of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) since its inception, broken down by period of eligibility, category of eligible employers (corporation, trust, charity other than a public institution, partnership, non-resident corporation), value of claim (less than \$100,000, \$100,000 to \$1 million, \$1 million to \$5 million, and over \$5 million), size of business (small, medium and large), and industry sector: (a) how many prepayment review audits were conducted; (b) of the audits in (a), what is the average audit duration; (c) how many postpayment audits were conducted; (d) of the audits in (c), what is the average audit duration; (e) how many times has the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) determined that an amount of the CEWS is an overpayment; (f) to date, what is the total amount of the CEWS overpayment; (g) how many notices of determination for overpayment have been issued; (h) what is the total amount and interest refunded to date as a result of the notices of determination for overpayment; (i) how many applications for the CEWS have been denied; (j) of the applications denied in (i), how many were subject to a second level review; (k) of the second level reviews in (j), what was the average processing time for the review; (l) of the second level reviews in (j), in how many cases was the original decision upheld; (m) of the cases in (l), how many of the applications were the subject of a notice of objection or an appeal to the Tax Court of Canada; (n) what was the rate of non-compliance; (o) excluding applications from businesses convicted of tax evasion, does the CRA also screen applications for aggressive tax avoidance practices, and, if so, how many applications were denied because the applicant engaged in aggressive tax avoidance; (p) among the businesses receiving the CEWS, has the CRA verified whether each business has a subsidiary or subsidiaries domiciled in a foreign jurisdiction of concern for Canada as defined by the CRA, and, if so, how many of the businesses that received the CEWS have a subsidiary or subsidiaries in foreign jurisdictions of concern for Canada; and (q) among the businesses in (p), has the CRA cross-referenced the data of businesses submitted for the CEWS application and their level of risk of non-compliance with tax laws?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 507—Mr. Kenny Chiu:

With regard to government statistics related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on racialized Canadians: (a) how many racialized Canadians, in total, were employed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic or as of March 1, 2020; (b) how many racialized Canadians are currently employed; (c) how many racialized Canadians, in total, have left the workforce since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic; (d) what information or statistics does the government have on how the pandemic has hurt self-employed racialized Canadians; (e) how many businesses owned by racialized Canadians have seen their earnings decrease over the pandemic, and what was the average percentage of those decreases; and (f) how many businesses owned by racialized Canadians have ceased operations or faced bankruptcy as a result of the pandemic?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 508—Mr. Dan Mazier:**

With regard to Service Canada, since January 2020, and broken down by month: (a) how many calls did Service Canada receive from the general public via phone; (b) what was the average wait time for an individual who contacted Service Canada via phone before first making contact with a live employee; (c) what was the average wait or on hold time after first being connected with a live employee; (d) what was the average duration of total call time, including all waiting times, for an individual who contacted Service Canada via phone; and (e) how many documented server, website, portal or system errors occurred on the Service Canada website?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 509—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to the Fall Economic Statement 2020 and the additional \$606 million over five years, starting in 2021-22, to enable the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) to fund new initiatives and extend existing programs aimed at international tax evasion and abusive tax avoidance, broken down by year: (a) how does the CRA plan to allocate the additional funding, broken down by CRA programs and services; (b) what is the target number of auditors to be hired in terms of full-time equivalents, broken down by auditor category; (c) what portion of the additional funding is solely directed to combating international tax evasion; and (d) what portion of the additional funding is solely directed to aggressive international tax avoidance?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 510—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to the government's commitment to launch consultations in the coming months on modernizing Canada's anti-avoidance rules as stated in the Fall Economic Statement 2020: (a) is funding already allocated to the consultation process, and, if so, what is the amount; (b) are staff already assigned, and, if so, how many full-time equivalents are assigned; (c) what is the anticipated list of issues and proposed changes to the consultation process; and (d) when is the consultation process expected to begin?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 511—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to budget 2016 and the government's commitment to provide \$350 million per year in ongoing funding to enable the Canada Revenue Agency to combat tax evasion and abusive tax avoidance, broken down by fiscal year, from 2016 to date: (a) how much of this annual funding has gone to programs and services for (i) high-risk audits, (ii) international large business sector, (iii) high net worth compliance, (iv) flow-through share audits, (v) the foreign tax whistleblower program; (b) has this annual funding resulted in the hiring of additional auditors, and, if so, how many additional auditors have been hired, broken down by the programs and services in (a); (c) has this annual funding resulted in an increase in audits, and, if so, how many audits have been completed, broken down by the programs and services in (a); (d) has this annual funding resulted in an increase in assessments, and, if so, how many reassessments have been issued; (e) has this annual funding resulted in an increase in the number of convictions for international tax evasion, and, if so, how many convictions for international tax evasion have occurred; and (f) how much of this annual funding was not spent, and, if applicable, why?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 512—Mr. James Bezan:

With regard to Canada-Chinese military cooperation, since January 1, 2017: (a) how many joint exercises or training activities have occurred involving the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of the People's Republic of China; (b) what was the date of these exercises or training activities; (c) what was the nature of these exercises or training activities; (d) what was the location of these exercises or training activities; (e) how many PLA and CAF personnel were involved; (f) what was the rank of each of the PLA personnel involved; (g) what were the costs of these exercises or training activities incurred by the Department of National Defence; and (h) who is responsible for approving these exercises or training activities?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 513—Ms. Michelle Rempel Garner:

With regard to the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) and Health Canada respectively: (a) what scientific evidence, expert opinions, and other factors went into the decision to extend the dosing schedule up to four months be-

tween doses of the COVID-19 vaccines; and (b) what is the summary of the minutes of each meeting the NACI had in which dosing timelines were discussed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 514—Ms. Michelle Rempel Garner:

With regard to the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC): (a) how many doctors and other designated medical professionals have been employed by the agency, broken down by year since 2015; and (b) what percentage of PHAC employees do each of the numbers in (a) represent?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 516—Mr. Dave Epp:

With regard to all contracts awarded by the government since November 1, 2019, broken down by department or agency: (a) how many contracts have been awarded to (i) a foreign firm, (ii) an individual, (iii) a business, (iv) another entity with a mailing address outside of Canada; (b) what is the total value of the contracts in (a); (c) for each contract in (a), what is the (i) name of the vendor, (ii) country of the vendor's mailing address, (iii) date of the contract, (iv) summary or description of goods or services provided; and (d) for each contract in (a), was the contract awarded competitively or sole-sourced?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 517—Mr. Dave Epp:

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), since January 1, 2019: (a) what was the call volume, broken down by month and by type of caller (personal, business, professional accountant, etc.); and (b) what was the (i) average, (ii) median length of time callers spent on hold or waiting to talk to the CRA, broken down by month and type of caller?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 518—Mr. Dave Epp:

With regard to government statistics on wireless service prices for Canadian consumers: (a) what was the average wireless service price as of November 1, 2019; (b) what is the current average wireless service price; and (c) what is the average decrease in wireless service price since November 1, 2019?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 520—Mr. Blaine Calkins:

With regard to government contracts, since January 1, 2020, and broken down by department or agency: (a) how many tendered contracts were not awarded to the lowest bidder; and (b) what are the details of all such contracts, including the (i) vendor, (ii) value of the contract, (iii) date and duration of the contract, (iv) description of goods or services, (v) reason the contract was awarded to the vendor as opposed to the lowest bidder?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 521—Mr. Blaine Calkins:

With regard to government statistics on the effect of the pandemic on the workforce: what are the government's estimates related to how many Canadians, in total, have left the workforce since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 522—Mrs. Kelly Block:

With regard to government contribution agreements: (a) how many contribution agreements ended or were not renewed since January 1, 2016; (b) what is the total value of the agreements in (a); and (c) what are the details of each agreement in (a), including the (i) summary of agreement, including list of parties, (ii) amount of federal contribution prior to the agreement ending, (iii) last day the agreement was in force, (iv) reason for ending the agreement?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 525—Ms. Jag Sahota:

With regard to the report in the March 9, 2021 Toronto Star that federal officials are researching and monitoring problematic supply chains, in relation to the use or forced labour to produce imported goods: (a) which supply chains are problematic; (b) how many supply chains have been identified as problematic; (c) in which countries are the problematic supply chains located; (d) what specific issues had the government identified that made the government identify these supply chains as problematic; and (e) has the government purchased any products that were either made or potentially made from forced labour, since November 1, 2019, and, if so, what are the details of the products, and why did the government purchase products that were potentially made using forced labour?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 528—Ms. Jag Sahota:

With regard to the government's plan to use the savings of Canadians to stimulate the economy: what are the government's estimates or calculations related to the average per capita amount of savings for each Canadian family?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 531—Mr. John Barlow:

With regard to government programs, and broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: (a) how many programs were ended or have been suspended since January 1, 2016; (b) what are the details of each such program, including the (i) name of the program, (ii) date the program ended or was suspended, (iii) reason for ending or suspending the program, (iv) dollar value in savings as a result of ending or suspending the program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 533—Mr. John Williamson:

With regard to government contracts, since October 21, 2019, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: (a) how many contracts have been awarded to companies based in China or owned by entities based in China; (b) of the contracts in (a), what are the details, including (i) the value, (ii) the vendor, (iii) the date the contract was awarded, (iv) whether or not a national security review was conducted prior to the awarding of the contract, and, if so, what was the result; and (c) what is the government's policy regarding the awarding of contracts to (i) companies based in China, (ii) companies with ties to the Chinese Communist Party?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 534—Mr. John Williamson:

With regard to foreign investments, since January 1, 2016, broken down by year: (a) how many foreign takeovers of Canadian companies have occurred in accordance with the Investment Canada Act; (b) how many of the takeovers were initiated by Chinese state-owned enterprises; (c) for the takeovers in (b), what are the details, including (i) the name of the company doing the takeover, (ii) the name of the company subject to the takeover, (iii) whether a national security review was conducted, (iv) the result of the national security review, if applicable; and (d) what is the government's policy regarding foreign takeovers initiated by Chinese state-owned enterprises?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 535—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to the Canada Infrastructure Bank, since May 2019: (a) what is the number of meetings held with Canadian and foreign investors, broken down by (i) month, (ii) country, (iii) investor class; (b) what is the complete list of investors met; (c) what are the details of the contracts awarded by the Canada Infrastructure Bank, including the (i) date of the contract, (ii) initial and final value of the contract, (iii) vendor name, (iv) file number, (v) description of services provided; (d) how many full-time equivalents were working at the bank in total, broken down by (i) month, (ii) job title; (e) what are the total costs of managing the bank, broken down by (i) fiscal year, from 2019-20 to date, (ii) leases costs, (iii) salaries of full-time equivalents and corresponding job classifications, (iv) operating expenses; (f) how many projects have applied for funding through the bank, broken down by (i) month, (ii) description of the project, (iii) value of the project; (g) of the projects in (f), how many have been approved; (h) how many projects assigned through the bank have begun operations, broken down by region; (i) of the projects in (h), what is the number of jobs created, broken down by region; (j) what is the remuneration range for its board of directors and its chief executive officer, broken down by fiscal year, from 2019-20 to date; (k) were any performance-based bonuses or incentives

distributed to the board of directors and the chief executive officer, and, if so, how much, broken down by fiscal year from 2019-20 to date?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 536—Mr. Andrew Scheer:

With regard to the Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB): (a) how much private sector capital has the CIB been able to secure for its existing projects; (b) what is the overall ratio of private sector investment dollars to public investment dollars for all announced CIB projects; and (c) what is the ratio in (b), broken down by each project?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 537—Mr. Andrew Scheer:

With regard to infrastructure projects announced by the government since November 4, 2015: what are the details of all projects announced by the government that are behind schedule, including the (i) description of the project, including the location, (ii) original federal contribution, (iii) original estimated total cost of the project, (iv) original scheduled date of completion, (v) revised scheduled date of completion, (vi) length of delay, (vii) reason for the delay, (viii) revised federal contribution, if applicable, (ix) revised estimated total cost of the project?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 538—Mr. Andrew Scheer:

With regard to applications for Infrastructure funding between November 4, 2015, and September 11, 2019, and broken down by each funding program, excluding the Gas Tax Fund: what is the (i) name of program, (ii) number of applications received under each program, (iii) number of applications approved under each program, (iv) amount of funding commitment under each program, (v) amount of funding actually delivered to date under each program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 539—Mr. Andrew Scheer:

With regard to applications for Infrastructure funding since October 22, 2019, and broken down by each funding program, excluding the Gas Tax Fund: what is the (i) name of program, (ii) number of applications received under each program, (iii) number of applications approved under each program, (iv) amount of funding commitment under each program, (v) amount of funding actually delivered to date under each program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 542—Mr. Matthew Green:

With regard to Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) high net worth compliance program, broken down by year, from November 2015 to date: (a) how many audits were completed; (b) what is the number of auditors; (c) how many new files were opened; (d) how many files were closed; (e) of the files in (d), what was the average time taken to process the file before it was closed; (f) of the files in (d), what was the risk level of non-compliance of each file; (g) how much was spent on contractors and subcontractors; (h) of the contractors and subcontractors in (g), what is the initial and final value of each contract; (i) among the contractors and subcontractors in (g), what is the description of each service contract; (j) how many reassessments were issued; (k) what is the total amount recovered; (l) how many taxpayer files were referred to the CRA's Criminal Investigations Program; (m) of the investigations in (l), how many were referred to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada; and (n) of the investigations in (m), how many resulted in convictions?

(Return tabled)

S. O. 52

Question No. 544—Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:

With regard to the processing of applications by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC): (a) how many applications did IRCC process each month since January 2020, broken down by month; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by visa category and type of application; (c) how many applications did IRCC process each month in 2019, broken down by month; (d) what is the breakdown of (c) by visa category and type of application; (e) how many IRCC employees were placed on leave code 699 at some point since March 1, 2020; (f) what is the average duration the employees in (e) were on leave code 699; (g) what is the current processing times and application inventories of each visa category and type of application; and (h) what specific impact has the pandemic had on IRCC's ability to process applications?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 545—Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:

With regard to the Canadian Experience Class Program and the round of invitations issued on February 13, 2021: (a) what is the total number of invitations extended to applicants with Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) scores of (i) 75, (ii) 76 to 99, (iii) 100 to 199, (iv) 200 to 299, (v) 300 to 399, (vi) 400 to 430, (vii) 431 and higher; and (b) what is the distribution of the total number of invitations across the individual categories of points within each factor of the CRS?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 546—Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:

With regard to compliance inspections for employers of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 13, 2020, to the present: (a) what is the total number of inspections conducted; (b) what is the total number of tips or allegations received through the 1-800 tip line or on-line portal reporting any suspected non-compliance or in response to information received, and broken down by type of alleged non-compliance; and (c) what is the total number of confirmed non-compliance, and broken down by type of non-compliance?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 547—Mr. Scott Duvall:

With regard to the proposal, as indicated in the 2020 Fall Economic Statement, for an additional \$606 million over five years, beginning in 2021-22, to enable the Canada Revenue Agency to fund new initiatives and extend existing programs aimed at international tax evasion and abusive tax avoidance: (a) what specific modeling was used by the government to support its assertion that these measures to combat international tax evasion and abusive tax avoidance will recover \$1.4 billion in revenue over five years; (b) who did the modeling in (a); (c) what were the modeling projections; and (d) does the \$1.4 billion estimate come solely from the proposed additional \$606 million over five years or does it also come from the 2016 budget commitment of \$350 million per year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 548—Mr. Scott Duvall:

With regard to events hosted by Facebook, Google, Netflix, and Apple that ministers have attended, since November 2015, broken down by each company, year, and department: (a) what is the number of events each minister attended; (b) of the attendance in (a), what were the costs associated with (i) lodging, (ii) food, (iii) any other expenses, including a description of each expense; and (c) what are the details of any meetings the minister and others attended, including (i) the date, (ii) the summary or description, (iii) attendees, (iv) topics discussed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 549—Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:

With regard to government contracts awarded to Cisco, broken down by department, agency, or other government entity: (a) broken down by year, what is the (i) number, (ii) total value, of all contracts awarded to Cisco since January 1, 2016; and (b) what are the details of all contracts awarded to Cisco since January 1, 2016, including (i) the vendor, (ii) the date, (iii) the amount, (iv) the description of goods or services, (v) whether contract was sole-sourced?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 551—Ms. Jenny Kwan:

With regard to loans approved by the Canada Enterprise Emergency Funding Corporation (CEEFC) under the Large Employer Emergency Financing Facility, broken down by approved loan for each borrower: (a) what are the terms and the

conditions of the loan in terms of (i) dividends, (ii) capital distributions and share repurchases, (iii) executive compensation; (b) for the terms and conditions of the loan in (a), from what date do these terms apply and until what date do they expire; (c) what are the consequences provided for in the terms and conditions of the loan if a company does not comply with one or more of the terms and conditions in (a); (d) by what process does the CEEFC verify that the company complies with the terms and the conditions in (a); and (e) has the CEEFC appointed an observer to the board of directors of each of the borrowers, and, if so, what is the duration of his mandate?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 552—Ms. Jenny Kwan:

With regard to housing: (a) since 2010, broken down by year, how much insured lending did the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation approve for rental financing and refinancing to real estate income trusts and large capital equity funds; (b) of the insured lending in (a), how much is associated with the purchase of existing moderate-rent assets; (c) broken down by project receiving funding in (a), what is the (i) average rent of units prior to the acquisition, (ii) average rent of units for each year following the acquisition up until the most current average rent; (d) broken down by province, funding commitment status (e.g. finalized agreement, conditional commitment), whether funding has been advanced and type of funding (grant or loan), what is the total funding that has been provided through the (i) National Co-Investment Fund, (ii) Rental Construction Financing Initiative, (iii) application stream of the Rapid Housing Initiative?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 553—Ms. Jenny Kwan:

With regard to the government's contracting of visa application services: (a) on which dates did Public Works and Government Services Canada and Public Services and Procurement Canada each become aware that Beijing Shuangxiang is owned by the Beijing Public Security Bureau; (b) since learning of the ownership structure of Beijing Shuangxiang, what reviews have been conducted in response to this information, and when did they begin; (c) regarding the process that resulted in the awarding of the contract to VFS Global in 2018, (i) how many bids were submitted, (ii) did any other companies win the contract prior to it being awarded to VFS Global, (iii) what was assessed in the consideration of these contracts, (iv) was the Communications Security Establishment or the Canadian Security Intelligence Service involved in the vetting of the contracts; (d) is there an escape clause in this VFS Global's contract that would allow the government to unilaterally exit the contract; and (e) the government having tasked VFS Global with the creation of digital services, what measures are being taken to ensure that the government is not providing VFS Global with a competitive advantage in future bids?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE**LABOUR DISPUTE AT THE PORT OF MONTREAL**

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that I have received a notice of a request for an emergency debate. I invite the hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville to rise and make a brief intervention.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the request for an emergency debate is related to the dispute at the Port of Montreal.

The Budget

Longshoremen at the Port of Montreal have been on strike since this morning. Yesterday, the government gave notice that it would be introducing special legislation before the strike had even begun. Today, the parties are having one last mediation session.

I am requesting an emergency debate to make sure that our government did everything it could before introducing a special bill that would put an end to negotiations and legislate working conditions for the longshoremen. I think there are other potential solutions.

The union has even pointed out many times over the past several days that it would have put an end to all of its pressure tactics had the employer withdrawn two measures that imposed new working conditions. I think solutions can be found if we want to take action. Special legislation is not a solution.

There is a way to debate this issue in the House. We have a major responsibility to ensure that every effort will be made before special legislation is introduced. I am calling for this emergency debate because the government is supposed to introduce that legislation in the coming days, maybe even as early as tomorrow. It is therefore important to first debate in the House the steps that the government could take to guarantee the negotiation of a collective agreement and get everyone back to work. No one wants this dispute, but there are solutions. We cannot accept the introduction of special legislation as a solution because it is not a solution but a sign of failure.

This merits an emergency debate in the House to determine how to act with equanimity on this issue. I am rising now under the provisions of Standing Order 52 because I know there is a particular time to do so. I am asking that the emergency debate be held as soon as possible because special legislation could be introduced in the very near future.

• (1525)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville for her remarks, but I do not find that the request meets the requirements of the Standing Orders.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

TAKING OF SCREENSHOT OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS— SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I would like to make a statement following the point of order raised by the government House leader on April 15 regarding the inappropriate sharing of a screenshot of our proceedings the previous day and the difficult situation the member for Pontiac faced as a consequence.

Measures were taken to inquire as to how the deplorable incident occurred. On Wednesday, April 21, the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue stood in the House to admit that it was he who had taken the screenshot and to apologize for his action.

The point of order raised by the government House leader is a serious one. All members of this House should be able to rely on their colleagues and staff to respect each other in conducting themselves

in the chamber, whether in person or virtually. It is in everyone's interest that this practice continues to be observed rigorously. As such, the events of that day are a clear breach of our rules and, more important, an affront to the authority and dignity of the House and its members.

[Translation]

You are undoubtedly aware, and my predecessors repeated it on numerous occasions, that it is strictly forbidden for anyone, except photographers authorized by the House, to take photos during our proceedings. There is no need to remind members that the virtual nature of the proceedings of the House and its committees has brought with it many changes and required many adjustments from everyone.

However, that in no way affects the validity of the rule. Respecting the rule has never been more crucial than it is at a time when members are participating in proceedings from their office on the Hill or in their electoral district, or even from their residence. I would add that the ease with which it is possible to share and disseminate information using the tools at our disposal only increases the risk of the rule's being broken. I reminded all members of this at the beginning of the session on September 28 and 29, 2020. The staff members of each party with access to the system that facilitates the virtual deliberations were also informed.

So, the Chair wants to remind all members and everyone with this privileged access that screenshots, photos of a screen and visual recordings of the proceedings of the House or any of its committees, whether open to the public or not, are absolutely prohibited.

[English]

I am therefore counting on everyone's collaboration to respect the rules in the new operating environment. As far as the House is concerned and the procedural aspect of this issue, I consider the matter closed.

I thank the hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1530)

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada needs a Prime Minister who sees where the solutions to our country's challenges truly lie. It is not in the government; it is in the people. It is Canadians who are the problem solvers, the solution makers and the wealth creators, not the government. We need a leader who sees the potential for the greatness of this nation in a free and self-sufficient people, again, not a big, bloated government.

The Budget

I am grieved by the ongoing patronization of the Prime Minister and so many of his ministers when addressing Canadians as if they are weak and helpless and in need of ongoing supports and hand-outs from the government, as if they do not have the ability, in and of themselves, to be a creative and strong part of the solution as we move forward. If they would only see Canadian people for who they are and let them do what they are best at doing, generating solutions, solving problems, designing equipment and technology, pursuing innovation, building businesses, creating jobs and securing our future, then we would be headed down a much better path.

Canadians are fair, they are reasonable and they are generous. What they are looking for is a road map. They are looking, first and foremost, for an ethical and competent leader at the helm and then they are looking for a plan, one with decisive action that is outlined, that can be measured and will be followed through on. We need to unleash the power of our workforce and let the ingenuity of the people map a course forward. Canadians want a secure future. They do not want to be handcuffed by an overwhelmingly bloated government or debt load or high taxes. Canadians deserve better than what is currently on offer and they want to be a part of the solution, moving forward.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are a couple of things that my hon. colleague from Lethbridge said that I want to address before I get to my question. She talked about investments and Canadians' footing the bill. I was disappointed that she was not recognizing that those investments were, indeed, for the benefit of Canadians. She mentioned big, bloated government. I would ask the member to look at her carbon tax program from the Conservatives and how they will tell Canadians how to spend their own money.

The hon. member talked about re-engineering society. Does she see a national child care program as re-engineering society?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister told Canadians not to worry, that the government would hold their hands, that it had them covered and that it would go into debt so they did not have to.

It is laughable to say that the government will go into debt so Canadians do not have to. Governments do not have their own money. It is not like the Prime Minister was being generous to Canadians, taking from his trust fund and spending on their behalf.

We are talking about a Prime Minister who was taking the credit card that belongs to Canadians, racking it up with hundreds of billions of dollars of debt, and now is going to have to increase taxes and cut back on social programs. That is atrocious. That is terrible leadership. That is not in the best interest of Canadians.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives like to brag about respecting provincial jurisdictions.

My colleague and I both know what is missing from the budget. What is missing is an increase in health transfers to 35% on an ongoing basis. Premier Legault and the premiers of the other provinces have all called for this increase.

The Conservatives say that they are listening to the premiers of Quebec and the provinces and their demands, so I would like to ask my colleague if she agrees that health transfers need to be increased to 35% on an ongoing basis, as called for by the Premier of Quebec and the provincial premiers.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, again, one of the interesting things about this budget is that the Prime Minister actually said that it was his COVID-response budget and that the budget would somehow bring COVID back into a manageable state.

Interestingly enough, not a dime in the budget is put toward a recovery plan that is measured, a recovery plan that is viable, a recovery plan that is substantial in any way.

In addition to not having a plan put forward to Canadians, the Prime Minister has also failed to increase any of the health care transfers that take place with the provinces.

One would think that if the Prime Minister were genuinely concerned about the well-being of Canadians during COVID-19 and wants to see their health and well-being cared for that he would, at a bare minimum, increase the health transfers that take place between the federal government and the provinces.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, in regard to my colleague's presentation, I want to ask her about leadership and patronization.

The member mentioned there was no leadership. It is like the Liberals do not know how. The Prime Minister has had several issues with things like the WE scandal, SNC-Lavalin, the cover-up on defence as well as other issues. It seems like there is an awful lot of drama involved.

I wonder if the member could expand on how that drama is not really leadership and how the Liberal caucus seems to follow along with it.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, the hon. member raises a good point around the Prime Minister's leadership. A budget serves a couple of purposes. One, of course, is that it is a financial document that outlines a plan for the country. The other is that it really acts as somewhat of a review of the leader at the helm to determine whether his vision is agreed with.

When it comes to the Prime Minister of the country, Prime Minister Trudeau, what we see is a man who has been—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the hon. member that we do not use names of other members in the House.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, we see that the Prime Minister has been convicted of two ethics violations, and is now being investigated for a third time. That being said, I think Canadians are rightly outraged and upset with his conduct.

The Budget

Now we find out that it is likely he has been hiding details with regard to sexual assault allegations that were brought forward concerning the Canadian Armed Forces. That is atrocious. It is especially atrocious when the Prime Minister claims to be a feminist, and he will not even stand up for those victims who are a part of the LGBTQ2+ community or are women who served within the Canadian Armed Forces, who have undergone tremendous—

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

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 pick up where the member was referencing leadership. It is hard not to laugh internally when I hear members say, "It's about leadership". Let me give a good example of what leadership really is.

Just over five years ago when we formed the government, the Prime Minister said that the environment was an important issue for all Canadians. Back then, over five years ago, the Liberal Party of Canada said that we needed to put a price on pollution. For days, weeks, months and years we heard the Conservative party yell from their seats how terrible it was, and that it was a carbon tax. For years this went on. Now, we see that the Conservative Party has adopted the need to have a price on pollution.

Do not get me wrong. I am glad that the Conservatives recognized, on the road to Damascus, the need to change and better reflect what Canadians are thinking, but this is regarding leadership and that vacuum prior. Why did it take the Conservatives five years to recognize what Canadians and the government have been talking about for the last five years? That, to me, is a lack of leadership. It goes beyond the present Conservative leader to speak to the type of leadership that was there with Stephen Harper.

We have seen strong leadership coming from the Government of Canada working with many different stakeholders during a difficult time. It is because we have worked with Canadians, listened to what they had to say and brought in some bold initiatives over the last 12 months that Canada is well positioned to generate jobs into the future and ensure that we can provide the types of programs that Canadians have.

The Prime Minister and my colleagues often talk about building back better, and I can tell members that each and every Liberal member of Parliament is committed to building back better, because we understand—

• (1540)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I think the member forgot to mention that he is sharing his time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am very happy to split my time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, the former leader of the Green Party.

I was talking about the strength of leadership that we saw at the national level and in provincial and territorial jurisdictions. Stakeholders came to the table with that team Canada approach and, as a result, Canada is in a much better position to build back better. I referenced the sense of commitment that I know every Liberal member of Parliament in the House of Commons has to ensure that we have a better economy and a better social environment. There are many examples of that.

I am very proud of the Minister of Finance, the first female national Minister of Finance, who did a fabulous job of presenting a plan that is going to take us into the years ahead. It will protect health care. We are investing in science to build domestic vaccine manufacturing capacity, something that we learned we needed. That is one aspect of building back better. We are investing \$5 billion to create national standards for long-term and older adult care. We know that is a priority for Canadians. We have seen a good rationale for the arguments presented through the last 12 months. We are improving mental health services. We will continue to push for a national pharmacare program, at the same time recognizing that we need buy-in from the provinces to provide the type of pharmacare program that Canadians expect of all levels of government.

We talk about putting people first. It is something I often reference. We see that in the budget, with an extension of income and business supports such as the CRB and the CEWS through to the fall. I find it amazing that members of the opposition criticize the government because we fulfilled a campaign promise. I am sure many of my colleagues will remember the campaign promise that if Liberals formed government, we would increase OAS for those 75 and over by 10%. That was a campaign promise. We are fulfilling that campaign promise, and the Conservatives are criticizing us for it and asking about other seniors.

In 2015 and 2016, this government lifted hundreds of thousands of seniors out of poverty. It increased the GIS for the poorest seniors in the country. In Winnipeg North alone, hundreds of seniors were lifted out of poverty because of direct action by this government. These are the types of things that are making a difference. It is a way that we are putting people first.

We are giving children a head start and adding value to our economy by reducing the cost of regulated child care by 50% by 2022, with the goal of it costing \$10 a day by 2026. What a bold initiative that is. We want the so-called gold standard in Quebec to be applied across Canada. Not only those who have children, but all of society will benefit from that because we will have more value in our economy as a direct result. We are investing close to \$30 billion over the next five years to build that permanent national system. We are committed to working with the provinces to make that happen.

The Budget

I talked about the price of pollution and the lack of leadership from the Conservative Party on that issue. Planning for a green recovery is an important aspect of the budget. We are fighting climate change with a price on pollution, helping more than 200,000 Canadians make their homes greener.

• (1545)

It is a wonderful policy announcement and I hope to see many of my constituents take advantage of it. Building a net-zero economy by investing in world-leading technologies, not to mention the legislation we brought forward and conserving 25% of our lands and oceans by 2025 for future generations, are the types of initiatives that are going to make a difference when we talk about planning for a green recovery.

Jobs are important. Many sectors have been hit hard. Programs such as the emergency wage subsidy program, the emergency rent subsidy program, the emergency business account, the credit availability program and the relief and recovery fund, not to mention the CERB, combined with other programs during this difficult time have put Canada in an excellent position. We are on track to create a million jobs before the end of this year. We are supporting almost 500,000 new training and work opportunities. We are helping small businesses to transform for a digital world.

These are the types of initiatives that are making a difference in the lives of all Canadians. We are in this position today because we have taken seriously the priorities Canadians have had over the last 12-plus months: minimizing the negative impacts of the coronavirus and being there for Canadians during this time.

The Government of Canada, with the support of many, has done just that. It pleases me to say we will have over 44 million doses of vaccines before the end of June, keeping in mind Canada's population is 37.5 million people. We are on the track for brighter days ahead, and a bit more warm weather too.

• (1550)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am getting calls from constituents in Oshawa who remember Pierre Elliott Trudeau and what happened when he left office. I remember it was Jean Chrétien who said, "We left the cupboard bare". My concern is that we seem to have maxed out our credit card, our kids' credit card and now it seems to be the grandkids' credit card.

When does the government plan to return to a balanced budget?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, this is what I mean about the Conservatives being like a rudderless ship. There is no leadership coming from their party. One day they are talking about deficit, deficit, deficit and asking why we are spending all this money, and on other days they are saying how good it is and they support legislation that spends the money that we need to borrow money for.

I gave a list of programs that were absolutely critical to support, not to mention things such as \$19 billion for a provincial restart and \$2 billion toward schools. There is so much money there that was absolutely needed in order to support Canadians. Some days the Conservatives support it, other days—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will take another question.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I could not help but smirk when I heard my colleague talk about the promises the government has kept.

What about the government's key promise in 2015 on electoral reform? What about the government's promise to stop giving subsidies to oil companies? What about the government's promise to stop interfering in provincial jurisdictions?

All I see in the budget is the government trying to interfere in provincial jurisdictions and, more importantly, rejecting Quebec's only demand, namely that the federal level increase health transfers to 35% on an ongoing basis.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, unlike members of the Bloc, I believe it is important that, as a federation, the national government work with provinces and territories for the betterment of all citizens from coast to coast to coast. When it comes to health care accords, enhancement of CPP benefits, or the high sense of cooperation to combat the coronavirus, it is absolutely critical that we not only recognize jurisdictional responsibilities, but also recognize that we have a responsibility to work together for the betterment of all of our communities. That has been clearly demonstrated over the last six years—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, while the Liberal government fails to go after the ultra wealthy and those profiteering off the pandemic, it is choosing to go after individuals living in poverty who accepted the CERB payment, often due to lack of clarity by the government when it rolled out the program. This is an action that will result in members of his riding of Winnipeg North and my riding of Winnipeg Centre ending up on the streets.

Does this member support Campaign 2000's call for repayment amnesty for CERB for low-income individuals? It is calling on the government to respect a human rights approach.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I can see the headlines the New Democrats are attempting to get: Tax the ultrarich. That is it. They want that to be their slogan. There is a bit of hypocrisy though, as we put a tax on Canada's wealthiest 1% in the first budget we presented, and members may not believe it, but the NDP voted no.

The Budget

• (1555)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I speak to colleagues today from the traditional territory of the WSÁNEĆ nation. It is a deep honour to be a member of Parliament for such a place. *Hych'ka Stiem*.

I am going to start with a reflection on the historical nature of this budget and with a thought that comes to us from the late Jane Jacobs, one of the most remarkable thinkers in Canada and a great urban planner. In her last book, *Dark Age Ahead*, she mentioned that we as a society seem to have collective amnesia.

What I am going to say next will probably result in some heckling. I apologize for that. I mean I apologize for possibly provoking heckling, not for heckling, as I have never heckled.

I do find it important, as we look at this budget, which has, finally, a historic commitment to child care, to look at the last chance we had for child care, the last chance we had to actually live up to our Kyoto targets and the last chance we had to make substantial progress toward reconciliation.

I am speaking of the 2005 achievements that were brought to an end. I am not going to refer to the political parties or the leaders at the time, but I will say that those opportunities were snatched from us by our first-past-the-post electoral system. This is why I say that, and I will just preface this by saying I was not a member of any political party at the time. I was the executive director of the Sierra Club of Canada. When I think of November 28, 2005, I could weep. I have wept.

We had a really good plan to reach the Kyoto targets. When I speak of collective amnesia, this include the Liberals, whose plan it was, but who seem to have completely forgotten that this was a historic reality. We had a very detailed budget from Ralph Goodale as finance minister. The minister of environment at the time was Stéphane Dion. It was found that it would have gotten us to within striking distance of 6% below 1990 levels. We now stand, in our last reported emissions, at 21% above 1990 levels.

Ken Dryden was the minister who delivered the child care plan, which was phenomenal. It had something that we do not have now in that it had signed agreements from 10 provinces. It really mattered. Members can ask Martha Friendly. It mattered, and it also had funding.

We also had five major indigenous organizations in this country representing first nations, Métis, Inuit, native women and so on working on a very strong agreement, which was called the Kelowna accord, of \$5 billion over five years. It was never enough, but it was a good start. These were all brought to an end because of first past the post and because of looking ahead at what would happen if a minority government was supported again.

Earlier in this House there was a bit of a debate between the member for London—Fanshawe and the member for Kingston and the Islands about the budget that year. Let us be clear. The budget that year did carry. Paul Martin's government did not fall on the budget. The budget, as some of us will remember, was brilliantly rewritten by Jack Layton. The budget included close to \$5 billion in increased social spending, money for affordable housing and more money to end global poverty. It actually would have put Canada on

track to hold to 0.7%, to meet that target known as the Pearson target. As I said, I could weep.

The budget passed, but then the Conservatives under Stephen Harper engineered the fall of the government by putting forth their own non-confidence motion, with the support of the other two parties in this House today, the Bloc and the NDP. It brought down the government because of first past the post. This is because, if an opposition party is looking forward, it really does not want the Liberals to be all that popular, and it would be popular if it were delivering on Kyoto, delivering on Kelowna and delivering on child care.

If it were not for that fateful vote on November 28, 2005, our emissions would now be measured against 1990 levels, not 2005 levels, and we would not be 21% above 1990 levels. We would be below them. Child care would have been a reality for Canadian working mothers and, I should say, parents, as dads take responsibility too, but as we know, it is mostly moms. Child care would have been a reality for the last 15 years, not five years away, as the new Minister of Finance states. I believe she fully intends and is fully committed to delivering on child care, but as a provincial jurisdictional reality, the money will not be enough without the agreements. We have to hope that child care deal gets done, but we would have had it for a very long time.

Here we are with this budget, and what do we like about it? Again, I have to say that if this budget is back to the future, we will never get those years back. It was a political calculation that it was worth defeating Paul Martin's government to put Stephen Harper in place because everybody, the Bloc, the NDP and the Conservatives, would do better later on.

• (1600)

We will never get those years back, so now where are we?

I am sure that I can speak for the other members of the Green caucus, and we are all very pleased to see the child care funding. We want to see that succeed, and we would love to support that. However, this budget is missing pharmacare. Why are we not moving ahead on pharmacare? The Hoskins report is sitting there gathering dust.

What happened to guaranteed livable income? We heard the Liberal convention and the NDP convention both support having a basic income, and that means a guaranteed livable income. It is not here at all.

The Budget

What happened to speaking to the opioid crisis that is taking lives across this country? Where is decriminalization? Where are the really significant plans to deal with the opioid crisis? What about those who are really being left behind here. Youth and post-secondary students, and people living with disabilities are being left behind. There is nothing for people who are dealing with low income and renting their places. There is so much missing here.

What of overseas development assistance and that one little promise from 2005? We have not heard anybody in the government talk about 0.7% of GDP to overseas development assistance since. This budget does very little on overseas development assistance, a surprisingly small amount. NGOs and those in the development community have asked for at least put 1% of what industrialized countries are putting into COVID relief to be put into overseas development assistance. This does not come close. It comes to less than half of one per cent, and it is spread over many years. We know the developing world is going to face a food crisis as a result of COVID. There is a need for more help than ever to developing countries, and, yes, there is an increase, but it is not nearly adequate.

There is money for the Canadian water agency, which is terribly important, but years ago, in 1986, when I worked in government, there was the Inland Waters Directorate, which is essentially what the Canada water agency is now being created to replace because it disappeared through cuts through years. It had over 1,250 employees and I think a budget of \$16 million, if memory serves. Just a drop in the bucket is going into this new agency. It needs far more than \$8.5 million a year for two years. That is just not adequate.

On climate, the budget itself says it will get us to 36% below 2005 levels by 2030. That is debatable. There is a lot of spending in here that is really laudable. I love the green bonds idea. That is great. It is very exciting to see \$4.4 billion go into what they are calling “deep home retrofits” to do more with renewable energy, but there is a lot in here that is masquerading under titles like “clean technology”, but it is dirty technology, such as small and medium nuclear reactors. If we are making hydrogen, that is great, but we have to make sure it is 100% from renewable energy, not from fossil fuel sources.

The big elephant in the room is how we can have a budget that claims to do something about the climate crisis, but that keeps the subsidies in place, the billions of dollars a year, to produce more fossil fuels while promoting and building, as a Canadian Crown corporation, a pipeline to deliver a product that does not have a market, is uneconomical and threatens to destroy ecosystems all along the route it is being built.

It has already been halted because just last week they realized they were cutting down trees and endangering the habitat of migratory birds. They were, in fact, destroying the habitat of migratory birds. Our Crown corporation, which is our tax dollars at work, is building a TMX pipeline that should never be built and which is a direct threat to the climate. The Parliamentary Budget Office says that if this project has any more climate limitations imposed upon it, it will lose billions of dollars, and that was before this budget, which does have new climate limitations.

There is much to like in this budget. There is much that one would want to support, but how do we get around knowing that, if we are serious about holding onto a livable world for our kids, we have to reduce greenhouse gases far more rapidly? We have to reduce them more rapidly than even the new announcement of 40% to 45% below 2005 by 2030 the Prime Minister made at President Biden's climate leaders summit last week. Our fair share is a minimum of 60% below 2005 levels by 2030. This budget, as much as there are good measures in it, and I have mentioned only some of them in relation to climate, there are others that are—

• (1605)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry. I tried to signal that the time was up.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her steadfast dedication to solving the climate crisis that we are currently faced with and her interest in the budget with respect to that matter.

A constituent of mine, Mary Jane Philp, purchased a copy of the book *A Good War* by Seth Klein and sent copies of it to all 338 members of Parliament. I have just started reading it, and one thing that I find very interesting about the book is that the author starts by comparing the climate crisis to the Second World War and the way that Canada was able to mobilize in response to it.

I find something perplexing. One of the reasons we cannot mobilize as effectively now as we would like to is that we are having a difficult time convincing everybody that we need to mobilize, whereas in the Second World War, Canadians seemed to come together and unite around a common cause so much more effectively and efficiently.

Can the member comment as to why we are having a hard time uniting around this?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I want to celebrate the member's constituent for sending Seth Klein's excellent book to every member of Parliament.

The Budget

Part of it is that it does take leadership, and it takes it from the top down. Members will recall that the United States was very slow to realize that it had to step up to deal with the fascist Nazi threat. Leadership does make a difference, and if we say that it must be done and will be done, we can get to the point where we will stop arguing about what is possible and start doing what is necessary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands on her speech.

I really liked hearing the Greens talk about the environment. It reflects more of their true nature, although they have not always been very critical of pipelines. However, that is another story.

Instead I want to talk about the issue of Quebec and provincial jurisdictions. Earlier we talked about the national child care program, which, I have no doubt, will be largely modelled on the one that has been in place in Quebec for over 25 years and that is working very well.

There is also the issue of unconditional compensation. As we know, the Prime Minister has been rather vague about his intentions on the matter. Will there be conditions attached to the financial compensation for Quebec's withdrawal from the program, yes or no?

I have the same concerns with respect to the eventual implementation of a Canada-wide pharmacare plan.

I would like my colleague to comment on this lack of specific detail and clarity regarding the government's intention to unconditionally compensate Quebec for child care.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague.

It is clear: We now have funding for a national child care program. This is extremely important for all families outside Quebec. My colleague is right to point out that Quebec introduced a very good program a few years ago.

However, I think the lack of specifics is due to the fact that negotiations will take place in the future.

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the leader of the Green Party for her service. I had the honour of working with her on her bill about Lyme disease, and one thing that has always impressed me is her ability to bring people together.

I was talking to a constituent of mine named Maurice on the phone. He was asking me about seniors, and he wanted to know how this budget was going to affect them. He mentioned that about a month ago, a bill was brought forward in the House that the Bloc, the NDP and the Conservatives supported. It was for an increase in OAS of \$110 per month. This budget, unfortunately, instead of bringing people together like the leader of the Green Party has done, is almost like the politics of division. The Liberals are treating seniors over the age of 75 differently from those under 75.

I wonder if the member could comment on this. Is there a way we could fix that?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Oshawa. His comments were terribly kind. I have a small correction, though: I am the former leader of the Green Party of Canada. Annamie Paul is now the leader of the Green Party.

Any increase in OAS is very welcomed. It is true, as the hon. parliamentary secretary mentioned just a moment ago in debate, that this was what the Liberals ran on in their campaign. I would rather that it were not defined based on the dividing line of over 75 or under 75. Perhaps we can make improvements in the budget before we vote for it, but I doubt that we are going to have time to see the Liberals change their budget much—

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

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Manicouagan.

We could talk at length about this budget, but I will focus on a few aspects and elaborate on those.

The deficit for 2021 is \$354.2 billion. It is astronomical. This is the biggest deficit in Canadian history. The projected deficit for 2022 is \$154 billion. If someone had told us this two or three years ago, not knowing that we would go through a pandemic and all its consequences, we would have said that it was impossible, that it would never happen. It just goes to show that we must never say never, because it did happen. Looking at all this, it may seem like it is the end of world for public finances for the Government of Canada and that we will never be able to catch up, especially with a government that has historically been considered a big spender.

In the press release issued with his “Fiscal Sustainability Report 2020”, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said, “Federal finances [are] sustainable over the long term—but most provinces and territories are not”. Despite this major hiccup, the Parliamentary Budget Officer tells us not to worry, that in the long run, things will turn out all right for the federal government. The reason is simple: the fiscal imbalance, which is the fundamental problem with the current federation.

Some people will say that the fiscal imbalance was invented by separatists complaining about the big bad federal government. However, this term was used in the 2002-03 annual management report tabled in November 2003 by Yves Séguin, a true Liberal. I have nothing against the Liberals, but in the interest of calling a spade a spade, I wanted to point out that Mr. Séguin is not a member of the Parti Québécois. He is a Liberal, just as Liberal as Mr. Gerretsen, but that is okay. Mr. Séguin mentioned the fiscal imbalance in his report.

The Budget

This is yet another example of how Quebecers are pioneers and trailblazers. If the rest of Canada wants to know what will happen in 20 years, it should just look at Quebec. In this case, the rest of Canada wants to copy Quebec's day care model, which has been around for 25 years. The Liberals noticed that Quebec's day care system was working well, so they woke up. That is how it goes. There are many ways in which Quebec has been a trailblazer.

When Quebec started talking about the fiscal imbalance, the other provinces figured that if Quebec had a fiscal imbalance, they must be in the same boat, because we all live in the same country, unfortunately. The provinces started digging and realized that they had a fiscal imbalance as well. It took them long enough.

However, what is the cause? Was it what the Liberals did in the 1970s or the 1990s? Neither. The cause dates back to 1867 and Confederation. Even then, there was already something amiss, as the Constitution of 1867 created a fiscal imbalance. The responsibilities and spending were assigned to the provinces and Quebec, but the tax base favoured the federal government. Furthermore, under the Constitution, the federal government was given very large fiscal powers, but it could also go get money in any way it liked. That was the federal government's grounds for interfering in income taxes. When it noted that this seemed to be a paying proposition for the provinces, it took over that responsibility from them and Quebec and grabbed the cash cow for itself.

Getting back to the fiscal imbalance and its cause, let us look at health spending. In Quebec, my country and the area I know best, health care takes up 50% of the operating budget. Half of what the Government of Quebec spends goes to health care.

• (1615)

I see that my Conservative colleagues are wondering whether that is also the case in their provinces. It probably is, but I did not check the numbers. However, it is probably close to that.

I am going to ask my colleagues to do some math. To keep the health care system afloat, taking into account inflation, demographics, the aging population and the modernization of equipment, Quebec needs to spend 5.2% a year.

There is a correlation between the revenues of the Government of Quebec and nominal GDP. I looked into it and we are talking about somewhere around 3.8%. That means that Quebec is bringing in 3.8% in revenue and spending 5.2% on health care. Who is paying the difference? There are two options. Either Quebec makes cuts elsewhere or it runs a deficit in order to keep the system afloat. That is when a structural deficit occurs.

The federal government says that it contributes to health care. People are saying that it should contribute 50%, but it actually contributes 21.7%.

According to the Canadian Constitution, given that the federal government has more revenue and does not have many expenditures, it needs to contribute to the provinces, ideally with no strings attached. The provinces are responsible for areas under their jurisdiction. I am not the one that said that.

The member for Outremont said that it is disgraceful to hand out blank cheques. Why would she say that? It is written in the Consti-

tion. Her country is governed by a constitution. As the Constitution says, she should just hand over a blank cheque with no strings attached.

The Liberals know nothing about this field. Even in areas they are familiar with, it is frightening to see them at work. It is not hard to imagine what will happen if they get involved in something they know nothing about. They should give us the money. It would put an end to all of this, with no hard feelings.

As I was saying, the federal government contributes 21.7%. The Liberals are saying that is going to increase. If we look at the figures more closely, we see that health care spending represents 5.2%, but the federal government contributes an average of 3.7% or 3.8%. The federal government is not paying its fair share.

Will the current 21.7% increase or decrease? It is going to decrease. What will happen? Who will pay the difference? If the federal government does not give 5.2%, if it gives less, who will have to make up the difference? It is the provincial and Quebec governments.

Health care is costing the provinces and Quebec a lot of money, which means there is a deficit. There is also an additional deficit because the federal government is not contributing as much as it could. That much is obvious.

The solution put forward by the provinces and Quebec is for the federal government to contribute 35% instead of the original 50%. That would add \$26 billion for the provinces, including \$6 billion for Quebec. That would help us make up the difference.

It is about as easy for the federal government to understand that fact as it is to eat an apple through a tennis racquet. It makes no sense to the federal government, but it is perfectly obvious to everyone else. Something has to be done because the fiscal imbalance is not going away. It is going to get worse. Basically, there is nothing for Quebec and the provinces in the budget. The fiscal imbalance is going to get even worse.

Last year, the deficit was \$354 billion, and this year, it is \$154 billion. The Liberals budgeted nothing for this. They say they are going to wait until the pandemic is over. For every \$100 the federal government spent during the pandemic, \$1 went to the provinces and Quebec to help them with health care costs. That is a fact.

We cannot support this budget, because the government is condemning Quebec and the provinces to an endless deficit spiral as a result of its failure to assume its responsibilities.

The Budget

● (1620)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree that Quebec inspires us. I am inspired by Quebec. I think Canada is a better place because of Quebec. I truly love the fact that Quebec is a part of Canada. In fact, my family and I spend a lot of time in Quebec during the summer months and ski there in the winter. We have a place in Lac-Sainte-Marie and love that Quebec is part of Canada.

The member talks about the deficit and the amount of debt that has been added. If Quebec had been an independent country, it would have had to put its own measures in place, spend its own money and run deficits to support its citizens during this time.

Does he not see that by unifying together and being one united force throughout the country, we are in a much better place? We can weather this storm together, collectively, as opposed to independently, as provinces would have to do otherwise.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, we might as well unify with the United States and the entire world while we are at it. There are limits. We need to have a country that reflects who we are, with needs that we understand and that we can defend.

Unfortunately, the money we send to Ottawa does not necessarily go to health care. It goes to the oil companies in the west, to shipyards in the rest of Canada and so on, but not back to us. It goes to government policies that apply more to Ontario and the west, not to Quebec. All of that money is our money. It is 22% ours. Ottawa should let us keep it, because we know how to manage it.

I do really like Canada. It is a beautiful place to visit, but we are nothing like Canada. It simply does not reflect who we are. Canada is like a boring party. There just needs to be one guest there, and the rest will follow. Once Quebec up and leaves, we will see what the other guests do—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The hon. Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN NET-ZERO EMISSIONS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

BILL C-12—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the consideration of the second reading stage of Bill C-12, an act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050.

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

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member spoke an awful lot during his intervention about health care transfers, and I agree with him that more money needs to be going to the provinces for health care. One of the areas that the NDP has been working very hard on is pharmacare. I was incredibly disappointed that the Liberals failed to live up to their promise on pharmacare. It would save all Canadians a lot of money if we had a national pharmacare program, and I know that many people in Quebec would like to see it.

What would he say about a national pharmacare program?

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, we already have that in Quebec. We are trailblazers. What the rest of Canada wants to do is their problem.

[English]

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, we have seen pandemic profiteers using government funding to pay executive bonuses and shareholder dividends. We have also seen additional wealth accumulation of the billionaire class during the pandemic, amounting to \$87 billion. The Green Party believes that we need a wealth tax and stronger rules to ensure that people are not enriching themselves with COVID relief funding.

Would the hon. member agree with me?

● (1625)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, we completely agree.

The member for Joliette fought tooth and nail to get money back from tax havens and for people who use them to pay their taxes. It is a matter of horizontal and vertical equity. Everyone pays taxes. Why should those people not pay theirs?

Once again, the Canadian government is signing agreements with tax havens, allowing people to avoid paying their fair share. Those are the consequences of the lax attitude adopted by the Liberals and Conservatives, the latter being even worse.

It is hard to imagine that anyone could be worse than the Liberals when it comes to tax havens, but the Conservatives are. Neither party really wants vertical and horizontal equity or for the rich to pay their taxes so that the money can be used to help the public. That is obvious.

The Budget

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, the member for La Prairie is a role model for me when it comes to both public speaking and economic policy.

I am wondering if he has read the book *Un gouvernement de trop*, or “one government too many”, by Stéphane Gobeil. If so, could he explain the conclusion the book came to?

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, yes, I have read that book.

My colleague is right. Having two levels of government side by side often results in unnecessary expenditures. It is called service duplication. As we saw with the example of a single tax return, eliminating the second tax return would save \$425 million. Imagine how much we could save if we eliminated an entire government.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today in the House as the Bloc Québécois critic for families, children and social development, but also as a woman, mother, worker and, naturally, Quebecker, to discuss what I believe to be the government's key measure in this budget, the federal child care program. However, we should not be blinded by this program, nor should it cloud our critical thinking.

In 2021, it makes no sense, whether we consider it from a feminist, economic, educational or other viewpoint, that a mother or a father has to make the impossible decision between starting a family or staying in the workforce. It is our responsibility and our duty, as citizens first and foremost, to ensure that children and their parents have what they need to thrive and freedom from want. Child care services should be available to all for the benefit of all.

Quebec realized this decades ago. It has already been 25 years since we decided to expand our social safety net by introducing a quality and, above all, universal child care system, known as the network of early childhood centres, or CPEs, in Quebec.

I will give a brief history. In 1997, Quebec developed an innovative family policy that led to the creation of a family allowance, a parental insurance plan, and educational and day care services for young children. The day care network was championed by women leaders, feminists, visionary leaders and, most importantly, I cannot not mention our former premier Pauline Marois, who was then the minister for families and children. I humbly commend her today and sincerely thank her on behalf of all Quebeckers and all those she inspired and continues to inspire.

To get back to the subject at hand, Quebec's family policy, centred around CPEs, had three objectives: ensure fairness through universal support for families and increased assistance for low-income families, help parents balance their parental and professional responsibilities, and foster child development and equality of opportunity.

It is possible to reconcile those two objectives: to promote parents' economic activity and to ensure equal opportunity by providing all children in Quebec with a quality early learning environment, since those years are crucial in a child's development. This is not an impossible feat, and Quebec has made that abundantly clear. It was with these ideals in mind and by putting children at the heart of our choices, as the title of our child-focused policy at the time

indicates, that Quebec implemented its child care system in the late 1990s.

I am a mother of three, and I have to say that my children greatly benefited from that system, as did I, my family and all of society. This child care system quickly proved its worth. Let us remember that, once it was implemented, Quebec mothers quickly caught up with and then surpassed Canada's average participation rate. The overwhelming effectiveness of this child care system and its immeasurable value to Quebec society made it a model, not only for Canada but also for other countries. I therefore have to admit that the budget presented by the Minister of Finance is quite right in praising the merits of our Quebec child care system and indicating that the Quebec model will serve as the foundation and model for the federal program.

That said, while I am certainly empathetic and happy for parents in other provinces, which will be able to follow Quebec's lead toward a more egalitarian society thanks to this investment, I have to admit that I have two major concerns about the federal government's announcement.

● (1630)

As I have said, Quebec chose long ago to invest in its children. The experience Quebec has gained over the past 25 years quickly made it the foremost expert in this area. We are proud and rather protective of that.

What worries me is the federal government's systematic tendency to use its spending power to encroach on areas under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. Family policies and all related programs fall exclusively under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

Not that I would ever need to, but if I did, I might take comfort in the government's constant attempts to take over our powers and interfere in matters that are none of its business if I thought it had any idea of what to do in its own sandbox and did not have way too much sand in the first place.

I would like the government to give Quebeckers their tax dollars. They know how to spend it and govern themselves. We are not short on ideas. We even dream of having our own country.

What also worries me, aside from this question of “everyone in their own sandbox”, which will have to be addressed at some point, is that this desire to colonize our jurisdictions might end up being more than just an idea. These so-called national strategies, whether dealing with long-term care or mental health, to speak only of this budget, are intended to Canadianize what is unique to Quebec and, worse still—although I do not really believe there can be anything worse—they are intended to substitute inexperience, even ignorance, for experience and knowledge. Quebec knows, in every sense of the word, what is good for Quebec.

The Budget

Ottawa, of course, plans to reach an asymmetrical agreement with Quebec, an agreement that the Prime Minister of Canada has quaintly described as pretty much unconditional. As Alfred de Musset wrote 200 years ago, and this is still today an apt metaphor, a door must be either open or shut. The Prime Minister likes to say one thing and its opposite, and, logically speaking, that is just nonsense.

If the Prime Minister has no idea of how to handle his own jurisdiction or is not thinking clearly when he tries to interfere in others' jurisdictions, if only with respect to this asymmetrical agreement, I cannot even imagine what he has in mind for child care other than to hold the provincial governments hostage. He is placing the burden on them and polishing up his image in a budget that, make no mistake, is the announcement of an electoral platform, if not an imminent election.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that I am happy for the improved quality of life for Canadian children and their parents that a child care system would hopefully offer and I am sure that Quebec will be generous enough to share its expertise.

However, at the risk of repeating myself, it is imperative that Quebec gets the compensation it deserves—and I would even say more, the compensation it is due—free from conditions. Freedom is unconditional. We are not talking about “pretty much free from conditions”, but “free from all conditions”. That is what we are asking.

The Bloc Québécois unreservedly supports the National Assembly of Quebec, which unanimously called on the federal government to give Quebec its fair share with no conditions. Any other scenario is unacceptable. It would be an affront, and not the first one, to Quebecers' autonomy and their right to make their own decisions. We decided that our institutions are secular, that our common language is French and that Bills 21 and 101 represent who we are.

It is up to the National Assembly of Quebec, that is, Quebecers and no one else, not even and above all not the Prime Minister of Canada, to decide what will happen with our child care centres. Quebecers can—

• (1635)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is time for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Kenora.

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know there is a lot that my colleague from the Bloc and I do not agree on, but I believe we can likely both agree that one-size-fits-all, Ottawa-knows-best solutions are not the most efficient and not the most ideal for Canadians.

Given that the Liberals have moved forward with a very big bureaucratic solution to child care, I wonder if my friend from the Bloc has any more comments on the potential effectiveness of that program versus one that is more direct to support individuals and families and provides them with more flexibility to make their own decisions.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kenora for his question.

Of course I agree with him on the red tape. However, just as I do not want the federal government to interfere in provincial jurisdictions, as a Bloc Québécois member, I will not interfere in the choices that the provinces make.

As I mentioned in my speech, I imagine that the burden has been placed on provincial premiers. I hope they will make their own decisions, as this is one of their areas of jurisdiction. I hope that the government will quite simply respect them. As I already said, Quebec has the knowledge and the expertise. We hope that the government will stay in its own sandbox.

[*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 constituents, and I think the same principles would apply for the member opposite's constituents, want a sense of co-operation among different levels of government and one way to maximize the potential of programs is when governments work together.

Does the member not recognize the true value of the national government working with provincial and territorial entities for the betterment of the people we both represent?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, as my colleague from La Prairie said, there is one government too many. That is the basic premise and the first thing I want to say.

Second, I want to say that I agree with my colleague from Winnipeg North. There are a lot of things that bother me as well. I hear the word “co-operation”, but Quebecers' money gets sent to Ottawa. I want the government to send that money back to Quebec so that Quebecers can choose how to spend it.

We have the expertise and experience in Quebec, and our network is already operational. In this particular situation, I think the ideal way for the federal government to co-operate with Quebec would be to simply transfer, unconditionally, the money set aside for the federal child care strategy to Quebec.

• (1640)

[*English*]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government mentioned that its child care program was based on Quebec's model, but it seems that the member sees a huge difference between the two, one of them being the Ottawa-knows-best approach and how bureaucratic and costly that can be.

I would ask the member to shed light on the significant difference between the two and how this can be enhanced to better serve Canadians.

The Budget

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I would have a hard time identifying any differences, because even the Prime Minister cannot commit to transferring the money unconditionally. He will not commit to doing that because he does not know what is in his own federal child care strategy.

This federal strategy is nothing more than pre-election political posturing. He must give the money to the provinces and let them decide what they need.

I would like to tell my colleague from Edmonton Manning that no matter how much they try to explain what is in this strategy, Quebec already has a strategy and does not need this federal one. We simply want the transfers we are owed.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): 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 Edmonton Strathcona, International Development; the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, National Defence; the hon. member for Kenora, Public Safety.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to wish those watching at home a good afternoon.

I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, which is in British Columbia. Even though we live on almost opposite ends of the country, we have something very important in common and that is that we are both extremely proud of the farming and dairy production in our ridings. I am pleased to share my time with him.

I look forward to finding out whether he is committed, as I am, to opposing the government's budget a few hours from now. That is the purpose of my speech. Over the next few minutes, I would like to explain the three main reasons why I do not intend to vote in favour of the budget presented by the Minister of Finance.

The first reason is that, as we all know, the Chaudière-Appalaches region is currently in heightened lockdown because it is in a zone that has been identified as particularly susceptible to a resurgence of cases. That is why we want as many effective measures as possible.

One very effective measure is vaccination. I am pleased to inform the House that many people over the age of 45 in Chaudière-Appalaches are getting vaccinated. Vaccination centres are operating at full capacity. We are a bit behind because of delays in vaccine distribution, for which I blame the government's poor pandemic management and its failure to sign contracts with western vaccine manufacturers in favour of cozying up to the Chinese. We ended up not getting the eagerly awaited vaccines.

The good thing is that, for now, we are trying to use vaccines to rein in the pandemic, but if we had received vaccines earlier, maybe more of us would be able to gather around our barbecues on warmer days like today.

This failure to manage the pandemic can also be seen in how government business and the financial response to the pandemic have been managed. We Conservatives have always been in favour of effective measures to combat the adverse effects of the pandemic and to support businesses. Unfortunately, there are businesses in my riding that have been left out of this latest budget. It is on their behalf that I will be voting against the budget and will continue to work to ensure that there are specific measures for the businesses that have been hit hardest by the pandemic. That, then, is my first reason for opposing the budget.

The second reason is that the budget does not address the needs of businesses. There is a business in my riding that I greatly respect that operates in the tourism and transportation sector with a fleet of buses. I received an email this afternoon from the owner. He told me that extending the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which still has an expiration date, as proposed in the budget, is a real joke for businesses like his. Many businesses will not begin to recover for at least 12 months. For example, he relies on educational school trips and international tourists to charter his buses.

Some businesses are having a field day during this pandemic. Just look at our grocery stores. That sector certainly has not been hit hard by the pandemic. On the contrary, their sales are up. However, there are businesses in the tourism, culture and transportation sector that have been grappling with an almost total decline in their revenues for months now. Even if vaccination does the job and things open up, people are not going to start chartering buses and taking package tours, including to our beautiful national capital. Tourists are not going to come to the Quebec City region or start travelling here from overseas.

There will still be a buffer period, and these people are counting on the bit of breathing room provided by the government to support them while the public health measures and guidelines remain in place. However, the government is taking a one-size-fits-all approach. The government is putting mechanisms in place and gradually removing the assistance measures, but it did not target the sectors that had specific needs, like the tourism business with a fleet of buses, of which we are very proud. I just want to note that its buses were manufactured in my riding at Prevost.

● (1645)

These are all businesses that have been hit hard by the pandemic, but no specific measures were created for them. The ill-conceived one-size-fits-all measures that the Liberals decided to implement backfired. Today, the labour shortage is even more acute. I am thinking in particular of restaurant owners who are looking for workers. In some instances, the measures implemented by the Liberals actually made the crisis worse instead of better. That is why I cannot support this budget.

The Budget

Not only are there no specific measures, but the government wants to spend recklessly because of the promises it made. We must remember that the Liberals had been in power for almost five years when the pandemic hit. They had made all kinds of promises and had not kept them. Today, we are in the midst of a pandemic, our economy is being battered, and the government is undertaking ambitious reform programs that will have a significant impact on the debt.

The third reason is the debt. People often say that all the Conservatives talk about is money and debt. Economists are saying that the debt is not that high and that we can go into debt. The only reason that is possible is that previous governments were responsible and managed taxpayers' money as though it were their own.

Marcel Boyer, a professor emeritus of economics at the Université de Montréal and fellow at the Center for Interuniversity Research and Analysis of Organizations, said today that, based on the figures in the budget, the federal debt is in the range of 30% to 50% of GDP.

Earlier, some of my Bloc Québécois colleagues spoke about the level of debt in Quebec. Based on the methods used by major international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the OECD, a Quebecer's debt would be 116% of GDP. There is provincial debt, federal debt and municipal debt. Mr. Boyer says that these three levels account for the 116%, with the federal share being 50% of it. However, before the pandemic and before the Liberals' obsession with racking up deficits, that figure was below 25%.

The Liberal government has mismanaged public funds, so I have to give it a failing grade. These same Liberals were in Washington last week telling us that they care about the environment, climate change and sustainable development. Our friends in the government need to be reminded that sustainable development is about striking a balance between the environment and the economy. Creating structural deficits will only move us further away from sustainable development and deprive future generations of the tools they will need to adopt measures to fight climate change. That is the second reason I will be opposing this budget.

I will recap the three reasons I will be opposing this budget. First, the government is spending huge amounts of money. Second, it has not created targeted measures for businesses like Autocar Excellence, the company I mentioned. Third, this budget demonstrates fiscal irresponsibility that leaves a burden on future generations.

In closing, I want to quote two different sources. Obviously, I would be remiss if I failed to mention the FADOQ, the organization that represents our seniors. It believes that this budget takes our seniors for fools and discriminates against them. Those between the ages of 65 and 75 are out of luck. The winners are those who are over the age of 75 because they are entitled to a \$500 cheque from the federal government. The FADOQ is wondering why the federal government created two classes of seniors and why it thinks the cost of living and rent is higher for those aged 75 and over. The FADOQ is also wondering what the basis is for this public policy that discriminates against seniors.

The government claims to be the champion of diversity, but now it is engaging in ageism and discrimination against our seniors. Members need to hear the felicitous comments of a 95-year-old senior who managed his fortune so well that it is now worth an estimated \$2 billion. He wants to know why the government does not manage Canadians' money as though it were its own and why it is acting childish and failing to make responsible decisions.

What is shameful is that this budget does not meet the objectives that taxpayers have the right to expect. That is why I intend to vote against it.

• (1650)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it very difficult to hear Conservatives say that this budget does not meet the expectations of what Canadians think is important. Right now we are focused on taking care of Canadians, as we have been over the last year. This comes down to a very simple decision: Do we want society as a whole to take on the burden of the incredible sacrifice that has come with COVID-19, economically speaking, or do we want to let individuals take on that burden by themselves? The people who are really affected by this, the small businesses, suffer the most.

The member agrees, because he voted in favour of all the spending measures to date, but does he not see that investing in Canadians throughout this time is absolutely critical in order to rebound successfully?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Speaker, my answer to the member's question is why does he not go and see the entrepreneur who is waiting for the government's pandemic supports that are not in the budget? I refer to the entrepreneur I spoke about in my speech in the transport and tourism sectors.

The Liberals are failing to help those who really need it. They are not using the money wisely and are actually increasing the burden by growing expenses that will have an impact on future generations. That is why I will oppose this budget with a lot of conviction.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech.

He talked about vaccination. That might be our only way out of this crisis.

This past weekend, I was talking to a pharmacist in Beauce. She was expecting 400 doses this week, but she is getting only 100.

I would like my colleague to comment on the whole vaccine procurement mess.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Speaker, I am honoured to answer a question posed by my colleague from Beauce. His region had to deal with another wave of the pandemic. As the member knows, my father lives in Beauce and has been vaccinated. There have been deaths though.

The Budget

More vaccination delays mean more repercussions for people's health. People are paying the price for vaccination delays, and that is a shame.

The message we have to send now is that people need to get vaccinated so we can slow the spread of the virus in Chaudière-Appalaches.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague on his leadership. He is helping Beauce do what it does best, which is create quality jobs and wealth.

My colleague can count on me to make sure we find workers and work against Liberal measures preventing us from finding the quality workers we need to meet our needs.

• (1655)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Quebec for his speech.

As he is also from Quebec, I would like to ask him a question. To date, no member of the Conservative Party has answered this question since I came to this place and started asking questions about the budget.

The Conservatives seem to agree with us that health transfers to the provinces should increase on an ongoing basis as Quebec and the provinces have asked for. However, no Conservative has agreed that the health transfer should increase to 35%.

The Conservatives are unable to tell me if they agree with Premier Legault and the other provincial premiers.

Therefore, I am asking outright if he agrees with the figure proposed by Quebec and the provinces.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Let me reassure him that federal Conservative governments have always been open to suggestions from Quebec. During the 2008 economic crisis, for instance, health transfers were not only maintained, but also increased by 3% a year during an extremely difficult period.

That is why, contrary to the Liberals' approach of interfering in provincial jurisdictions, we choose to respect these jurisdictions and support the provinces.

I remind my hon. colleague that a Conservative government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to interrupt the member, but he will be able to continue another time.

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a real honour to be back in Ottawa and to have the opportunity to respond to the budget. Today I will be speaking on housing.

I want to begin by sharing a personal story. In 2016, I distinctly remember reading in the Abbotsford News that house prices had increased over 30% during the spring season. I was filled with anxiety and the fear of missing out, the fear of being unable to provide a safe and affordable place to raise my kids, and the fear of losing hope of ever owning a home.

When I recently hosted a telephone town hall in the tri-cities region, it was reiterated that the concerns I personally held are now the norm and they are growing. During the course of that discussion, the message received again and again was that young professionals do not see a pathway to home ownership. Hope is being lost.

As the Conservative Party's shadow minister for housing, I scoured the budget for a plan to meaningfully address the ongoing housing affordability crisis plaguing this country. However, the budget includes nothing for young Canadians or first-time homebuyers trying to get into the market. The document barely mentions Canada's housing supply crisis. Urban indigenous people seeking long-promised support for, and autonomy over, their housing requirements were snubbed as well.

Even though the Liberals admit that our real estate market is better for foreign investors than for Canadians trying to find a home, their proposed solution is to further consult and maybe implement a foreign buyers' tax in 2022. When it comes to addressing money laundering, the Liberals, again, turn a blind eye to this insidious problem.

All in all, there was an opportunity before us not to be reactive, but to respond to the needs of those trying to secure new homes, those looking for stable places to live and those seeking more security in their lives. We are not there as a nation, and the anger and frustration is growing.

These are serious issues with significant impacts on Canadians' futures, and they deserve far more time than I have in my 10 minutes today.

Housing prices exploded during the pandemic. According to the Canadian Real Estate Association, the national average rose 31.6% compared with March of last year, to a record price of over \$716,000. The reasons for these skyrocketing prices are many, and if there were an easy fix we would not be having this discussion. Indeed, even in my critiques, I will acknowledge there is no easy solution to the housing problem.

Among the new factors are the Bank of Canada's quantitative easing practices. Its manipulation of interest rates is increasing real estate and asset inflation, encouraging high debt levels and punishing savers.

The Budget

The Bank of Canada cut its key interest rate three times in the early days of the pandemic, when Mr. Poloz was governor. The current governor indicates that the bank will keep rates low until at least 2023. Mr. Poloz has stated that, “If the side effect is a hot housing market, that’s one I’ll take every day.”

I am sorry, but what about the 30-year-old renter in Coquitlam with two university degrees and a good job who is on the brink of giving up on ever owning a home? She followed all the rules and we are failing her.

We must not forget just how wrong CMHC’s predictions about the housing market were in the early days of the pandemic. From spring 2020 all the way through winter 2021, CMHC claimed we would see a decline in average home prices of between 9% and 18%. This was despite the Canadian Real Estate Association’s statistics showing a vastly different story. Members have likely caught on that the difference between CMHC’s predicted 18% decline and the actual 31% increase is almost 50%. This is the Crown corporation we are entrusting with Canada’s housing future.

As an opposition MP, I am often asked what I would do differently, and what my party would do differently. Here are some ideas today. First, the Liberals should address our housing supply gap by unlocking private capital and incentivizing municipalities to take action. We need a tax policy that encourages housing development in Canada. Increasing the ability of entrepreneurs and developers to construct purpose-built rentals is both a more elegant and more responsible approach than the tired tax-and-spend standby of the Liberals.

The Library of Parliament found that the tax provisions of the 1970s and 1980s, under the multiple unit residential building program, or MURB, led to the creation of 195,000 units at the lowest estimate, but potentially as many as 344,000 units.

- (1700)

This cost \$1.8 billion in today’s dollars, about \$9,000 per unit in forgone government revenue, as opposed to the Liberals’ rapid housing initiative, which spends 23 times that per unit.

Too often I hear from entrepreneurs, developers and city councilors that municipal bylaws and NIMBYist zoning practices are keeping homes from being built. Look at the many Vancouver neighbourhoods still zoned for single-family homes that no local family can afford. Federal infrastructure dollars should be directed to municipalities that increase zoning densities and amend restrictive bylaws around transportation corridors to get more housing built. Federal support should be directed to communities that remove backlogs on development permits so builders are not waiting years for approval.

The second point is that the Liberals should do what was promised and give indigenous people more autonomy. The Aboriginal Housing Management Association, or AHMA, has stated in no uncertain terms that it is outraged. Its CEO, Margaret Pfoh, said she has “never been as shocked or as disappointed” as she was when reading the budget. She went on to relay that there has been virtually no progress on the creation of an urban indigenous housing program and that this budget does not even make mention of it, despite

the fact that the Prime Minister included it in the mandate letters of both the minister and the parliamentary secretary.

The Conservative Party of Canada wants to increase autonomy for indigenous people and support them as they strive to meet their housing needs. It is puzzling that the government does not.

The third point is to have a robust plan to address the role of foreign buyers in Canada. Budget 2021 proposes consultations on the implementation of a foreign buyers’ tax, which is actually an old Liberal campaign promise. The parliamentary secretary for housing has admitted that Canada is “a very safe market for foreign investment, but not a great market for Canadians looking for choices around housing”, so I am a bit shocked the Liberal budget response is so weak. Does the government not understand just how much it dismayed Canadians to hear it finally acknowledge that the system is rigged for foreign buyers?

I remember, in the summer of 2019, a homeowner on Grewall Crescent, in Mission, B.C., talked about the busloads of foreign buyers coming to neighbourhoods and dropping asking offers on homes without conditions. How is this good for a Canadian family trying to get into the market?

Dr. Kershaw of Generation Squeeze appeared before the finance committee last week. He said that such a tax would only be a minor tool and is ultimately insufficient. SFU’s Dr. Josh Gordon has written about the need for continuous and comprehensive tax measures.

We need to signal to foreign buyers that Canadian housing is for Canadians first. What about a higher capital gains rate for foreign investors? What about penalizing quick flips to avoid rampant speculation? The government needs to address this from multiple angles.

The fourth point is tackling money laundering. It is not only foreign buyer activity that artificially inflates the price of home ownership and puts it out of reach for Canadians. Criminals who clean illicit funds through residential property are yet another factor. There is a reason terms like the “Vancouver model” and “snow-washing” are used by global law enforcement. These problems arose in Canada and are embedded here. Yesterday on the way to the airport I heard on *The Roy Green Show* that \$100 billion is laundered in Canada every year. Despite mounting evidence and recommendations from experts, we continue to see minimal action from the government. For instance, the Expert Panel on Money Laundering with a focus on B.C. real estate found a significant disconnect between FINTRAC and reality.

The Budget

What did we get from the Liberal budget? Only \$4.6 million over four years for minor FINTRAC projects when, according to experts, the organization itself is ineffective and the legislation guiding it needs to be updated. Canadians are losing trust in the institutions that are meant to protect them. We need to bring them into the 21st century.

The fifth point is having mortgage policies that work for Canadians. Current rules allow for the removal of \$35,000 from one's RRSP for a down payment. This is not anywhere close to covering a down payment in most of Toronto and Vancouver. The Liberals' first-time home buyer's shared equity program has failed for many reasons. This becomes especially evident when we realize that increasing amortization periods to 30 years on uninsured mortgages would achieve the same goals but would cut out all the administrative costs of the shared equity program. Mortgage stress tests play an important role in protecting lenders from defaults, but when they are as divorced from reality as they currently are from interest rates, they only serve to cut out those who are struggling the most to enter the housing market. As well—

• (1705)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will leave it at that. The member may complete his comments during questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I must admit I am bit perplexed by the member's comments with respect to unleashing the development world into building new housing, to design purpose-built housing, particularly multi-unit housing. He said that he wanted to unleash incentivization for builders and developers to do that. How?

I would like to know what his plan would be, because it already exists. There is a very healthy GST rebate for anybody who builds a new multi-unit building or somebody who even substantially renovates it. There already is a mechanism there to incentivize it for developers. He criticized it, but he did not actually give any suggestions as to how he would see that incentivization take place, especially when one already exists.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, the one aspect of the national housing strategy that is really good is the rental construction financing initiative. However, the reality is that we have a supply shortage in Canada and we need to do more through taxation measures to produce even more building.

The Liberal program focuses a lot on social housing, but it does not address those who do not want to live in a social housing unit and want to have something offered by the private sector. We should use the private sector to build more housing in Canada. Right now the taxation code is not as amenable to that as it could be.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I work with my hon. colleague on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, where we just finished a housing study.

In regard to housing, I know he talked about home ownership. One of the things we just reviewed was the urgent need for affordable, accessible social housing, particularly for indigenous people in urban areas. I wonder if he would like comment on the need for affordable, accessible social housing in urban centres.

• (1710)

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech related to AHMA, federal money for indigenous people would be better spent if we empowered indigenous Canadians to take control over their own housing needs.

Right now, we have too much of an Ottawa-knows-best approach and we need to empower indigenous Canadians both with home ownership and with a new co-op arrangement, for example, to give them the tools they need to meet their housing needs. We are not doing enough right now, and we can make a lot of changes to do that better for indigenous Canadians.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, the member highlighted a lot of issues with affordable housing. This is not something that happened overnight. We have seen free trade agreements and we have seen an openness to foreign direct investment in Canada for pretty much anything. If one wants to buy it, here it is, and now it has happened with our housing market.

We have seen money laundering and tax evasion schemes with our housing market. I have heard from the member's other colleagues who say they do not believe we need to restrict foreign direct investment. Does he believe that is the key to solving this housing crisis?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, we need to take actions at the federal level to ensure Canadians have a better chance of home ownership. As the housing shadow minister, I am committed to provide hope to Canadians to get into the market. Canadians need to come first over foreign buyers.

The member is right to point out many people who are say living in Victoria, Burnaby or Nanaimo have been left out because they were outbid by a foreign buyer. That is not acceptable in Canada. Canadians need to come first.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member did give some solutions and when we talk about the budget, it is really important. One of the things I am hearing from economists is that this budget has an extra \$100 billion of stimulus in it that the economy may not need right now, especially with the Americans' spending. I am worried about the quantitative easing, the stimulus and the concern about inflation.

The Budget

I remember when friends of mine who graduated just four years earlier than I did paid \$100,000 less for a home. Could he comment on this extra amount of stimulus and the idea of hyperinflation?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I am not an economist, so I am not going to go very deep into the quantitative easing program, but I do know that we are seeing record inflation as it relates to housing. We need to get that under control, and that starts with the Government of Canada getting its spending under control and putting forward a reasonable pathway to balance budgets to protect the long-term interests of Canadians. The member's grandchildren, my children—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality.

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to discuss budget 2021, a transformative agenda that values the work of women and recognizes the contribution of women in creating a more sustainable and resilient economy.

I will be sharing my time today with my colleague, the member for Surrey Centre.

Budget 2021 is a feminist plan. It is a plan built from the continuous advocacy of Canadian women all across our country from coast to coast to coast, and for the first time in our country's history, it was tabled by a woman.

[*Translation*]

We have long understood that supporting women's safety, prosperity and leadership will help ensure a truly inclusive post-pandemic recovery.

[*English*]

All throughout the last year, we have heard from front-line organizations and women's rights advocates who have been doing the heavy lifting throughout this pandemic. I am proud of this gender-progressive plan, because I know it will make a difference for millions of women and under-represented Canadians.

It has now been over a year since COVID-19 first impacted our communities. This has been a hard time for everyone, but it has been particularly difficult for those who are already marginalized, vulnerable or struggling.

● (1715)

[*Translation*]

Women, girls, LGBTQ2 people, youth, indigenous people and minority groups have been hit the hardest by COVID-19.

[*English*]

Since the beginning of the pandemic, women have faced job losses, reduced work hours and have had to take on most of the additional unpaid care responsibilities at home. In the early stages of the pandemic, women lost jobs at almost twice the rate of men. This was particularly true for young women and younger people in general. More than a year later, women are still struggling. During the second and now the third wave of COVID-19, as the public re-

strictions have tightened again, women have lost jobs again at nearly double the rate of men.

In times of greater isolation, we have seen an increase in intimate partner violence as well as unprecedented barriers for those seeking help. Let us pause and think about what this really means.

When the world shut down, it took away safe locations for women to access outside their homes. It created new barriers for child care, employment loss and took away community supports. In the third wave of the pandemic, the problem is only getting worse for these women. Rates of gender-based violence have increased somewhere between 20% to 30%, and the severity of violence experienced by women has intensified.

The prevalence of gender-based violence means that it is happening or has happened to someone near us. It means that it is happening in my community and it is happening in other members' communities too. If any of the women or girls we know are indigenous, living with a disability, lesbian, bisexual or trans, then they are at an even greater risk.

From the onset of this pandemic, our government has been there for Canadians. We have provided the support they need to continue to make ends meet while staying safe and healthy. We also took action in providing \$100 million in emergency funding to women's shelters and sexual assault centres to help them accommodate public health measures and to keep their doors open during this crucial time. This funding supported over 1,000 organizations and another 500 are receiving long-term funding. Six million people have benefited from their important work.

[*Translation*]

We know that women's safety has to be the cornerstone of all progress. Budget 2021 reflects that commitment.

*The Budget**[English]*

This budget includes significant, historic investments to address and prevent gender-based violence. We are committing \$601.3 million over five years to continue work on the national action plan to end gender-based violence. This includes \$200 million over two years to support gender-based violence organizations; \$105 million over five years to enhance a gender-based violence program with a focus on initiatives that engage men and boys, combat human trafficking, support at-risk populations and survivors and provides support for testing and implementing best practices; \$14 million over five years for a dedicated secretariat to coordinate the ongoing work toward the development of an implementation of a national action plan to end gender-based violence; \$11 million over five years for gender-based violence research and knowledge mobilization; \$55 million over five years to support gender-based violence prevention programming led by indigenous women and LGBTQ people; and \$30 million over five years for crisis hotlines to serve the urgent needs of more Canadians to prevent the escalation of gender-based violence.

It is impossible to speak about gender-based violence without acknowledging the disproportionate violence, systemic racism and the long-standing structural and inequalities faced by indigenous women, girls, two-spirit, and LGBTQ2 people in Canada. It is an injustice that simply cannot continue.

This budget includes \$2.2 billion over five years and \$106.9 million ongoing to support initiatives to preserve, restore and promote indigenous culture and language, foster health systems free from racism, support culturally responsive of policing, develop an indigenous justice strategy to address systemic discrimination, enhance support for indigenous women and LGBTQ organizations, and work with indigenous partners to monitor and to measure the progress.

We are also taking action to support a more diverse and inclusive Canada through targeted measures to promote LGBTQ equality, promote LGBTQ rights and address discrimination against LGBTQ communities both past and current. This includes investing \$15 million over three years for a new LGBTQ2 projects fund. This will support community-informed initiatives to overcome key issues facing the LGBTQ communities, such as assessing mental health services and employment support.

Earlier this year, courageous women have been sharing their stories of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces and unfortunately, these stories are not new. For 30 years, women have been advocating for cultural change. This was highlighted in the Deschamps report. Now we are at a pivotal point where we can actually make it happen.

This budget also includes \$236.2 million over five years and \$33.5 million per year ongoing to the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada to support the contributions to the national action plan to end gender-based violence and expand their work to support survivors and eliminate sexual misconduct and gender-based violence in the military.

Our government had committed that there was no recovery without child care, and we are delivering on that. The budget makes a

generational investment of \$30 billion over five years and \$8.3 billion ongoing to build a Canada-wide early learning and child care system.

Only weeks ago, a Conservative member introduced back door anti-abortion legislation. Women are tired of this debate. Women and women alone have the right to make decisions about their own bodies. To provide every person in Canada with equal access to sexual and reproductive health resources and services, no matter where one lives, budget 2021 commits \$45 million to improve access to sexual and reproductive health care support, information and services for vulnerable populations.

Since we know that being able to stay home and stay safe is not an option for everyone, we are investing \$2.5 billion in additional funding over seven years and \$1.3 billion in reallocating funding to support a wide-range of affordable housing initiatives. That includes \$1.5 billion to address the urgent housing needs of vulnerable Canadians; \$315 million over seven years to help low-income women and children fleeing violence with their rent payments; and \$250 million in reallocated funding to support the construction, repair and operating costs of an estimated 560 units of transitional housing and shelter spaces for women and children fleeing violence.

Women still face unique and systemic barriers to starting and growing businesses, so to help women entrepreneurs adapt their businesses to meet current and future challenges, we are committing up to \$146.9 million over four years to strengthen the women entrepreneurship strategy.

To provide affordable high-quality, high-speed Internet to everyone in Canada, including those living in rural, northern and remote communities, we are investing an additional \$1 billion over six years for the universal broadband fund. That is bringing us one step closer to reaching our goal of connecting 98% of Canadians all across the country by 2026 and all Canadians by 2030.

● (1720)

[Translation]

As we celebrate our progress, we recognize that there is still a lot more to do.

[English]

We know there can be no recovery from the pandemic if we do not address the systemic challenges and inequalities facing women. They have been amplified through this past year—

The Budget

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question to the parliamentary secretary is about an issue important to our Canada-U.S. relationship. It relates to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the bilateral agreement that was agreed to.

In that agreement, Canada is to pay 31% of sea lamprey control costs and 50% of costs associated with science, fisheries management, collaboration and administration. Unfortunately, Canada only currently pays approximately \$10 million, which is only 28% of sea lamprey control, and 0% for the science and fisheries management. In effect, this means Canada has not even paid for the sea lamprey control being undertaken in Canadian waters.

When the minister's office was asked if the Liberal government was going to meet the national funding commitment for this in budget 2021, she confirmed it was not. When the Liberal budget is spending over \$350 billion, why is it failing to meet our bilateral commitment?

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his passion. I am sure there are many female fishers involved in this. I will get an answer from the minister responsible and get back to him.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened closely to the parliamentary secretary's speech, and I thank her for her speech.

She talked about the health of society's most vulnerable members, such as members of the LGBTQ2+ community and women. My understanding is that Ottawa intends to take care of the health needs of the most vulnerable people.

Does the parliamentary secretary not trust Quebec and the provinces to take care of the health needs of the most vulnerable? I believe that is within their jurisdiction.

Is that why her government refused to grant Quebec's only request, which was to increase health transfers to 35% on an ongoing basis?

Did she and her government refuse to increase health transfers because she does not trust the governments of Quebec and the provinces on health matters?

[*English*]

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: Mr. Speaker, our government has supported many organizations throughout Quebec with our emergency response funding. We will continue to, and we will work with all communities from coast to coast to make sure that funds for LGBTQ people get in the right areas and do the work that is needed for Canadians from coast to coast.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, Justice Phillip Sutherland of the Ontario Superior Court found once again that provisions criminalizing

sex work are unconstitutional. In Parliament, there was supposed to be a review of the former Bill C-36, but it was never started.

Since the vast majority of sex workers in Canada are women, and since these provisions make it unsafe to work as a sex worker, when will the government move to decriminalize sex work, as has now been twice required by the Supreme Court of Canada?

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his advocacy and work on this very important file.

One thing I have been doing in my role, along with the minister, is having consultations from coast to coast to coast as we develop the national action plan. One of the pillars is about doing just that. We have heard from workers and are looking forward. As the member knows, funds to support the national action plan were put in the budget, and it is a pillar in there. We look forward to having his input as we get it across the finish line.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary mentioned the Liberal child care and day care program. The Liberals have been promising this since 1993. There is an old saying: "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me six, seven or eight times, shame on me."

We really do not believe they are going to come through with this. Their plan does not take into account the difference between rural and urban and the cultural differences in Canada. Some parents want to do things a bit differently.

Does she not agree that it would be better, instead of waiting years to develop this program, to give the money directly to parents so that parents have a choice in the raising of their children?

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague may or may not know, I come from a very rural riding. Its land mass is bigger than Switzerland, and it has over 200 small communities. A rural lens does need to be put on this.

In my province of Newfoundland, there is supplemented day care, but it is not reaching farther afield into the really rural communities. That is where it needs to be, and working with the provinces and territories, we will develop a plan that provides choices for individuals and families to best meet their needs when coming up with a child care program.

We have heard a lot about this at the FEWO committee. For the plan, we need to work with all provinces, territories and municipalities and take into consideration cultural differences and, of course, the impacts of being in really rural and remote areas and urban centres.

The Budget

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will start by acknowledging that budget 2021 was presented in the House by Canada's first female Minister of Finance. I congratulate the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for continuing to break down the barriers faced by women in the workplace. I thank everyone involved in the creation of this budget, including the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, for their hard work to support all communities represented in the House and to create this comprehensive recovery plan for jobs, growth and resilience.

It is hard to know where to start and what to highlight in this extensive plan. Budget 2021 contains something for everyone. It has everything from proposing an early learning and child care plan to extending COVID support to supporting foreign workers.

Over the last few months, I have asked the constituents of Surrey Centre to write to me with their top concerns for our community, which I will highlight today. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to respond to this request. The pile was high.

The top five concerns included affordable housing, support for seniors, the environment, public safety and addressing gun violence, and mental health and addiction care. I am very proud to say that budget 2021 addresses each of these issues and many more that are important to Canadians, especially those in my riding.

I am going to begin at the end of my list because addressing the mental health of Canadians is an all-encompassing issue for which budget 2021 lays out a comprehensive plan to address.

We have seen across the country the impact that the pandemic has had on the mental health and general well-being of Canadians. The budget provides a plan for wide-ranging support that will contribute to the overall well-being of Canadians and is going to be extremely important as we move forward with recovery from the pandemic and with ongoing efforts to create a more equal Canada.

By some estimates, the rates of anxiety and depression in Canada during the pandemic have been some of the highest we have ever seen. We also know that there has been a sharp increase in drug use and overdoses reported in British Columbia and other regions of the country. The loss of jobs, economic decline, isolation and an overall sense of uncertainty have left many Canadians trying to cope the best they can with the grief and loss of loved ones and with losing the way of life we lived only 13 months ago.

The release of the Wellness Together platform has supported millions of Canadians with their mental health. I am sure all of my colleagues in the House can agree that the \$62 million proposed for the continuation and expansion of this successful resource is a very important investment as we continue to find ways to support the mental health of Canadians across the country. However, we know that this mental health support needs to come in addition to improving well-being across a broad range of issues for Canadians. That is why I am pleased to see that this budget is using both social and economic factors to address the mental health challenges faced by Canadians.

Social and economic factors like good jobs, the environment, safe and supportive communities, social inclusion, income equality and high-quality health care are highly important to the overall

well-being of Canadians. To address the opioid crisis and problematic substance use, the budget is proposing additional support for the substance use and addictions programs that support harm reduction, treatment and prevention at the community level. The budget also proposes working toward a crisis hotline, as well as an extension to funding for a kids helpline. I know this funding would lend significant support to organizations on the ground that are working to reduce drug use in our communities.

Finding and securing affordable housing has been a long-standing challenge for many individuals and families in Surrey. Over the last year, we have seen an increase in housing prices and The Economist has recently said that Canada has the fastest rising housing prices in the G7. That is a concern for many of my constituents who are looking to find affordable housing in a market where the demand exceeds the available supply. Funding for the national housing co-investment fund and the rental construction financing initiative, as well as \$612 million to end homelessness, will help Canadians find safe and affordable homes.

The past year has been challenging for seniors across the country, and I have heard from many seniors in my riding throughout the pandemic who are having a tough time. Our government is committed to supporting seniors, and I am receiving some great feedback regarding the support in budget 2021 directed toward seniors, which includes \$90 million to help seniors stay in their homes and increasing old age security for pensioners 75 and over. Many of the seniors who reside at Kinsmen Lodge, many of my friends at the Royal Canadian Legion's Whalley branch and countless others will benefit from the additional \$500 payment and the 10% increase to OAS for pensioners aged 75 and over, which starts in July 2022.

The Budget

• (1730)

The urgency to address climate change has only become more apparent as a result of the pandemic, and we know that we must continue to change the way we live and how much we consume in order to slow down global warming. The budget contains a plan to create a centre for innovation and clean energy to scale up clean technologies and help Canadians make their homes greener with retrofits. We have promised to conserve 25% of our lands and oceans by 2025, create jobs in a green economy and reduce pollution, and will provide \$5 billion over seven years to the net-zero accelerator. Also, the \$56 million in funding proposed for working with countries like the U.S. to create standards for zero-emission vehicle charging and refuelling stations will be beneficial as we expand our access to EV charging stations at community centres and ice rinks, building more green infrastructure for our communities, like those right here in Surrey Centre.

Budget 2021 also includes \$101 billion in proposed investments as part of the Government of Canada's growth plan to create good jobs and support a resilient and inclusive recovery. In March, I had the opportunity to host the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness at a round table discussion with organizations in Surrey that work to address and prevent gang violence in the city. They emphasized the need for more funding for local projects that address the particular needs of the community.

As a member of the justice committee, I have learned about the urgent need to address domestic violence and controlling and coercive behaviour. The budget proposes more than \$60 million to advance a national action plan to end gender-based violence, \$200 million to support gender-based violence organizations and more than \$40 million to implement legislation to address gun violence and fight trafficking and smuggling.

A broad-based plan that supports Canadians in all aspects of their lives is what we all need to recover from the pandemic. I believe that this budget lays the groundwork for a comprehensive and inclusive recovery plan for jobs, growth and resilience in Canada.

• (1735)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I noted that, with great care, the hon. colleague from Surrey Centre characterized this budget as having something for everyone. In fact, I believe there are 270 spending measures in it.

Would he not agree that this budget should more appropriately be a plan for Canada's recovery so that the debt on our kids and grand-kids is not so large, rather than an election budget for finding money for everyone?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question from my hon. colleague across the way. Our approach has differed from the Conservatives' approach. What the member and members of his party proposed would have meant people taking on huge debts through their credit cards and lines of credits and borrowing against their homes at higher interest rates than are available to governments, or the provinces would have had to deal with this.

Our government chose a direction that cost the lowest amount for Canadians with the lowest interest rate. We took the burden upon ourselves as a taxpayers' government to help those who needed it

the most: SMEs and people who lost jobs. The recovery has been working so well that most of those who lost jobs in the biggest recession or contraction we have seen since the Second World War have gotten their jobs back. However, we have more work to do, and we will continue to fight for Canadians and make sure they have a recovery.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, earlier, my colleague said in his speech that this budget contains something for everyone. Sorry, that may be true, but that is like me buying my son a geranium for his birthday when he asked for a bike. This budget may contain something for everyone, but it is not what people wanted. The federal government is using this budget to meddle in everyone's business.

First, there is the matter of day cares and the fact that we still do not know whether Quebec will receive unconditional compensation. Then there is high-speed Internet, an issue on which the Liberals recently joined forces with the Government of Quebec, since the latter had a better plan. The Canada-wide standards that the federal government wants to implement in long-term care homes are yet another example of interference in provincial jurisdictions. Quebec and the provinces wanted just one thing from this budget: an ongoing, unconditional increase in health transfers.

I will speak candidly to my colleague and give him an opportunity to take back what he said, correct himself or clarify. What, exactly, does this budget contain for Quebec and the provinces?

• (1740)

[*English*]

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, Canadians in Quebec, just like those in British Columbia, all expect their federal government to be there for them in their times of need. If Saskatchewan gave us health care, British Columbia gave us carbon pricing, and Quebec gave us a great role model and a great model for child care.

Our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has already said that we will be reimbursing its fair share to Quebec for the great model of providing affordable child care for its citizens and residents. I am hoping that other provinces will quickly adapt and join the federal government in taking this share and making sure people like those in Surrey Centre or Montreal or Sherbrooke all get the same type of affordable child care so that children are taken care of, their parents can go to work, and everyone gets something from this budget.

The Budget

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a bit of a theme from my colleagues across the House and around the House this afternoon. The member spoke about having something for everyone. The Conservatives mentioned that there was too much for people. The Bloc mentioned there were the wrong things for people.

I want to ask a question about a group of people who were completely abandoned by the government, completely left behind despite what we heard in the throne speech. Where is the support for people living with disabilities? Why are they always forgotten by the Liberal government?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her passion for those with disabilities and those in need.

We have had great legislation brought forward to give more access for those who have disabilities, under the accessibility act. We have given compensation for those who were in need, those who have lost their jobs during the pandemic, many disproportionately due to disabilities.

As my colleague across the street from me, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Carla Qualtrough, has passionately advocated for these rights, I can assure Canadians that this government will always look after the rights of those in need, including those who suffer from disabilities or accessibility issues.

The Deputy Speaker: I would just remind hon. members about the use of their colleagues' names, their given names, that is. He had her title right, but the second part was not necessary. I am sure the hon. member understands that. It does happen from time to time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the chamber to take part in one of the most basic responsibilities of Parliament, which is to discuss the authority of the Crown's government to spend its citizens' money. It has been a long time, over two years. The last budget was seven months before the last election, which seems like a lifetime ago.

It is easy to forget that in the third quarter of 2019, the Canadian economy was then teetering on the brink of recession. The economy had stopped growing in the fourth quarter of 2019 and the first quarter of 2020 was grim, even without the pandemic. Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio was rising, our triple A credit rating had been cut, and the government had already racked up \$100 billion in new debt during a booming global economy. All of that was before COVID.

We were then expecting Bill Morneau's deficit targets would be significantly blown in the 2020 budget, but then the pandemic was declared and the budget was cancelled. We had to wait 13 more months for this budget.

There was no question that the government then had to support those who had been ordered, or even recommended, not to work. Businesses that were being asked or told to close needed to be supported. Massive emergency spending was necessary public policy at the time, from the moment public health orders took away peo-

ple's paycheques and business revenues, yet that is not an excuse for refusing to table a budget, and it does not forgive the lack of fiscal discipline and lack of financial stewardship in this budget.

The borrowing contained in this budget staggers the imagination. Another \$330 billion over the next five years, on top of the \$355 billion in the last year alone, and there is no end in sight, merely a hope that this will mean, eventually, a return to a declining debt-to-GDP ratio starting next year. This anchor is one that had already been discarded before COVID and has no credibility coming from the government in this budget.

I do want to mention that I had intended to split my time with the member for Steveston—Richmond East, so I hope it is all right to bring it to your attention now, Mr. Speaker.

We have heard the government say over and over again, both before and during COVID, that deficits are all right because interest rates are so low, but Canada's accumulated debt, the majority of which is not locked in long-term, is extraordinarily vulnerable to interest rate volatility. To this, the government also responds that it expects interest rates to stay low for the foreseeable future, so there is really nothing to worry about until there is an economic recovery. Therein lies the threat to the sustainability of Canada's public finances. The sustainability of this unprecedented debt is jeopardized if interest rates rise, and yet economic recovery is precisely what will trigger interest rates to rise. Having to service such high debt at higher rates will threaten the economy all over again and eventually necessitate higher taxes or cuts to services that Canadians depend on.

This budget is claimed to contain over \$105 billion in stimulus to ensure economic recovery, but that is not true. The single largest line item in the \$105 billion of stimulus is actually emergency support funds for this year's continuing payments alone. In other words, more than a quarter of the so-called "stimulus" is really just emergency response spending because the government could not get its act together to protect Canadians from a third wave.

That is perhaps the biggest criticism I have about this budget. The budget does not contain what Conservatives have been asking for since last May: that the government have a plan rooted in measurable data to have a safe and permanent reopening of the economy. The very reason that this budget contains tens of billions of dollars in continued emergency COVID spending is that the government has failed to use the tools that already exist to help Canadians live safely in a COVID-19 world.

The Budget

When the economy first shut down during the first wave, there was no other sensible option based on the information available to policy-makers in March 2020, but since then the government has failed to procure vaccines in time. It has failed to procure, approve and ensure the wide distribution of rapid, at-home test kits approved for screening purposes. The only meaningful and timely response that the government has had to COVID is to spend, while hoping that things will get better.

• (1745)

There is no question the government's vaccine procurement is a disaster. Canada is taking surplus vaccines from other countries and raiding the COVAX system for developing nations. This is because even its terribly slow delivery schedule from the manufacturers is not coming through. The inadequate health response is what is driving the dangerous levels of debt contained in this budget, and the absence of a plan that would have avoided the ravages of a third wave threatens to destroy thousands more small businesses.

I have said it before in this House many times. Small businesses are the lifeblood of our communities, they are the backbone of the Canadian economy, and the owners, workers and customers are our neighbours and our friends. These small businesses are the ones that have borne the brunt of COVID.

Yes, this budget contains extensions to the supports many small businesses need just to survive through the summer, but that is not what small businesses want. They want their customers back. They want to be open. They want to serve the needs of their communities. They want to give their own friends and neighbours their jobs back. They want to at least try to put the hopes and dreams of their business shattered by COVID back together.

Small businesses do not want to take on more debt. The average small business has already taken on \$170,000 in debt since the pandemic began, and these debts threaten their recovery. Some of this debt is in the form of low or no-interest loans from government aid programs, but the majority of this debt actually comes in the form of bills that small businesses just cannot pay, things like their rent or their suppliers' invoices. These debts threaten to cascade throughout the economy and prevent recovery.

By the end of last year, 60,000 small businesses had failed, and now nearly 200,000 more are hanging by a thread. There is one particular group of small businesses that has been completely, and at this point one must even conclude deliberately, ignored by the government, and that is the small businesses that had the terrible misfortune to have opened their doors in late 2019 or early 2020. In most cases, the owners of these businesses put their life savings into their businesses and incurred significant debt to pursue a dream to open, start or reinvent a small business, but these businesses have nothing, and there is nothing in this budget that will help them.

The Minister of Small Business and her parliamentary secretary have been saying for months that new businesses will be supported, but they have done nothing. This once-in-two-years budget still ignores these businesses.

Just this weekend, I received an email from the owner of a business who opened an auto service business in Calgary in October

2019. This business cannot even acquire a CEBA loan, which is among the easiest ones to qualify for, never mind access to the other aid measures. This small business is not going to be sustained by words. It needs cash, or better still, its customers from a fully opened economy and a vaccinated population.

Between platitudes such as “we have your back”, “we will stop at nothing” and “we will continue to work for new programs for new businesses”, the government will occasionally mention it is concerned about the integrity of its programs and is making sure businesses do not suddenly materialize and take advantage of its programs. Of course nobody wants anyone to game the system, but with all the red tape in this country, it takes months to even get a building permit to start a new restaurant.

Somebody who opened in March of 2020, spending their own money and exhausting their finances long before COVID began, is left out of the programs. There are thousands of these businesses. They are in every riding. I know every MP in this House is getting emails from these kinds of businesses.

There is so much more I could say, but I will end by pointing out there are many necessary economic support measures contained in this budget, but they are necessary precisely because the government has failed so spectacularly to protect Canadians from the third wave. It would be imprudent to support a government that adds so much debt without a coherent plan to manage this debt and reduce it over time. There is just no fiscal anchor or even any credibility with the government concerning its fiscal anchors.

• (1750)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member started his speech by talking about the government's desire to take on debt right now because of low interest rates. That is not entirely true. The reason why governments are okay with taking on and having deficits is because as long as they are growing their economy at a pace that outpaces that debt, it is realistic to take it on.

Members do not need to take my word for it. They can ask Brian Mulroney or Stephen Harper. Out of the 16 years that they were in government, they ran deficits 14 of the 16 years. In fact, the Conservatives' own plan says that it will take them 10 years to get back to balanced budgets. This is the current Conservative leader saying that he will run deficits for 10 years.

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On spending, the member is absolutely correct. It is all happening right now because it is to help Canadians get through this. Therefore, on the other end of this, as soon as it is over, the deficits are going to drop considerably. Why do the Conservatives need 10 years to bring it back to a balanced budget then?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to start with that. Has the member even looked at the chart that shows the deficit projections? The government will never balance a budget. There is no plan anywhere to come even close to it. The Liberals' plan, which is contained in this budget, hopes that they might get below 50% debt-to-GDP by the end of its projections. That is if nothing goes wrong between now and 2026.

That is a government that has broken through every fiscal anchor it came up with, right from the promise it made in 2015. The debt-to-GDP ratio was rising even before COVID. There is no credibility from the government on any fiscal anchor or any attempt to have a long-term plan.

• (1755)

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for focusing on government priorities and spending. What does he think about wasting \$18 billion on the Trans Mountain expansion project and another \$18 billion in subsidies to the fossil fuel industry when we are in a climate crisis and we know that we need to transition? Does he think that money would be better spent on that transition to a clean energy economy?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, the fact that the Government of Canada had to buy the Trans Mountain pipeline to get it built is a spectacular failure of policy on the part of the federal government. The federal government chased the private project builder, which was going to build the pipeline with private money, out of the country. I agree that this is a failure of the federal government. That pipeline should have been built privately and be up and running, getting our products to market, generating revenue that we could then use to fund programs that are important to Canadians.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend from Calgary Rocky Ridge for his very accurate speech of this complete failure on the part of the government in so many different areas with respect to the budget. One area that our province of Alberta has been hit particularly by is the government's anti-energy policies over the last six years.

In the budget, there was almost no mention of the oil and gas sector. Could my friend speak to that?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, it is incredibly disappointing that in 730 pages of the budget the Liberals could not discuss an industry that contributes so much to the Confederation. It is as if the government thinks that the primary industries and export industries that fund services in Canada are not important enough for substantial mention in a 730-page budget document. It is very disappointing to my constituents, so many of whom have struggled with unemployment since the Liberal government came to office in 2015.

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business has complained that I complain too much about how the government spends like there is no tomorrow. I am here again to do just

that. After all, having seen the recent budget, how could I not. Let me point out a few points beforehand.

Budget 2021 proposes overspending by \$143 billion, enough to sign up every Canadian for nearly \$4,000 in extra debt, an equal albeit an unwanted opportunity for each man, woman, child and senior. A deficit of \$143 billion for one year is already an unfathomably large number. To put that into perspective, 143 billion years ago, not even time existed. Cosmologists say that our universe and the time that goes with it only came into being about 14 billion years ago.

Let us pull ourselves back from fantasy and to reality, a reality where the Liberal government says to the average Canadian that the government knows best how to spend Canadians' money. A whole-of-government approach from cradle to grave might be a valid and perhaps worthy discussion in this chamber when our nation is drowning in budgetary surpluses.

However, when we are looking at the immediate future, figuring out how to get the millions of struggling Canadians back on their feet, it is clearly not the time for introducing utopian, socialistic, imagineered and unproven projects. We owe that to our future generations when we are deciding to subject them to the evermore massive debt burdens to not surrender to our reckless binge spending desires on their credit card.

Instead of this reasonable and responsible approach, we see an effort to blindly push forward policy to grow the state and the state's control over our lives. To paraphrase Khrushchev, we will be fed small doses of socialism until we finally wake up and find we already have communism. I, for one, will fight to keep that from happening, and as a parent, I would say parents know better than politicians what is best for their families. Canadian families do not need an Ottawa-knows-best, one-size-fits-all child care system. For those who support this idea and do not share my concerns, be prepared to be let down.

For decades, Liberal governments have been promising a government regulated child care system but have not delivered. This promise will be no different than the promises to introduce electoral reform or holding off Canada's carbon emission, having the budget balance itself or planting two billion trees. I bet that if money did grow on trees, we might finally see the government start planting those trees. It is no wonder the Liberals have not updated the "promises kept" page on their website since 2016.

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What do they have to show besides making people feel let down? With budget 2021, unemployed Canadians hoping to see an atmosphere for new job creation and economic opportunities for their families are going to feel let down. Workers who have had their wages cut and hours slashed, workers in industries like forestry, tourism and hospitality or work within the B.C. fisheries industry who have lost jobs and were hoping to see a plan to reopen the economy are going to feel let down. Families that cannot afford more taxes, that are struggling to save more money for their children's education or to buy a home are going to feel let down.

Additionally, they will suffer from the inflationary effect of pumping hundreds of billions into the economy. Costs will go up, interest rates will go up and we will see the social spending dry up. When that happens, feeling let down may be overshadowed by more imminent threats such as staying afloat.

Budget 2021 is not stimulus spending focused on creating jobs but spending on Liberal partisan priorities. What has been proposed is a reimagined Canadian economy that dabbles in risky economic ideas, like abandoning Canada's world-renowned and sustainable natural resource industries, leaving our economy in a precarious position.

● (1800)

We must approach COVID emergency spending with a lens of compassion, recognizing that what we do now will have lasting effects on the lives of countless Canadians. Acting responsibly now will save them from suffering later in the medium and longer term. Unfortunately, this budget does nothing to secure long-term prosperity for Canadians, and when I say "unfortunately", I mean it.

Conservatives do not want to see Canadians let down. Yes, we critique the government for spending too much and we critique it for spending not enough, but this is obviously not a contradiction. Surely even the Liberal members can see how the government is spending too much on its pet projects and not enough on what matters to ordinary Canadians.

Conservatives represent the real people this government has lost touch with. We give voice to their concerns and align with their priorities, which I emphasize include putting food on the table and keeping resources like gas and electricity affordable so that people can continue to drop off and pick up their kids from soccer or hockey games once the pandemic is over. We need to focus on keeping families safe and keeping Canadians gainfully employed.

My home province of British Columbia is in the middle of an opioid epidemic, which occupies merely half a page among the 725 pages of the Liberal budget. It does not do much to enhance opioid addiction treatments. The Liberals have failed to deliver a comprehensive, recovery-oriented plan to tackle Canada's addiction crisis. This is an area of life and death where help is needed. This is a priority.

Conservatives had been advocating for mental health supports long before this budget was introduced. Many Canadians are facing mental health challenges as a direct result of the pandemic. Many wonder why budget 2021 has not provided much-needed support for provinces to tackle mental health issues or other direct COVID-19 consequences. These are two areas that could be greatly

expanded. Canada would benefit from seeing comprehensive approaches taken to these issues and seeing them treated as priorities now and going forward.

Like the George Massey tunnel replacement project in Richmond, Canada's infrastructure is in desperate need of reinvigoration, but new spending on ideological Liberal vanity projects does nothing for it or for projects like the SkyTrain extension or further diking in low-lying, populated urban areas such as Richmond. These are real, on-the-ground priorities. B.C. is a priority.

I believe that Canadians can be confident that the Conservatives know what their priorities are. With a Conservative recovery plan, we will secure their future by recovering millions of jobs and introducing policies that result in better wages and help struggling small businesses get back on their feet. We must show progress in safely reopening the Pacific cruise routes, classical tourism and associated industries, which employ, by the way, tens of thousands of B.C. residents directly or indirectly.

Canada's Conservatives kept Canada from being dragged into the pits of despair and brought us out of the last recession. Canadians who are worried about their future know that we will do it again.

Let us stay down on earth with our budgets, away from grandiose and intangible, undeliverable promises. If the government keeps spending as it is, there will be no bright tomorrow for our future generations. Canadians deserve a government that brings hope and confidence in the future. I intend to work with my Conservative colleagues to deliver them such a government.

● (1805)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech and his very passionate comments.

I am interested to know what the member thinks about the recent report on the 2021 best countries, where Canada has taken first place. Canada jumped two spots over the last year and it beat out 78 other countries for first place, including Japan, Germany, Switzerland and Australia. I would like to think that our government, since 2015, has been a major component of how happy Canadians are.

Could the member comment on how he voted on the CERB? Did he support the CERB? We are trying to take on the debt and not put it on the average small business owner and household. Did the member support the CERB?

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Vimy for asking me this repeated Liberal question.

To start, if we are to amortize Canada's younger generation's future we could always spend more. If money can solve all the problems and we can engage in reckless spending as the Liberals have been doing, then we can actually raise our ranking here today, in this moment, but our future generations are going to be in a dire situation.

For the member to ask me questions respecting the CERB and CEWS, in my speech I am trying to address that there is a priority. Just as an idea, the Liberals could for example push out CEWS first and freeze the jobs that are in trouble and therefore have fewer Canadians on CERB, so when the businesses are returning, they would—

• (1810)

The Deputy Speaker: We will need to leave that there and get on with some additional questions.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Steveston—Richmond East. I have the good fortune of serving with him on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights. It is a pleasure to work with him.

I noticed that he talked about an election budget in his speech. I could not agree with him more. The Liberals are about as subtle as a fire truck. They plan to send a \$500 cheque to seniors aged 75 and over in August, just before the election they hope to hold in the fall.

That is a problem because only seniors aged 75 and older will get a cheque, while seniors between the ages of 65 and 74 will not get anything. I am getting calls at my office from people who are angry, but oddly enough those calls are not only from seniors between the ages of 65 and 74. Seniors aged 75 and over are calling because they are angry that their cousins or brothers or sisters are not getting anything even though they are also seniors.

I want to know what my colleague thinks about the Liberals' approach, which creates two classes of seniors and second-class citizens.

[*English*]

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Mr. Speaker, I too enjoyed participating in the Subcommittee on International Human Rights with my fellow member.

I am speechless. I do not know how to answer a question that the Liberals have put in place. However, drawing from my experience, knowing that the Liberal Party enjoys playing class struggles in politics, perhaps the Liberals' research finds that they have more

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potential to get votes from people aged 75 and above. I do not know. Perhaps the member would want to consult the Liberal side.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am always happy to have the last word.

I want to take these last few minutes to talk about veterans in this budget. There are over 15,000 veterans waiting for their disability claims to be processed. Last year we know that the Parliamentary Budget Officer did an in-depth review of this wait time, and I want to be clear: it is up to two years for some of our veterans.

The feedback was very simple. The just-over 300 people who VAC has hired temporarily need to be put in place permanently. To address this backlog, even more need to be hired very rapidly. We are already behind. With the government opposing the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report, I am not sure when these veterans are actually going to see the resources they rightly deserve delivered to them. The budget does list \$29 million for VAC to hire permanent case workers, but this is a reannouncement of money set aside in budget 2018.

Now we have the budget offering veterans yet another program to fill in the gap. The veterans I hear from are very clear. They are tired of new programs. What they want is simple: one case worker who stays with them. They want to call that one person who knows their file and understands their situation, their family and the situation they are in, so they do not have to keep repeating themselves, starting over from the beginning.

This budget would provide \$140 million for this program to fill in the gap, but I have a lot of questions. Will this new program simply be available to everyone who is stuck on the backlog of the disability claim? If it can do that, why can they not just approve the original claim and make the actual resources available, instead of another patchwork program? Are we just going to see another program that has to be applied for and takes a really long time to process, putting people on another list, waiting?

Another important gap in the budget is that there is absolutely nothing to deal with the "marriage after 60" clause. The gold-digger clause was created in the early 1900s to prevent women from marrying older veterans and getting their pensions when they died. The reality is that this has always been unfair and very sexist. Many veterans live well into their 80s or more, and their loving partners care for them. I think most Canadians support love when it happens, and we should respect that. We now know that some veterans are living in poverty because they married after 60 and are giving up part of their current pension to put aside for the future. Why are we punishing veterans for getting married at any age?

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I want to remind everyone in the House that the RCMP is included in this. Recently I spoke with the RCMP's veterans association and heard loud and clear that this issue is urgent and needs to be dealt with now, so I hope this gets on the Order Paper for the minister very quickly, and I want to thank members for allowing me these very few minutes to talk about how underserved our veterans are, and how the government needs to do so much better.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Ways and Means Motion No. 2.

[*English*]

The question is on the motion.

Now, in the usual way, if a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request either a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise in their place now and indicate so to the Chair.

I see the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I did not see anyone else jumping up to do it, so I will.

I would request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, call in the members.

• (1900)

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

(*Division No. 96*)

YEAS

Members

Alhabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Bachrach	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baker	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bessette
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois
Boulerice	Bratina
Brière	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Collins
Cormier	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca

Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gameau
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hardie
Harris	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Julian	Kelloway
Khalid	Khera
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	McPherson
Mendès	Mendicino
Miller	Monsef
Morrissey	Murray
Ng	O'Connell
Oliphant	Petipas Taylor
Powlowski	Qaqqaq
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Regan	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)
Saini	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simms
Singh	Sorbara
Spengemann	Tabbara
Tassi	Trudeau
Turnbull	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Young	Zahid
Zann	Zuberi— 178

NAYS

Members

Aboultatif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Atwin	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benzen	Bergen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan

Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boudrias	Bragdon
Brassard	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Carrie
Chabot	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chiu
Chong	Cooper
Cumming	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fortin	Gallant
Gaudreau	Généreux
Genus	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Harder
Hoback	Jansen
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Larouche
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
Manly	Marcil
Martel	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLean
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Nater
Normandin	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perron
Plamondon	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Rood
Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Saroya	Savard-Tremblay
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shin	Shiple
Simard	Sloan
Soroka	Stanton
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Thériault
Therrien	Tochor
Trudel	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Viersen
Vignola	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Wagh	Webber
Williamson	Wilson-Raybould
Wong	Yurdiga
Zimmer — 157	

PAIRED

Nil

Adjournment Proceedings

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, ensuring that vaccines are available for all vulnerable people around the world is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity today. I do not want to be an alarmist or want this to be seen as a partisan attack. Rather, I am speaking from my heart in the most urgent way I can to say that we, as human beings, are facing an existential, ethical, moral and intellectual threat. I am deeply afraid that the Liberal government is making the wrong choice to protect Canadians and the world.

As we all know, we are in the midst of the third wave of the COVID-19 global health pandemic. COVID-19 has killed close to three million people so far worldwide. Countries have had their economies crippled and their health care systems demolished. Of course, we have spent countless hours in the House debating the impacts on our economy and the measures we need to take to address those impacts.

What we have not addressed, and what the government refuses to address, is Canada's critical role in combatting COVID-19 around the world. This is a global pandemic that will require a global solution. It will require that wealthy countries do what they can to protect the health and well-being of citizens and the economy. Perhaps more importantly, it will require that wealthy countries such as Canada recognize this and work to help citizens in every country to ensure we can all recover from COVID-19. That is simply not happening in Canada with the current government.

Instead, we know the government is refusing to support a proposal to the World Trade Organization that would waive certain intellectual property rights and allow low-income countries to manufacture their own vaccines and medicines to combat COVID-19. While millions suffer and die, variants develop and the global economy crashes, the government delays and deflects. It has been over six months since the intellectual property waiver proposal was first made to the World Trade Organization by NDN South Africa. Over those six months, the government has delayed providing a concrete response, instead asking questions for which it already has the answers and tiptoeing around its refusal to support the measures.

We do not have the luxury of time. While the government is delaying and taking the side of big pharma, ensuring record multibillion-dollar profits for these companies, the virus is evolving. It does not care whether one lives in a low-income or high-income country. It does not care about big pharma's profits. It will continue to spread around the world and continue to evolve as long as we fail to recognize that this is a global crisis that requires a global response.

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This is the proverbial tip of the iceberg. We are in a global race between vaccines and variants right now, and the variants are winning. The intellectual property waiver is not just about giving poor countries the tools they need to combat COVID-19 for their own citizens. It is also about protecting Canadians. Our health, well-being and economy depend on defeating COVID-19.

Canadians are not asking the government to protect big pharma. Canadians are asking the government to protect them. When will the government sign on in support of the intellectual property waiver at the WTO?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague opposite from Edmonton Strathcona for this opportunity to deliver my first remarks as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development.

The Government of Canada is committed to a comprehensive global response to COVID-19 that leverages the entire multilateral system in supporting the research, development, manufacture and distribution of safe and effective COVID-19 diagnostics, equipment, therapeutics and vaccines.

With respect to the proposed COVID-19-related waiver from certain provisions of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, TRIPS, Canada has not rejected the proposed waiver and is working with an range of WTO members to seek to understand the specific nature and scope of any concrete intellectual property, challenges experienced by WTO members related to or arriving from the TRIPS agreement such that concrete and census-based solutions can be found.

Canada also continues to engage WTO members on the use of existing public health flexibilities under the TRIPS agreement and as affirmed by the Doha declaration on the TRIPS agreement and public health and continues to share its own experiences in this area.

As the Doha declaration emphasizes, the TRIPS agreement is part of the wider national and international effort to address public health problems. In addition to ongoing discussions on the waiver, Canada is actively engaged in the work of the WTO Ottawa Group on the trade and health initiative, which aims to strengthen global supply chains and support the delivery of essential medicines and medical supplies around the world.

Canada is highly supportive of the access to COVID-19 tools accelerator and its vaccine's pillar, the COVAX facility. In parallel to the ongoing TRIPS waiver discussions, Canada has also encouraged the WTO director-general's efforts to enhance the WTO's role in dialogue with the pharmaceutical sector toward accelerating the production and distribution of affordable, safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines and other medical products in coordination with the World Health Organization and other relevant organizations.

The Government of Canada remains actively committed to a robust, multi-faceted and global effort to address the pandemic that draws upon all the necessary resources and tools available in the international rules-based trading framework as well as new mecha-

nisms for global co-operation on the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines and other medicinal products.

As equitable, timely and affordable access to testing treatments and vaccines will be critical for controlling and ending this pandemic, Canada looks forward to continued engagement with all members of the international community to find solutions to these global challenges.

• (1905)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, the member says that the Liberals have not rejected the TRIPS waiver, but by delaying, by deflecting, by asking for more information that they already have, they are failing to support us. They are failing all of the people who are looking for the COVID vaccine.

Now, when the world needs Canada to step up and support global efforts, the government is failing. I am beyond frustrated. I am beyond exasperated by them. I am tired of these excuses. Over 280 European parliamentarians support the waiver. Even members of his own party, their own members of Parliament, have called upon them to support the waiver.

There are no more questions left unanswered. The government needs to do what is right. It needs to support Canadians. It needs to support our lives, our economy. It needs to stop supporting big pharma at the risk of so many people being able to get the COVID vaccine.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, Canada has long supported the ability of WTO members to use existing flexibilities under the TRIPS agreement to respond to public health emergencies and stands ready to find solutions to any concrete challenges in WTO members' responses to COVID-19-related to or arising from the TRIPS agreement and which cannot be addressed through existing TRIPS flexibilities.

Meanwhile, Canada continues to work closely with international partners like COVAX and plays a leadership role in the ongoing effort toward ensuring the timely, equitable distribution of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics to middle and low-income countries.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak this evening on behalf of women and men who have been victimized by sexual misconduct in the military. Each case of sexual misconduct is significant, and addressing this issue and the systemic causes behind it must be a top priority for the government.

Adjournment Proceedings

Our women and men in uniform, as well as our veterans, entered into our military with the highest ideals of service. They understood that they were going to be asked to serve in the most difficult of situations and perhaps give up their lives. What they did not expect or deserve was conflict and assaults from within our own ranks. They deserve a fair hearing and meaningful action in response to their trauma, not half measures, lip service and shameful attempts to sweep allegations under the rug.

On March 12, I posed a question to the Minister of National Defence. I framed my question around the March 11 edition of *The Fifth Estate*. In the segment “Broken honour”, Sergeant Jessica Miller revealed her experiences of sexual abuse by a superior while at sea. Under the guise of Operation Honour, Jessica hoped for justice. However, it was revealed that Jessica's abuser received a mere code of conduct discipline violation, no criminal charges and a move to a posting of his choice.

Jessica Miller is only one of the victims who have come forward in an effort to expose systemic issues of sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces ranks. What is more, the lax consequences applied to Miller's perpetrator are just one example of the lack of seriousness with which they are being addressed.

We have recently come to learn that this pattern of impunity can be found all the way to the top. For three years, the Minister of National Defence knew about the sexual misconduct allegations against General Vance and did nothing to address them. I asked for a justification from the minister, but the response I received was troubling.

How can the government claim that it has “no tolerance for misconduct”? Clearly that is not the case when a perpetrator received no criminal charges and was given an alternative posting of his own choice. Where is the accountability in that?

I heard words from the member who responded that rang with excuses and indifference, like “institutional culture is complex and change takes time”. It does not have to be that way.

My colleague, the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, recently wrote about military sexual misconduct in the context of a similar situation in the U.S. Tailhook, of course, involved up to 83 women and men sexually assaulted by U.S. Navy and Marine Corps officers at an event over the course of a weekend. The U.S. military response was swift and decisive. Top brass were fired and a policy of zero tolerance was established. As my colleague wrote on the fallout from Tailhook, “There was to be no doubt that the U.S. military would be a place where women could serve equally and with pride.” My colleague wrote that this is Canada's Tailhook moment, and I wholeheartedly agree with her.

We need a wholesale change of perspective and culture within our military, and we need it now. Sexual assault and harassment go largely unreported because of fears that complaints will not be taken seriously or that victims will face repercussions. As I mentioned earlier, Jessica Miller is just one example of a service member who has voluntarily come forward, but she is an exception. As it stands, women and men are not comfortable with coming forward. It is saddening to realize that there are far more victims sitting in silence.

At the outset of Operation Honour, General Vance stated, “Any form of harmful sexual behaviour has been and always will be absolutely contrary to good order and discipline.... It is a threat to operational readiness and a threat to this institution.” Clearly Operation Honour is a misnomer when our top soldier is not a part of the solution but a part of the problem.

I hope and pray that continued exposure to this systemic issue will encourage more victims to break their silence and that this critical mass will persuade the minister to undertake wholesale reform and fire those who need to be fired.

● (1910)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville for bringing such an incredibly important issue to the floor of the House.

Let me start by stating our position in the clearest possible terms. Our government does not, and will not, accept any form of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence from anyone, regardless of rank or position.

We are committed to ensuring that survivors and affected persons have access to a range of supports, and are treated fairly and compassionately. We must take care of our people, providing them with a workplace free from harassment and discrimination. It is written into our defence policy. It is written into the minister's mandate letters, and it is my personal belief system.

Everything that we do must be informed by those with lived experiences. Sexual misconduct is harmful beyond measure. Our government has worked hard, first by responding to Justice Deschamps' report. We put measures in place focused on understanding the issue, preventing harm from occurring in the first place, addressing incidents when they happen, and providing support to survivors and those impacted.

We created the Sexual Misconduct Response Centre, completely independent from the chain of command. We launched new mandatory training and education. We partnered with Statistics Canada to conduct surveys so we could better understand the scope of the problem. We reviewed 179 old cases that had been categorized as unfounded. We created new specialized teams within our military police and our prosecution service to address sexual misconduct. We sought out expert external advice, and we implemented new programs and policies. Last year we released a preliminary cultural change strategy. All of this work was essential and foundational.

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However, we have heard recent survivors, coming forward so bravely, with very traumatic and difficult stories. This is something that is heartbreaking. Those who have come forward, and those I have personally heard, have stories that have shaken me deeply. I will remember and carry them with me forever. It has to stop.

It is clear that Operation Honour has not produced the solutions we had hoped it would. It is extremely clear that we have a lot more work to do. We will learn from what has not worked and develop a deliberate plan to go forward. It must be an evergreen process, and it is urgent.

We need to make it easy and accessible for anyone, at any level and any gender, to report an incident. They need to have confidence in those reporting mechanisms. That is why we will be developing an independent reporting structure to look into all allegations. We must ensure that this kind of abuse of power, and that is what it is, an abuse of power, ends and never happens again.

As the minister and Prime Minister have stated, all options are on the table. We are listening. Eliminating all forms of misconduct, abuse of power and violence, and creating a safe work environment for everyone in the defence team has always been our top priority. We know that any organization, including the Canadian Armed Forces, must work hard to eliminate the toxic masculinity that creates an unacceptable culture.

All avenues to a safer future for the women and men serving in the Canadian Armed Forces are going to be considered in order to change that culture. We owe it to our members and to Canadians to get this right.

• (1915)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, I have addressed the deep lack of confidence our serving members, veterans and Canadians have in the Liberal government's ability to deal with the military sexual trauma pandemic taking place within our military.

In this House, I called upon the Prime Minister to extend the deadline for the CAF-DND sexual misconduct class action, currently scheduled to close on November 25. That is too soon. This is a painful experience for victims, who have to recount traumatic experiences in great detail. It is overwhelmingly difficult. Ultimately, the deadline is going to prevent victims from coming forward.

Extending the deadline, at least until those responsible are held responsible, is one measure the government could take right now, in good faith, to indicate to our service members and veterans that justice will be served.

Will the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defence and the Liberal government do the right thing and remove the looming deadline on the sexual misconduct class action?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Mr. Speaker, I assure the hon. member opposite that all options are on the table. That is why budget 2021 committed over \$236 million to eliminate sexual misconduct and gender-based violence in the Canadian Armed Forces, including expanding the reach of the sexual misconduct response centres and providing online and in-person peer-to-peer support.

It is clear that the measures we have taken already are not enough, and we will have more to announce in the coming weeks

for the next steps. We know the solutions we have put forward have not moved fast enough, and we are listening to survivors and those impacted. Canadian Armed Forces members make enormous sacrifices to protect Canadians, and regardless of rank or gender, they have an undeniable right to be able to serve in safety. We can and we must do better, and we will.

• (1920)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in March I asked the public safety minister why his government is moving to confiscate legally purchased firearms from hunters and sport shooters instead of getting tough on real criminals. In response, the minister claimed that his government is putting "Canadians' safety first." However, if the Liberals were trying to put safety first, they would not have voted against a Conservative bill to impose tougher sentences on criminals caught with smuggled guns. They also would not have introduced a bill allowing lighter sentences for people convicted of serious gun crimes.

In February, the government introduced a bill removing mandatory minimum sentences for crimes like weapons trafficking, using a firearm in commission of an offence, possession of a loaded handgun, illegally firing a weapon with intent, robbery with a firearm, extortion with a firearm and more. I fail to understand how this is putting Canadians' safety first.

The Conservatives have a plan to actually keep Canadians safe from violent crime. That plan includes strengthening anti-gun and anti-gang units, supporting the CBSA in cracking down on cross-border smuggling, supporting mental health initiatives and bringing in real consequences for real criminals. Our plan does not include cracking down on duck hunters while letting violent criminals off with a slap on the wrist, as the Liberals are.

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The Liberals' plan to confiscate guns from law-abiding Canadians is, frankly, overreaching and incoherent. They hide behind vague terms like "military style" without ever defining what that label means, all the while passing legislation and moving forward on measures to ban many rifles used for sport shooting and hunting. With the latest firearm ban they announced last year, it was reported that several hunting rifles and shotguns were included on the list. This is truly not putting Canadians' safety first; it is only criminalizing lawful gun owners and law-abiding Canadians.

I raise this issue again because I have heard from many in my riding who are deeply concerned about the government's approach to this. Aside from COVID, it is far and away the single biggest issue I have heard about in my riding. I get the greatest number of calls and emails about this, and people are writing by mail too. They are concerned about the government's approach.

I have heard from countless constituents about this, who reached out to me from Weagamow, Fort Severn, Lac Seul and first nations across the region. They are concerned that the government is limiting their ability to hunt.

When I visited the Lake of the Woods Gun Club, I heard many concerns about the Liberals' misguided priorities. When I went shooting at the Sioux Lookout Handgun and Rifle Club, I heard about the already robust set of rules that members must follow. When visiting the Vermilion Bay Rod & Gun Club, I was urged to stand up against the government's heavy-handed attack on our way of life in northwestern Ontario. I have heard similar concerns raised by members of the clubs in Ear Falls, Dryden and Red Lake and by residents across northwestern Ontario. Some residents who are not even living in my riding have reached out to me to share their concerns.

I will take this opportunity to ask the parliamentary secretary my question again. Will the government stop targeting law-abiding hunters and sport shooters and instead take real measures to fight real criminals?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kenora for this interesting adjournment debate. It is a topic that concerns us.

To answer the question he asked at the very end, I can assure him that there is nothing in Bill C-21 that takes aim at the vast majority of law-abiding Canadians, whether they are hunters, sport shooters or collectors who obey the law and who have our respect. There is absolutely nothing in Bill C-21 that targets law-abiding Canadians who own guns.

As for the gun smuggling he referred to in his question a few weeks ago, which he addressed to the Minister of Public Safety, it should be noted that Bill C-21 includes tougher sentences for those who are involved in smuggling operations. The maximum has increased from 10 to 14 years. It is rather surprising to see the Conservatives oppose such a measure. As for the bill he talked about in his speech, there was nothing in there that addressed smuggling as such.

Now let us look at what we are actually doing. Next Saturday marks the first anniversary of the measures we put in place to ban over 1,500 models of military-style firearms and their variants.

While the Conservatives listen to the gun lobby, we listened to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, which has been calling for such measures for decades, as have many civil society groups. Last May, we took extraordinary and necessary steps to ban more than 1,500 models of military-style firearms. These are weapons that were designed not for hunting or sport shooting, but for tactical situations for their effectiveness on the battlefield. They have a lethal character that makes them inappropriate for civilian use and makes them too dangerous in our society. That is why we decided to ban them on May 1, 2020, and I am very proud of that.

Last month, we introduced Bill C-21 to make further headway in our fight against gun violence. This bill will complete the ban on military-style firearms, which have no place in our society as I mentioned. Once passed, the bill will help reduce domestic violence and prevent suicide with the implementation of a red flag and yellow flag regime. These measures will allow individuals and the authorities to act more quickly and remove weapons from individuals who are a danger to themselves, society or their families.

The bill will help fight the criminal use of firearms and their diversion to the black market by requiring that a firearms licence be presented to import ammunition and by giving police organizations greater powers to share information when there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a licence holder is supplying weapons to criminals. It is a measure that the Conservatives should support. We are surprised that they are not supporting these types of measures, which are enshrined in Bill C-21.

The bill will also create new offences for altering a gun's cartridge magazine and for depicting violence in firearms advertising.

In short, we believe it is essential to reduce firearms smuggling and trafficking in Canada to make our communities safer. I sincerely hope that our opposition colleagues will help us pass this bill, which, as I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, will also amend the Criminal Code to increase the maximum penalty of imprisonment for smuggling and trafficking firearms from 10 to 14 years. That is important. It sends a message to all judges about how significant these types of offences are and how seriously we take them because they have very clear impact on violence in our communities. I would certainly like to see my colleague from Kenora support Bill C-21.

This bill will also prevent people who have been arrested for smuggling from entering Canada by amending the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

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I see that my time is running out. We could continue to talk at length about the good things that Bill C-21 has to offer, as well as the investments our government has made in budget 2021 to provide more resources to police authorities, whether the RCMP or border services, to combat trafficking and smuggling.

● (1925)

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the parliamentary secretary once again used those terms, “military style” and “assault style”, without a clear definition of what those are. He claims that the firearms that the government has moved to ban are not used for hunting or sports shooting. However, in my riding, many people are seeing the guns that they do use for hunting and sports shooting on the Liberals' list of now illegal firearms. There is clearly a disconnect between his talking points and what is actually happening on the ground.

Also, I am surprised that the Liberals, who claim to want to make Canada safer, voted against a Conservative bill that would impose tougher sentences on those who are found in possession of an illegally acquired firearm, a smuggled firearm. If the government is so committed to combatting gun crime, why did its members vote against this common-sense, Conservative motion?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I am always puzzled to hear those types of criticisms from the Conservative Party.

When the Conservatives formed the government, they proceeded to make the biggest cuts to our intelligence services and our police forces, such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the RCMP, and border services officers. Their austerity plan included massive cuts to technical resources and staff deployed on the ground to fight smuggling or illegal gun violence. The Conservatives talk a big game, but do very little.

In contrast, without looking back to the past five years, but simply looking at the investments we made in the past year, the 2020 fall economic statement provided \$250 million to target the causes of violence and prevent it upstream by investing directly in our communities. More recently, just last week in the budget, we allocated \$312 million over five years to the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency to better support their efforts to fight gun violence. All of that speaks much louder than the Conservative rhetoric.

● (1930)

The Deputy Speaker: 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 7:30 p.m.)

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