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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, December 10, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

• (1000)

[*English*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from December 2 consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, and of the amendment.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): *Ama sqit*, Madam Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

It is a great privilege for me to rise to speak in support of the historic Speech from the Throne by Her Excellency Mary Simon, Canada's first indigenous Governor General. Over the last two years, Canadians have faced unprecedented new challenges, from a global pandemic to raging wildfires and extreme flooding, from a lack of affordable housing to the tragic discovery of unmarked graves at residential schools. The last two years have been a trying time for Canadians of all backgrounds from coast to coast to coast.

However, despite these challenges, Canadians have come together, united by common goals and shared values. These shared values are the thread that ties together our national identity. Values like compassion, courage and determination have been on display in spades as Canadians have pulled together to overcome unprecedented challenges.

It is this resilience and a commitment to these values that have inspired our government's priorities for the new parliamentary session because that is what Canadians voted for. They gave parliamentarians a clear mandate to collaborate and work together to deliver our future based on these values and to build a country where everyone has a fair chance at success. These values have already seen us through many of the darkest days of the pandemic and will form the basis for our recovery plans. Canadians have shown determination and compassion as they made personal sacrifices for the well-being of their families, friends, total strangers and the public good. These values have been a vital part of how Canadians have helped keep each other safe, and our government is determined to

continue cultivating them as we look to finally put the COVID crisis behind us.

Canadians have voted for a government that will mirror the compassion they have shown each other during these difficult times. They chose a government that recognizes the challenges that are leading to unequal outcomes for equity-seeking groups and a government that is committed to acting on them. Our government has already passed the ban on harmful conversion therapy with the unanimous consent of the House, and we will continue to take determined action to fight systemic racism, sexism and discrimination of all forms because everyone deserves to feel safe and respected and have an equal opportunity for success.

Perhaps nowhere is the need for action more evident than along the path to reconciliation. There was a collective outpouring of grief this year as much of our country learned for the first time about the horrific history of residential schools with the discovery of unmarked graves at these sites. Walking the path of reconciliation will require the courage to listen to and learn the truth behind Canada's history with indigenous people. Our government is committed to facing this head-on and will shine a light on that truth to ensure that we can move forward in partnership, with indigenous people in the driver's seat.

The government will respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action and appoint a special interlocutor to further advance justice on the legacy of residential schools. The government will invest significantly in a distinctions-based mental health and wellness strategy guided by indigenous people and will make sure that communities have the resources and support they need to keep families together. The values that have gotten us through the pandemic will continue to guide us as we build back better in partnership with indigenous Canadians to a more just and equitable future.

Just last month, Nanos conducted a poll of Canadians asking if they thought the next generation of Canadians will have a higher or lower standard of living than we have today. Sixty-three per cent of respondents said that the standard of living in the future would be lower. That is why we also need to move forward with courage. We need the courage to tackle the biggest challenges of our time, challenges like reconciliation, housing, affordability and, of course, climate change. Canadians chose to take strong and courageous action to build a better future, and this throne speech shows the government received that message and is committed to taking action to deliver on that mandate.

The Address

It has become plainly evident that if we are going to build a more prosperous future, there is no time left to waste on climate action. B.C. is already facing the consequences of climate change. Unprecedented heat waves, fires and flooding have ravaged the province and cost hundreds of British Columbians their lives just this year alone. The consequences are severe and they are only to get worse unless we move forward on the real climate action that Canadians voted for.

● (1005)

That is why this government is committed to capping emissions from the oil and gas sector and accelerating our path forward to a 100% net-zero future. We are also mandating the sale of zero-emissions vehicles and investing in public transit to build more human-oriented, affordable and sustainable cities. We will make sure cities, public transit and zero-emissions vehicles are powered with clean electricity as we invest in modernizing our electrical grid to make it 100% net zero by 2035. Importantly, our government is launching consultations on all these new measures by the end of this month.

We know that we need to work with our indigenous partners so we can meet our ambitious commitment of protecting 30% of our land and oceans by 2030. Our government has much to learn from the leadership and collaboration that recently saw Howe Sound Atl'ka7tsem declared as Canada's 19th UNESCO biosphere region. Protecting and preserving our biodiversity will be vital to preserving the health of our country's unique ecosystems and preventing the rise of new pandemics.

Getting to net zero and halting climate change is of the utmost importance, but we also need to adapt to the ways in which our climate is already changing. That is why the government is developing the first-ever national adaptation strategy, so we can make sure that we are prepared to withstand the effects of a changing climate. We need to work to build resilient infrastructure and communities that can withstand increasingly frequent weather events like those we have seen this year in B.C.

While we tackle these challenges head-on, we will need to work hard to ensure that nobody is left behind. We need to ensure that Canadians can afford to live the sort of lives that make this country the best place on earth.

In addition to raising over a million Canadians out of poverty through the Canada child benefit, we know that Canadian families are still quite stretched when it comes to the rising cost of living. For this reason, we have already signed child care agreements with nine provinces and territories that will cut fees in half in the next year and build hundreds of thousands of new child care spaces right across the country.

I know this will be a lifeline for families in Squamish who are currently stuck waiting years to get a child care spot, and if and once they do, it often costs them over \$100 a day. With this agreement, 40,000 new spots will be created in B.C. alone, and we will get to \$10-a-day child care within five years or less. Building an affordable child care system will not only help families save more of their hard-earned money, but will also be a shot in the arm for our economy as we allow more parents to get back into the workplace and alleviate the current shortage of labour we are experiencing right across the country.

We also need to tackle the worsening affordability of housing. The government is committed to continuing to build more and better housing as quickly as possible. The housing accelerator fund will invest \$4 billion to build capacity at the local government level so that 100,000 new middle-class homes will be built, while encouraging better zoning bylaws and transit-oriented development so we can build more sustainable and affordable communities that provide a higher quality of life. Even still, we know breaking into the housing market can be a challenge for new homebuyers, so we are going to help families by improving the first-time home buyer incentive, bringing in a new homeowners' bill of rights and creating a rent-to-own program, among a swath of other measures to help reduce the barriers to home ownership.

It is clear that now is the time to act on the biggest challenges we face in our country. There is no time to waste if we are going to build a future of prosperity, inclusivity and sustainability. Canadians have made their choice on how they want us to build back from the pandemic. They want a chance to believe that the future will be better than the past. They want to live on a planet with a healthy climate and clean air. They want the chance to own a home and to have a family. They want their children to inherit a better standard of living than they had. This is a future we all want, and now it is time to move forward with the same compassion, courage and determination we have seen during the pandemic and build that future together.

?ul nu msh chalap.

● (1010)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned the child care program agreements that are being put in place. I would like him to tell me how these programs are going to work for families in smaller rural communities, like Grindrod in my riding of North Okanagan—Shuswap, or Lumby or the Scotch Creek area, where there are no government-organized day care services. How about shift workers who do not work nine-to-five jobs? They will not have access to these programs. How does the program being promoted here help those people?

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Madam Speaker, this is a very important question. Even in my riding, which is not entirely within a downtown urban core, we face the same challenges. There is a huge wait-list for people to get access to child care, and it is a big challenge when we get into smaller communities.

The Address

The agreement we signed with B.C. is going to create 40,000 new spaces, and it is important that those spaces are available where they are most needed. It is also important that there are flexibilities. Child care is of course delivered by the provinces and territories, so much of the discretion is up to the provinces.

We can now see the details of the agreement. It was just released online yesterday or the day before. It goes through different items regarding how B.C. is going to deliver on this, and the action plan it has for each subsequent year.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He talked about the environment and helping families. However, over the past few days, we have realized that seniors have once again been left out. They have not been mentioned. They are being ignored.

Yesterday, during the supply day on housing, the government mostly talked about people purchasing their first home, but what seniors need is better access to more social, community and very affordable housing. What seniors need is to be given help as of the age of 65. The government is not talking about that. It is completely ignoring seniors.

Some seniors are getting poorer because their guaranteed income supplement has been cut for administrative reasons. The government is not talking about that.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about seniors who need help. They have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, but there is nothing for them.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her important question.

As I said in my speech, as we look to the future, we need to think about everyone, particularly seniors.

We have implemented a number of programs, including the rapid housing initiative, which seeks to create affordable housing for the people who need it most, like seniors.

My colleague said that our government has not been there for seniors. I disagree. Over the past two years, we have given money to the most vulnerable seniors, and we will continue to be there for them, for example, by increasing old age security.

• (1015)

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member talked about climate change and I know he is concerned about that. The government, in the Speech from the Throne last year, promised legislation on the just transition for workers. However, there was not a single mention of that. Nothing was done last year, and there was no mention of it at all in this Speech from the Throne.

Why is there a lack of ambition there?

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Madam Speaker, we launched consultations on the just transition a few months ago. This is very much a priority. It is in our campaign platform as well and I think it is important.

I mentioned that we cannot leave anybody behind as we are going through these transitions. We absolutely need to be there for workers who are now very concerned about what their future is going to hold. That remains a priority of this government, and I look forward to seeing the results of this consultation and the legislation that will be forthcoming after that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to the throne speech, and to a lesser degree to the amendment proposed by the Conservative Party, because if we read the amendment from the Conservative Party its members have really missed the boat.

I want to start by responding to some of the questions from the opposition party. If we listen to what the government has said over the last number of months and within the throne speech, and the issues the Conservatives have raised, the government is in fact beyond concerned and is taking action.

For example, the Conservative member made reference to child care. For the very first time in Canada, the government is moving forward to create tens of thousands of spaces in every region of our country. For the first time, we have a Prime Minister and a government that have recognized the importance of affordable child care. We are now entering into agreements with the provinces and territories to ensure \$10-a-day child care. That is going to have a profoundly positive impact on our communities, both urban and rural, whether direct or indirect.

All we need to do is look at what happened in the Province of Quebec when it instituted \$10-a-day child care. Taking a good idea from one region of the country, and expanding it and implementing it nationally, is going to create opportunities for thousands of people who would have had to defer getting a job in the future or deal with the rising costs of child care. More people will be engaged in employment as a direct result, and children will have quality care. That is the bottom line. That is the answer to the Conservative question.

Then we have our friends in the Bloc, who talked about seniors. I would challenge the members opposite to reflect on this. We came into government in 2015. Prior to that, what did the Conservative Party do for seniors while it was in government? Let us look at what we have done. From day one, we dramatically increased the guaranteed income supplement that lifted tens of thousands of seniors across Canada out of poverty, hundreds of whom are in Winnipeg North. We were there for them leading up to the pandemic, and when the pandemic hit we gave direct payments to not only our poorest seniors but to all seniors. We also made the commitment to increase old age security for seniors age 75 or older. Those benefits are direct cash in their pockets.

The Address

I would also mention the indirect things we have done for seniors, such as the new horizons program and increased program funds to support seniors, as well as supporting non-profit organizations throughout the pandemic that were there for seniors all across our land.

The opposition trying to give the impression that this government does not care about seniors, or is not doing enough for seniors, is misleading at best. At the end of the day, I do not have any problems comparing what we have done for our seniors. That is not to say that we are done. We have a minister responsible for seniors who is very much in the community consulting with seniors and stakeholders to figure out what else we can do to continue to support seniors going forward.

• (1020)

The NDP ask about workers and the whole idea of transition and support programs. I would remind my NDP colleagues of the degree to which this government has stepped up to the plate. When the worldwide pandemic hit Canada, we had a government and a Prime Minister that were there every day, seven days a week and 24 hours a day, to ensure that we were developing the programs that were going to be there to support Canadians and businesses.

We can talk about the CERB program that supported millions of Canadians in all regions of our country, or the wage subsidy program that supported tens of thousands of businesses, thereby also saving tens of thousands of jobs, or the rent subsidy program. These programs really mattered. They put disposable income in the pockets of Canadians. They provided a lifeline to businesses, whether in the arts, the private sector or the non-profit sector. The government was there in a very real way.

As a government, we recognize that the impact has not ended. COVID-19 is still there today, and we recognize that. The battle is not over. That is why we continue to promote and encourage the idea of getting fully vaccinated. Over 86% of Canadians are fully vaccinated. We all have a role to play in the promotion of that.

A week or so ago, the new premier of the province of Manitoba, Heather Stefanson, made it very clear in her caucus that if members were going to continue to sit in the house they had to be fully vaccinated. Former leader Brian Mulroney gave his opinion on the issue. If people want to be part of the Conservative caucus, they had better be fully vaccinated. For Canada to be able to continue to do well, especially in comparison to other countries, we need to recognize the millions of Canadians who stepped up and recognized how important it was to become fully vaccinated. It is making a very real difference today.

More jobs have been put back in place today than we had pre-pandemic. We are doing exceptionally well on the job front. There are many jobs out there. We continue to work at expanding the economy the best that we can. We continue to work with provinces to ensure a sense of co-operation in identifying industries and jobs and using retraining programs. Literally hundreds of millions have been invested by this government to ensure that we can train people for the jobs that are going to be there for Canadians.

We have a very proactive Minister of Immigration working with provinces to get ahead of industries where we can. We have to put

it in the perspective of keeping Canadians safe, and we do that by having people who travel to Canada either be fully vaccinated or quarantined. These initiatives and policy decisions are based on the fact that we have to continue to be diligent. COVID-19 has not disappeared yet.

The throne speech highlights the fact that the battle is not over yet. We should not let our guard down. That is why we passed Bill C-3. I was really encouraged to see all members of the House supporting Bill C-3 going to committee. That is what Canadians want. They want us to be working together. The mandate that was given was very clear: The Liberal plan was the best plan, and there is an obligation for all of us to work together. That is why there is a minority situation.

I see that my time has expired, but hopefully I will get a question or two.

• (1025)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg North's frivolous speeches are always so fun to listen to. He said that Quebec made a good decision in 1997 when it set up its own child care network. That was 24 years ago. If this file is so important to the Liberal Party, why did it not take action sooner? The Liberals held the reins for 13 of those years, including as a majority government, but somehow, they did not think of setting up a child care program or even proposing one. If it was that important, why are they just getting around to it now?

Today I would like to mark an unhappy anniversary. A year ago, the Prime Minister called a meeting with all the Canadian premiers, including Quebec's, to talk about health transfers. A total of 81% of Quebecers want the government to increase health transfers, so the Prime Minister committed to increasing them, but a year has gone by and nothing has happened. How many surveys will it take? How many more times will the premiers of Quebec and the provinces have to push for this? When will this government actually increase health transfers?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would love to fully answer that question, but it would take me a good 20 minutes to do.

The government under Paul Martin had a child care agreement, and a coalition of the Bloc and the NDP defeated that minority government and stopped that in its tracks. However, this Prime Minister, this government and the Liberal members of this caucus pushed and ultimately made it an election platform, and now we have materialized on that commitment. Today, we have a majority of provinces on board and signed up, and we are moving forward on a national child care program.

Canadians also care about mental health and the importance of the national government having a leadership role in the area of health care. We are also prepared to deal with that leadership role.

The Address

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question in regard to the universal child care program being suggested. Cardus did a major study on this, and I would like the member's comments.

The government is choosing to spend money on day care spaces in a national system instead of strengthening the full ecosystem of care that Canadian families currently use and that many prefer because it better meets their needs and exists throughout the country, regardless of population density.

Further, it treats all families the same, regardless of financial need. This concerns me, as it is our low-income and single parents who need this support, yet so often this funding is going directly to individuals who do not need it and they are not provided with the care space that they need.

Why is the government choosing to go this route, rather than focusing on those who truly need the support? If the payments were allocated by a means test vehicle, such as the Canada child benefit, those with the lowest incomes—

• (1030)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member reinforces the fact that the Conservative Party of Canada just does not get it. A vast majority of Canadians understand and want affordable child care, and that is what Canadians are getting because, as a government, we recognize the direct and indirect value for every rural and urban region. Canada will benefit because of this national child care program. We will have affordable child care and we will have more people in our workforce.

The benefits far outweigh any sorts of negatives that the Conservatives continue to espouse. I wish they would get onside and support it. Fortunately for Canadians, we do not need the Conservative Party's support on the child care plan because most progressive politicians recognize the—

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

The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have had an unnecessary election. We have an almost identical Parliament, yet the government is moving with absolutely glacial speed at getting things going again.

Could the member explain what is going on over on the other side of the aisle?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would disagree. I was here last spring and June, virtually or in person, and that election was absolutely necessary. Canadians ultimately renewed this government's mandate. In fact, we picked up a couple of seats and, I believe, the New Democrats picked up one seat. At the end of the day, there is a new mandate. We are prepared to work with Canadians and others at fulfilling that mandate.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure and an honour for me to rise to speak in response to the Speech from the Throne, which was delivered over two weeks ago.

As one might expect, I would like to take a moment to thank a number of people and to recognize the work, commitment and dedication of the huge team I had behind me during the last election. First of all, I must highlight the invaluable contribution made by volunteers who gave their time and kept showing up, day after day, during the election campaign. I would like to name a few. I feel a bit ungrateful doing this, because there are so many people who take care of us and our schedules and who see to our every little need. In short, we have a lot of people supporting us. I will have a chance to talk more about it later, but in my case, this was my seventh election campaign. Every time a campaign starts, I have what feels like an army of about 300 people who suddenly show up and lend a hand. It seems ungracious to name only a few, so I would like to extend my thanks to all the others as well. I want to say a big thank-you to Denise, Jean-Pierre, Marie-Ève, Sarah, Claude, Rock, Bruno, from our association, and Yvon. I also want to sincerely thank all the others, and they know who they are, of course.

I would like to thank my father, Claude, who is 86 and still very sharp. He loves politics maybe even more than I do. He is a man who is always there for me, always ready to listen. When I need to vent, I still turn to him today at age 54. I thank him, and I want him to know that I love him very much. I thank him for being there for me.

My mother is no longer on this earth, but I know she is with me.

There is also my son, François-Xavier, my big six-foot-four boy, who is becoming an accomplished young man and who has been by my side for a long time. I got into politics in 2003. He was seven at the time and missing his two front teeth. I have wonderful photos with him. He is probably the one who has paid the highest price for my political involvement.

Everyone here knows what it means to have a life in politics, especially as a parent. It is very demanding. One day, when I was reflecting on my political involvement, I asked my son, who was then 11 or 12, what he thought about it. He said I should do what I love in life. He gave me his stamp of approval and that may be why I have lasted in politics so long. I owe him everything. I thank him, I love him and I am proud of him. I am very proud to be his mother.

I want to thank my partner, Dany, who is patient, open-minded, positive and cheerful. I am not sure if he likes politics, but he certainly likes his girlfriend. I thank him from the bottom of my heart. I love him and thank him for being there for me. Nothing would be the same without him.

The Address

I would like to thank my party, who welcomed me with such kindness and openness. There are some francophones in the caucus. Everyone makes an effort to stop by and see me. We speak in French. I would like to say that I noticed and that I appreciate it. Thank you. I especially want to thank them for their warm welcome. They are incredible. Finally, I would like to thank our leader for the heartfelt discussions we have had. He loves Quebec. I will say it once more today: He is a remarkable man. I am pleased to be supporting him.

I would like to talk about political commitment. We are all moved by a desire for dedication and change. It is a rather crazy thing to be getting into politics these days, because it is not always very popular. However, at the end of the day, just as we lay down to sleep, we tell ourselves that perhaps we helped someone that day or changed someone's life. That is how we give meaning to our commitment.

I have been involved in politics for over 15 years. I started out at the provincial level, spending 15 years as an MNA and 10 years as a minister. I know what political commitment means and what it represents. I know what it means to assume the responsibility we are given when we come to Parliament and represent our constituents. We have a responsibility. There are 338 members who represent 38 million people, and that is really quite something.

• (1035)

We essentially have three roles as members of Parliament. First, of course, we have our role as legislators. We want to pass the best laws possible and improve people's lives. We want to be visionaries.

Our second role is to help people, our constituents and the businesses in our riding. Politicians are the ones who do this, because otherwise the work would have to be done by deputy ministers, and that is not what we want. What we want are politicians who care and who are able to get things done for people, to help them through the sometimes opaque and complicated bureaucracy, to help them with situations that might not otherwise get addressed.

Our third role is to be auditors, to review expenditures and assess how and why they are being made and whether they are appropriate. That is part of our job.

I may have digressed a little to talk about who I am and to thank people, but my speech today is in response to the throne speech, and I want to talk about the economy.

The throne speech is particularly disappointing. The government's vision is lacklustre and narrow and there was no effective plan forward. That may be because the throne speech contains nothing, or nearly nothing, on the economy.

Quebec and Canada are in a full-blown labour shortage crisis. We have tried to get that point across every way we can think of. We keep asking questions about this issue, but the government refuses to answer, and the throne speech is silent on the subject.

What about balancing the budget? Not a word. How is that possible in a throne speech? When the government that has been in power since 2015 runs higher deficits every year, that inevitably runs up

the debt. My colleagues are right: that is shameful. Plus, there is only one sentence about inflation.

A throne speech is supposed to present a unifying vision of the government's priorities, so how is it possible to deliver a throne speech without mentioning the three issues I just raised, if only very superficially?

In 2014, the Prime Minister said the budget would balance itself. That is a fantasy, a fallacy. That is not how it works. I do not understand how the Prime Minister could have said such a thing or how the throne speech could reflect what he thinks or what he did and failed to do.

The government was far more concerned about its image and holding an absolutely pointless \$600-million election, rather than dealing with the economic issues facing Canadians and Quebecers.

I want to talk about the deficit and debt. I mentioned it earlier, but it is frightening to watch the government navigate with such huge sails, but no rudder.

I looked at the debt numbers, but I am going to refer to an article written by columnist Michel Girard that is both fascinating and frightening. His article details some numbers that are troubling, to us and to Canadians.

The deficit has grown from \$2.9 billion in 2016 to \$354 billion in 2021. That is a lot of money. The debt, meanwhile, went from \$634 billion to \$1.234 trillion. That number is so huge, I cannot even count it or figure out how many zeros it has.

I see that the Chair is telling me that my time is up. That is too bad, because I still had a lot to say. I will certainly have the opportunity to do so during questions and comments.

• (1040)

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis for her speech.

I agree with her when she says that this government has huge sails, but no rudder. I would add that there is no wind in their sails, either. Just because you have a sail it does not mean that you are getting anywhere.

Speaking of wind, this throne speech is rather insubstantial. I am a college teacher by training and what I see is a speech that is actually just a few lines long but has been double-spaced and typed in large font to make it about 15 pages long. I have never seen anything so short on substance. The Liberals were not even able to hide the lack of content.

First, I would like to know whether my colleague agrees with the member for Shefford and me, and whether she is outraged that the member for Winnipeg North is boasting about the fact that the throne speech discriminates against seniors and he is fine with that.

Does my colleague agree that there is a huge fiscal imbalance? The whole issue of child care—

The Address

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I must give time to other members, so that they can ask questions. I would ask people to keep their preambles short when asking questions.

The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Madam Speaker, obviously, I think that we should have the freedom to take exception to things. That is part of raising awareness of the issues that affect us. If we take exception to something, it means that we are aware of what is happening around us and to us.

I think that the throne speech is sterile, uninspired and insipid. It does not have any impact on Canadians and does not give any answers. It says nothing. It does not set out a plan or a strong vision.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, first of all, I congratulate the member for her speech in the House of Commons.

I certainly know that she has many ideas to share with the House. Perhaps the member will continue to share the ideas that are important to her.

• (1045)

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Madam Speaker, this warm welcome and my colleagues' friendliness towards me and the entire caucus is what I was trying to convey earlier, and I thank him.

I am someone who bounces back. I like to stand up for my constituents and everyone else for just causes. I want to assure my colleague that I will always defend our people, our constituents and everyone in our riding. I have no shortage of ideas. I will most definitely have the opportunity to share them with my colleagues. That is why we are here.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis says that she takes exception to some things. We take action.

On the one hand, she says that we did nothing, and on the other hand she complains that we spent too much. In my riding, people were very pleased, especially with the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which helped save and maintain many jobs.

I would like to know where she would have made cuts.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Madam Speaker, I take exception to the fact that this government is not addressing Canadians' needs, is not addressing the labour shortage, is not addressing inflation and has no plan to balance the budget. This affects Canadians' wallets. That is what we will be debating here in the House.

[English]

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has become more and more apparent that this is a Liberal government that has run out of steam and run out of ideas. We are now nearly three months away from what was supposed to be, in the Prime Minister's words, "the most...[consequential] election since 1945", yet Canadians still have little clue about what direction the Liberal government is taking our country. Canadians can be

forgiven, I think, for a profound sense of déjà vu as they read the latest throne speech delivered by the Governor General. In many ways, it reads exactly like the throne speech from 2020, so much so that Canadians are wondering just why we needed to have an unnecessary, reckless and expensive \$600-million pandemic election.

To be sure, there are some important points in the throne speech, such as fighting the pandemic and getting Canada back to normal. There are promises to address reconciliation with first nations, to take action on climate change, to strengthen the middle class and to grow the economy. These are all important promises, but when we look at the record of the Liberal government, particularly over the last three years, we see a lot of talk, but little action. Conservatives believe that the purpose of winning elections is so we can legislate to fix problems and seize opportunities for our country. For the Liberals, it is the other way around. They legislate and make promises so that they can win elections and seize opportunities for themselves.

This abdication of leadership has led to a country that is dealing with more than one crisis, where the government can say the right thing, but action is rarely forthcoming. One columnist recently wrote that the Prime Minister is the return of the infamous Mr. Dithers character. Someone who has "hit the ground running at a sloth-in-slow-motion speed." This is no longer the government of idealists elected in 2015. It is a government that desperately wants to hold on to power, divide and conquer Canadians, and take the bare minimum of action required to safely remain in government.

This has resulted in a terrible situation in our country, where very real problems are not being addressed with the seriousness they deserve. In the throne speech, I was disappointed to see little or no mention of the significant issues Canadians care about right now. For example, in Canada, we are undergoing the most significant period of inflation since I have been alive. For decades, Canadians could rely upon fiscal and monetary policy that maintained an inflation rate close to 2%. This meant that Canada's economy could grow at a solid rate, while ensuring that prices for goods did not drastically increase. Now we are seeing very significant increases across all sectors, with food, fuel, housing and vehicles all seeing steep jumps in prices.

One recent report also indicated that almost every investment asset class, when calculating for inflation, is returning a net negative real return. The consequences of letting inflation run at these levels will impact families for generations to come. It will mean less money saved for retirement, more resources dedicated to just the essentials and less resources for achieving Canadians' dreams. It will mean eroded standards of living for retirees on fixed incomes, who will look at the value of their nest eggs shrink as the money supply expands exponentially. The government promises that it will find a way to make Canadians whole, but we saw the consequences in the past of government trying to control wage and price inflation. It only exacerbated the problems further.

The Address

The most significant actions that have worked historically to address runaway inflation have been for the government to get its fiscal house in order and for the Bank of Canada to raise interest rates. These are bitter pills to swallow for Canadians who have grown used to massive government largesse and artificially lowered interest rates. The Liberals, I fear, will try and win politically by forestalling this inevitability by increasing spending and allowing the Bank of Canada to let inflation run even higher, thus forestalling the need for increased interest rates.

The consequences of this will mean exponentially more pain for Canadians in the future as the government loses its ability to finance deficit spending and the Bank of Canada loses its ability to control inflation. Canadians deserve a government that will make the tough choices to ensure future generations can have a better life than the one we have. I know from hitting the doors in my community that the cost of living was top of mind for many families. Canadians need to see leadership from the government and they are not seeing it right now from the Liberals.

● (1050)

There is also nothing in the throne speech to comfort the anxiety of my constituents in Alberta. In my region, we rely on the agriculture, forestry, oil and gas, and service sectors to put food on the table. On the agriculture front, there was only one mention in the Speech from the Throne, and that was about creating a Canada water agency. What about a plan to ensure that Canadian farmers can continue to access world markets? What about a plan to address the rising cost of agricultural inputs, such as fertilizer and fuel, which are threatening global food security? These are serious issues, but there was no mention of them by this government.

Where is the plan to fight the Americans on the unjust doubling of softwood lumber tariffs? Where is the plan to ensure that our oil and gas sector can continue to sustain our economy for generations to come while reducing and eliminating greenhouse emissions?

I see company after company from Alberta pledging billions of dollars in combined resources to implement revolutionary and effective carbon capture technology. Where is their willing partner in the federal government? Where is the tax credit for enhanced oil recovery, which will sustain new, low-carbon jobs and investments for decades to come? It is not to be found in the throne speech. Instead, we just see ideological talking points and promises to shut down our jobs and our industries.

The words “just transition” have become a nightmare for Albertans. Many people in my riding lost their jobs when coal-powered plants were phased out a few years ago. Communities and workers were promised by this Liberal government that they would have compensation and a just transition. The last promise in the 2019 budget said \$100 million for coal communities.

Well, we have not seen any funding from this Liberal government, and it has been two years. Folks in my area know exactly what a “just transition” means. It means fewer jobs, less prosperity and more “just inflation”. It is time for the Liberal government to take co-operative action with the oil and gas sector to ensure the prosperity of all Canadians, not just those who are represented by Liberal MPs.

The Speech from the Throne also failed to address the elephant in the room in Canada right now. One of our most important institutions has been on the news on an almost daily basis, and not a lot of it has been good news. I am talking, of course, about the Canadian military and the numerous scandals that we have seen.

As someone who represents a large military community and CFB Edmonton, I know that my constituents are extremely proud of our Canadian Forces members, but every day they lose confidence when they see the Liberal government fail to act and fix problems. An institution as important as the Canadian military deserves far more attention from this government than it received in the throne speech, where it was not even mentioned once. Sadly, this is just another case of the Liberal government failing to tackle the important issues that Canadians want to see solved.

The Liberals' rhetoric has, yet again, failed to match the reality of action. When the Prime Minister said this was “the most important election since 1945”, he clearly was not talking about its importance to Canadians. Instead, he was talking about its importance to his own ambitions for a majority government.

We are seeing bills being passed today that would have been, and could have been, passed if we had not had an election, such as Bill C-2, Bill C-4 and Bill C-6. We see legislation that was passed with unanimous support, like Bill C-3 last night, which fulfilled the promise from all the way back to May 2020 to implement paid sick leave.

This is legislation the Prime Minister said would be implemented without delay, but it took a year and a half to produce a mere page of legislation. In fact, it was not even important enough to merit its own legislation. It had to be merged together with a Criminal Code amendment. We are seeing a recycled throne speech. I praise the government for its commitment to recycling, but the throne speech largely repeats the promises and agenda of the government from last year in 2020.

It is clear, as I said at the beginning of my speech, that this Liberal government has run out of steam and out of ideas. Canadians are growing more disappointed each and every day as they see the priorities they talk about around their kitchen tables with their families every night not being reflected in the policies and action of this government. I hope for the sake of all Canadians that this government can get its act together.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

• (1055)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Deputy House Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the speech by my colleague across the way, and one thing that jumped out at me was when he mentioned that we were here to legislate to fix problems. I agree. However, I think we have demonstrated that over the last six years, whether it was with medical assistance in dying or finally banning conversion therapy.

I would like to know if the member opposite will be supporting us with respect to Bill C-2 to make sure we are fixing the problem of the gaps currently being experienced because of COVID-19.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Madam Speaker, we, as the opposition, have a sacred duty to hold the government to account. We have seen so many times during the past two years in this pandemic the government push forward with legislation that we found had serious flaws. We are not going to abdicate our responsibility. Our duty to Canadians is to hold the government to account to ensure the best possible legislation.

If Liberals were so concerned about getting this legislation passed in a timely way, then why did they waste Canadians' time and taxpayers' money on a reckless, unnecessary, \$600-million election, which did not change a single thing in the House?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, in previous speeches from the throne, I remember seeing the Liberals talk a lot about putting in national pharmacare and making a reference to dental care.

In this throne speech, these topics are nowhere to be found. It is like they never even existed. The member is right, and the cost of living is also a huge subject of concern among my constituents in my riding. Unexpected medical costs, the cost of pharmaceuticals and the cost of dental care are huge issues for working families in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

What does the member think about the fact that the Liberals used to talk so eloquently about these programs, and they are nowhere to be found in this 2021 version?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his commitment to his constituents.

There is an old adage that says, “Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.” The NDP have been fooled not once, but twice, by the Liberal government. First when it promised paid sick leave in May 2020 in order to get NDP support for a hybrid Parliament, and second with pharmaceutical and dental care.

The member has seen again that the Liberals have tricked the NDP. When are the NDP going to wake up, stop getting tricked by the Liberals and stand up to them for a change?

• (1100)

[English]

SENIORS

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that helping our growing senior population is critical, particularly during COVID-19.

The New Horizons for Seniors program provides grants up to \$25,000 for projects that help seniors age in place, stay healthy and remain connected. We have funded over 3,000 projects across Canada this past year, including some great ones in my riding of Cambridge, like the Islamic Centre of Cambridge, Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank, Good Neighbour Community Garden, Fairview Mennonite Homes, Townline Muslim Centre, Kinbridge, Fiddlesticks and Alison Neighbourhood Associations, and the Preston Lawn Bowling Club.

Everyone in the House should remind their communities that the New Horizons for Seniors program is open for applications right now and up until December 21.

We must all help our seniors-focused organizations apply and help all Canadian seniors to stay connected, happy and healthy.

* * *

SAINT NICHOLAS

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, Nicholas, a Christian bishop in Turkey, heard of a distressed family in his community, a father who had lost everything and his three daughters who now, unable to marry, might be forced into prostitution. Filled with compassion, Nicholas slipped out under the cover of darkness and through an open window, he dropped a bag of money, enough for the first daughter to get married. Two more times he did this, secretly giving from his own pocket to help this family in need.

Some 1,700 years later, we continue to celebrate the generosity of Saint Nicholas by practising charity and giving gifts at Christmas. We do this because at Christmas we celebrate the greatest gift of all, the birth of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, Jesus who himself would give his own life for the sins of humanity. It is up to each one of us to personally accept this gift.

To my colleagues, my constituents and, indeed, to all Canadians, I invite them to consider this awesome gift and I wish them a very merry Christmas and a blessed new year.

Merry Christmas.

* * *

LOCAL YOUTH

Mrs. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today, I would like to recognize the inspiring young people of Kanata—Carleton, who have been writing to me about the issues that matter to them. I received many letters with insightful questions.

Statements by Members

Grade six student, Suzie Rigby from Katimavik Elementary School asked great questions about reconciliation. The students of Mr. Gianfranco and Mr. Kappel's classes at Earl of March Secondary School asked great questions on climate change, COVID supports and other critical issues.

I thank them for their questions and ask them to please stay engaged. We need their voices.

I would also like to recognize our teachers. In particular, congratulations to Robert Tang, a resident of my riding who recently received the national certificate of excellence for teaching from the Prime Minister. I congratulate Robert and I thank him for his dedication to our youth.

* * *

WILLIAM "PETE" SCHUSSLER

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I regret to inform the House of the loss of retired chief warrant officer William "Pete" Schussler. He was an incredible Londoner, veterans advocate, loving family man and a dear friend.

Pete started his military career in 1941 with the militia and then enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces Infantry in 1942. He served in England, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. Pete re-enlisted in 1948 with the Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and served in Korea. He was a peacekeeper in the Middle East and served with NATO in Germany.

Pete received 16 honours and awards, including the Order of Military Merit, and he received a knighthood with the National Order of the Legion of Honour for his service during the liberation of France in 1944. The Legion of Honour, awarded by the Government of France, is its highest order of merit and that is exactly how folks in London and how I always knew Pete, a gentleman of the highest honour.

We thank Pete and we will remember him.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PHILIPPE LANDRY

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize and celebrate an extraordinary man who was a father, a husband, a journalist, an innovator, a man of justice, an activist and a strong advocate for French in Ontario.

Philippe Landry left his mark on French Ontario. Franco-Ontarians have access to justice in French today thanks in large part to Philippe Landry and his involvement in the civil disobedience movement known as C'est l'temps! He once spent two days in jail because he refused to accept a ticket that was written only in English.

His passion for sharing stories about the Franco-Ontarian community did not disappear once he finished his career in journalism. He created a Facebook group called Fier d'être Franco-Ontarien // Fièrè d'être Franco-Ontarienne, which has more than 12,000 mem-

bers, to promote, share and encourage discussion within our community.

Even though his death has left a hole in our community, Philippe Landry's love and passion for defending the French language will be felt for generations to come.

I offer my sincere condolences to his daughter, Geneviève, and his family.

* * *

● (1105)

[*English*]

FEED THE NEED

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the people of Oshawa for re-electing me for the seventh time. I am truly honoured.

This Sunday, musicians are gathering at the historic Regent Theatre in downtown Oshawa to help feed their neighbours in the fourth annual concert to Feed the Need. The proceeds from this event will go to Feed the Need in Durham, an agency that distributes food and other essential items to food banks, shelters, schools and other food programs across Durham region.

With the funds generated from the concert, \$300,000 worth of food has been distributed to those who need it most, and the need has never been greater. Since the start of the pandemic, food bank use across my region has increased 30%.

I want to thank the producer, Joe Solway, of the Rotary Club of Bowmanville, as well as the talented and generous musicians who have stepped up to make this show happen. The rotary clubs of Durham region, including my own club in Oshawa, are grateful to help those most in need.

I wish all my friends and neighbours a merry Christmas.

* * *

TIBET

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, *tashi dalek*. I rise today to celebrate the 32nd anniversary of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1989.

His Holiness is an honorary Canadian citizen and a global symbol of peace, compassion and harmony as a spiritual leader of six million Tibetans.

I had the privilege of meeting His Holiness in India in 2018. In that meeting, he asked me to ensure that elected leaders around the world would not forget about Tibet and the cause of Tibetan linguistic, cultural and religious freedoms.

Today, on this international Human Rights Day, I renew the commitment I made to His Holiness then; that I will continue to champion the cause of the Tibetan people, a resumption of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue and the middle way approach, an approach that seeks nothing more than greater autonomy for Tibet within China, based on the concepts of equality and mutual co-operation.

For His Holiness the Dalai Lama, *thuchi che, ka drin che* for all that he has done, not just for the Tibetan people but for the global community, and promoting the cause of peace and pluralism.

* * *

[Translation]

MANUELA TEIXEIRA

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Gatineau Chamber of Commerce held a gala a few weeks ago for its Excelor Awards, which recognize entrepreneurs in our region.

I congratulate all of the nominees and winners, and more specifically, Manuela Teixeira, an entrepreneur I admire a lot.

She is the CEO of Old Chelsea Square and the owner of the Chelsea Pub and Biscotti & Cie. She is not afraid of a challenge and does an amazing job of showcasing Pontiac and the entire Outaouais region.

[English]

Again, I congratulate this pioneer for all her hard work and what is to come.

* * *

REGINA—WASCANA

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, as this is my first time rising in this 44th Parliament, I would like to thank the many volunteers who worked on my re-election campaign. As everyone in this chamber knows, even when we win, a political campaign is a humbling experience, because we realize just how much we depend, as the saying goes, on the kindness of strangers.

An election campaign is a team effort, and Regina—Wascana was no exception. Whether people were door-to-door canvassers, phone bank callers, lawn sign installers or doing any of the many jobs on this campaign, I want them to know that their contributions made a difference.

Of course, I must thank my two biggest supporters, my mom and dad, for their unconditional love and support.

I thank the voters of Regina—Wascana for once again placing their trust in me. I will work every day to earn their continued trust and support.

* * *

GREENER HOMES GRANT

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Canada greener homes grant is all about our communities, our environment, our jobs and helping people make their homes more energy efficient.

Statements by Members

The Government of Canada will be issuing up to \$700,000 worth of grants, up to \$5,000 each, to encourage and help homeowners make their homes more energy efficient. Whether it is replacing windows, adding insulation and so much more, people can apply for these grants knowing that they too can play a role in fighting climate change, while at the same time creating jobs, improving our communities and making a difference.

I would like to encourage the residents of Winnipeg North and others to apply for this grant. Collectively we can improve Canada's housing stock by making it more energy efficient, which means cheaper utility bills and fighting climate change at the same time.

* * *

● (1110)

INDSPIRE AWARDS

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour today to rise and recognize a teacher from Meadow Lake's Carpenter High School, Derek Eftoda. Derek recently was named as a Guiding the Journey national award winner by Indspire, a charity that invests in the education of first nations, Inuit and Métis students.

Mr. Eftoda is known as a teacher who builds authentic relationships with all his students and creates an environment in his classroom of mutual respect. As an avid storyteller, Mr. Eftoda's tale of fighting off a bear from inside his tent or his close encounter with a cougar on his acreage are just two of the many stories that have become legendary among his students.

As the only non-indigenous teacher to win this award, Mr. Eftoda understands that reconciliation is accomplished through actions of respect and finding a positive path forward. He is an example for all of us to follow.

I ask all members to join me today in recognizing Mr. Eftoda.

* * *

CARLTON TRAIL—EAGLE CREEK

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today and thank the voters of Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek for once again placing their trust in me to be their voice in the House of Commons.

Our constituency is a large, diverse and beautiful rural riding that reflects the values of integrity, respect and excellence, as well as a deep commitment to hard work and perseverance. I will do my utmost to faithfully carry out the responsibilities that my constituents have entrusted to me.

I want to thank my husband Milton and my family for their support and their sacrifices over the years.

I also want to thank my campaign team and the many volunteers who worked tirelessly throughout the election campaign. I would not be here without their support and efforts.

Statements by Members

In closing, I wish my constituents, everyone in this place and, indeed, all Canadians a very merry Christmas and a new year filled with good health and happiness.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE PEOPLE OF LONGUEUIL—CHARLES-LEMOYNE

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoynes, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with gratitude and humility that I rise in the House today to thank the people of Longueuil—Charles-LeMoynes for placing their trust in me and electing me to be their MP in Ottawa for a third time.

I have had the honour of representing the people of this riding since 2015, and I will continue to stand up for their interests during the 44th Parliament with renewed energy and determination.

The people of Longueuil—Charles-LeMoynes have always generously shared their comments and suggestions with me about issues that matter to them, and I encourage them to continue to do so. My team is always there to serve them, and my door is always open.

[*English*]

I thank the constituents of my riding from the bottom of my heart for their renewed trust and support. I will always strive to do them proud, and wish them all the best this holiday season.

* * *

DANIELLE ADAMS

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, last night, we received very sad news of the passing of Danielle Adams, a member of the Manitoba legislative assembly for Thompson, who tragically died in a car crash yesterday.

Danielle was a mother of two, loving partner to her husband Bill, a friend to many of us and a very hard-working NDP MLA for Thompson, who worked tirelessly for her constituents. Danielle was a strong advocate for the north and for people, fighting for accessible, affordable child care. She was a kind, loving and respected colleague to many.

Today, I extend my deepest condolences and love to Danielle's children, Nick and Joe, her husband Bill, her friends and family, the city of Thompson and the Manitoba NDP caucus.

May Danielle fly with the eagles. Rest in peace.

* * *

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

MARC-ANDRÉ FLEURY

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am immensely honoured to acknowledge Marc-André Fleury's 500th career win.

From Sorel-Tracy to the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, from Pittsburgh to Las Vegas and now Chicago, Marc-André has dominated his sport.

This passionate athlete known by the nickname "Flower" is an extraordinarily talented goalie with quick reflexes. He is a gentle man who is always smiling and is well liked by his teammates, and he has overcome every obstacle that high-level hockey has thrown at him with an exemplary attitude.

With three Stanley Cups and a Vezina Trophy under his belt at the age of 37, Marc-André is already a living legend, especially after earning this 500th career win in a shutout in front of his friends and family in Montreal.

Last week, I had the chance to watch his 497th career win in Washington.

Marc-André Fleury ranks up there with the two greatest goalies in history, the Quebecers Patrick Roy and Martin Brodeur. I congratulate him on all his accomplishments. The hall of fame awaits him. In the meantime, he still has a long career ahead of him.

Quebec is proud of him.

* * *

[*English*]

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND POTATO INDUSTRY

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, this week, P.E.I. potato farmers drove 6,000 bags of spuds to Ottawa to raise awareness about the Liberal government's ban on P.E.I. potato exports. The government's half-baked plan is smashing the island's biggest economic driver, yet the four silent island Liberal MPs are not fixing the problem.

There are 300 million pounds of potatoes that sit idle. Hundreds of jobs are lost and countless family farms are at risk. In 15 days, families on both sides of the border will be sitting down to a Christmas dinner with turkey and cranberry sauce, deprived of P.E.I. mashed potatoes. If the Liberal government's export ban is not lifted, P.E.I.'s potatoes will not be spending their Christmas on plates across North America.

The Prime Minister has admitted that this ban is political and not backed by science. It is time that the spuds from the bright red mud started rolling down the highway smiling.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today is Human Rights Day, marked every year to commemorate the day in 1948 when the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Here in Canada, the Canadian Human Rights Act was adopted in 1977, and I am proud that our government in 2016 added gender identity and expression. Our Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a document that guides us as Canadians. This year, the United Nations is choosing to highlight that at the heart of human rights lie the principles of equality and non-discrimination. We must ensure that everyone can live in dignity, regardless of who they are, who they love and where they live.

Around the world and here at home, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted already existing inequalities. Today let us make a commitment to build back better, to build a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, in two weeks, Canadians will be celebrating Christmas, but it might not be as merry as some families would have liked. Why? It is because the number one concern of all Canadian families right now is the ever-increasing cost of living. We have been talking about it here for days and days, even weeks. Yesterday, we finally got the numbers. We learned from Canada's Food Price Report that all families will be paying \$1,000 more.

Why is the government refusing to address the inflation that is affecting all Canadian families?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question and congratulate him on his re-election.

Inflation is an issue of real concern to Canadians, but we know that it is a global phenomenon, not a problem unique to Canada.

I want to reassure Canadians. We are working hard to make life more affordable. Our child care plan will reduce family expenses considerably. We are also determined to make housing more affordable.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am sure the Minister of Tourism, along with all 338 MPs, knows that this is not just a global issue. It affects all Canadian families directly. I invite the Minister of Tourism to visit food banks in his riding and tell people not to worry because it is a global problem. No, this problem affects all Canadian families, and the government is refusing to talk about it. There is barely a mention of it in the throne speech. The word "inflation" comes up just once. Lucky for her, that word is the same in French and in English.

When will the government get serious about tackling inflation, which is affecting all Canadian families?

• (1120)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to talk about some of the specific ways our government is helping Canadians face the very real challenges related to affordability. A single mother of two will get \$13,600 from the Canada child benefit. An

Oral Questions

average Saskatchewan family will get a carbon pricing rebate of almost \$1,000. A student will save \$3,000 because of changes to the loan program. That is how we are helping families with affordability.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, when the price of fruit goes up 5%, the price of vegetables goes up 7%, and the price of dairy products goes up 8%, it is time to take concrete measures to control inflation. The first thing that a responsible government should do is at least control spending, because if it does nothing, all Canadian families will pay a steep price. "Just inflation" is making it impossible for families to make ends meet.

When will the government deal directly with the problem of inflation, which is affecting every Canadian family?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since coming to power, our government has worked to make life more affordable for Canadians. My first vote in the House was on cutting taxes for the middle class. We established the Canada child benefit to support families. We increased support for seniors, reduced small business taxes, increased the Canada workers benefit, and increased the Canada student grant, all to make life more affordable.

[*English*]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, inflation is rising and Canadians are going to feel it even more at Christmas. For many, it will not be just gifts and presents that are more expensive this year, but putting food on the table for family and friends. If they can even afford to plan a Christmas dinner, a turkey will cost 25% more; eggs for their eggnog are up 7.4% and bacon for breakfast is up 20.2%.

When will the minister take action and address this inflation crisis?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me share some of the ways the government is helping Canadians with the very real challenge of affordability. A single mom with two kids will receive \$13,600 from the Canada child benefit; the average family in Saskatchewan will get almost \$1,000 in the carbon price rebate; a student will save more than \$3,000, thanks to the changes we made to the loan programs; and in Alberta, a family of two using child care starting January 1 will save, at a minimum, \$12,000. That is how we are making life more affordable for all Canadians.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

• (1125)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will ask members to hold off. They are not being called on to speak at this point, and we want to hear the question just as much as we want to hear the answer.

The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, inflation is making goods and services more expensive this Christmas. Families were already struggling to make ends meet, and now many will have to decide between heating their homes or feeding their families. Natural gas is up 18.7%; food bank visits have climbed 20% and are expected to double in the months ahead. The costs keep climbing, but the paycheques just are not keeping up.

Will the government start taking this crisis seriously and address inflation before the clock strikes midnight?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we absolutely understand that inflation and affordability are pressing concerns for Canadians. We also know that this is a global phenomenon and not a made-in-Canada issue.

I also want to assure Canadians that we are working hard to make life more affordable. Our child care plan will reduce costs dramatically. We are committed to addressing housing affordability. We were there for Canadians when the COVID recession hit and we will be there for Canadians as we face this challenge together.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, as members will recall, Health Canada caused quite an uproar over the summer when it sought to increase the allowable limits for pesticide residues on food. The public backlash pushed the government to delay that bad decision, as it was on the eve of the election campaign.

The ongoing close relationship between Health Canada and the biotechnology and pesticide industry is troubling. Now we are learning that Health Canada is considering allowing GMO producers to regulate themselves through voluntary transparency.

Three weeks ago, 100 organizations wrote to the government, calling on it to back down. Will the government heed their call?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. We are very concerned about the issue of pesticides, which is why we decided to take action in this area. We made a number of commitments during the election campaign that we will be working on over the next few months, because this is an important issue.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, science and the precautionary principle should take precedence when it comes to pesticides and GMOs. The government seems to be moving away from transparency when, really, more transparency is needed. The government seems to be listening to the industry

much more than to farmers and people who want to know what is on their dinner plates.

The Bloc Québécois is proposing an investigation into the links between Health Canada and the biotechnology and pesticide industries. Does the government agree that more transparency is needed?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we completely agree that more transparency is needed. That is why we have called for an independent review of some of the processes that are already in place regarding pesticide approvals. We will continue to work on this issue in the coming months.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, yesterday's PBO report is crystal clear that under the Liberal government, inequality has reached unparalleled levels. The ultrarich are richer than ever in the Prime Minister's Canada, but still Liberals resist a wealth tax and do nothing about overseas tax havens. Canadians are struggling to put food on the table, to keep a roof over their heads and to pay their bills.

In the fiscal update next week, are the Liberals going to put the interests of the ultrarich ahead of those of everyone else yet again?

[Translation]

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

[English]

Our government is committed to asking those who prospered during the pandemic to help pay more for those who did not. Our platform committed to raise corporate income taxes on the largest, most profitable banks and insurance companies, and introduced a temporary Canada recovery dividend, given that they have recovered faster. We are working to implement a global minimum tax, and 136 OECD/G20 framework members have already signed up.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, the government has a pattern of punishing the poor and rewarding the rich. After clawing back the GIS from the most vulnerable seniors in this country and then failing to fix it for months, finally the Deputy Prime Minister committed to fixing this issue quickly, but in many cases, this is far too late. Working seniors across this country are already living on the streets. Stop punishing seniors with red tape.

Will the government promise to get it done now so seniors get this much-needed amount of money immediately?

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know just how challenging the pandemic has been for seniors. Every single step of the way, our government has been there to support seniors, especially the most vulnerable, by strengthening their GIS. We moved very quickly to provide immediate and direct support to seniors this summer. When it comes to this issue, we are working hard to find the right solution to support those most affected. As always, we will be there for seniors.

* * *

● (1130)

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, millions of families across Canada are being left behind by the exponential rise in the cost of necessities like gas and groceries due to reckless Liberal spending. The burden of the inflated cost of living is especially felt by Canadians who live outside the transportation hubs of central Canada, like the working-class families in my riding. Canadian families are struggling right now, yet the Liberals plan to spend even more, further ballooning the cost of necessities.

When will the Liberals admit that their policies are responsible for the inflation crisis and clean up their mess?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on her election.

We understand the economic recovery is not equal across the board, but here are the results of our plan: 154,000 new jobs created in November, 5.4% annualized GDP growth in Q3, 106% of jobs recovered, AAA credit rating, and the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. The Conservatives do not like that the economy is growing, but we do and so do Canadians.

[Translation]

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, according to a recent study, food prices will rise by 5% to 7% in 2022, adding nearly \$1,000 to the grocery bill of an average family of four.

The Liberals' inflation rate is pushing a growing number of Canadian families to their limits. The Prime Minister is responsible for this failure. When will the Liberals start caring about monetary policy?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to debate this question with my former student from Campus Saint-Jean. There are now two Campus Saint-Jean graduates sitting in the House of Commons.

The results of our plan speak for themselves. There were 154,000 jobs created in November, the GDP increased by 5.4%, and 106% of jobs have been recovered. Our economy is doing well. The Conservatives do not like that, but our government does and so do Canadians.

Oral Questions

HEALTH

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, the student has surpassed the teacher.

For the second time since the beginning of the pandemic, the Auditor General has criticized the Liberals' border management. The system lost track of 1,156 travellers who had tested positive for COVID-19. These 1,156 people who had COVID-19 came into Canada, and the Public Health Agency of Canada simply lost track of them. Over 1,000 people have been going around Canada, unaware that they have the virus.

How many other people will be infected? How many more classrooms will have to be shut down? How many more people will have to quarantine?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we thank the Auditor General for her report and findings.

Our government has always sought to protect Canadians. We are adapting our response to COVID-19 based on the most recent scientific evidence. We accept all of the recommendations made by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada as a result of this audit. Work is already under way to implement them.

We acted swiftly at a time when the Conservatives wanted to do much less.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, considering how slow the government was to close the borders and provide vaccines, I think the minister needs to review his talking points and remember the beginning of the pandemic.

Other findings by the Auditor General include the following: 30% of test results are missing or cannot be linked to anyone; and no one knows whether 75% of travellers followed quarantine orders upon arrival.

Six hundred million dollars later, the Auditor General found, and I quote, that “the agency did not adequately administer...border control measures imposed to limit the introduction of the virus and its variants into Canada”.

Cases are on the rise, but the Liberals have learned nothing. Canadians want to know why.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I sometimes have a hard time following what the hon. member is saying. Sometimes he wants us to do more. Other times, he wants us to do less.

We have worked very hard to protect the health and safety of Canadians, and we will continue to take action for the future.

● (1135)

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government's mismanagement of this pandemic has hit a new low, and closing the border is not working and neither is testing. From February to June, this government misplaced 30% of COVID tests from people entering this country; almost 400,000 tests were lost. There are now new testing requirements.

Oral Questions

This government is not protecting Canadians. Twenty months into the pandemic, and it has not gotten testing right. Why would Canadians trust you?

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

The hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we certainly thank the Auditor General for her recent report and her findings. Our government has worked extremely hard to protect Canadians and to address the issues associated with COVID-19 based on the latest science and evidence. We are accepting all of the recommendations of the Auditor General, and work is already under way to ensure that we are learning from some of the observations that she has made.

However, we have acted quickly and we have acted boldly to ensure that we are protecting the health and security of Canadians at a time when the Conservatives wanted us to do less. That is what Canadians expect, and that is what we will continue to do.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is starting to get a little loud on this side when ministers are trying to answer the question. I am sure that hon. members want to hear the response so they can ask another question.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, 46,000 people from April to June this year landed at U.S. border airports and immediately crossed into Canada by land, all to circumvent the ineffective air travel restrictions the Liberals put in place.

Yesterday's AG report said that no recommendations were ever given to the government to enforce different rules for air and land. These arbitrary rules on Canadian travels have been a boon for American airports.

How many jobs has the minister created in the Buffalo Airport, and when is he going to stand up for Canadians?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I have said a number of times today, the government has worked very hard to protect the health and security of Canadians, and that is what Canadians expect a responsible government to do.

We certainly recognize and acknowledge the recommendations that were made by the Auditor General. We can and shall do better going forward, but we have done extremely hard work. We have put in place measures that have been effective in protecting the health and security of Canadians, and we are going to continue to do that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the members of the official opposition one more time that when someone else has the floor to listen to the answer, even though they may not like the answer, and prepare for their next question instead.

The hon. member for Shefford.

[*Translation*]

SENIORS

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, yesterday we learned that food prices will go up by 7% next year. That will cost families almost \$1,000 extra.

That is also very bad news for seniors in the 65 to 74 age bracket, whom the government decided will not get the old age security increase.

With prices on the rise, the government's decision to create two classes of seniors is literally forcing people to take food out of their carts, put it back on the grocery store shelf, and go line up for a Christmas hamper.

What will it take for the government to realize it has to increase OAS for all seniors?

[*English*]

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government's priorities have always been to support seniors, especially those most vulnerable.

When it comes to our record on seniors, I am proud of it. One of the first things we did as a government was to restore the age of eligibility for OAS back to 65. We have enhanced the CPP. We have strengthened the OAS and GIS. We will be increasing OAS by 10% for those older seniors.

We have an ambitious agenda for seniors, and we are going to continue to make sure that we deliver for seniors across Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, that is not what we are talking about. This is going to take a whole lot more than lip service. It is going to take action. Too many seniors are being left out in the cold.

Not only is the government refusing to help those under 75, but it is actually attacking older workers who receive the GIS. It is cutting benefits for those who lost their jobs during the pandemic and had to apply for CERB. We have the numbers. Benefits for over 183,000 seniors are being cut by an average of \$3,500. The government is taking away 83,000 people's GIS entirely. As food prices skyrocket, those people are finding themselves in a more precarious position than ever.

Why does the government have it in for society's poorest?

[*English*]

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, strengthening income security for seniors has been a top priority for our government, and that is why our government has strengthened GIS for vulnerable seniors. We provided one-time payments for seniors during the pandemic, so they could afford the things they need. We will be increasing support through OAS for older seniors.

We have an ambitious agenda for seniors. We are going to continue to make sure we have their backs.

Oral Questions

• (1140)

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, 2022 marks the platinum jubilee of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. In 1975, 2002 and 2012, the governments of the day issued jubilee medals to mark this historic occasion and delivered them to deserving Canadians. If these past 20 months have shown us anything, it is that there are so many deserving Canadians who stepped up in the fight against COVID-19, yet here we stand in December 2021, with no announcement of the platinum jubilee medal.

Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage take immediate action to create a platinum jubilee medal to recognize so many deserving Canadians on this momentous historic occasion?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as members know, 2022 marks the 70th anniversary of the Queen's reign, and we are going to provide funding to communities across the country to celebrate the jubilee and all the things we have accomplished together, as many countries in the Commonwealth are still considering options. We will be sharing the rest of our plans for this celebration in due time.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, "in due time"? Unless their calendar was broken, the Liberals have known 2022 has been coming for some time. Whether they are truck drivers, first responders, health care workers, those working in the food supply chain, the military or veterans, all of these Canadians stepped up over the last 20 months during the fight against COVID-19 and are so deserving of recognition through a platinum jubilee medal.

Will the minister do the right thing and take this platinum opportunity to recognize Canadians?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we said, we will be sharing the rest of our plans in due time. Of course, we recognize the hard work of all Canadians and all the efforts of Canadians during the pandemic. One of the things we can do to respect the work and efforts of all Canadians is get vaccinated. Maybe that is a thing the Conservatives may want to consider.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, the backlogs at IRCC continue to grow. As of October, there were 1.8 million applications in backlog and counting. Those are not just numbers; they are families that remain separated, Canadian businesses unable to fill labour shortages and refugees stranded in Afghanistan. This Liberal-made backlog is causing immense mental health issues, at a time when loved ones need to be together, our economy needs workers and refugees are desperate for safety.

What concrete steps is the government taking to finally address the disastrous Liberal-made backlogs?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is no question that the COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for our immigration system, when we continued to have demand to come

into Canada at a time when our borders were closed. However, I have good news for the member opposite. Month after month, we have set records in our nation's history, due in large part to the work of my predecessor, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

I can tell the member opposite that we are on pace to hit an all-time record, with 401,000 new Canadians admitted this year.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the minister pats himself on the back for a job well failed, Deepak Talwar is a business owner in Saskatoon. He and his family left India for Canada in 2017 and have been waiting for years to hear any word on their applications. This story is just one of thousands about newcomers who are lost in the black hole of Liberal-made backlogs. My office hears these cases every day and the devastating effects they have on people are damaging Canada's reputation around the world.

When is the government going to stop hiding behind excuses and finally get something done on immigration backlogs?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his concern, and I point out, as he is looking at the role immigration plays in the economy, that we are going to set a record for the number of people who are admitted to Canada this year. I will also point out that as of last month, 106% of the jobs lost during the pandemic have now been recovered, making our labour force participation rate the highest in the history of our country.

We will make the necessary investments to reduce the backlog. I am going to work on this issue. It has my full attention, and I look forward to sharing future investments in the near term with the member opposite.

* * *

• (1145)

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Auditor General released a damning report about the systemic failure of the Liberal government in ensuring temporary foreign workers are protected. Many workers tested positive for COVID-19 and some went home in a body bag. The government said that it would take immediate action, but inspections only got worse. Employers were found to be compliant with regulations even though there was little or no evidence to support it.

Oral Questions

Are these lives dispensable to the government, or will the Liberals end this exploitation by giving all migrant workers permanent resident status now?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the health and safety of temporary foreign workers is of the utmost importance to the government, and I want to thank every single temporary foreign worker for what they have done for our food security over the course of COVID-19. Like every worker in Canada, they deserve to be safe in their workplaces.

I thank the Auditor General and her office for the report and recommendations. We understand the importance of this audit, and we agree with her recommendations. They will guide our work ahead.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Auditor General's latest report is a scathing look at the government's border measures. It turns out that the Public Health Agency did not track over one-third of arrivals at the border. It did not know whether people were actually staying in its quarantine hotels. One-third of tests were missing or not matched up, and here is the worst part: Over 1,000 people tested positive for COVID and were not even contacted.

The border measures had one goal: to protect Canadians from COVID exposure. How did the government allow so many Canadians to be put at risk?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, protecting the health and safety of Canadians has been and always will be the top priority of this government. We thank the Auditor General for her report and her findings. Our government will work to ensure that we are implementing the recommendations on a go-forward basis.

We have acted quickly and boldly at a time when the Conservative Party wanted us to do less. We will continue to work to protect the health and safety of Canadians as we move forward.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad to rise today in recognition of International Human Rights Day, which recognizes worldwide the principle of the right to equality, justice and freedom for all. International Human Rights Day also shines a light on the continued oppression of populations and groups around the world, such as the people of Myanmar.

Could the minister update the House on the work being done to support the people of Myanmar?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a young activist, I worked for two years for the Canadian Human Rights Foundation, and I am particularly proud to stand on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs today—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I cannot hear the answer, so I will ask the members who clearly still have questions to wait. We will let the hon. minister answer the question the member asked.

[*English*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, as a young activist, I worked for two years for the Canadian Human Rights Foundation, and I am proud to stand on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to thank the member for Mississauga—Streetsville for her question.

I am pleased to say that Canada has imposed additional sanctions today on entities affiliated with Myanmar's military regime. Today's announcement sent a clear message to the people of Myanmar that their resilience and quest for democracy and civil rights will not be diminished.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is mid-December and there are still no public accounts. There are disturbing stories that the Liberal government has actually reopened the audited public accounts and changed them for political gain.

Earlier this week when we asked about this, the President of the Treasury Board refused to answer, so I will ask about it again. Did the government reopen the public accounts and alter them for political purposes?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is committed to financial transparency, including for COVID-19 response spending. Monthly financial results are reported throughout the year, and the "Fiscal Monitor" and departments provide quarterly financing reporting. Our annual audited financial statements in the public accounts will be tabled this month within normal legislated timelines.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am still hearing some heckling, so I will ask members to please hold off.

The hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wonder if it is normal to reopen the public accounts and doctor them. The public accounts are audited financial statements of the government, yet the Liberals are delaying the tabling of these accounts. We have out-of-control Liberal government spending, yet no accounting of over \$600 billion of taxpayers' money.

Why has the government not yet tabled the public accounts? Is it because they are too busy cooking the books?

• (1150)

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring financial transparency, including for COVID-19 response spending.

Monthly financial results are reported throughout the year in the “Fiscal Monitor”, and departments provide quarterly financing reporting. We are being transparent. Our annual audited financial statements in the Public Accounts of Canada will be tabled this month within normal legislated timelines.

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[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I would like to bring attention to some words shared by a Liberal minister. He said, “We have not seen a model where we can get to net-zero emissions by 2050 without nuclear. The fact of the matter is that it produces zero emissions.” These are kind words about the nuclear industry in Canada, but there is zero concrete action from the government on the nuclear industry here in Canada.

Does the Minister of Environment agree with his colleague or is he a science denier?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The longer it takes to come to order, the more questions there will be at the end of the day on other issues, and some members may not be able to weigh in.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to see how popular I am with the opposition.

We are focused very much on ensuring that we are doing our part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions around the world at a time when we are also looking to incent the development of a clean growth economy and create good jobs and economic opportunities for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. All non-emitting sources of energy are on the table and are a part of the energy mix as we go forward. The hon. member knows that in Ontario, for example, nuclear energy is already an important part of the energy mix.

* * *

[Translation]

SENIORS

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, more and more seniors in my riding are experiencing financial difficulties because of the pandemic.

The current government has created two classes of seniors. It is time for the government to review the indexation of benefits for se-

Oral Questions

niors over 65, because \$1 a month is not enough. Furthermore, the spike in prices due to inflation is getting out of control.

Our seniors deserve better. The Minister of Seniors keeps saying that she has an ambitious agenda for seniors. When will she introduce it?

[English]

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, from the very beginning, our government's priority has been to help the most vulnerable, especially the most vulnerable seniors. That is why we have worked hard to strengthen income security and the OAS they rely on. Our plan delivers on our promise to increase OAS by 10% for seniors who are 75 and older.

We will continue to deliver for seniors, especially those who need it the most as they age and as their needs increase.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for Quebecers to be able to eat local food, we need the essential contribution of temporary foreign workers. That is why agricultural producers pay thousands of dollars every year for the right to bring them here.

This year, at least 243 workers breached their contract and left their job. Some left our country for the United States, while others were illegally recruited in Canada. Our farmers woke up the next morning to find their employees gone.

What is the government doing to combat this poaching?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are working very hard to improve the temporary foreign worker program, especially for the agricultural sector. Frankly, there needs to be more fairness in the employer-worker relationship, and we are working hard on that.

• (1155)

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, we agree on fairness, but that is not what we are talking about.

We know that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is swamped and that something is clearly dysfunctional. However, the government must ensure that foreign workers go through the proper channels when they get here. People who illegally recruit temporary foreign workers off our farms are hurting farmers and Quebec's food self-sufficiency and taking advantage of people who simply want to improve their conditions. These matters are connected, and this poaching is unacceptable.

What is the government doing to combat the poaching that is harming Quebec's food self-sufficiency?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is no question that in our agricultural sector, and across different sectors in the economy, the role that immigration plays in welcoming workers to the economy is very important for our collective well-being. I can advise the hon. member that yesterday I had the pleasure of having a conversation with my Quebec counterpart, Minister Boulet, to discuss the source of international workers who can contribute to the economy.

It is essential that as we bring more workers in, we strengthen the integrity of the system. I would be pleased to work with the hon. member to ensure that we have a system that works for all, that is fast and that helps contribute to a growing economy.

* * *

*[Translation]***HEALTH**

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, Mr. Castillo and Ms. Ruel are constituents of mine in Montmagny. They were fined \$10,000 on November 29 after returning from a short trip to the United States lasting less than 72 hours.

First, border officials turned them away and told them to submit their ArriveCAN info. Then it was not until November 30 that they were told they had to provide a test. Government communication was extremely unclear and inadequate.

Will the government be flexible when it comes to honest people who thought they were following the rules?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government will do whatever it takes to protect our borders and keep Canadians safe. Over the past year, ArriveCAN has played an important role in reducing the introduction and transmission of COVID-19, and it is mandatory.

Last week, I instructed the Canada Border Services Agency to be a bit more flexible with Canadians returning to Canada.

[English]

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, Christmas is coming and because of ArriveCAN's bureaucratic red tape, fully vaccinated Canadians who are at home for a two-week isolation have a tough choice to make ahead of the holidays: one, do not buy presents; two, turn off the heat in the middle of winter; or three, take out a payday loan. None of these options is acceptable.

Will the government do the right thing and release these fully vaccinated Canadians from quarantine?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I just said, we have always taken the steps that are necessary to protect the health and safety of Canadians throughout the pandemic, and especially now as we continue to study the new variant of concern omicron. It is essential that we continue to use tools, like ArriveCAN, that protect the health and safety of Canadians.

My hon. colleague is worried about the holiday season. This government will always have the backs of Canadians to protect them and provide them with the supports they need so they can provide the gifts they want to their loved ones as we head into the holiday season.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, in October 2020, the government stated that it does not directly or indirectly provide funds to the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, an NGO linked to the Canadian-designated terrorist organization the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. This past October, Israel declared the UAWC a terrorist organization. In November, NGO Monitor reported that the UAWC is, in fact, receiving Canadian tax dollars.

I have a very serious question. Why are the Liberals funding terrorists?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada is a steadfast ally of Israel and a friend of the Palestinian people. We are committed to the goal of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, including the creation of a Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel. Our position remains that this can only be achieved through direct negotiations between the parties.

* * *

● (1200)

*[Translation]***DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one year ago, our government launched the 50-30 challenge to encourage Canadian organizations to increase diversity and inclusion on corporate boards and in senior management.

The challenge has two goals: gender parity, meaning 50% women, on Canadian boards and senior management; and 30% representation of under-represented groups.

On this, the first anniversary of the 50-30 challenge, could the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry give us an update on what has been accomplished so far?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my excellent colleague for his excellent question.

Since this initiative was launched, nearly 1,400 Canadian organizations have stepped up and taken on the 50-30 challenge. Just this morning, we also announced more than \$28 million in funding to help organizations participating in the 50-30 challenge meet their diversity and inclusion objectives.

When members of corporate boards reflect the diversity of our communities across the country, we all benefit as Canadians.

* * *

[English]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the average Canadian small business is now carrying \$170,000 in new debt due to the pandemic. With business payroll taxes set to increase on January 1, this will be yet another hit to their ability to hang on. When I asked the government to freeze this tax hike, the associate finance minister shockingly said businesses “can afford” this.

Is the Liberal tax policy on small business that there is no problem or issue here, and that small businesses can afford this?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let us be clear. The CPP enhancement represents a major step in improving retirement outcomes for workers and reducing the uncertainty that many Canadians feel about being able to save for retirement. It addresses important challenges faced by young Canadians who are saving for retirement, such as declining workplace pension plans and prolonged periods of low interest rates. It strengthens one of the most successful social programs we have as Canadians.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals plan to limit the amount of fertilizer that farmers can use. Any plan to reduce emissions must not reduce maximum crop potential. Canadian farmers are among the most efficient users of fertilizers in the world, but instead of working with them the current government is threatening the future of our agriculture industry. The bigger the crop, the bigger the paycheque.

Does the agriculture minister know how much her cap on fertilizers will cost farm families and rural communities?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, farm families are absolutely at the very heart of all of our communities across the country. Supporting them, particularly through this very difficult time of the pandemic, has been a top priority for the government. We are going to continue to support farm families all across this country.

I thank my hon. colleague for raising this very important issue.

* * *

SENIORS

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, many seniors in my riding are frustrated. The CERB was supposed to help those who were in financial need. Instead, after collecting the CERB, many seniors received a letter to pay it back and lost their guaranteed income supplement. Now, through no fault of their own, they are strapped for cash, because the current government poorly explained how the CERB would affect their pensions.

When will the government stand up for our seniors instead of the fraudsters of the CERB? Is this because of the member for Calgary Skyview?

Oral Questions

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since the beginning of the pandemic we have told Canadians, particularly seniors, that we would be there for them as long as they needed, and that is exactly what we are doing. We have always prioritized the most vulnerable seniors by strengthening their GIS. We provided immediate and direct support to seniors this summer.

When it comes to the issue the member raised with respect to the CERB and the GIS, we are aware of it and are working to find the best solution for those affected. As always, we will be there for seniors.

* * *

• (1205)

HOUSING

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, many Canadians are struggling to find affordable housing, especially in my riding of Niagara Centre. Yesterday, the Conservatives decided to play political games while bringing their motion that did not even mention affordable housing. It proposed no constructive ideas, showing just how out of touch they are on this issue.

Can the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion please tell the House about our government's real, concrete plan to address this issue?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Niagara Centre for his advocacy on this important issue.

Since coming into office, we have invested over \$27 billion in affordable housing and have helped over a million families find the housing that they need. Despite the petty political games from the Conservative Party, we have a real housing plan that includes a new \$4-billion housing accelerator fund, a more flexible first-time homebuyers program and a rent-to-own program.

We will not rest until every Canadian has a safe and affordable place to call home.

*Routine Proceedings***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is clear the RCMP is in need of serious reform. The RCMP has often taken concerning approaches that endanger Canadians rather than keeping them safe.

In the previous Parliament, the public safety committee released a report on systemic racism in policing in Canada. The report called for an overhaul of the RCMP, including better civilian oversight and a transition away from a paramilitary force.

Will the Minister of Public Safety implement these recommendations so that the RCMP can better serve all communities?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I look forward to working with my colleague and all members in the chamber on this important issue.

Throughout the election as well as now, we were and are committed to ensuring that there is an appropriate degree of oversight, transparency, equity and representation within the RCMP. I have already had a number of important discussions with the commissioner as well as with other senior members of her executive team.

We are going to continue to work with the RCMP to ensure that we provide top, world-class law enforcement right across the country so that we can have public safety for all Canadians.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I think all members in the House ought to have respect for the rules and traditions of this place. What we just saw was the member for Niagara Centre ask a question during question period as a parliamentary secretary. Precedents in this place state that parliamentary secretaries cannot ask questions of their own government.

I would draw the Speaker's attention to Hansard, page 3,103, February 4, 2005, when the Speaker ruled, "Order, please. I am afraid this is my mistake, but of course a parliamentary secretary cannot ask a question of his own cabinet."

I expect that the Liberal government will have more respect for this place in the future.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Excuse me, but the hon. member had an opportunity to put his point forward, and I hope that side of the House will allow the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader to speak.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opposition bringing this to our attention, and we will do our best to make sure it does not happen in the future.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the interventions. The message has been heard, and I want to apologize for having recognized the hon. parliamentary secretary, given the changes that have recently occurred in having the parliamentary secretaries named.

I want to remind members that we are continuing with today's work. I would ask members, if they are exiting for whatever reason, to please do so quietly.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1210)

[English]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts.

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

* * *

INSTRUCTION TO COMMITTEE ON BILL C-2

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC) moved:

"That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Finance that it have the power to divide Bill C-2, an act to provide further support in response to COVID-19, into two bills: Bill C-2A, an act to provide further support in response to COVID-19 (business support programs); and Bill C-2B, an act to provide further support in response to COVID-19 (benefits and leave), provided that (a) Bill C-2A be made up of part 1 of Bill C-2; (b) Bill C-2B be made up of all other parts of Bill C-2; (c) the House orders Bill C-2A and Bill C-2B to be printed; (d) the Law Clerk and parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion and; (e) if Bill C-2A is not reported back to the House within two sitting days after the adoption of this motion, it shall be deemed reported without amendment."

He said: Madam Speaker, sometimes the simplest questions are the hardest to answer. The other day, I was in the finance committee, where the government was asking parliamentarians to approve another \$7-billion expenditure. It sent 10 government officials to tell us all of the wonderful things this \$7 billion would do. I had a simple question: Where does the money come from? Silence blanketed the room.

I sat quietly and patiently, looking up at the Zoom screen, to find out if a reassuring voice would answer an obvious and simple question. We were told the majority of the 10 officials were from the finance department. If any department were able to tell us where the money comes from, one would expect it would be finance, but silence continued to triumph. The awkwardness thickened to the point that it could be cut with a knife.

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Finally, the chair broke in and encouraged me to ask another question that might be easier for these 10 government officials to answer. I then asked the chair if he could tell us where the money comes from. He was likewise perplexed. He sat baffled in front of the committee, unaware of what to do. This is the chair of Canada's parliamentary finance committee, here in a G7 country.

Of course, there are really only four places that money that passes through the House comes from: one, it can be taxed; two, it can be borrowed; three, it can be printed; or four, God forbid, it can be cut from something else and reallocated. However, none of those answers were forthcoming.

Instead, a fifth novel explanation of the providence of this money came forward, finally, about three minutes into the long committee silence. One official said that the money is within the government's broader macroeconomic framework and that he could not speak to it. If \$7 billion can appear magically from something called a "government's broader macroeconomic framework", then everyone should have a broader macroeconomic framework.

Imagine what a single mother could buy at the local grocery store if, instead of having to rely on decreasingly valuable Canadian dollars to buy food for her kids, she could carry around with her a broader macroeconomic framework. Imagine if the worker who cannot afford to gas up his car could just open up his wallet and, instead of pulling out increasingly worthless Canadian dollars, he could pull out a card inscribed with "broader macroeconomic framework". Then he might even be able to fill up his tank with gas. Maybe that 28-year-old who lives in his parents' basement despite having a good job, because house price inflation has made it impossible for him to buy, could, instead of using inferior Canadian currency to bid on a house, walk up to the realtor and say that he has decided to pay not with cash, not even to pay with debt, but with a broader macroeconomic framework card.

I hope that at the end of my remarks, a minister and the government will announce, just in time for Christmas gift purchases, that they will mail out a broader macroeconomic framework to every Canadian household, so parents could, in collaboration with Santa Claus, make sure there are gifts under the tree for every child in these impossibly difficult times.

If we are going to ask the simple question of where the money comes from, why do we not ask the yet simpler question of what money is, because sometimes it is important to go back to first principles in order to make sense of this crazy world of ours? Money, of course, is merely a technology by which we transport value over time and space. Without it, our spaces would have to consume in the present everything that it produces.

• (1215)

Most species do. They have to eat what they kill right away, lest it be stolen or spoil. Squirrels can squirrel away a bit, which is a good habit the government should learn from, but most species have to use it or lose it.

We developed a technology to allow two people exchanging things to go ahead with their exchange. Even if each did not have the ability to supply the other with what they wanted, they could

simply use this technology, called money, to transport the value between each other across time and different geographies.

Over time, money has taken many forms. In one island in the South Pacific it was a ledger carved on scarce limestone. In some places it was beads or seashells. In prisons, they use cigarettes. When I was a kid in school, it was candy. Throughout history it became metal, some precious, some brute. We had gold, silver and copper. Many different means of translating value across space and time have been used.

Politicians have found it a nuisance to pay their bills and use money with integrity. Back in 1215, poor old King John was forced by the barons and the commoners to sign this nuisance of a document called the Magna Carta, the great charter. In that document was inscribed the principle that the crown could not tax what the people had not approved. That principle is still in place here in this Parliament today. The government cannot spend what we do not vote on, 800 years later.

When we look around and see the beautiful green here, we know where it comes from. It was the colour of the fields in which King John was made low. That green should remind everyone that the people in the fields doing the work are the ones who produce the money we spend around here. That might have been a better answer in the committee than "the government's broader macroeconomic framework", but I digress. After King John was prevented from taxing what people had not approved and was forced to go back to the commoners to get their permission to take their money, he and his successors became increasingly creative in sourcing the cash they acquired.

Years later, King Henry VIII, who is more famous for clipping off the heads of his subjects, decided that he could get his hands on money by clipping coins. He and his regime would clip off the edge of a coin. That way, they could melt those edges down and make more coins. Back then, it was hard to make coins because it was the British pound, which was a pound of silver. By clipping off a piece, they could melt it down and create more coins and Henry could inflate the value of currency in his hands, thereby deflating the value of the wages that his peasant class earned.

He got even more creative later on, which is how he got his famous nickname. He would have his minters melt down the British pound and re-mint it with just a tiny coating of silver around the outside of a copper coin. People thought they were getting a silver coin. Meanwhile, on the inside, they actually got copper.

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The problem was this: Being the egomaniac he was, he did not want a profile shot, so he had his face placed facing outward on the coin, so it stared everyone in the eye when they looked at it. Because his nose protruded out from the coin, it would rub against the inside of people's pockets and the silver would scrape off the tip of his nose. Then they had a silver coin with a red nose, which is how he got the nickname "old coppernose". Every time someone saw that red copper nose, they knew the king had stolen the real value of their money.

Throughout time, other politicians found other creative ways. Dionysius, who was a Greek dictator in Syracuse, actually took all the one drachma coins and restamped them to give them a value of two drachmas, so all of a sudden he had twice as much money.

• (1220)

I hesitate to tell that story in the House because I worry the Prime Minister might think he could do the same. If we run out of money, we can always get more and turn loonies into toonies, and toonies to fours. That might be the next creative idea by which government could get its hands on money.

Throughout the 20th century, we saw this same tactic of cash creation. The most famous example was in the early 1920s in Germany. It created so many new units of account that inflation ran out of control. People needed to have a wheelbarrow full of cash in order to buy a loaf of bread. If people went to the bar to try and drink away their inflationary blues, they ordered all their beer at the beginning of the night because, as the minutes went on, beer became more expensive.

We, in this part of the world, have not been immune to this inflationary disease ourselves. During the post-war era, we inherited monstrous debts from fighting the fascists, but governments had hard money from the end of the war until the early 70s. We basically operated on an American-led standard. If someone had a U.S. greenback, they could exchange it at a rate of \$35 per ounce of gold.

In that period, we had an enormous amount of prosperity. The Americans paid off their war debts here in Canada with solid currency. We wrestled the inflationary beast to the ground in the post-war era. We took our record debts, which we inherited from the war, and we paid them off. We increased the size of the Canadian economy by 300%. By 1973, we had basically become a debt-free country.

However, what happened in the 1970s? President Nixon wanted to spend on warfare and welfare. Of course, the Americans were bogged down in Vietnam, which was a costly enterprise, and President Nixon wanted to keep his popularity at home, so he decided to spend, spend, spend.

In the decade that followed 1971, not only did they unleash the American dollar from any particular standard, but they also increased the number of U.S. dollars in circulation by 150%, while output only grew by about 39%. In other words, the amount of money grew about four times faster than the amount of underlying output that the money represented.

Here in Canada, we had Pierre Elliott Trudeau. He looked down at all the inflation that the U.S. government was creating. It had reached double-digit inflation down there. It was a total inflationary crisis. The American dollar was devalued on an international basis and was incapable of buying affordable petroleum on the world market. They like to blame OPEC, but they took no responsibility for the fact that the unit with which they were buying oil on the international markets was itself devalued.

Trudeau looked at all the misery in the United States. He looked at how people were lined up at gas stations waiting for an hour and a half to gas up their cars. He saw the poverty that was overtaking inner-city streets. He saw the expanding wealth gap in the United States of America. What did Pierre Elliott Trudeau say to all that? He said, "Let us have some of that up here."

Then he started printing money here in Canada and massively increased the money supply within Canada. I have the data right here. Between 1971 and 1981, the money supply in Canada grew by over 200%, while GDP only grew in real terms by about 47%. We can imagine that money is growing in supply at more than four times the rate the economy is growing, so we have more dollars chasing fewer goods. What does that get us?

Some hon. members: Inflation.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, that is right. We all learned that in grade school, but apparently some lessons need to be learned and relearned here in this House of Commons. What happened was by the early 1980s, inflation had risen to 12% in Canada. The government claimed that if it kept printing money, this would stimulate the economy and create jobs.

• (1225)

What it delivered was 12% unemployment and 12% inflation. It is worth spending a minute on this. Why is it that high inflation actually kills jobs, contrary to what the so-called experts always tell us? The answer is that prices are information; prices are some of the most powerful and condensed forms of information ever known to humankind.

The great economist Milton Friedman explained how complicated it is to make a pencil. He basically said that the lead comes from a lead mine in Asia; the rubber comes from a rubber tree in another part of the world; the timber might come from a forest in the western United States, and the paint might come from a titanium mine somewhere in Africa. All these people are working together to make a pencil. None of them actually know they are making a pencil, but they agree to make the ingredients of the pencil because they are zapped with a laser beam called "the price signal". The price is high enough to incentivize them to make the investments and do the work to supply the goods.

The consumer knows what it costs to make that pencil, not because they called all the mines and all the forests and asked them all to feed in the price, and pulled out their calculator and figured out what it should cost to make a pencil. No, the consumer knows because when they walked into the store there was a price, and that price basically zapped to them the cost of making the pencil; the hundreds of people who unknowingly conspired to make it communicated that information to the buyer just like that. Then the consumer calculated in their mind that the pencil was worth more than the money they had to spend to get it. Therefore, all of those laser beams led to that wonderful little transaction that brought the consumer home a pencil.

Here is the problem with inflation: It messes with all those information signals.

Just last week, I was in New Brunswick and I was speaking to a gentleman who was in a recycling business. He signs five-year agreements to do the recycling work for other companies. Here is the problem: When he does not know what the price is going to be over the next five years, he does not know what he should charge. He locked in contracts that expected inflation to be the normal 2%. Now, we have 5% inflation and it is potentially rising. The difference is that over a five-year period, instead of having 10% total inflation it will be closer to 25% or, with compound interest, 30%. Now, he is getting actually 20% less in his fifth year than he thought he was going to get.

Therefore, all these information signals that allow people to exchange work for wages, product for payment and investment for interest are totally scrambled by inflation. The technology that is supposed to allow us to transport value through space and time is scrambled. It is like scrambling the hard drive on a computer. All these signals mess with the ability of humans to exchange value with one another, and when that system breaks down, everything breaks down. That is why inflation has almost always led to social disorder.

It also allows those with the greatest means to profit the most, because they can move their money into things that are inflation-protected, like land, buildings, private businesses, stocks, bonds and countless other assets that inflate in price. Meanwhile, the people who actually live off their wages see a real pay cut. Those people who are wealthy enough not only profit by watching their assets inflate in value, but the real value of the debts that they take on shrinks in inflation-adjusted terms. Therefore, those who have access to the financial system get vastly richer as their debts shrink in real value and their assets inflate; and those who do the work, the people in the fields for whom we painted these floors green, watch the fruits of their labours wither away by this inflation.

Therefore, I rise today to call for a restoration of the real integrity of our money, to bring back the meaning of money, which is to transport value over space and time, to restore free markets among free people and to put the commoner ahead of the Crown.

• (1230)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am not surprised, but I am a little disappointed. The Conservative opposition should have learned something over the last

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number of months, just by making some very basic observations, such as that COVID-19 is still an issue. There is still a need for the Canadian government to provide supports.

Why does the Conservative Party continue to look at ways to frustrate and cause a slowdown in the passing of legislation that would enable businesses and Canadians to continue to receive the support they need?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, it is because the member forgets the other side of the equation, which goes back to the very first question I asked at the outset: Where does the money come from? He has another \$7 billion of expenditures that he wants to impose on Canadians.

I very helpfully explained to him how a pencil is made. I thought he would take out his pencil to scribble some notes so that he could finally explain on behalf of his government where the \$7 billion will come from, but apparently I gave him too much credit.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Carleton, and I commend him on his eloquent speech. It is always interesting to hear him talk about history.

I want to tell him about a catastrophic historical event called the 1840 Act of Union. The Act of Union was pure depredation. It united Upper Canada and Lower Canada. At the time, Upper Canada had a debt of 1,200,000 pounds and could not even pay the interest on it anymore, whereas Lower Canada had a debt of 95,000 pounds. The two were united, and Lower Canada paid Upper Canada's debt.

Does my colleague agree that the federal government should now repay that debt to Quebec with interest?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the member is forgetting that debts repaid by Canadians, whether they are from Quebec, Alberta or anywhere else in the country, are not paid by a group or a government. Those debts are paid by working people.

We need to stop thinking about identity groups and starting thinking about individual working citizens. Every person is responsible for themselves, and every person must have more economic freedom. If people had had more economic freedom in those days, the government would not have been able to impose its debt on them.

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• (1235)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, throughout COVID-19 we have provided supports to business. As New Democrats we have talked about the concerns about big corporations paying dividends to shareholders and CEOs taking bonuses off the backs of everyday Canadians when they apply for benefits.

One thing that is missing as they divide this bill is that I do not hear Conservatives talking about the GIS clawback. We see the government not going after the big corporations, but using clawbacks it is going after seniors, families and single parents who have the Canada child tax benefits, the most desperate Canadians. I think about women over 65. One-third of single women over 65 are living in poverty.

My question to the member is this. Does he not agree that the government needs to change course? Why have the Conservatives not put this into the amendment splitting this bill, helping especially to support the most vulnerable, whom the government is targeting?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I find it very interesting that the NDP does not seem to care about the effect on seniors of government-created inflation. Of course, inflation hurts savers the most.

Seniors, because of this incredibly high inflation, get rates of return on their savings that are inferior to the rise in the cost of living, which means that every single year they are becoming poorer. Meanwhile, the cash creation that the government has done floods financial markets. Just yesterday, the finance minister said that housing prices are up and food prices are more expensive, but not to worry as the stock market is rising. Of course it is rising. Having had \$400 billion pumped into it, it has gone up.

The big corporations and their CEOs can use all that money for share buybacks, dividends and capital appreciation. Meanwhile, the inflated cost of living leaves our seniors poorer and poorer every single year.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague on the finance committee, who gives a great contribution and gave us an excellent indication today about what exactly is happening to our money supply here in Canada.

We were at the finance committee yesterday and one of the most senior members of the Department of Finance came to us. The member asked that senior member of the Department of Finance what Canada's debt is. The answer that came back to the member for Carleton was that they did not know. The member from finance was asked the same question later in the meeting, and the answer was that he did not know.

When are we going to get some finance officials who actually understand the metrics that are driving the economy of this country?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the question I asked was, "How much debt do Canadians owe, publicly and privately?", and the finance minister said she could not say. This is the person responsible for the finances of the nation, so I asked the top bureau-

crat she had on the panel with her. He said he did not know either, so I went to Statistics Canada, which just by chance updated that number today. Therefore, I announce, on the floor of the House of Commons, that Canadians owe nine trillion dollars. That is "trillion" with a "t". Our debt level is now 371% of our GDP, \$3.71 of debt for every dollar of output. That is nearly double the historic level, and it is a massive risk that could lead to detonation when interest rates return to normal.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, given that the hon. member for Carleton has sprung a motion on us today, this is probably my last chance to speak before holidays, so I wish all in the House a wonderful holiday.

The hon. member will be surprised, I think, that I quite agree with him that we do not seem to have finance officials who know where the money comes from or where it is going. I specifically would ask for the support of the Conservative Party in pursuing the question of what a fossil fuel subsidy is. This question needs to be asked of Finance Canada, and speaking of sharp pencils when the member for Carleton raised the problem of where we go to make a pencil, they did not get their pencils out.

Actually, for the first time in the history of the country, when the Auditor General asked Finance Canada for its paperwork on what a fossil fuel subsidy is, since the government has committed to ending them, finance officials refused to answer the Auditor General. It is unprecedented, and I ask the hon. member for Carleton where we are going to find people who will answer questions. Canadians demand to have those answers in front of us.

• (1240)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, one example of a fossil fuel subsidy would be the taxpayer-funded plane ticket that the member receives to fly here on a petroleum-burning airplane in order to sit in the House of Commons, but speaking of corporate subsidies, she raises a good point in general. I believe we should let businesses keep more of what they actually earn instead of providing them with government handouts. That way, we would go to a free-market economy, instead of state capitalism.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, I am not an economist, but I do have a basic understanding on how an economy works. I have always found it somewhat interesting when my colleague from Carleton goes into a diatribe about all the theories out there. He does tend to have that heavy right slant.

When I go back to my days at university, I think of the economy when theorists would have the whole dog-eat-dog world type of thing. I guess I am closer to the Keynesian type of theorist in recognizing that there is time for a government to come forward and take tangible actions to support our communities.

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The member made reference to the fact that I should take notes. I did take a couple of notes as the member was speaking, because I wanted to make reference to a few of the thoughts he was espousing. He talks about the money. I will elaborate on that point, maybe not from an ivory tower perspective, but rather from the perspective of how I believe my constituents would like to hear it, and that is as plain as possible, my basic understanding of it.

He talked about where the money came from. I hear those types of things from members opposite, and no one uses them more than the member for Carleton. It is important for the people, who might be following this debate, to understand that the member is the finance critic for the Conservative Party, meaning the Conservative Party takes its lead from its leader sometimes on finance issues and at other times from the member for Carleton.

I do not say that to scare people. I say it because people should recognize why the member for Carleton says things. There was a time when the Conservative Party did not exist. There used to be a Progressive Conservative Party and the Reform Party. The member for Carleton would fit in quite well with the Reformers.

It is interesting to see the contrast when the leader is trying to say the Conservatives are moderates or somewhat moderates. After all, that is why the Conservatives flip-flopped on the carbon tax issue, and that upset a lot of the old Reform members. That is why members of the Conservative Party, members of the caucus in particular, have a certain appreciation and respect for the member for Carleton, because his job is to keep that party to the right. He does a pretty darned good job of doing keeping them on the extreme right. Some of them applaud and I do not blame them for that, if that is their basic principle.

The member for Carleton talks about government expenditures and how wasteful they are. I would argue that government expenditure is a good thing. That how we support real people and businesses. That is why governments brought in programs during a very difficult time, not just in Canada but around the world. It was a global pandemic. This government recognized that we did not need to take the approach to economics that the member for Carleton would take. We needed to think about government spending that would support Canadians, small businesses, to have the backs of Canadians. That has been a first priority of the Prime Minister, the cabinet and Liberal members of Parliament from day one.

● (1245)

That was one of the reasons we went into an election, and were given a renewed, stronger mandate. The plan that we provided to the House of Commons is, in fact, supported by a vast majority of Canadians. Only a good portion of the Reform element of the Conservative Party calls into serious question why the government has made these expenditures. We should think of the consequences had we not provided the support, had we not listened to what Canadians wanted, had we not done the consultation that was so critical or had we not worked with the different levels of government, the non-profit organizations and many stakeholders, including health care workers and so many others. What would have been the alternative?

What would have happened if we had focused our attention on the Conservative Party's ideas, in particular the finance critic's

ideas? We would not have had programs like the CERB, which provided millions of Canadians financial support during the pandemic, financial support that put dollars in their pockets so they could pay their bills, whether it was their mortgage, rent, utility bills or to put the food on their tables.

The Conservatives, led by the member for Carleton, repeatedly talk about the deficit, that right-wing element of the Conservative Party. Yes, the CERB program did cost a considerable amount of money, but had we not invested in that program, imagine the suicides, the family breakups, the costs resulting from mental health and the impact it would have had on our economy. Those are the reasons the Prime Minister acted quickly in making the statement that we would have the backs of Canadians and we would be there for them.

Let us think of the business supports we provided over the last 18 months. In particular, let us focus on our arts community and small businesses. The wage subsidy program allowed employers the opportunity to keep employees working. It ensured that many thousands of jobs would still be there when we recovered. We have been proven to be correct with that program.

We can think of the rent subsidy program. How many small businesses would not be here today had the government not provided support in the form of rent subsidy. The bills continue to come in, the suppliers still want to be paid and landlords still want to be paid. That program provided tangible support for workers and sick pay. These things made a difference and helped Canadians.

When we went to the polls back in September, Canadians agreed with the Liberal plan. That is why we are on the government benches. They agreed with the progressive policies that we had put in place. That is why a majority of Canadians supported parties that understood how important it was for government to continue to play a role in supporting people, whether they were seniors, people with disabilities, other vulnerable Canadians, Canadians who were losing jobs or Canadians trying to keep their businesses afloat. These are the types of things that really matter, and progressive parties in the House did well as a result.

● (1250)

What is Bill C-2? It is an extension of the programs I just finished talking about in one form or another.

Around this time last year, I would have been standing in this place, saying that the Conservative Party was playing a destructive role in the chamber. I am not surprised that the member for Carleton and the Conservative Party has decided to bring forward this motion, which proposes to divide the Bill C-2. The bill went to committee on December 2.

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However, by literally dividing the bill into two bills, this is another way the Conservatives feel they can slow down legislation, possibly preventing it from being passed. What is next if this motion passes? Are they going to suggest that we need to strike up more committees to meet on these issues? Is this yet another indication from the official opposition that it wants to frustrate the legislation? Do the Conservatives not realize the cost of this legislation not passing?

Back on October 21, the Prime Minister indicated that the government had targeted business support programs, that it wanted the Canada recovery hiring program; create the tourism and hospitality recovery program and hardest-hit business recovery program; and establish the Canada worker lockdown benefit. The Prime Minister wanted to see the House of Commons act on this quickly. That is why it was no coincidence that when we were back in the House, literally, Bill C-2 was the very first piece of legislation. A good way for the government to express its priority is by the first piece of legislation it presents.

When we first were elected in 2015, the first legislation created the framework for the tax break for Canada's middle class. It was also the legislation that established the need for an additional tax on the wealthiest 1% in our society. Interestingly enough, the Conservatives voted against that legislation. At the time, that was our priority; it was our piece of legislation.

We can look at what is happening around our country today. If we go back to the press conference the Prime Minister held on October 21, what will we find? If members do want to believe me, they should consult their constituents. Every region of the country is concerned about COVID-19. Everyone in the country wants to see a higher sense of co-operation taking place on the floor of the House of Commons. How is dividing such a critical piece of legislation, which, in essence, encapsulates in good part what is on the minds of Canadians, going to help in getting it passed through the House?

The bill went to committee back on December 2, and the committee already has had six meetings, and I think today is its seventh meeting. What is the real purpose of this Conservative Party motion today? We were supposed to be debating the throne speech, which deals with another aspect. It is the plan on how we continue to move forward.

• (1255)

The content of the throne speech, which we are not debating now because of this silly motion, highlighted the fact that we are still dealing with COVID-19 and that we still need to do what we can to minimize its negative impacts. Canadians realize it and have stepped up to the plate. I believe 86% of Canadians over the age of 12 are now fully vaccinated.

We recognize the strong leadership role that each of us has to play, but let us also recognize the important role that our communities have played. An 86% fully vaccinated community is a healthy community. We can still do better. We can still get more people fully vaccinated, but until we have achieved that optimum level we need to continue to be there in very real ways.

Some of our communities could be significantly hit into the future because of coronavirus mutations. That is one of the reasons why there is an important lockdown measure. We want Canadians to know that in the House of Commons, at least among the New Democrats, Bloc, Greens and Liberals, people understand that we need to have progressive measures in place to support real people and ensure that our communities are healthy into the future.

By investing and by supporting communities, we will all benefit collectively in the long run. Had the government of the day followed the Conservative Party, in particular the Conservative finance critic who is worshipped by many within the Conservative caucus, the programs that we have today would be in question. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that we would not have had the types of progressive programs that we have today.

As a result of those programs, we are in a far better position to recover, and we see that in the numbers. We actually have more people back and employed than we had pre-pandemic: far more on a per capita basis than the United States and other countries. The reason for this is because the government supported Canadians and businesses. Businesses were able to survive and people were able to overcome the biggest issue of the pandemic, specifically vaccination. Canada has led the world because there has been a team Canada, except for the Conservative Party, here on the Hill that has consistently talked about the importance of being fully vaccinated. As much as possible we have provided programs that would make a difference and would provide the disposable income that would save jobs and save businesses.

I would ask the Conservative Party to rethink its motion, and maybe put the member for Carleton's economic theories on hold for a while. Let us see if we can pass this legislation as it is out of committee.

• (1300)

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a really easy question. Earlier in the member's intervention he mentioned he went to university and he thought a lot about economics. I am sure the Hansard will reflect that statement.

With regard to monetary policy, would the member agree that monetary policy is very important for the recovery of our country, or would he agree with the Prime Minister that monetary policy is not worth the conversation?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I can appreciate some very basic things within economics, such as money supply. However, what we need to recognize is that if the government had not borrowed much of the money that was borrowed, we would have had Canadians borrowing more money to pay bills and buy groceries. There would have been far more bankruptcies. The people who would have benefited the most would have likely been institutions such as banks. What impact would that have had on things such as interest rates?

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I studied the economy, but I am not an economist. Having been a parliamentarian for 30 years and having listened to many budgets, I have a basic understanding of how an economy works. The government needed to get involved and we did that. Over my 30 years, I have seen even Progressive Conservative governments recognize that there are times when there is a need for the government to get involved.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I pretty much agree with my colleague from Winnipeg North. That does not happen very often, so I thought I would point it out.

My colleague raised an important question when he asked why the Conservatives want to split the bill in two and what the next steps would be. I would like him to hypothesize. Where are the Conservatives going with this request and why?

We want to pass this bill quickly. What do the Conservatives have up their sleeves?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I wish I could get another 20 minutes to properly answer that question. This is a tactical procedure that I believe the Conservative Party is using to stir the pot, cause some frustration and maybe try to embarrass the government. They are not only doing this to the government, but also to other opposition parties, I would suggest. If we recognize that the vast majority of Canadians support these progressive measures, we will see the value inside this legislation.

I am not trying to say the government is perfect. There are all sorts of ways opposition members can critique the government. I do not want to take anything away from that. The measure that we are seeing with this particular motion is more to try to stir the pot and cause frustration. Hopefully, members on all sides of the House will see the game that is being played here. We got a mandate as a minority. Let us see if we can work together on some of these projects. It does not mean that they cannot criticize government.

• (1305)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think it is important to keep the bill together because there are a number of different issues that have to be addressed. There is the issue of workers who are connected to an employer. There is also the issue of workers who are not going to be able to access money through the wage subsidy, either because their employer does not choose to exercise that mechanism or because they are self-employed.

I do not think it helps the debate to divide and conquer: to split off one piece and move ahead with it and not talk about the other. To pretend that this bill is going to do a lot of good for people is also a bit of a farce. One example is that the Canada worker lockdown benefit actually does not apply to any region in the country so far, even though the government talks about how great it is that it is retroactive.

Can the member name a region of the country where, between October 23 and now, the Canada worker lockdown benefit would apply?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as opposed to attempting to answer something I do not necessarily know offhand, I would like to point out that the member for Elmwood—Transcona is doing the responsible thing as a member of the opposition: He is recognizing the value of the legislation even though he is calling in to question a number of its aspects. I respect that. I understand the New Democrats have concerns with respect to the legislation. I suspect if we were to go to the committee meetings, we would hear a number of concerns. I would probably disagree with a number of them, but they will no doubt raise them and continue to raise them inside the House. I respect that. What I disagree with is using a tactic of mere political and partisan gamesmanship. It is not in the best interests of legislation of this nature.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I share the outrage of my colleague from Winnipeg North. From my perspective, we have the Christmas season coming and more people are going to be inside together in groups. We also have the omicron variant, and case numbers are climbing in other parts of the world. I think these supports are critical for Canadian workers and the businesses that have been hardest hit.

Could my colleague explain to us what he thinks the impacts of delaying this important piece of legislation would be on those businesses and workers?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is a good question. I think members need to reflect and show empathy as opposed to sympathy. Imagine if we had one of the businesses or were an individual waiting in need for this legislation. Anything that causes an unnecessary delay would cause some anxiety.

We should be promoting and talking about buying local. It may have even been a Conservative member who started this, but we have been talking about it for quite a while within our caucus. Now is a great time to support some of our local businesses. There is a wonderful plant store in Winnipeg North. There is also the Jeepney Restaurant and the Water Plant. There are so many local businesses in our communities, and Christmastime might be a nice time for us to promote our local small businesses.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am quite stunned by the hypocrisy of the members opposite. They talk about how important it is to get this bill passed immediately, after playing political games by proroguing Parliament and then calling an early election. If they had not called an early election, we would have been here in mid-September and could have passed this bill then. However, they interrupted Parliament with an election and then waited a full two months before recalling it.

If the bill is so important, as the Liberals claim, why did they not recall Parliament immediately after the election? It took the United Kingdom six days to bring back its Parliament. It took the Liberal government two months. Why did it take so long?

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• (1310)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, back in October, the Prime Minister talked about why we needed to continue to support our communities. Supporting communities means healthier communities.

The Prime Minister talked about Bill C-2 back in October. In essence, it is the first real bill. We also have Bill C-1, although I do not know exactly what its contents are offhand. However, in my books, Bill C-2 is the most important bill. That is why it was listed as the first priority coming in, and opposition members have known about it for many weeks, going on months now.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to say right away that I will be sharing my time with my wonderful, passionate and fascinating colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé.

I will start by being a good sport because I always like to find the good in any motion, bill or supply day topic that is presented. I will start by saying what I like about it. However, unfortunately, the thing I liked the most today was the historical content in the member for Carleton's speech. Just between us, if one day he decides to create a podcast with stories or interesting facts from history, then I will be the first to listen to it while driving home on the 417. He always has very interesting things to say. I will give him that.

I am, however, going to put an end to the suspense here. My Conservative colleagues might be disappointed, but the Bloc Québécois does not intend to support the motion. We are sorry about that. I will explain why, even though I think they may already have some idea. We do not intend to support the request to split this bill because we think that the two parts of the bill that the Conservatives want to split go together.

It is as though we are being told that on the one hand, there is a pandemic affecting businesses, and on the other hand, there may be something that could possibly affect individual workers, so maybe one day, we could address this issue differently. In reality, it is still the same pandemic that is affecting both workers and businesses. Since the bill covers two aspects of the same problem stemming from a single pandemic, I do not understand the motivation for splitting it as proposed.

As my colleague from Winnipeg North mentioned, people are waiting. I feel like coming back to that, although the Conservatives mentioned it too. We lost time because of an unnecessary election. In the meantime, people have suffered and still need support.

I do not see the point of taking a bill that has already passed at second reading and been studied in committee, and bringing it back to split it and start the process over again. In the meantime, there are businesses that will suffer from the delay in the process. I think this part was understood and that is the one the Conservatives want to hold onto, but there are likely even more ordinary folks who could suffer as a result as well.

We lost too much time with the unnecessary election to make people wait and suffer even more, when they have already gone through enough, in our opinion.

As we said during the election campaign, the initial benefits that were created were not perfect. They quite likely contributed to the labour shortage we experienced, although they were not the only factor. I am not saying that Bill C-2 is perfect and that is why we do not want to split it, but I do think that if the bill goes to committee, it can be discussed and improved. A review of the benefits was warranted, and it still is, which is why it is important for the committee to study not only the wage subsidy and rent subsidy, but also the so-called individual benefits.

We are suggesting that there are still some workers who could be added to the list of benefit recipients. The Bloc Québécois has spoken about this a lot, but I am mentioning it again because it is important. I am thinking, in particular, about workers in the arts and culture sectors. It has been two years since musicians and actors were able to take the stage at any big shows, festivals or events. If we do not support these people, they could end up leaving the sector, taking their talents with them. Our arts and culture sector could lose its stars, its talent, its creative geniuses if they cannot earn a living. At some point, they will decide that half a loaf is better than none. If they have no way to support themselves, they could end up moving on to something else, and we would lose that talent.

The question we should be asking ourselves is: Are we prepared to pay the price of losing these creators?

• (1315)

Technicians, stage riggers, and people who run cables for sound systems told me that more and more of them have been leaving the field to go work in the mines, where the skill set and schedules are similar. These are not 9-to-5 jobs. These are two-week stints, like being on a concert tour. Mine work pays well, so if we do not support these people, they may decide to stay there. If we lose access to their expertise, we will be very sorry once the economy is back up and running again.

That is what is on my mind when I think about how it would be good to let the Standing Committee on Finance to keep talking about individual benefits by not splitting Bill C-2.

It would also be good to keep working on things that affect businesses. This hare-brained Conservative motion could end up delaying work on the Canada emergency wage subsidy and support for businesses that need it.

The Bloc Québécois would like to share some thoughts with the committee regarding which areas could also benefit from government support through regulation. We are just waiting for the minister to confirm that she will be able to open up areas through regulation.

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Two sectors in particular come to mind, one of which is extremely important in Quebec, namely the aerospace and aeronautics sector. This sector is one of the hardest hit by the current crisis, given that there is less travel and aircraft construction. We must support those businesses.

On top of that, so many manufacturers have been indirectly affected by the pandemic. For instance, there is a supply shortage of microprocessors, which has caused many manufacturers of trucks, armoured vans and various automotive products to have to slow down their production lines, not because of a labour shortage, but because of a parts shortage. This is a side effect of the pandemic, and these people also need help.

Ultimately, all I am seeing today is an attempt to slow down the process and delay the passage of Bill C-2 in its entirety or in part. The Conservatives are forgetting that, behind all of this, there are people who need our support, and that is the unfortunate part. I am not saying that we have to fix the mess made by the government, which delayed things with the election. However, we do need to realize that if we create even further delays, people are going to suffer. If we think about it, we are kind of doing what we accused the government of doing.

It is ironic to hear the Conservatives say that the government delayed recalling the House and that the election was pointless when they are doing the same thing by delaying the passage of bills. They are saying two different things, and I do not particularly like it. All that is to say that I do not see any merit in taking a bill that has been passed in principle, that can be improved, that is being improved at committee, and then splitting it, slowing down the process and returning to the House to do the same work over again. That is not helpful. There is already enough duplication of work with two levels of government, the federal government on the one hand and Quebec and the provinces on the other hand. We do not support making more work.

As long as there is a pandemic, it will affect both businesses and individuals. Bill C-2 addresses both because there is only one pandemic, and therefore there is just one problem with multiple consequences. We must not attempt to separate out the consequences and deal with them individually. Instead we must take a holistic approach to the problem because it is the result of the same situation, and that is the pandemic.

• (1320)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (deputy House leader of the government, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her excellent speech. I completely agree with her. Industries like the cultural industry are being affected.

My colleague brought up some very important points, and I look forward to talking about them at the Standing Committee on Finance. I completely agree with her about the importance of not starting the process over again. Our businesses need help.

Are our Bloc Québécois friends prepared to do that good work with us?

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I let the cat out of the bag at the beginning of my speech, when I said that we did not

intend to support the Conservatives in their attempt to split Bill C-2 into two parts.

Also, generally speaking, when we think about bills and how we are going to vote, we think about who the bill is intended for and who it focuses on.

We therefore have no intention of throwing a wrench into the works.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the major problems with Bill C-2 is the lack of support for self-employed workers in the tourism and arts and culture industries. They do not have access to any financial support.

One way to give them this kind of support would be to get the Liberals to amend the bill so that workers in the arts, culture, tourism and hospitality industries have access to the benefits given to workers in case of a lockdown, whether a lockdown has been ordered or not.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, that is kind of what we are proposing.

Lockdown orders are not necessarily the reason arts and culture workers do not have work. Even without lockdown, venues are still not operating at full capacity. Lockdown is not necessarily a criterion, because we are more interested in the types of workers affected.

I think we can all agree on this, because it is part of our basic demands.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my eloquent colleague from Saint-Jean on her speech.

I want to share something with the House. Something very rare is happening. All Canadian premiers agree on something: increased health transfers.

One year ago today, on December 10, 2020, the Prime Minister met with the Premier of Quebec and all the provincial premiers to tell them he would be increasing health transfers. In the year since, nothing has happened.

Can my colleague tell us what is the solution that will enable us to stop waiting for Ottawa to take action and claim that power and that money for ourselves, for our workers, so we can provide health care?

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, there are so many great shots I could take here, that I do not even know where to start.

The best solution is definitely independence. There is also no doubt that health transfers are needed. Quebec could have done so much more if it had received its fair share.

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If we just look at the federal government's areas of jurisdiction, the bill clearly shows that some important work should have been done a long time ago, namely, EI reforms. If that had been done properly at the time, with an eye to the future, we probably would not have had to deal with so many specific, piecemeal programs here and there. We would have already had a better social safety net in place for workers. This proves why it was a mistake to not do it sooner.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, my esteemed colleague, who is so brilliant, not to mention extremely kind, always sets the bar high, so I am going to seem a little less clever than I usually am.

What are we doing here at 1:30 p.m. on a Friday afternoon? We have work to do, but we are considering a motion that came out of left field and seeks to split a bill in two, meaning that it will take longer to pass. What is more, this motion comes from a political party that spends at least half of its time denouncing the government opposite for being too slow.

I am trying to understand, but I must be missing something. What is the strategy here? We are accustomed to seeing attempts to buy time, score political points and annoy the government, but what is the objective here? I would like my Conservative friends to at least tell me that much, because I do not understand what is going on. Is the goal to slow down the work so they can then accuse the government of dragging its feet? Sometimes I wonder.

People are waiting for that support. Well-meaning people here who were elected by the public want to do good work on bills and make proposals in committee. However, here we are, in the process of losing an afternoon to entertain the idea of splitting this bill in two, holding two separate votes, doubling the amount of time to do the parliamentary work and doubling how long it will take to get the support to those who need it.

Sometimes it is hard not to throw a fit. I am going to have to stay calm. This is not the first time that has happened to me in the House.

My colleague from Saint-Jean did a good job describing our party's perspective, so I will focus on common sense and address my Conservative colleagues. People at home are watching them.

One week they see the Conservatives making grandiose speeches about the urgent need to help our businesses, but the next week they see them actively trying to slow down the passage of a bill.

I am not saying that this bill is perfect, and I am certainly not saying that this government is perfect. However, the bill before us is a good starting point, and we need to pass it quickly.

Earlier, my colleague said that we are not experiencing two different pandemics. We are all going through the same crisis at the same time. Can we take our work seriously for the common good and quickly pass a bill that will help everyone in the meantime?

If we split this bill in two, who are we going to help first and which part are we going to vote on first? What are the Conservatives trying to accomplish? Are they trying to deny help to businesses or do they want to deny help to individuals? Would either option be justified?

I believe that the Conservatives are not against either one. When they put their questions to me, they can tell me if I am mistaken. I would ask them to do that for me.

I hope their questions will do me good, because I do not feel great right now. When I am in this place, I am supposed to be working on behalf of the people, but that is not what I am doing right now. Instead, I am trying to prevent members from slowing down the work that we do for people. That is not what we usually do, and furthermore it is a little appalling. Yes, I am not my usual pleasant self. Could we get down to work for the people, who are watching?

As was mentioned earlier, we are already way behind. I said that the government is not perfect, and a good example of that was that it was in a hurry to call an election in the midst of the Afghanistan crisis and COVID-19, which was not over yet. However, Parliament was working just fine. I cannot speak for the other parliamentary groups, but there is always one that is hard at work in this place, and that is my team.

• (1325)

Even though some people in English Canada might think that we are here to cause problems, for the most part, the Bloc Québécois is here to find solutions. We respectfully make suggestions because we are here to improve the lives of our constituents. We work for everyone. I am not working against the Liberals, Conservatives or New Democrats. I am working for the people of Quebec.

People need these assistance measures to be extended, and the bill we are studying is not perfect. We have mentioned the topics of self-employed workers, in particular ones working in the cultural sector, but I know others who have not been able to get back to work.

Instead of sitting around this afternoon in an attempt to block a stalling tactic, could we not send this bill to committee so that the committee can study it and make suggestions? Fortunately, based on what I understand, three political parties are against the motion, so it will only have cost us half a day. Nevertheless, time is money and the clock is ticking.

We were called back to the House 62 days after the election. It took a very long time for that to happen. In most of their speeches, the members from a certain party say that the government is not doing anything, that the election was useless, that the Liberals took 62 days to recall Parliament and that we should have just kept working. However, that same political party is preventing us from working this afternoon. I censored the last word of my sentence, which proves that I am not getting too carried away.

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The Bloc Québécois spoke about shortages of microprocessors and about individuals who need help. I am now going to talk about something that my Conservative colleagues like to bring up a lot, and that is inflation. I think they are right in bringing it up all the time, and I am not criticizing them for that, quite the contrary. Inflation is a real problem and we need to help our fellow citizens, so let us take action.

Individuals, employees and businesses need benefits, and 58% of SMEs say that they are not back to pre-pandemic levels. That means that nearly six out of 10 businesses do not have enough revenue. Is the government going to wait for those businesses to shut down? Is it simply going to advise people to apply for EI in the hopes that they are among the few who are eligible?

What we need is real employment insurance reform, but nobody seems to be able to do that. We might not have to talk about self-employed workers so much if the EI system were a real EI system, not a disguised federal government funding program. We need to get money out to everyone and deal with seasonal gaps. We need to talk about these things because they affect real people.

We also have to talk about improving access to sick days because of COVID-19, the wage subsidy, the rent subsidy and so on. We have to protect the social fabric and pay attention to it.

I am really looking forward to answering my Conservative colleagues' questions. I have asked for this at least three or four times, and I hope they will ask me at least one question. I would like the Conservatives to explain to me what is going on this afternoon because I do not understand. There are several sectors we need to talk about urgently, and we need to move forward.

It will come as no surprise to anyone that the Bloc Québécois is going to oppose this motion. It was said earlier. We hope that we will be able to move forward as quickly as possible afterward.

If we do end up wasting even more time on this, the government might move time allocation to limit debate, and that motion might get support from its NDP friends. If that happens, I really hope the Conservative Party members will not complain. A certain political party is responsible for wasting our time. It is backing us into a corner and will force us to adopt the bill quickly. I do not need to say which party that is.

• (1330)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, for whom I have a great deal of respect. We often have the opportunity to talk about agriculture, and we will have the chance to talk about it next Thursday.

My colleague really made some good points. For the past few weeks, the official opposition has been playing word games worthy of François Pérusse. I can say that François Pérusse is a lot better at wordplay than the Conservatives.

Today's motion is a waste of time. The Standing Committee on Finance is currently considering Bill C-2.

Why, then, are we debating a routine motion to determine whether it is the workers or employers who will receive their bene-

fits first? Can my colleague tell us how important this issue is to his constituents?

• (1335)

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I sincerely thank my esteemed colleague, whom I respect a lot. I also want to congratulate him publicly on his recent appointment as parliamentary secretary. That is exciting news.

My colleague asked me about our constituents. There is one thing I cannot understand. Members are rising to delay proceedings even though they, I would imagine, are also getting calls to their riding offices. I have a hard time believing that they do not get any, unless they just completely ignore that aspect of their work, let their employees take care of it, and know nothing about what is happening.

I like to go see what is going on from time to time. I call people who are struggling the most and I explain to them what we are doing. I explain that when proceedings in the House are stalled, I rise, I get upset, and I stand up for my constituents. That is what I am doing this afternoon.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the other problem with the Liberals' proposed economic recovery plan is that it does nothing to help many people who are financially vulnerable.

One such example would be the families who receive the Canada child benefit, who are already low-income. Another example would be the seniors who receive the guaranteed income supplement and whose benefits were slashed because they received CERB payments. This problem needs to be addressed, because seniors are ending up in the streets, homeless.

I would like to know whether the Bloc Québécois would be inclined to support fast-tracking Bill C-2 if it contained solutions to these problems.

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank my highly respected colleague for his very pertinent question. He either wanted to turn the matter over to me or he thought I was not upset enough.

He spoke about the guaranteed income supplement, or GIS. I just went through my first re-election campaign. I thought that I was a member until September 20 and had to continue working for my constituents. I am very naive. When people told me about their problems with the GIS, I contacted various ministers' offices. I was told that we were in a transition period, that nothing could be done and that we would talk again after the election.

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In the meantime, seniors do not have enough money to buy groceries because they received the CERB after losing their jobs, which is not really their fault. They are considered to have earned too much. It would be easy to change this, however. The Bloc Québécois made some suggestions and so did the ACEF groups. This is very simple to do, we must act quickly and it can be included in the bill. It is one of the Bloc's conditions for supporting the bill. Therefore, we are on the same side.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, “we are all in this together”. That is a phrase that has been uttered a lot since the pandemic first struck the country and for a time, that was true. There was a real sense of solidarity in our communities. We felt it across the country; we felt it here in this place, such as that was.

In the very difficult days of the early pandemic, we were able to secure proposals to help people that went above and beyond the government's initial proposals, because there was a real spirit of collaboration and working together to get things done and get them done quickly. That is why it was not a \$1,000 a month benefit as the government initially proposed, but a \$2,000 a month benefit for people who had lost their employment. It is how we were able to negotiate a benefit for students who originally were not going to be captured by the government's plan.

We negotiated a one-time payment for people living with disabilities and for seniors, although what we would really like to see is the government take responsibility for ensuring that they have a guaranteed livable basic income at a rate that is above the poverty line, something that we have not yet seen.

We were able to get meaningful improvements through negotiations in this place and that is what it meant for a time to say that we are all in this together. That is not the approach that Bill C-2 represents. It is not the approach that it represents in its substance, but it is also not the approach that the government has taken in the way that it is managing Bill C-2 through the House, in the early stages of its development before it was tabled. There was no discussion with other parties as far as I know, certainly not with us prior to the announcement on October 21, and there has been very little since.

The motion that is before us right now is about dividing even more. From this moment of solidarity and over the course of the last 20 months or so, the government has slowly been edging back from that sense of solidarity, and with Bill C-2, actually just turning its back on the idea that the Prime Minister just ran on in a campaign in September saying that they would not leave anybody behind.

However, splitting the bill would make that problem worse because there are two components to the bill. One is a component that provides help to businesses directly and to workers in those businesses. The other is something that is supposed to be there for workers who are self-employed or workers whose businesses do not opt to apply for the wage subsidy for various reasons, or maybe whose businesses do not quite meet the qualifications, but who nevertheless find themselves not able to work. We know that there are businesses that have let people go during the pandemic, but nevertheless did not qualify for the wage subsidy. There are all sorts of

ways in which workers will continue to need help directly. In fact, we know that in October, there were still 900,000 of them that were needing that direct support.

We are not going to get to the point where we are negotiating effective solutions if we are picking off industries or particular players and advancing the programs that are there for them and leaving the others out of the discussion, particularly the ones with the least amount of economic clout and leverage themselves, the individual workers. Individual workers in exposed industries like hospitality and tourism or arts and culture are not a big business with their own personal lobby that can come to Parliament Hill and meet with 338 different MPs, just about one for every day of the year. They do not have that kind of money and that is why they are not reflected in the government's proposals in Bill C-2.

If we are going to solve that problem, we need to keep the components of the legislation together so that we are not picking some winners and allowing others to be losers any more than is already the case. That is why we in the NDP feel very strongly it is important to keep the bill together, a bill that frankly, we do not support because we do not think it goes far enough.

● (1340)

However, if we are going to get back to a place where we can have some meaningful negotiation, a situation that we did obtain in the last Parliament, then it is important that we are negotiating for everybody. We cannot leave the most vulnerable and those most hard done by in the current economy behind while accelerating the help for industry players, who have also been very much hard hit. It is tough, and we do want to see that help go to that industry, but we do not want to see some being helped and not others, or say that we will speed one up, but leave another to languish.

We need to maintain that sense of us all being in it together, instead of being picked off one by one in a divide-and-conquer strategy to ultimately roll back pandemic support for Canadians. That is where we actually see a pretty close affinity of intent and interest between the Liberals and Conservatives right now, who are talking about the extent to which they are going to roll back those supports. The widespread agreement there is that the supports are going to get rolled back.

The supports rolled back pretty naturally under the conditions of the program. Regarding the CRB and the CERB, at one time there were about nine million Canadians availing themselves of the CERB. On its own, without government kicking anyone off the program, by October this year there were just under 900,000. That is a reduction in the program of over 90%, and therefore, a reduction of over 90% in the spending. As people could find work, they were leaving the program.

How many times have we heard Conservatives talk about how they want to see program spending reduced? This is a program whose spending had been reduced by over 90% because we in the NDP actually believe that Canadians do want to work. We believe that, but we also recognize that in the pandemic economy, such as it is, that is hard to do.

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We recognize that there are a lot of people who desperately want to work, but the jobs are not there for them. It is not because there are not jobs available, but it is because people lost work in a particular sector, with a particular set of skills and a particular education, and those are not necessarily the jobs that are available now. Therefore, there is some work for us to do here, in conjunction with employers and employees, to talk about what jobs are available, who is available to fill them and how we train the people who are available to work in the jobs that are available. However, that is not the discussion we are having here.

The discussion we are having here is how to go from a program that was still supporting 900,000 Canadians who needed financial support in difficult economic times to a program that, to date, does not even apply in one single place in the country and that will not provide financial support to one single worker in the way the CERB did just a month or two ago. That is a big difference, and that difference is what the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party have in common.

I think the Conservative finance critic sometimes thinks he is a champion for workers. He certainly said as much. The member gave an interesting history lesson about the Magna Carta. He even waxed poetic about how the green here represents the commoners who were there at the Magna Carta when they signed a lovely deal that meant that there would be no taxation without representation. Indeed, he talked about the peasants.

He needs to know, and this is his blind spot and the blind spot of both Conservatives and Liberals, that the people who signed the Magna Carta with King John were not the commoners. The people who signed the Magna Carta with King John were the aristocrats and the barons who ruled over the peasants. They took taxes and whatever they wanted from them without any representation for them. That is the problem.

The Conservatives have this kind of mystical understanding of the Magna Carta, that it was this great progressive moment. It was an important moment on the road to democracy. A little over 600 years later, universal male suffrage would come to the United Kingdom, and it would be another 50 or 60 years before women had access to suffrage on the same terms as men in the United Kingdom. Therefore, yes, it was a milestone that laid the groundwork for some progress centuries later.

● (1345)

I think the Conservative finance critic misses a few steps. It is not an innocent mistake, and it is not an inconsequential mistake. Those same barons who were there to sign the Magna Carta are not unlike the 1% today who, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer reported this week, own 25% of the wealth in Canada now.

That was not always the case. Around the turn of the century, it was more on the order of 11% or 12%. Now 1% of the population is sharing 25% of the wealth in Canada, and 40% of the population is sharing 1% of the wealth. That is the tale of the one per cents in Canada right now. We have 40% of people sharing 1% of the wealth and 1% of people sharing 25% of the wealth.

The way we got there has a lot to do with both Liberals and Conservatives. That is why the Conservative finance critic wants to fo-

cus so much on the Bank of Canada lately. He does not want to talk about all the capital that was hoarded over the last 20 years or so. That is now being used in the real estate market, and had been used in the real estate market to cause significant inflation in housing well before the pandemic struck. There is no question there has been massive housing inflation since the pandemic began, but that is not where it started. It has been going on for a long time.

It has been going on since the corporate tax rate was cut from 28% in the year 2000 to just 15% today. We have seen overwhelming increases in the amounts of dividends that are paid out. Who are some of the people who are gaining the biggest amount of money from dividend payments as a result of corporate tax cuts? They are that 1%. That is how we got to the point today where 1% of the people own 25% of the wealth.

In the year 2000, the capital gains inclusion rate was cut from 75% to 50%, and nine-tenths of the benefit of that tax cut over the last 20 years has gone to the top 1%. That is cash in hand for them, and they have been sitting on it until they had a moment to spend it in a way that would create more money, just as the Conservative finance critic likes to talk about.

However, they are not getting all of that in liquidity from the Bank of Canada. They are getting it from increasing returns as corporations pay less and less of a share of government revenue. In Canada 65 years ago, corporations paid 50% of government revenue. Today, they pay 20%. That means individual Canadians are picking up 80% of the tab when they used to have to only pick up 50%.

The Conservatives will say, and Liberals will join them in saying, that if we cut their taxes they will invest back in the economy and that will create jobs and wealth. That is true to a point, except the cash holdings of corporations and the wealthiest individuals have skyrocketed over the past 20 years while the corporate tax rate went from 28% to 15%.

In fact, investment in real assets and productivity has stayed constant at around 5.5% of GDP. Even the late Jim Flaherty, whom some might remember, sat on the Conservative side of the House and scolded corporate Canada at one point for the extent to which it was failing to reinvest money from corporate tax cuts back into the economy.

The amount of \$25 billion is what the Parliamentary Budget Officer, hardly a partisan office, has estimated that Canadians are losing every year to tax havens legally. That is how we got to the point that 1% of the population in Canada now owns 25% of the wealth. That has about doubled over the last 20 years or so.

There is a story to tell about the Magna Carta. There is a story to tell about wealthy individuals with a lot of pull and influence being able to constrain the government in a way that benefits them while they squash the people under them and take the value of their work for themselves.

Routine Proceedings

● (1350)

Unfortunately, this is not that old of a story. It is an old story in the sense that it has been going on, but it is not a history lesson. It is a contemporary economic lesson, and we need to figure out how we are going to change that. That is why I am proud to have run on the idea of a wealth tax for fortunes of over \$20 million, which does not cover a lot of Canadians.

It is pretty hard to get outraged at this idea for people who have amassed more and more of the economic pie. Their proportion of the pie has grown far more quickly than the pie itself, which means more and more people are sharing less and less, and people wonder why we do not have money to fund public services. It is not that we just magically have less money; it is that the people at the top are paying far less than they used to. They are hoarding that wealth, or they are spending it on themselves or they are using it to make investments in the real estate market, which is driving up the cost for everybody else. That is the real problem.

Therefore, I am always glad to talk history and economics with the Conservative finance critic, but there are some facts missing from his version of events when he talks about the Magna Carta. The people who are forgotten in his story are the same people who are being forgotten in Bill C-2. They are the people who have been unable to get back to work and were depending on a government that said it would have their back. However, they found that within a month after the election, with two days' warning, the very same Prime Minister who said he would have their backs turned his back on them. This is what we are dealing with in Bill C-2. If we are going to get to a decent solution, we are going to do it by talking about everyone at the same time instead of hiving them off into sections, leaving some to languish and others to get the help they genuinely need.

Make no mistake, the New Democrats are in favour of people getting the help they need and getting it rapidly. It is why we have not had any secrets about what we think needs to happen and what the government needs to do as we pass Bill C-2. In fact, we will have some suggestions on how it can include these measures in Bill C-2; how it can stop the clawbacks of the GIS, the Canada child benefit and the Canada worker benefit; how it can implement a low-income CERB repayment amnesty so it is not chasing after people, who are already losing their homes, for about \$14,000 in debt. In some cases, these people are negotiating payment plans for \$10 a month. How long it is going to take for the government to get its \$14,000 back at \$10 a month?

Meanwhile, some of the largest publicly traded companies, like Chartwell, TELUS and Bell, gave huge dividends to their shareholders during the pandemic and increased the amount of their annual payout by anywhere from 3% to 6%, yet the government has not asked them for a dime back. That is the story of the barons getting together to design a system that would serve them so well, the system we have inherited here, and that is part of the tradition of this place in more ways than one.

We have ideas about how to end the clawbacks. We have proposals for a low-income CERB repayment amnesty. We have proposals on how to ensure that people in the arts and cultural sector and the tourism and hospitality industry can access the only benefit that

would be left, which is the Canada worker lockdown benefit, in terms of a regular payment to people who are unable to work. The Liberals have laid out the industries in part 1 of the bill. All they have to do is say that anyone who earns their income in an industry named in part 1 of the bill will have access to the Canada worker lockdown benefit, whether there is a lockdown order in their part of the country not. The government already recognizes that those industries are in distress regardless of whether there is a lockdown order in effect.

These are just some of the proposals that we will be putting on the table. If the government adopts them, it can see swift passage of the bill in this place, and that is what it will mean to leave no one behind.

● (1355)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with respect to the government, the member believes he has found a number of flaws. At times, we will no doubt have to agree to disagree, and he will continue to advocate on that. However, I appreciate and want to recognize that the member, at the very least, sees the bill as one piece of legislation and to advance the issue, it is important that we keep the bill as one. I suspect he is not going to lose any of his enthusiasm for critiquing the government based on his speech.

This is more of an open comment and an expression of appreciation for recognizing the value and importance of the bill to all Canadians.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, as I have said, the bill has a lot of problems. We are voting against the motion today because we think the path to a solution lies through negotiating the situation for everyone at the same time so that no one is left behind. The problem with the motion today is that it says we are going to leave one group of workers behind and move ahead with the workers and businesses that would benefit from these changes. That is the problem we are solving today in the motion, and we look forward to solving the problems with the bill at committee.

● (1400)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, first of all, I hope the member still considers that the whole purpose of the Magna Carta was to ensure the king could not unilaterally decide for everyone. That was an important step. The Conservatives have always believed in extending franchise to first nations and women, for example. It was Conservative prime ministers who first brought these ideas here in this place.

I hope the member can agree that we want to see accountable government. At the end of the day, separating the bill into two would allow the NDP, the Conservatives and every member to have more accountability. Right now there is a mishmash of different measures in there, and obviously it is harder to hold the government to account and bring witnesses to speak specifically if all these measures have been drawn up into one bill.

Would the member not agree that breaking the bill up would offer more chance for debate in this place on specific measures? That would increase accountability. It would mean that all of our voices would be stronger in this place.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, there are two things. First of all, I have criticized the government for omnibus bills. We have seen plenty of them. My opinion is that this is not one, and I think it hangs together. It is a set of pandemic benefits. We do not think it is enough and do not think it is targeted in the right way, but this is the government's pandemic benefit program and that makes sense. We should have had more time. The Liberals should have brought Parliament back earlier and there should have been more conversations and all of that. However, I do not think there is an accountability issue with whether or not we examine these two things together.

On the question of whether the king can make decisions for everyone else, one funny thing occurred to me. In the last Parliament, I sat on the procedure and affairs committee and we did a big study of prorogation. At the end of that study, when we were reporting back, the New Democrats had recommended that the Prime Minister no longer have the prerogative to dissolve and prorogue Parliament in the name of the Queen without consulting this place, the place of the commoners. It was the Conservatives who got together with the Liberals to recommend that one person should maintain the ability to make decisions for everybody else.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Elmwood—Transcona for his remarkably cogent and large view of how we got to where we are today.

One thing the COVID benefit response included, or at least it seemed that a lot of Parliament suddenly realized, was that the employment insurance program did not work for 60% of Canadians. I want to give the member some time to talk about how we should be moving forward with this so that these people, the 60% of Canadian workers who do not qualify for EI in the old way, are being taken care of. What should we be doing?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I always appreciate a pointed and difficult question in the House.

The fact of the matter is that Canadians would have been far better served in the pandemic if not for the chronic problems with employment insurance. They were not really news to many of the people who had to avail themselves of employment insurance, or who tried and could not, and the organizations that work with folks who have needed employment insurance over the years. We should have done the work they were already calling on us to do.

There is another way in which Canadians would have been very well served if we had done the homework on employment insurance early on. As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, one of the big

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problems we have right now is a lack of a way to hook up workers who are out of work and trying to find a way back into the labour market with the training they need that pertains directly to a job that is available in the market. That is something we used to do in the unemployment insurance system we had many years ago in Canada. We used to work with workers to find a job and train them up to it. We need something like that in our EI system again.

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very pertinent speech.

I would like to give him an opportunity to tell us more. Can he explain what is behind the Conservatives' manoeuvre this afternoon? Why have they wasted all this time?

I did not get an answer to the question I asked earlier.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I always find it hard to think like a Conservative. As a parliamentarian, when I can, I always try to attribute good intentions to my colleagues in the House of Commons.

Whether it is worth separating the two parts of the bill is an interesting debate, in my view. Many bills in the House of Commons have elements that do not necessarily go together. This is a familiar debate.

In this case, however, I think the different parts of the bill share a common purpose, so it would make sense to maintain both parts of it, but not as it has been presented to us.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, my thanks to my hon. friend for Elmwood—Transcona for, as ever, a clear analysis of how Parliament should function and how our traditions should guide us. I just want to add to his analysis that an omnibus bill really has to have unrelated sections that are forced together.

To support his analysis that these do hang together, although they are inadequate, he may have something else to add. I think his analysis on conventions of prorogation and confidence of the House needs to be understood by all, but for now I will just ask if he wants to add more about what benefits we need.

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Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, it is a rare thing in this place to say of a bill that there should be more things put into it. We often do say that there are too many things in a bill that do not relate. I think there is a moral point at stake, and there is a conceptual point. We are talking about Canada's recovery. This bill is the legal foundation for the first big step in Canada's recovery. I actually think it is coming too soon for the kind of step that it is. I think this is actually probably more like the third or fourth step and we are jumping across a lot of steps that we need in between.

However, we did need to have a discussion in this place about what Canada's recovery looks like, how we make sure that no one is left behind and the programming we need in order to do that. The fact that the government's proposal is inadequate does not mean that it was not right to have that conversation and that it did not make sense to have a bill that would bring those elements together so that we could really talk in a programmatic way about what our recovery looks like.

Splitting up the bill just means we are talking piecemeal about recovery instead of a recovery system that could actually build an infrastructure for a new economy that really does not leave people behind. The bill does not do that, but this is the place for the conversation.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not have a lot of time, but it would be a waste of time anyway, since the Standing Committee on Finance is already studying Bill C-2.

I am surprised that the Conservatives would move such a motion today, considering that they are always advocating for less red tape.

[English]

I am surprised that the Conservative Party would introduce such a motion today knowing full well that the finance committee had already started to look at the bill on December 7. They sure know because the member for Carleton likes to give us lectures for about 20 minutes at a time. Probably the whole reason for this motion today was so that he could speak for 20 minutes, give us a lecture on rebel news economics and publish it on his Twitter, if it is not already published now.

In fact, as I speak, the finance committee is continuing to look at this bill.

We see the news across the world and there was some good news in November. Our economy added 153,000 net new jobs, but COVID is still real and we do not know what may happen in January, February and March. That is why it is important that the measures in Bill C-2 be debated and adopted at some point. I hope the bill passes because it provides the worker lockdown benefit. I hope our Canadian economy and provincial governments will not have to implement lockdowns, but they are obviously a tool to reduce the spread of COVID. I would hate to let our workers down because of shenanigans in this place. This is exactly what this routine motion would do.

• (1410)

[Translation]

The motion we are debating today essentially proposes the creation of two bills C-2 that would be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance. This would lead to delays, including for workers who might need benefits if certain sectors of the economy had to close again. If we adopt the motion moved by the member for Carleton, then the bill cannot be passed before Christmas.

I had the opportunity to rise to speak to Bill C-2 earlier this year. Some sectors of the economy are still not operating at full steam, including the tourism industry. I often think of the 417 Bus Line Ltd company, which offers transportation services for the tourism industry. That company has to pay between \$15,000 and \$20,000 just to put a bus on the road. Some benefits would have helped them rehire employees and cover some of those costs. That would have been a big help.

[English]

The member for Carleton knows really well Paul's Little Ray's Zoo. I am going to be meeting him at five o'clock today. He wants to know when Bill C-2 will be passed and I am going to have to tell him that his friend is trying to delay, through dilatory motions like this one today. I would expect those types of motions to be presented after six, seven or eight months. We know the official opposition plays games in a minority government. Of course, the Liberals have never done that. I am going to have to tell Paul that I do not know whether Bill C-2 will pass before the holiday season. I am going to tell him to talk to his business community and ask him to call the member for Carleton to explain the sense of urgency and why these measures are so important not only for the business community, but also the workers who may depend on them.

Numbers are really high in schools right now. Parents have to be off work and it is important for them to have access to the recovery caregiving benefit. Not everybody can stay home and be paid. They are not fortunate like the member for Carleton. Some of them have to rely on measures that we have introduced. That is why it is important that Bill C-2 passes as quickly as possible, because people are depending on it. As cases rise in schools, parents have to take time off work, and it is not their fault. We are asking them to get their kids tested, and that is a responsible thing by the government. We recognize there is a gap in the system, but we fill that gap through the recovery caregiving benefit and the recovery sickness benefit. They are measures included in Bill C-2.

I hope Conservative Party members join us. They can bring accountability to the finance committee, as they are doing as we speak, but Bill C-2 needs to pass before the holiday season.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[*Translation*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, and of the amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 2:15 p.m., it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 50(5), to interrupt the proceedings and to put forthwith every question required to dispose of the motion. Pursuant to Standing Order 66(1), the debate on the motion is transferred under Government Orders.

Accordingly, it is my duty to put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the amendment to the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

• (1415)

[*English*]

The question is on the amendment.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

The Address

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I request that the amendment carry on division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Monday, December 13, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House you would find unanimous consent to call it 2:30 p.m. at this time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to see the clock at 2:30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 2:18 p.m.)

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