



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 026
Tuesday, February 8, 2022

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 8, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)
[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), and consistent with the current policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, four treaties.

The first is the “Convention on the International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation”, adopted at Kuala Lumpur on February 28, 2020.

The second is the “Agreement on Social Security between Canada and the Argentine Republic”, done at Buenos Aires on August 13, 2021.

The third is the “Agreement on Social Security Between Canada and the Republic of Austria”, done at Vienna on July 5, 2021.

The fourth is the “Antarctic Treaty”, done at Washington on December 1, 1959.

* * *

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-12, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (Guaranteed Income Supplement).

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

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following nine reports of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The first report is entitled “Report 1, Procuring Complex Information Technology Solutions of the 2021 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

[English]

The second report is entitled “Report 2, National Shipbuilding Strategy, of the 2021 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

The third report is entitled “Report 3, Access to Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities—Indigenous Services Canada, of the 2021 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

[Translation]

The fourth report is entitled “Report 4, Canada Child Benefit—Canada Revenue Agency, of the 2021 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

The fifth report is entitled “Report 5, Follow-up Audit on Rail Safety—Transport Canada, of the 2021 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

[English]

The sixth report is entitled “Report 6, Canada Emergency Response Benefit, of the 2021 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

[Translation]

The seventh report is entitled “Report 7, Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, of the 2021 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

The eighth report is entitled “Report 8, Pandemic Preparedness, Surveillance, and Border Control Measures, of the 2021 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

● (1005)

[English]

The ninth report is entitled “Report 9, Investing in Canada Plan, of the 2021 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to each of these reports. All of them are signed in both official languages.

*Routine Proceedings***INCOME TAX ACT**

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-241, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (deduction of travel expenses for tradespersons).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this chamber today to introduce my bill, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, to allow a deduction of travel expenses for tradespersons. By 2025, Canada will need an additional 350,000 tradespeople to fill this void. I look forward to working with all parties in this place to pass this important legislation and give the necessary support for our tradespersons across the country when they must travel for work.

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

* * *

REUNITING FAMILIES ACT

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-242, an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (temporary resident visas for parents and grandparents).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce the reuniting Canadian families act. In 2012, the Conservative government brought in a super visa, a 10-year multiple-entry visa, to allow parents and grandparents to reunite with their families here in Canada. From the ensuing 10 years, we know improvements are needed to it.

This bill would allow people to stay for five years over 10 years. It would allow the purchase of insurance from a foreign country to reduce the cost of buying health insurance, which is a prerequisite for a super visa. Finally, it would require the government to deliver a plan to reduce the low-income cut-off so that more families can qualify for the super visa.

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

* * *

ENDING THE USE OF FORCED LABOUR AND CHILD LABOUR IN SUPPLY CHAINS ACT

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-243, an act respecting the elimination of the use of forced labour and child labour in supply chains.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to introduce my PMB, an act respecting the elimination of the use of forced labour and child labour in supply chains. The seconder, and indeed the author of the bill, is my good friend, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Manufacturers looking to maximize their profits often buy products made in countries where labour is cheap, but in countries where labour is cheap, labour standards may be low or non-existent. Perhaps worst of all, products might be made using either child labour or forced labour. I think many companies and consumers would prefer not to look too closely at the labour practices that went into the products they buy. This bill, if passed, would require big companies to look into their supply chains and file a public report yearly identifying the parts of the supply chains where

there is a risk of child labour or forced labour and report what the company has done to address those risks.

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

* * *

• (1010)

COPYRIGHT ACT

Mr. Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-244, an act to amend the Copyright Act (diagnosis, maintenance and repair).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to introduce my private member's bill, Bill C-244, an act to amend the Copyright Act, one part of our right to repair system in Canada.

I would like to start off by saying that this bill was previously tabled in February 2021 by my hon. colleague, the member for Cambridge, and made it through the committee studies. It is my honour to bring this bill back in the 44th Parliament because it is still critical to the protection of Canadian consumers and our environment.

The bill is aimed at addressing copyright that is being used to stop Canadians from repairing and maintaining items that have been purchased and are owned by Canadians. It is a targeted bill that creates specific exemptions to copyright. When an individual makes a purchase of an item, the owner should have a right to repair it and not be restricted by the manufacturer. Being able to repair the items we own is critical to the well-being of our environment.

Canada has the ability to be an international leader in sustainable consumerism and act as a model on how to live a more environmentally friendly lifestyle with the things we buy. Canadians work hard to purchase the things they own and should have a right to repair these items as well.

I look forward to the debate and the support of my colleagues in the House.

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

* * *

CANADA INFRASTRUCTURE BANK ACT

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-245, An Act to amend the Canada Infrastructure Bank Act.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present my bill, an act to amend the Canada Infrastructure Bank Act. This bill leverages public ownership in the fight against climate change and in support of the most marginalized communities in our country, including indigenous and northern communities.

Catastrophic climate change is a threat to our survival. Indigenous and northern communities are already paying the price. Regions like ours have already been living the devastating impacts of climate change, and we do not have the infrastructure and resources needed to respond.

From the need to transition away from diesel-generated power to the need for all-weather roads, fire protection and flood and drought mitigation, indigenous and northern communities need infrastructure support now. It is clear the fight against climate change requires bold, collective action.

The Infrastructure Bank was designed by billionaires for billionaires, and it is time to change that. The Canada Infrastructure Bank must be part of the solution by doing away with for-profit private agendas, focusing on investing public funds through green bonds and ensuring indigenous representation and transparency. It is time Canada put people over profit and built up the infrastructure we need to fight climate change.

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

* * *

[Translation]

CONSTITUTION ACT, 2022

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-246, An Act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867 (representation in the House of Commons).

He said: Mr. Speaker, in 1995, the House of Commons recognized Quebec as a distinct society and encouraged the government to be guided accordingly in its conduct. In 2006, the House recognized that Quebecers form a nation. In June 2021, the House reiterated that recognition by adding that it also recognized Quebec's jurisdiction and will to amend its constitution to enshrine in it not only the fact that Quebec is nation but also that French is the only official language of Quebec and the common language of the Quebec nation.

Recognizing the Quebec nation automatically means acknowledging that Quebec must be properly represented here in the House of Commons. That is the purpose of this bill.

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

* * *

● (1015)

[English]

PROHIBITION OF FUR FARMING ACT

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-247, An Act to prohibit fur farming.

He said: Mr. Speaker, commercial fur farming is cruel to the animals that face horrible conditions every day, and it poses a real risk

Routine Proceedings

to human health, including pandemic risk. Many countries have already put an end to this practice and Canada should do the same. Animal science experts describe the filthy and cramped conditions as inherently inhumane. Infectious disease experts describe commercial fur farming as a hazardous practice that poses serious risks to human health because of the transmission of viruses between animals and people, and the very real threat of viral mutations.

In phasing out mink farming, B.C.'s provincial health officer declared it a "health hazard". It is not only B.C., of course. The U.K. banned commercial fur farming over two decades ago, and many other countries have implemented similar bans since. It is now time for Canada to end the cruel and dangerous practice of commercial fur farming, and that is exactly what this legislation would do.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

HIDDEN DISABILITIES

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my first petition, e-3704, is on a symbol for hidden disabilities. The international disability symbol of access iconographically excludes the hidden disability community. Collectively, hidden disabilities are represented less than detectable disabilities in research and advocacy, yet they affect more people. Different identifiable disability icons, symbols and memes are used in a number of countries through various models.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to adopt and promote a national hidden disability symbol and to participate in actions toward its international adoption.

Routine Proceedings

FASHION INDUSTRY

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition, e-3725, is from the Canada Fashion Network. We must identify fashion as a form of art. The fashion industry is diminishing, and is crucial to our national identity and our diverse population. There are several ongoing unaddressed issues, such as cultural awareness and appropriation. If promoted, opportunities for Canada are exponential both nationally and internationally. The petitioners request that the government pass legislation to promote Canadian fashion in the national interest, and that it add the Canada Fashion Network to the list of organizations that make up the Canadian Heritage portfolio.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, freedom of conscience is a fundamental right clearly articulated in section 2 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I have the honour to table several petitions signed by hundreds of citizens across Canada who call upon Parliament to protect the conscience rights of medical professionals from coercion or intimidation to provide, or refer patients for, assisted suicide or euthanasia. I thank these Canadians for their engagement on this important issue.

- (1020)

BRADFORD BYPASS

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling petition e-3766 today. The petition has been signed by Canadians across the country, but primarily residents of York Region and the riding I represent: Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill. They are very concerned by the Province of Ontario's decision to move forward with the construction of the Bradford Bypass without adequate environmental consideration of proposed routes or possible alternatives. The petitioners request that the connector highway known as the Bradford Bypass be designated by the Minister of Environment for a federal impact assessment under the Impact Assessment Act. The existing assessment was done over 25 years ago, in 1997, and on October 7 of last year, the Ontario government exempted this project from a provincial environmental assessment.

The petitioners note that the bypass will result in adverse environmental effects within several jurisdictions. They argue that the bypass, which cuts across the environmentally sensitive Holland Marsh, including wetlands and farm lands in the Greenbelt and the Lake Simcoe headlands, would bring an average daily traffic of approximately 58,000 vehicles. They argue this would contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, add to phosphorus pollution, destroy wetlands and forests, threaten species at risk and allow more levels of road salt to flow into Lake Simcoe, which would endanger fish habitats. It would also destroy one of Canada's most significant historical sites: the Lower Landing, which is of great importance to first nations.

The bottom line is that these petitioners are asking the federal government to do its duty, because the Province of Ontario did not. It is the Government of Canada's duty and responsibility to deliver on both ensuring the climate change targets that Canada committed to on the international stage and, more importantly, ensuring that we do everything we can to protect our fragile ecosystem.

The Speaker: Before continuing, I want to remind the hon. members to be as concise as possible. It is a very brief outline of what the petition puts forward. I just wanted to remind everyone.

Presenting petitions, the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

FIREARMS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of being concise, I rise today to present a petition that supports the health and safety of Canadian firearms owners. The petitioners recognize the importance of owning firearms, and they are concerned about the impact of hearing loss caused by the damaging noise levels of firearms and the need for noise reduction.

The petitioners acknowledge that sound moderators are the only universally recognized health and safety device that is criminally prohibited in Canada. Moreover, the majority of G7 countries have recognized the benefits of sound moderators and allow them for hunting, sport shooting and reducing noise pollution. The petitioners call on the government to allow legal firearms owners to purchase and use sound moderators for all legal hunting and sport shooting activities.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise virtually in the House today on behalf of several Prince Edward Islanders to present this code red petition. These Canadians are extremely concerned about the climate emergency, and they are calling upon the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada to enact just transition legislation to reduce emissions by at least 60% from 2005 levels, to create good, green jobs, to drive inclusive workforce development, to protect and strengthen human rights and workers' rights, and to expand the social safety net through new income supports, decarbonized public housing and operational funding for affordable and accessible public transit countrywide.

I appreciate this opportunity.

HOUSING

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a huge honour to table this petition on behalf of residents of Cumberland, Courtenay, Parksville and Port Alberni.

The petitioners want to draw the attention of the House of Commons to the estimated 235,000 people in Canada who experience homelessness every year. Canada's commitment to reduce homelessness right now by 50% over 10 years would still leave 117,500 Canadians homeless each year. The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to take immediate action by officially recognizing that housing is a human right, and to develop a plan to end and prevent homelessness in Canada.

MIDDLE EAST

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to table today.

First, over 1,500 Canadians have signed a petition raising concerns about Israel's designation of six leading Palestinian civil society organizations as terrorist organizations. They note the concerns raised by the UN special rapporteurs condemning the designation, and they call on the Government of Canada to call upon Israeli authorities to immediately rescind the designations and to end all efforts aimed at delegitimizing and criminalizing Palestinian human rights defenders.

• (1025)

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has been signed by almost 1,000 Canadians. They are calling attention to the fact that non-believers are persecuted in several countries, both by governments and the public. The petitioners note that freedom of religion includes freedom from religion.

They call upon the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to clarify the status of the less complex claims policy, and to ensure that non-believers are included in the list of people eligible for any special refugee status so that they will be treated equally with those people belonging to the religions listed in the less complex claims policy.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF BILL C-10—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on February 1, 2022, by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent concerning the alleged premature disclosure of Bill C-10, an act respecting certain measures related to COVID-19.

During his intervention, the member argued that the Prime Minister had spoken about the bill in detail during a press conference

Speaker's Ruling

held the day before. At that time, the bill was on notice and had not been introduced in the House. The member said that the bill is simply entitled "An Act respecting certain measures related to COVID-19".

He added that the Prime Minister had provided details by indicating that the government was going to present a bill to continue to offer the greatest possible number of rapid tests to the provinces and territories. He also said that such a disclosure breached the convention that members must be the first to learn the details of legislative measures and thus constituted contempt.

[*English*]

The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader responded that the Prime Minister had only spoken about the bill in general terms and had not disclosed any specific details. He also said that sharing a draft of the bill with the opposition parties before its introduction satisfied the requirement that members must be the first to be informed of such measures.

The convention that members have a right to first access to legislation is a well-established practice. Looking at the relevant precedents, including those cited by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, the Chair notes in particular that, when a premature disclosure was ruled to be a prima facie breach of privilege, precise details had been disclosed. These provided evidence that the contents of the bill had indeed been shared before they were disclosed in the House.

In the case before us, the Chair must determine whether the information provided by the Prime Minister at the press conference constitutes a disclosure of the contents of the bill, which would be, at first glance, a breach of the privileges of members or of the dignity of the House.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-10 is relatively short and contains only two clauses. The purpose is simple. The first clause specifies the maximum amount that can be paid out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the purchase of rapid tests. The second concerns the distribution of these rapid tests to the provinces and territories. The second aspect of the bill has been part of public discourse for some time now.

It is the view of the Chair that the Prime Minister's statement does not give way for the Chair to conclude that there was a breach of the privileges of the House nor to give the matter precedence over all other business of the House. Thus, I cannot conclude that there is a prima facie question of privilege.

• (1030)

[*English*]

In closing, I would like to point out that the disclosure of bills before they are presented in the House has recently been the subject of several questions of privilege. A new practice also seems to have been established in which the government shares certain bills with the opposition before they are introduced. As such, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs may wish to review these elements and, if necessary, share its findings with the House.

Business of Supply

I thank the members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1035)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF CANADA
(THE SASKATCHEWAN ACT)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC) moved:

Whereas on October 21, 1880, the Government of Canada entered into a contract with the Canadian Pacific Railway Syndicate for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway;

Whereas, by clause 16 of the 1880 Canadian Pacific Railway contract, the federal government agreed to give a tax exemption to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company;

Whereas, in 1905, the Parliament of Canada passed the Saskatchewan Act, which created the Province of Saskatchewan;

Whereas section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act refers to clause 16 of the 1880 Canadian Pacific Railway Contract;

Whereas the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed on November 6, 1885, with the Last Spike at Craiggellachie, and has been operating as a going concern for 136 years;

Whereas, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company has paid applicable taxes to the Government of Saskatchewan since the Province was established in 1905;

Whereas it would be unfair to the residents of Saskatchewan if a major corporation were exempt from certain provincial taxes, casting that tax burden onto the residents of Saskatchewan;

Whereas it would be unfair to other businesses operating in Saskatchewan, including small businesses, if a major corporation were exempt from certain provincial taxes, giving that corporation a significant competitive advantage over those other businesses, to the detriment of farmers, consumers and producers in the Province;

Whereas it would not be consistent with Saskatchewan's position as an equal partner in Confederation if there were restrictions on its taxing powers that do not apply to other provinces;

Whereas on August 29, 1966, the then President of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, Ian D. Sinclair, advised the then federal Minister of Transport, Jack Pickersgill, that the Board of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company had no objection to constitutional amendments to eliminate the tax exemption;

Whereas section 43 of the Constitution Act, 1982 provides that an amendment to the Constitution of Canada may be made by proclamation issued by the Governor General under the Great Seal of Canada where so authorized by resolutions of the Senate and House of Commons and of the legislative assembly of each province to which the amendment applies;

Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, on November 29, 2021, adopted a resolution authorizing an amendment to the Constitution of Canada;

Now, therefore, the House of Commons resolves that an amendment to the Constitution of Canada be authorized to be made by proclamation issued by Her Excellency the Governor General under the Great Seal of Canada in accordance with the annexed schedule.

SCHEDULE

AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF CANADA

1. Section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act is repealed.
2. The repeal of section 24 is deemed to have been made on August 29, 1966, and is retroactive to that date.

CITATION

3. This Amendment may be cited as the Constitution Amendment, [year of proclamation] (Saskatchewan Act).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand to present the motion today and lead off the debate.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek. I am happy to hear her comments put on the record as well. We will have a lot of Saskatchewan content in the chamber today. I feel that more common sense from Saskatchewan is always a good thing.

I want to talk to the members in the chamber today about why this motion is important. There are two defining reasons why we should be passing this unanimously. One is for tax fairness. I believe the taxpayers of Saskatchewan should not be forced to pay an additional dollars to a profitable corporation. Second, it is about respecting provincial jurisdiction. I believe all colleagues can appreciate that. I think we have a duty in this chamber to respect what has been done in provincial legislatures across the country. We know that this passed unanimously in the Saskatchewan legislature last fall.

I brought forward a unanimous consent motion, but I appreciate that the member for Winnipeg North and the justice minister wanted to have debate on the floor of the House of Commons about why this motion is important and why it should be passed. It is with respect to their wishes that we brought forward this motion today so we would have that conversation, have that debate and have comments put on the record as to why this is a necessary motion. Hopefully, after today there will be a vote on this motion and we can move it to the Senate. Then this could be passed in respect to the wishes of the people of Saskatchewan.

I have some thanks to give. My thanks to the minister of justice in Saskatchewan, Gordon Wyant, who put this motion forward in that legislative chamber. I have also talked with some of the NDP MLAs in Saskatchewan, my home province. I was a member of the legislative assembly there, and Trent Wotherspoon has said he has communicated with the NDP in the House of Commons. I believe they will be on board with this motion as well because they should respect what their provincial colleagues have done.

I hope this will be a good and thorough debate about why we, as legislators, should respect the provincial jurisdiction of what is going on. I want to put on the record that I think it is very important that we have the proper tone. Decorum in this House has left a little bit to be desired.

The motion today was put forward by the opposition so that we can all get together and have a good conversation to show the people of Canada that we can work together. We have done it in the past. We can work together and get things done more quickly and not see some of the holdups we have seen in the past with some of the bills put forward because of partisan politics.

These are the conversations we have been having over the last couple months. I put forward a unanimous consent motion that was denied, so hopefully that will not happen again with this motion before I back home to Saskatchewan.

Talking about the people of Saskatchewan, this is important to them because they think it is time that Ottawa listens to some of their concerns around tax fairness. Obviously, we have seen that the price of everything has been going up and inflation is increasing everywhere. They want to know that we are listening. My number one job when I stand in the House of Commons representing the people of Regina—Lewvan is to put forward their interests and make sure that I am a voice for them. This is something that I feel is very important. They feel, like I said previously, that they should not have to pay an extra dollar for a profitable corporation.

We went through the motion. For a little more background, this is a constitutional amendment. That is not unheard of, as B.C. has done this, as well as Alberta, and through this very process. We are not breaking new ground. We know this has been done before, amending provincial constitutions through motions and agreement with parties in the chamber and in the Senate. I believe this is something that can be done again.

We really want to make sure that people realize that this is an outdated exemption. It dates back to 1880. It was something where the government at the time made a deal with CP Rail. It is something where they were exempt from paying taxes. Going back to 1880 makes it 116 years old. CP and the Saskatchewan government have been engaged in a battle over this for the last 13 years.

For CP, that is something that will be ongoing. This will affect that going forward. That court case will be settled in the courts. It will not be settled here today, but we will make sure that we get this exemption done and off the books so that something like this does not come up again.

● (1040)

On November 29, the justice minister introduced the motion to repeal section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act in the legislature. Like I said, it has been a few months. I believe my colleagues across the way on the government side have had an opportunity to look at it and are in agreement with this motion going forward. The resolution will be passed by the government and the Senate.

I want to put on the record today a comment made by the minister of justice in Saskatchewan. He said, “We’re going to vigorously defend the claim that’s been brought by the railway to defend the interests of the people of Saskatchewan”. When it comes down to it, today we are trying to defend the interests of the people of Saskatchewan on the floor of the House of Commons. That is what I will always do.

When I talk to the people of Regina—Lewvan, I tell them that I will always be on Saskatchewan’s side. This motion shows both that commitment to the people who have sent us to the legislature and that we have the ability to get things done. Sometimes I am asked in my hometown of Regina if I can move the yardstick being in opposition, if I can get things done. This is an example of how, working with all parties, we can get something done for the people of Saskatchewan and make sure they do not pay a cent in tax that should be paid by profitable corporations.

In a few conversations with people back home over Christmas, they were really interested in what the problem with this could be. I am hoping that, if the other parties, the Liberals, NDP or Bloc, do

Business of Supply

have concerns, they put them on floor of the House of Commons today. We can then answer those concerns, and we can work together to ensure this will be moved forward. It is very important that we make sure outdated legislation is changed.

I believe it was an oversight because in 1966, as it says in the motion, there was a handshake agreement between CP Rail and the government of the day to get this exemption off the books. Sometimes there are small oversights, so we are going to fix a past mistake that was overlooked and ensure that everyone knows what the rules are going forward. Canadians are really looking for some certainty and making sure we are doing what we can to make legislation clear. Passing this motion so that oversight is fixed and that exemption is taken off the books of CP Rail is what today is about.

This is about tax fairness for the people of my province, and I am looking forward to hearing the debates of my other colleagues from Saskatchewan. It is about respecting provincial jurisdiction. I think a lot of members in the chamber agree with this and will make sure we work together to get this motion passed. I believe everyone in this House thinks provincial jurisdiction should be respected, and when it comes to tax fairness, I think everyone in the House would agree that people in our home provinces should not be paying for profitable corporations. When I go home, I will be happy to have conversations with the people of Regina—Lewvan and tell them this is one thing we did together.

When they watch the news, sometimes all they see is the combativeness among opposition parties. They watch question period and think all we do is argue and not get answers from our colleagues across the way. Through this motion and the debates today, I want to show there is co-operation at times.

I am hoping my government and opposition colleagues will help us to make sure this is fair for Saskatchewan. I am proud to say that I will always be on Saskatchewan’s side, and that is what this motion is about.

● (1045)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my friend and colleague’s approach to dealing with what is a serious issue. Whenever a provincial legislature takes an initiative, it is appropriate that the government respond, no matter what its political stripe, in whatever way it can. There is also a responsibility to gain a full understanding.

The credit that the member referenced is for the province of Saskatchewan. Are there other jurisdictions that are encountering the same situation, or is this truly unique to the province of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, this particular motion is truly unique to the province of Saskatchewan, because the exemption is in section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act. I have not read any other provincial acts that deal with the Constitution, so it may be in the Manitoba or Alberta act as well, but this motion just deals with repealing section 24 in the Saskatchewan Act.

Business of Supply

The motion today deals only with Saskatchewan. If the member likes, he could have some conversations with provincial colleagues in Manitoba or Alberta to see if there are other provincial constitutions with the same exemption for companies, but the motion today deals strictly with Saskatchewan.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to respond to the question from my colleague from Winnipeg North, who wanted to ensure that this applies only to Saskatchewan. As we know, the feds have an almighty fear of ever talking about the Constitution, especially when it comes to Quebec.

I realize that this applies only to Saskatchewan, but would my colleague agree that this could set a pretty strong precedent for re-opening discussions on the Constitution? I would like to hear his comments on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, this is not a precedent. It has been done before, as I said in the opening comments of my speech. B.C. and Alberta have used this method as well to change portions of their provincial constitutions. It would not set a precedent, and other provinces have the ability to do it. I would love to have a constitutional debate with my friends from Quebec. If they have any suggestions, I am open. They always bring forward good ideas, so I hope that if they have ideas to bring forward, they will do so through the House of Commons.

This particular motion is only about the Saskatchewan Act and does not set a precedent, because, as I said, B.C. and Alberta have used this method already to change their provincial constitutions.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is wonderful to see the Conservatives standing up and calling for Canada's biggest corporations to pay their fair share. It is obvious that what we have been saying all these years is rubbing off, and it is good to see.

The court case between Saskatchewan and CP Rail has been going on for 13 years. It seems there would have been ample opportunity to have addressed this issue quite a bit earlier—for instance, when the Conservative Party was in government. I wonder if my colleague could reflect on why it has taken 13 years for the federal government to take this step.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, it is coming up now because the provincial legislature passed this motion unanimously just recently. At this time, how the process rolls out is that the provincial legislature has to pass a motion unanimously before it comes to the House Commons. That is why it is happening now.

In my speech, I said that it had been passed in November of 2021, and we brought this up at the earliest opportunity. First we asked for unanimous consent and now we are going through this process to ensure it is done properly and is debated on the floor. I know the court case has been going on for 13 years, but the timing of when the provincial legislature passed its motion unanimously is the reason it is here in the House of Commons today.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Regina—Lewvan, for his excellent and informative

speech on this important and historic opposition day motion calling on the House to amend the Constitution of Canada.

The passage of the Saskatchewan Act, which created the Province of Saskatchewan in 1905, became part of the Canadian Constitution and came into force on September 1 of that year. Through a unique mechanism created as part of our Confederation, provinces have the ability to amend the Constitution when a matter deals exclusively with their internal governance.

For those who enjoy the history of Canada and learning about the twists and turns of the past, the events that have brought us to this point are really quite fascinating. As already mentioned by my colleague and as outlined in the motion itself, prior to the creation of the Province of Saskatchewan, our nation's forefathers were undertaking an immense nation-building exercise: the completion of a trans-continental railway, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company.

In order to help the fledgling railway company complete this mammoth task, the Government of Canada agreed to provide it with a tax exemption. When the Saskatchewan Act was passed in 1905, the tax exemptions applicable to the Canadian Pacific Railway were referenced in section 24. Since the creation of the Province of Saskatchewan, the company has paid applicable taxes to the Government of Saskatchewan. Section 24, or the Provision as to C.P.R. Company, states the following: “The powers hereby granted to the said province shall be exercised subject to the provisions of section 16 of the contract set forth in the schedule to chapter 1 of the statutes of 1881, being an Act respecting the Canadian Pacific Railway Company.”

Let us fast-forward 61 years to August 29, 1966, when the president and board of directors of the Canadian Pacific Railway company confirmed to the federal minister of transport at the time that the board had no objection to constitutional amendments to eliminate the tax exemption. The elimination of the tax exemption contained in clause 24 was based on an agreement between the company and the federal government that the Government of Canada would make certain regulatory changes.

It is important to note that the Government of Canada upheld its part of the agreement and made the regulatory changes. However, clause 24 of the Saskatchewan Act was never eliminated. Recently the company undertook a challenge to this tax exemption, which is why we are seeking to address this change.

While I am pleased to speak today on this motion, it is unfortunate that I have to do so. Last year my colleague, the member for Regina—Lewvan, presented a unanimous consent motion in the House dealing with this very issue. I was both disappointed and more than a little troubled that consent was not granted by members of the government at that time.

This is not a partisan issue. The motion we are discussing today was unanimously passed by the Saskatchewan legislative assembly on November 29 of last year. In fact, two members of the Saskatchewan NDP caucus, Trent Wotherspoon, the official opposition critic for finance, and Nicole Sarauer, the official opposition critic for justice, wrote a letter to the federal ministers of justice and finance, the government representative in the Senate, the leader of the official opposition in the Senate, and the finance and justice critics for the Conservative Party of Canada, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party, expressing their support for the motion and calling on the Parliament of Canada to act.

This letter was cc'd to all 14 Saskatchewan members of Parliament.

For the record, I would like to quote from the letter, which states:

You are likely aware of the resolution adopted by the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan on November 29, 2021, to repeal section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act. We ask you to work with your colleagues in the House of Commons and the Senate to ensure that the parallel resolutions required under section 43 of the Constitution Act, 1982 to finalize this amendment can be passed without delay.

• (1050)

The letter goes on to say:

We stand united as a legislature on this front, and we trust that you appreciate the importance of the quick and enthusiastic support of the Parliament of Canada in this endeavour.

This collaborative, non-partisan approach by Saskatchewan's members of the Legislative Assembly reflects the spirit in which this matter should be dealt with. Additionally, the letter emphasizes the speed and urgency needed in dealing with this matter.

Unfortunately, I am concerned that the government may not make this a priority or treat it with the urgency that it requires. The motion passed in the Legislative Assembly is comprehensive and clearly outlines the issues for the Province of Saskatchewan and its people. It is my sincere hope that the government will support this motion and pass it, as the potential cost to the people of Saskatchewan is significant.

Exempting a major corporation from certain provincial taxes would cast a significant tax burden on the residents of my province. Citizens pay their taxes. Families, single parents, seniors and young people who are new to the workforce all pay their fair share. It would also be unfair to other businesses, including small businesses, as it would give significant advantage to the CPR over those businesses and would be detrimental to our farmers, producers and consumers.

The Hon. Gordon Wyant, Saskatchewan's justice minister, put it very well when in the Saskatchewan legislature when he stated:

Simply put, it would not be fair for one of Canada's largest business corporations to have a substantial tax exemption in our province, but be required to pay taxes in other provinces simply based on the date Saskatchewan became a province.

I have to admit that after the rejection of the unanimous consent motion, I was skeptical about whether or not the government would do what is clearly the right thing for Saskatchewan. However, given the clear arguments laid out in the motion put forward by Minister Wyant and Mr. Wotherspoon in the Saskatchewan legislature and the context provided during the debate, as well as the unanimous support of the Legislative Assembly, I would submit to this place

Business of Supply

that now is the time for the federal government to ensure that Saskatchewan is treated equally and fairly within our federation. I do hope that the government and in fact all parliamentarians will unite and support the people of Saskatchewan by supporting this motion. As I said earlier, this is about fairness and equity for Saskatchewan.

I want to quote one last time from the letter by Mr. Wotherspoon and Ms. Sarauer. It says:

Currently, section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act purports to limit Saskatchewan's powers of taxation in a way that does not apply to other provinces in Canada. The amendment to the Saskatchewan Act proposed by the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan removes this inequality and will ensure fairness in taxation and jurisdiction for all Saskatchewan people.

The Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan has demonstrated that this is not a partisan matter, and I hope that all parliamentarians would look at this issue as one that they could support. As the Hon. Gord Wyant stated at the time of his intervention that section 24 is a relic of an earlier time and that repealing this section will cement Saskatchewan's place as a truly equal partner in our federation.

I hope that our colleague, the federal Minister of Justice, has had sufficient time to consult with his officials, Saskatchewan's justice minister and his colleagues across the way so that they will support this motion's speedy passage, both in this place and in the Senate of Canada.

I appreciate the opportunity to make this intervention and I will try to address any questions that my colleagues might have.

• (1055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I suspect that individuals who might be following the debate here today or the debate that took place in Saskatchewan might be curious about what it really means in terms of the taxation.

Had the Province of Saskatchewan actually forgone any ability to tax CP Rail, or did CP Rail actually pay taxes? In listening to my colleague, one would be of the opinion that CP has been paying taxes. That is not 100% my understanding. If she could enlighten me on that point, I would really appreciate it.

• (1100)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and I understand. I did make the statement that since the creation of the Province of Saskatchewan, the company has paid applicable taxes to the Government of Saskatchewan. I will say that I stayed away from commenting on the case that is before the court. I do not want to comment on that since it is before the courts, but I thank him for his question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

The Bloc Québécois obviously supports the Conservative Party motion about a proposed amendment to the Constitution of Canada in relation to the Saskatchewan Act.

Business of Supply

However, we cannot discuss the Constitution without acknowledging the elephant in the room. Quebec is not a signatory to the Constitution Act, 1982, which Canada simply imposed on us.

Would my colleague comment on the fact that, for Quebecers, the constitutional status quo is unacceptable?

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, the member and his party have been very clear about what they think about the Constitution and their place in this federation. In fact, it was not so long ago that we were here in the last Parliament, toward the end of Parliament, entertaining an opposition day motion where they were flexing their right as a province to amend the Constitution. I appreciate his question on this issue. Here we are today asking for a similar consideration.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her speech. It is great to see us working together. This started in the Saskatchewan legislature, led by the Saskatchewan NDP.

I met with Dr. Katharine Smart from the CMA yesterday. She cited that there are pre-existing shortages. We need \$3.2 billion for 7,500 new doctors and nurses. We need \$6 billion to end the wait-lists in our health care system. We have overworked, tired and exhausted health care workers, and it is corporations like this that are not paying their fair share.

Does the member agree that not only should Canadian Pacific pay its fair share, but those who have profited from COVID-19 and the pandemic and companies using tax havens to not pay their fair share of taxes should also be paying their fair share? I hope she agrees with me that they should.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I absolutely believe that corporations should pay their fair share of taxes. I would suggest that what we have seen over the last two years during the pandemic, which I believe has been greatly mismanaged by the current government, was the spending of tax dollars to grant sole-source contracts to Liberal insiders and their friends to line the pockets of those individuals. They really did take advantage of the pandemic. I suggest that questions about health care and whether it is being funded properly should be posed to the members across the way.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at the outset, let me acknowledge that I am speaking to you from the traditional lands of the Algonquin people. I also want to acknowledge the lands from which our colleagues are joining us today.

It is a solemn honour and pleasure for me to rise in this debate to speak on the proposed constitutional amendment in relation to Saskatchewan. It is not every day a motion for a resolution to amend the Constitution of Canada comes before the House. I want to thank the member for Regina—Lewvan for bringing this forward.

Indeed, a resolution authorizing the proposed amendment has already been adopted by the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. The amendment, if also authorized by resolutions of both Houses of Parliament, would repeal a provision of the Saskatchewan Act that

was enacted by Parliament in 1905 but is now an entrenched part of the Constitution of Canada.

Hon. members are aware that 40 years ago the Constitution of Canada was patriated by the enactment of the Canada Act 1982. No longer would the Parliament of the United Kingdom legislate for Canada, including making amendments to its Constitution. The Canada Act 1982 completed Canada's journey from a colony to an autonomous dominion to a full independent state, while preserving our institutions and traditions of parliamentary democracy and the rule of law.

Our government is proud to support the province and the people of Saskatchewan in supporting this important constitutional amendment to ensure the tax system in Saskatchewan is fair and that all corporations pay their fair share of taxes.

The Constitution Act, 1982, which is scheduled to the Canada Act 1982, not only constitutionally entrenches the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples of Canada and sets out the commitments of governments to promote equal opportunities for all Canadians. It also establishes the procedures for constitutional amendments.

There are five amending procedures. Two of them we have often heard about: the general rule or 7/50 procedure; and the unanimous consent procedure.

The general procedure requires the approval of at least seven of the 10 legislative assemblies of the provinces representing 50% of the provincial population, and the two federal Houses. Only one constitutional amendment has been made under the general procedure. It was made in 1983 to strengthen the rights of indigenous peoples under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

The unanimous consent procedure, which applies to a limited number of subjects, requires the approval of both the Senate and the House, as well as 10 provincial assemblies. For both the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords to succeed, they would have had to meet this stringent standard.

As well as the two multilateral procedures, there are two unilateral procedures of limited scope. The Parliament of Canada can amend the Constitution of Canada in relation to the executive government or the Senate and the House of Commons, subject to the protections of the fundamental characteristics of these institutions by the multilateral amending procedures. That is how, in 1985 and 2011, Parliament amended section 51 of the Constitution Act, 1867, concerning representation in the House. As well, each provincial legislature may amend the constitution of the province as long as it does not infringe on fundamental provisions, such as section 133 of the Constitution Act, 1867, and section 23 of the Manitoba Act, 1870, which protect language rights.

We now come to the bilateral constitutional amendment procedure. It is this procedure that the legislative assembly has invoked, which is set out in section 43 of the Constitution Act, 1982. An amendment to the Constitution of Canada in relation to a provision that applies to one or more but not all provinces may be made by a proclamation issued by the Governor General when authorized by a resolution of the Senate and the House, and of the legislative assembly of each province to which the amendment applies. That is the case here. The provision that would be amended, section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act, only applies to Saskatchewan. The legislative assembly of the province to which the amendment applies, the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, has authorized this amendment. It is now for the two federal Houses to determine whether to adopt resolutions authorizing the same amendment: the repeal of section 24.

• (1105)

The bilateral procedure can be viewed as a middle ground between the multilateral procedures requiring unanimous consent of the federal and provincial Houses at one end and the unilateral procedures allowing for an amendment by an ordinary act to the legislature on the other. The bilateral procedure is found in part V of the Constitution Act, 1982, which the Supreme Court of Canada has said “provides the blueprint for how to amend the Constitution of Canada”.

The court called section 43, the bilateral formula, the “special arrangements procedure”, which applies in relation to provisions of the Constitution that apply to some but not all provinces. The court noted that it would “overshoot the mark” to make the adoption of the amendment dependent on the consent of provinces to which the provisions do not apply. Section 43 of the Constitution Act, 1982, also serves to ensure that a special provision cannot be amended without the consent of the province to which the amendment applies.

The bilateral constitutional amendment procedure has produced no fewer than seven constitutional amendments. Four of them concern Newfoundland and Labrador: one changing the name of the province to include “Labrador” in 2001, and three changing the denominational schools provisions of the terms of union in 1987, 1997 and 1998. One was made at the request of Quebec and also concerned denominational schools provisions to remove their application as to favour the organization of school boards along linguistic lines, and that was done in 1997. One was made at the request of New Brunswick in 1993, adding section 16.1 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and thus recognized in the Constitution the equality of the English and French linguistic communities in the province. Finally, one was made at the behest of Prince Edward Island in 1993 to remove the requirement in the terms of union for Canada to maintain a ferry service, thereby facilitating the substitution of the construction of the Confederation Bridge to the mainland.

These amendments all have the same things in common: each amended provisions of the Constitution of Canada that applied to fewer than all provinces; each amendment applied only to one province; each amendment was initiated by the provincial assembly of the province in question before being considered by the federal

Business of Supply

Houses; and each amendment modernized certain aspects of the Constitution and demonstrated federal-provincial co-operation.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

The amendment proposed by the Saskatchewan legislature is similar to the seven others that have been adopted under the bilateral process since 1982. It seeks to amend a provision of the Constitution that does not apply to all the provinces. The amendment itself would apply to only one province. The initiative to make the amendment came from the legislative assembly of the province before it ended up before us.

The amendment would modernize certain aspects of the Constitution, in this case by removing a limit on the exercise of the province's power that does not apply to most of the provinces and no longer has its place.

Repealing section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act at the request of the province would be, by the way, a fine example of federal-provincial collaboration.

[*English*]

The Governor General is being authorized to proclaim a constitutional amendment, so it should go without saying that the wording of the constitutional amendment must be identical in each of the federal and provincial resolutions and in each official language version of the text.

To come to the proposed amendment at hand, on November 29, 2021, the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan unanimously adopted a resolution to amend the Constitution of Canada to repeal, retroactive to August 1966, section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act, the enactment that created the Province of Saskatchewan.

This section of the act purports to subject Saskatchewan's constitutional powers to clause 16 of an agreement dating back to 1880 between the Government of Canada and the founders of the Canadian Pacific Railway company, which is now commonly referred to as the CPR. This clause exempted CPR from certain federal, provincial and municipal taxes forever. Despite its tax exemption, in 1966 CPR agreed to pay applicable taxes. More recently, CPR brought claims against all governments involved to reassert its historical tax exemption.

The amendment proposed by the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan is similar to the seven others that have already been made to the bilateral procedure since 1982. It aims to amend a provision of the Constitution that does not apply to all provinces. The amendment itself would only apply to one province. The amendment was initiated by the legislative assembly of the province before coming before us, and the amendment would effectively modernize certain aspects of the Constitution, in this case by removing a limit on the exercise of powers of the province that does not apply to most of the other provinces and which is no longer appropriate. Moreover, repealing section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act would be a nice example of federal-provincial co-operation.

Business of Supply

Saskatchewan's concerns regarding section 24 are threefold. First, Saskatchewan is of the view that it would be inconsistent with the province's position as an equal partner in Confederation. The provision restricted Saskatchewan's taxation powers relative to those of the other provinces in Canada. Second, Saskatchewan believes it would be unfair for other businesses operating in the province, including small businesses, if a major corporation were exempt from certain provincial taxes, providing the corporation a significant competitive advantage over those other businesses to the detriment of farmers, consumers and producers of the province. Third, Saskatchewan asserts it would be unfair to the residents of Saskatchewan if a major corporation were exempt from certain provincial taxes, casting an additional tax burden onto the people of Saskatchewan.

Back in 1880, this exemption for a single large corporation may very well have been appropriate, as it was intended to recognize and encourage CPR's investment in the construction of the trans-Canadian rail network in the late 19th century. As such, it was just one of the incentives that Canada offered CPR to build Canada's first cross-country railway in fulfillment of a promise made to British Columbia for joining Confederation.

While there may have been valid reasons to grant CPR's founders a tax exemption as part of a series of measures to support the construction of Canada's transcontinental railway, those reasons no longer stand now that the construction is completed and Canada's transportation legislation has been modernized. In broader terms, section 24 of Saskatchewan's founding statute and CPR's historical tax exemption have not kept pace with how Canada's tax and fiscal policies have evolved to support an effective and efficient transportation system and a healthy growing economy.

Under the division of powers in our Constitution, the provinces are granted a general power to impose direct taxes. Section 24 seeks to constrain Saskatchewan's ability to do so with respect to the CPR, yet not all provinces are subject to such constraints, resulting in an asymmetry within the federation. Our government believes Saskatchewan should have the freedom to levy taxes within the province's boundaries, as it deems appropriate.

We agree with our Saskatchewan counterpart that other taxpayers in the province should not bear a heavier tax burden as a result of a single large corporation benefiting from an exceptional exemption from provincial taxation. We also agree there should be a level playing field between all businesses operating in Saskatchewan's transportation industry.

• (1115)

As we all know, the completion of this railway was fundamental to the birth of our nation and the subsequent rapid growth and development of our economy. The last spike, uniting east and west, is an iconic representation for our national heritage and unity.

If proclaimed, a constitutional amendment would have the effect of removing CPR's tax exemption from the Saskatchewan Act, retroactive to August 29, 1966, the date on which CPR entered into an agreement with the federal government to forgo this perpetual exemption from some taxes. The Constitution was not amended to reflect this agreement at the time because it had not yet been patriated.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

It is important that we not only focus on the substance, but also ensure that the form and procedure of the constitutional amendment are executed faithfully.

It is true that the Constitution is, as the Supreme Court tells us, the expression of the sovereignty of the people of Canada and it lies within the power of the people of Canada, acting through their governments duly elected and recognized under the Constitution, to effect whatever constitutional arrangements are desired within Canadian territory.

[*English*]

I submit that this is a very important constitutional amendment, one that is rooted in fairness. It would ensure that all Canadian corporations, including in Saskatchewan, pay their fair share of taxes. I look forward to ensuring the passage of this motion today, as well as questions and comments from our colleagues.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the speech from my friend across the way, the parliamentary secretary for justice, and thank him very much for his support on this motion. I have also heard questions from my Bloc colleagues, and they said they support it as well, as do my NDP colleagues. I thank them very much for today's decorum. The people who have spoken have been very much in support of this motion.

Does my colleague who just spoke believe that we will have that same support from the senators in the Senate chamber when this motion goes to the floor of the Senate? I am hoping they have the same kind of decorum and unanimous support for this motion.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I cannot speak for the Senate. The Senate is independent of our government, but we certainly will be supporting members throughout the passage of the motion in the House of Commons today, as well as supporting it through the process in the Senate.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague's speech was very technical. I will put it in terms that people can better understand. Basically, Canadian National, or CN, is asking for a reimbursement of taxes paid that is equivalent to 0.3% of its sales annually.

In 2021, that equalled \$8 billion dollars, which is significant. The annual amount requested by CN represents approximately \$290 for every Saskatchewan taxpayer, including children. How is it fair that a multi-billion company that was granted land for free and expropriations until 1966 is asking for more?

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, today's subject is a constitutional amendment that would essentially give Saskatchewan a right that it should have had to tax CPR. That is the fundamental issue. Previously, without this amendment, that would have been limited. I therefore submit that this is moving toward fairness, and it is up to the Government of Saskatchewan to impose a tax policy that is appropriate.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, the most surprising thing I have heard this morning has come from the member for Regina—Lewvan, the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek and now the parliamentary secretary, the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park. They have all said the same thing: They believe corporations should pay their fair share of taxes. The New Democrats welcome all of them onto that political space because it has been a long time since we have heard that kind of unity here.

Does the member think we can use the consensus this morning on paying a fair share of taxes to move forward with some kind of supertax on those who have profited from the pandemic?

• (1125)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, obviously, my friend has not known my politics long enough to understand that I have always said it is important to tax corporations. Of course, as a party we believe that and have acted on it consistently. We look forward to working with all parties on issues of importance, particularly in this case to ensure that Saskatchewan has all the tools available to it so we do not differentiate it from other provinces.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for Regina—Lewvan on this motion, and I thank my colleague from Scarborough—Rouge Park for quite a lot of technical information that helped to guide me a bit. I love Saskatchewan very much. My father used to live in Saskatchewan, and I visited Regina many times to race on Wascana Lake.

I want to give a shout-out to Mark McMorris, who won his third bronze medal at the Olympics. He is the pride of Saskatchewan. I texted his dad Don and his mom Cindy yesterday to congratulate them.

As to my question for the member, have we looked at how this would enable Saskatchewan to raise revenues and potentially invest more in health care, education or other priority areas for the province?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I thank my friend from Milton for his leadership and for ensuring that Canada's team does very well in Beijing. I really look forward to the medals they bring home.

To his point, this allows Saskatchewan a number of important things. First, it equalizes the tax playing field for all businesses so there is no unfair advantage and no unfair burden on other corporations that do not have this exemption. Second, it allows for corporations, such as CPR, to pay their share of taxes that are due to the people of Saskatchewan. It is really up to the people of

Saskatchewan to decide how they spend their money, including on important issues such as health care.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member will recall that late last year when this suggestion first came up, shortly after the Saskatchewan legislature passed the motion, we looked at giving unanimous consent to pass a motion. At the time, I indicated that I did not think it would be appropriate, given the very nature that a constitutional change was being proposed.

I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts as to why he feels today it is important for us, at the very least, to have some debate before the motion's passage.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I know our not supporting the ratification of this motion by way of unanimous consent was noted by the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek. As the member knows, we get a number of unanimous consent motions, and something of this nature, with the magnitude of amending the Constitution, requires debate, and it is the type of debate we are having today. It allowed the government a number of months. The Saskatchewan legislature passed a motion in November last year, so we are within a three-month timeline to support it.

We are very proud to support the motion today. We look forward to its passage both in the House and in the other place.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mirabel, commonly known as the Jean-René Dufort of the Bloc Québécois.

I asked myself this morning how I would deal with this fascinating issue. Something struck me when reading the motion, specifically the following:

Whereas the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed on November 6, 1885, with the Last Spike at Craigellachie....

As I am fascinated by this subject, I consulted the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, the dean of our party, who was there, and he told me that the last spike was actually driven into the track on November 4.

All joking aside, it is a fascinating subject, but I will comment on two aspects. First, I asked myself why my Conservative colleagues decided to devote an opposition day to this issue. In my view, a political party generally uses an opposition day to poke at the government with actions that more or less reflect their own political orientation. Sometimes, the intent is to shed light on urgent issues or to put forward the party's policies or agenda, which are unique to each party.

Business of Supply

Why would the Conservatives choose to use an opposition day to talk about the railway in Saskatchewan, especially in the middle of a pandemic? Numerous opposition days have been dedicated to this urgent situation, on such topics as vaccination and the “Justinflation” that my Conservative friends keep bringing up. The Conservatives are positively giddy about inflation.

I have to wonder why they did not devote an opposition day to inflation or health care funding. It seems as if power within the Conservative Party is shifting west. Who knows. I do not know. I would not want my Quebec colleagues to feel abandoned, but this is nevertheless rather interesting.

Earlier this morning I pointed out to a Conservative member that if we were to adopt this motion it would set a precedent for allowing an opposition member to move a motion to amend the Constitution. My colleague said that this had been done before, but by the government. This would therefore be the first time the Constitution would be amended through an opposition motion. I am not going to lie; this precedent is pretty appealing to a sovereignist.

We know that no one wants to debate the Canadian Constitution or hear about it. Let us remember that the rhetoric of the federalist governments in Quebec City was that the fruit was not ripe enough so we could not talk about the Constitution.

Need I remind members that in 1982, Quebec was the only province that did not sign the Constitution? We still have not signed it to this day. Perhaps we could resolve this issue through a motion.

Need I remind members of the two unsuccessful rounds of constitutional negotiations, Meech and Charlottetown? Quebec kept whittling its demands down further and further, but despite this reduction to Quebec's five traditional demands, there was no agreement from all the provinces to amend the Constitution and offer Quebec special status. My colleagues will therefore understand why this idea of being able to amend the Constitution based on an opposition motion would excite a typical sovereignist. I am highly intrigued by the idea.

The Constitution is our principle of political association; it is a fundamental principle. We are one of the only countries whose principle of political association was based on building a railway. That is true. If we look at the United States, their principle of political association was based on a quest for emancipation. It is ironic that we are talking about this issue today, given that the starting point for us was that a group of business people wanted to build a railway from one coast to the other, and in order to do that, there had to be a political form that emerged from the various colonies at the time. That is how the British North America Act came to be.

• (1130)

I find it kind of ironic that we are revisiting the subject in the present context. However, what most interests me is the possibility of amending the Constitution via an opposition party motion.

Many political thinkers have already pondered this question, including James Tully, who has written about diversity. In his book, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity*, James Tully tells us that one of Canada's biggest problems is our restrictive constitutional framework. He says it is virtually impossible

to amend the Constitution, which makes it that much more difficult to recognize ethnic minorities. James Tully talks about that in this wonderful book, and his conclusion is that our constitutional rules should be more flexible. In other words, we should have the means to easily amend our Constitution.

That is very interesting from a theoretical standpoint, but why have we not done it? Why has there never been much appetite in Canada for the kind of flexible framework that would enable us to amend the Constitution?

I will say it. It is quite simple. The reason is, if we open this Pandora's box, it will be easier for indigenous groups to get what they have long been asking for, namely greater political autonomy.

It is important to make a distinction. When James Tully says that minorities must be constitutionally recognized, he is referring to ethnocultural minorities. However, there are also national minorities, and in the Canadian context, we have two main groups: the minorities of the indigenous nations, which are too numerous to name, and the Quebec national minority.

What are these national minorities asking for? They want political autonomy.

As my father used to say, opportunity makes the thief. If we had a system that facilitated more flexible constitutional amendments, we would definitely be the first in line to try to use such measures, perhaps to assert Quebec's traditional demands, specifically, veto power and recognition of distinct status. I am sure that indigenous nations could do the same.

Unfortunately, the federal government and the federalist parties will never allow the flexibility needed for constitutional changes to be made. If a precedent is being set today, I am curious to see how this will develop in the future.

A constitutional amendment was made in the past, without any fuss or fanfare. In Quebec, Pauline Marois wanted to change the school boards from being divided along religious lines to linguistic ones. A constitutional amendment was needed for that to happen. It was done without too much fuss or too many political problems.

However, we do not have a tool that would allow us, as legislators, to potentially enter into dialogue with our colleagues on the Constitution. I welcome the Conservative Party motion today, because it might be just what we need to be able to open this Pandora's box and actually have a conversation about the Constitution.

If we do go down that road, perhaps the Quebec nation and indigenous nations could be recognized in some way. That is why I am confident that my party will enthusiastically support my colleague's motion.

Business of Supply

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for supporting this motion. It is a matter of fairness and justice. It is a matter of fairness to the provinces, especially to Saskatchewan. That is what the motion is asking for.

Does the member agree with that?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague.

I may not have focused on that aspect in my speech, but it is unacceptable to allow a company like Canadian Pacific, which according to my research makes \$2.8 billion in profit a year, to not pay taxes. That is unacceptable.

That is something that I think can be fixed quickly. With the goodwill of the Liberal Party, I am sure that we can quickly resolve that issue.

• (1140)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member can reflect on the amendment we have before us today in the form of a motion. It deals with an agreement that was, in principle, agreed to back in the 1960s. It dates all the way back to 1880, as has been pointed out.

There is a general feeling on all sides and from all stakeholders, including CP Rail itself to a certain degree, although this might be somewhat dated, that there is a quite difference between a motion of this nature and some of the more complicated issues of constitutional ideas that surface from all sides of the House. Does the member recognize the difference?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, to be honest, I have to tell my colleague from Winnipeg North that I am not a constitutional expert. However, I very much appreciate the idea that an opposition member can propose amendments to the Constitution by means of a motion.

As I said earlier, when I was a bit younger, I was interested in what James Tully had to say about flexible constitutions. Personally, I tend to think that is a good idea. If we set a precedent, it could be good for those who are trying to advance the idea that the Quebec nation could have more political autonomy. From that perspective, I find that my Conservative colleagues' motion is worthwhile.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy listening to the member for Jonquière. I lived in Saguenay for several years.

The big issue before the House of Commons today is the fact that a tax loophole has cost us hundreds of millions of dollars. As we all know, we lose \$25 billion a year to tax havens. There are tax loopholes everywhere. In Canada, the ultrarich avoid paying their fair

share of the money that should be invested to combat the housing shortage, to reinforce our health care system and so forth.

My question for the member for Jonquière is simple. Is it not important to eliminate all these tax loopholes?

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague from the NDP.

The government is plainly complacent about tax havens and tax loopholes. There is talk of the need for major initiatives once we are out of this crisis, including with regard to health care funding. That money will have to come from somewhere.

There needs to be major tax reform. We also need to put an end to tax havens and all the tax loopholes that are poisoning our society. I completely agree with him.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I feel like I am dealing in antiques today. The motion we are debating would amend a Constitution that was ill-conceived and that has aged poorly. The Constitution has so many holes, it looks like moths got at it. The holes in this Constitution are costing the provinces, Quebec and taxpayers a lot of money and preventing the provinces from properly and independently funding their public services.

What we are talking about today is a 136-year-old, billion-dollar company that cleared \$2.8 billion in net profit last year and is exempt from paying taxes. As an economist specializing in taxation, my first instinct is to say this is an injustice and a relic of post-colonial cronyism.

This tax revenue is owed to Saskatchewan, and we think that the provincial government should get this money back. I want to inform my colleagues straightaway that I will be pleased to support this motion.

However, since we are speaking of holes in the Constitution that are costly for the provinces, I think it is difficult to ask the opposition, and especially members of the Bloc Québécois, to disregard other fundamental problems that this Constitution has created.

As I said, the Constitution has not aged well. The Constitution was drafted in 1867, and the majority of its provisions are still in force today, but the country that drafted this Constitution was not a modern country. Health care essentially referred to field hospitals run by religious communities. Assistance for the poor was essentially charity, again run by religious communities. Education consisted of a few one-room schoolhouses and some private schools supported by charity. These responsibilities were assigned to the provinces. The Catholics were in Quebec, and they were essentially given peanuts. The Constitution was obviously drafted to ensure that Ottawa would get more and more revenue over time.

When Canada was founded, there was no personal income tax, no corporate tax, and no sales tax. I just listed basically all of the federal government's revenue sources. Since then, all the responsibilities have remained with Quebec and the provinces, but half of the revenue has gone to Ottawa.

Business of Supply

That is the problem, because we have a dusty old Constitution, the spirit of which the party in power deigns to respect. The provinces have responsibilities, and they must have management autonomy and must be able to legislate in their areas of jurisdiction. What remains is the power to spend. The problem is simple, and I have explained it many times to students: Ottawa has too much cash. That would make a great headline.

Ottawa loves to meddle in provincial affairs, loves to spend money and make legislation in areas of provincial jurisdiction, but the Constitution does not allow this. However, there is a loophole: the federal government can tell the provinces that if they do not do what it wants, it will withhold the promised money instead of giving it to them. Unfortunately, the Constitution has evolved, but not for the better. That is the problem.

Today, we have a government that provides Canada health transfers that cover only 22% of the system's costs. When this government is asked to respect the Constitution, it spits in Quebec's face. The line that all the Liberals across the way keep repeating like trained parrots is that Quebec will not be given a blank cheque, that money is not given out without accountability.

We tell them that it is none of their business and that health is not a federal jurisdiction. Their response, which I have been given here in the House, is that this is false and that it is a shared jurisdiction. They say that we have only to look at the Canada Health Act to see the way it is institutionalized. This act is the embodiment of the federal spending power. It is an almost unethical way of confirming that Ottawa has too much cash.

• (1145)

The blank cheque is Canada's Constitution, and that is not what Quebec is asking for. The Liberals have slashed funding for health care. People need to understand that. The Constitution is full of holes. It has evolved, but not for the better. That is also true for other sectors.

Mental health is an important matter. The pandemic has shown how difficult things can be and how great the provinces' needs are in terms of mental health. That is also the case for health care and hospital capacity.

What was the government's response? It decided to appoint a minister. Instead of appointing a minister of mental health, it should have sent money to Quebec. The issue is not that we are begging for money, but that the Constitution is full of holes as though eaten by moths. It should have been printed on cedar.

The same goes for housing. There is currently a housing crisis. We know the Liberals well. They talk a lot and think that the problems will solve themselves. Quebec wants respect. Negotiations on housing have been ongoing for two and a half years. We are at that point because Quebec ensures that its jurisdictions are respected and stands up for itself. That is nothing new.

In 1951, the then premier of Quebec, Maurice Duplessis, was already turning down federal subsidies for universities, because Ottawa had already started acting predatory by then. What did Quebecers do when Ottawa refused to give in? They forfeited their own money, just as they are doing now, just as they have done for

housing, health and mental health. Ottawa wants us to give in to its conditions because it has too much cash. That is the case for social policy, for the Canada health transfer and for the Canada social transfer. Ottawa says that if we do not accept its conditions, it will not give us the money.

I did not say I was against a universal public health care system and so on. What I said was that it is none of their business. The reason they are not minding their own business is that the Constitution has aged poorly. None of it has aged any better than the section that applies to the CPR. It is important to understand that this is not an exception. It is a major problem.

Now I would like to share a bit about myself.

I remember the moment when something just clicked and I decided to become an economist. I believe it was in 2001. I had read the Conference Board of Canada's report on the fiscal prospects for Quebec and the provinces. In early 2000, I was attending CEGEP. I still have the document, which has a blue binding. It showed the changing demographics and the provinces' responsibilities and how everything was going to fall apart. I should note the Conference Board is not a group of sovereignists.

People have been saying this for a long time. The Tremblay commission in Quebec said it, and so did the Séguin commission. This was based on forecasts that proved to be accurate. What happened on the other side? Nothing.

Former Quebec premier Bernard Landry, who was negotiating with former prime minister Jean Chrétien, had no choice but to call him a predator because of his behaviour. The Constitution has not aged well and was not well written.

I sympathize with our friends in Saskatchewan. A mistake can be corrected. In fact, correcting one's mistakes is a sign of intelligence. I think that we will show some intelligence today on this file.

Following this debate and after all is said and done, I sincerely hope that the CPR will be able to sing "Saskatchewan, you took my tax".

• (1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I believe the member is completely out of touch with what the people of Canada, including people in Quebec, actually feel is an obligation of the federal government.

The residents I represent, and that he is smearing, understand and appreciate that there is a need for the federal government in the area of health care. It is not good enough just to give cash. We can look at the pandemic, long-term care, mental health and other very important issues where my constituents, and I believe many of the constituents the member represents, want to see a national government presence in health care.

Could it be the member is using a brush to paint a picture that is unfair to the people of Canada?

Business of Supply

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg North is so disconnected that I think I will ask a page to take him an adapter.

There are 10 provincial premiers, all of whom are asking for an unconditional increase in health transfers and for Ottawa to mind its own business. Would my colleague say they do not represent anyone? Do those people not matter?

This is the attitude I am talking about, the Liberals' attitude towards Quebec and the provinces. They would have us believe that mutual respect is tantamount to giving a blank cheque. Meanwhile, they are slashing funding. Our constituents, like those in my riding, Mirabel, need more funding for improved services and want the system to be managed by the people on the ground, not you.

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

The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

• (1155)

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my colleague from the Bloc. I think there is symmetry in what Saskatchewan is going through with this Constitutional amendment: this mistake that should have been fixed in 1966.

Are there other, comparable changes the member would like to see made to the Constitution from a Quebec point of view? It is nice to see that Quebec and Saskatchewan are on the same page. Could the member outline a few more examples of where he would like to see some fixes in the Constitution for his home province?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, as my colleague knows, if it were up to me, there would be an international border along the Ottawa River. Of course, that would not stop me from inviting my colleague for the weekend.

I would say that the first thing would be to recognize Quebec as a distinct society and the legal implications that entails.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague talking about the deficiencies when it comes to health care transfers to the provinces.

As I said earlier, I met with the Canadian Medical Association's Dr. Smart yesterday. She cited that \$6 billion is needed right now just to end waiting lists. We know that health care workers are stressed. They are tired. We know there is money out there, and that corporations are not paying their fair share, whether it be Canadian Pacific in Saskatchewan or those that are using tax havens or loopholes not to pay their fair share of taxes.

Would my colleague agree that the Liberal-Conservative coalition to protect large corporations needs to end, and that large corporations that have profited from the pandemic, that are moving their

money outside the country, and that have CEOs who are not paying their fair share of taxes, need to pay their fair share? Then we could have doctors and nurses, and the services that all Canadians need to protect themselves and their families.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has always been an ally of the taxpayer in the fight against tax evasion.

When it comes to funding health care, I would like to point out that we heard the Minister of Health across the way tell us about the pandemic and say that suddenly there was money and commitment, but only when the solution was temporary. For a permanent solution there is never one cent.

It is important to realize that the money the provinces are asking for, and which is in Ottawa because, as I was saying, the Constitution is full of flaws, is money that was taken away from us. It is money we used to have. All we want is to go back to the way things used to be, which was more or less fair. We are not asking for heaven and earth. We are just asking for the minimum, and this government refuses to even listen.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today and speak to the opposition motion brought forward by our friends in the Conservative Party down the way. I am even more pleased to be sharing my time with the excellent member for Elmwood—Transcona.

This motion proposes an amendment to the Constitution of Canada that would repeal section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act and deem the change retroactive to August 29, 1966. Notably, this would remove a provision dating back to 1880, prior to Saskatchewan's becoming a province in 1905, which exempted Canadian Pacific Railway from paying provincial taxes in Saskatchewan.

This has been an interesting issue to learn about over the past 48 hours. I understand that this motion here before us today complements a similar motion the Saskatchewan legislative assembly unanimously passed in November of last year.

I might seem to my colleagues a bit of an unlikely speaker to this issue, being a B.C. boy and all, but I am honoured to serve as the NDP transport critic. Of course, trains transport things, and Canadian Pacific owns trains. Hence, for the next 10 minutes, Madam Speaker, I am your guy. More important, I am a proud Canadian, and I believe in the principles of fairness and responsibility, which I believe lie at the heart of this issue.

Business of Supply

For folks following along back home, and I will not hazard to guess how many of those there might be, I believe these are the basic relevant facts in this matter. Canadian Pacific Railway obtained access to a huge swath of our country, much of it unceded indigenous land, to build its railway. While the corporation made a significant investment, it also received substantive incentives from the federal government of the day. Among those incentives, the federal government agreed, in its contract with Canadian Pacific Railway, to exempt the railroad from paying taxes in perpetuity.

It is surprising, I know, that a Conservative government would agree to such immense corporate welfare, but there we have it. Despite this, and for reasons that are not exactly clear, CP has been voluntarily paying taxes to the Province of Saskatchewan for a century. It is also surprising to see such voluntary corporate benevolence.

Today, Canadian Pacific wants the taxes it has paid to the province since 2002 to be returned in the sum of \$341 million on the basis that it should not have paid those taxes in the first place. I am not a lawyer, and I will not be making legal arguments today. The battery of lawyers who are engaged in the court case that is ongoing will have that aspect well in hand. Rather, the argument I will make in support of this motion is a simple moral one.

Today, Canadian Pacific benefits greatly from the Province of Saskatchewan and from the infrastructure and services its residents have funded through their taxes. CP employees drive to work on roads paid for by the people of Saskatchewan. They utilize hospitals paid for by the people of Saskatchewan. Their kids go to schools paid for by the people of Saskatchewan.

Ignoring, for a moment, the historic paperwork negotiated under who knows what kinds of circumstances, I doubt many in this place would dispute that Canadian Pacific has a responsibility as a corporation to contribute its fair share to the province's coffers. This is hardly a company that needs either a hand up or a handout. Last year, CP made \$3 billion in profits.

It is not as though being exempt from taxes would level the playing field on which CP operates; it is quite the opposite. After all, Canadian Pacific's main competitor in Canada, CN Railway, pays its taxes. I imagine CP's other competitors in the United States also pay applicable state and federal taxes.

This is about fair treatment for Saskatchewan in this confederation. Saskatchewan deserves to be treated equally, with the same control over its internal affairs and taxes that every other province enjoys. The jurisdictional inequity raised in this motion unfairly denies it that. The people of Saskatchewan have made their will clear, and the unanimous passage of the same motion in the provincial legislature illustrates that there is cross-party support for this change. It is time for the House to act.

• (1200)

By nullifying the historic tax exemption, this motion essentially codifies into law the practice that CP has already been following for an entire century. It seems to be the right and proper thing for us to do.

Besides a questionable historic contract, how could CP possibly argue it should not pay its fair share to the Province of Saskatchewan? People in Saskatchewan want their taxes to go to the public services they rely on, things like health care and education. They do not want them to have to pad the profits of a multi-billion dollar corporation. The money that CP Rail is demanding could be much better spent. I think everyone in the House will agree that it would be much better spent helping the people of Saskatchewan.

The railroads, and I speak of railroads in the plural sense, had a pivotal role in the development of our country. It is one of the central narratives we are taught in elementary school, yet in many ways, it was a Faustian bargain because today we are left with corporations that wield power far out of proportion to their place in our society. Railway companies have their own private police forces that investigate their actions when things go wrong, as we saw in British Columbia after the disaster that killed three men in 2019 near Field: Dylan Paradis, Andrew Dockrel and Daniel Waldenberger-Bulmer. Their families are still fighting for justice.

Railways own vast tracks of land, much of it adjacent to communities, and this too often constrains community development and restricts public access. Railway companies design their own safety plans, which are opaque to citizens and communities and, as the auditor general found in her follow-up audit last year, are inadequately monitored for effectiveness by Transport Canada.

Railway companies also own the tracks themselves, precluding the federal government from operating a dependable passenger rail service in much of the country during a time of climate crisis when our national bus service has been shut down for good.

Now I certainly recognize the positive role that railways play as well. They are certainly important employers in our communities. In the community I live, in the community of Smithers, the town is named after the former president of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, Sir Alfred Smithers. Notwithstanding those things, when I talk to community leaders about their relationship with the railroads, sadly, mostly what I hear are stories of frustration.

In light of this dynamic, which is admittedly difficult to reshape given all that has happened, I would submit that the least we should expect is that these highly profitable companies pay their taxes. Let us put an end to this historic injustice. I hope all parties in the House will come together and ensure that Saskatchewan is treated as an equal partner in our Confederation. It sounds like they will.

Learning about this issue made me think of my mom's family, who settled in Regina in the 1800s. My great-great-grandfather, George Broder, settled in Regina in 1882, right around the same time that CP was building the railroad. His son-in-law, my great-grandfather, Neil Taylor, was a lawyer, businessman, veteran, athlete and someone who loved his own province deeply. Incidentally, he ran for the federal Conservative Party in 1945. I checked the electoral record, and I was simultaneously delighted and dismayed to see that he was trounced by someone representing a little party called the CCF.

Now, Neil, my great-grandfather, was also known as “Piffles”, a nickname he was given in reference to a turn of phrase that was popular during that time. If someone said or did some thing that was, shall we say, extremely lacking in merit, one would say it was “piffle”. It was nonsense, rubbish, balderdash and all the other words I am not allowed to say in this place, either directly or indirectly.

I asked my uncle Sam in Vancouver about this. He is our family's historian. I wanted to know what he thought my great-grandfather would have said about this issue if he were alive today, what he would say about a wealthy railroad company trying to get out of its responsibilities to the people of Saskatchewan. He said he would probably say that it was a bunch of piffle.

• (1205)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the member for his support of our motion. Saskatchewan appreciates it. It is also heartwarming to see how everyone tries to make a connection to Saskatchewan. It has been said that all roads will lead to Saskatchewan, so I am happy to see members trying to make that connection. It is truly the best province in our country.

I understand that the railway does have a wide swath. I think that if we can find agreement on something else today, other than the motion itself, is that maybe if we had other ways to move goods back and forth across our country other than the railway, maybe with some pipelines, that would be a good start as well.

I wonder if my colleague would agree that some pipelines also need to be built in this country.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate what my hon. friend is trying to do with his question. Now, I agree that the things that bring us together as different provinces across the country are good things indeed. I would submit that, given his province's excellent renewable energy resources, perhaps an even better opportunity is to come together around the vision of a clean energy economy, one that delivers the kind of safe and secure future for our kids that I think we all want.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, based on a number of today's comments, people listening to the debate might think CP has not been paying any taxes to the Province of Saskatchewan, and we know that to be not true. I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on not only ensuring tax fairness but also being transparent that CP has actually been paying taxes. It has not been using that particular clause in order to avoid paying taxes.

Business of Supply

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary will note that in my speech I detailed at some length the fact that CP, for some reason, has been paying its taxes for 100 years voluntarily despite a clause in the contract that clearly exempts it from doing so.

The question I have is a similar one. Why all of a sudden is this railway company wanting its taxes reimbursed? What happened 13 years ago? Maybe there was a change in its legal team or a new staff member came in who wanted to prove themselves, but all of a sudden it is coming forward and saying that it wants 300 and some million dollars from the people of Saskatchewan and that does not want to pay taxes going forward. What changed in its philosophy as a company?

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague and I seem to be on the same wavelength. If this Conservative Party motion is adopted and an amendment is made to the Constitution, what does he believe that would imply for Quebec, which in fact wants to revisit the Constitution?

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech of the member's colleague on this matter, and I understand there are a number of long-standing grievances the Bloc would like to see remedied in one way or another. To make limited changes to the Constitution using this mechanism is something that has been done before by other provinces. It is an avenue available to every province.

I am not a constitutional scholar, and I will leave it to those more educated in those areas to give some sense of what might be possible, but absolutely it is important that it is a living document and that we make changes as appropriate over time to reflect the will of the people of our country.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise and ask the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley a question, as I have family from that part of the world. Earlier my colleague was talking about pipelines, another transportation method in Canada, and the retort was about renewable energy.

In Alberta, we do all of the things. We do renewable energy, traditional energy and all of these things. The lack of pipelines has really rejuvenated the rail system in northern Alberta because a lot of the oil is now going out on rail. I am wondering what my colleague's comments are on that.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, we seem to be straying a bit from the constitutional matter at hand, but I will humour the question from my colleague. Obviously, transporting oil by rail or by pipeline is a risky business, as we have seen evidenced by many spills over the years and all of the damage that has occurred.

Business of Supply

We need to do things as safely as possible, and I have grave concerns about the safety of our railroad system. The transport committee is currently studying rail safety, and I would invite my hon. colleague to attend some of those hearings and learn about—

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

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thought I might start off in today's debate by making a couple of disclosures.

First, my paternal grandfather comes from Saskatchewan: Biggar, to be exact. He ended up in Transcona, which is also a rail town, because at that time, in order to serve an apprenticeship with CN, one had to do time in Biggar and then in Transcona. That is how my father's family found its way to Transcona: by working on the railway for CN, of course, not CP. CN continues to be a very important company in Transcona. It does not employ anywhere near as many people as it used to, but it still employs a lot of people, and its training centre is in Transcona just about a stone's throw away from my home, where I am speaking from today.

We deal with a lot of challenging issues in Parliament. One of the things we can take from the tenor of today's debate and the confluence of arguments is that this is a pretty straightforward question. It does not make sense to exempt a large and profitable corporation from paying the taxes its competitors pay by virtue of something that happens to be in the Constitution from a very long time ago.

As people have remarked, it is legitimate to wonder what changed. Why, all of a sudden, has CP adopted a very different posture, and why does it want over \$300 million in taxes it paid to Saskatchewan back from the province? It had been paying its taxes without issue for about 100 years, despite having access to this exemption under the Constitution. It is clear that CP operates in a competitive market, and its competitors do not get this kind of exemption. Therefore, if we want to have a fair and competitive industry, players have to be playing by the same rules at the very least. That is why I am very happy to support this change and to protect folks in Saskatchewan from having to reimburse taxes that I think were rightly paid by CP.

What is interesting about this feature of the Constitution that we are trying to change today is that it hearkens back to a time when government was a lot more open and honest about the extent to which it was willing to patronize large companies. However, that kind of thing is happening today. I would argue that we should be just as concerned about the kind of flagrant disregard that governments in Ottawa, whether Liberal or Conservative, have had for big companies paying their fair share. We should be just as concerned with the examples of that today as we are regarding historical examples, because they certainly persist.

Here we have something that at least is clear-cut. It is in the Constitution, so it is easy to see. What is a lot harder to see are the details of the transactions that go on, under various agreements, that establish tax havens so that wealthy corporations and individuals are able to move their money out of Canada without paying taxes. That is a lot harder to have an informed debate about. We do have folks who have done a lot of work on this, but it takes a lot of digging. It is not spelled out in the Constitution, and we do not have a

company going to court to celebrate what it thinks is its right to get out of paying its fair share.

Instead, we have a lot of shady dealings. They are under legal agreements, to be sure, but they are shady nonetheless. We do not have appropriate access to information about how much money is leaving the country and the extent to which large, profitable corporations are getting away without paying their fair share.

As far as I am concerned, what is happening with CP is just one small, stark example, on the scale of what is going on, of what is happening every day in the Canadian economy. Based on the best information available, and it is not a very transparent process, the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that Canadians are losing out on \$25 billion every year through the use of tax havens by Canada's wealthiest individuals and corporations.

• (1215)

We are talking about a tax bill that has accrued over the last 20 years or so that is on the order of about \$300 million.

For those who are getting up today to highlight the unfairness of CP demanding back \$300 million from Saskatchewan taxpayers, which it rightly paid and should not get back, I would hope that we can take our outrage and our shock at that and transform it into some meaningful action on something that might actually make a dent in the finances of the nation. There is certainly a need to be able to pay for things that are going to support people through the remainder of this pandemic, but also that will help make investments as we try to face the climate challenge.

Of course, there are people who say that the government should not spending any money on encouraging renewable energy or other things like this, because the government has no place in deciding these things, but CP is an interesting case study with regard to that.

Despite all the wrongs that were part of building that railway, whether it was the treatment of indigenous people and running roughshod over their land, or the Chinese people who were brought here to work on the railway and who were killed and treated horribly, there is no question that building the railway was a central component of making Canada the country it is today. There is a lot that we could talk about regarding what was wrong with it. That is a legacy we can talk about and debate another time.

However, it did not happen solely through the ingenuity of private entrepreneurship. In fact, there was a fair bit of government investment. We are dealing with the legacy of that government involvement today. I think it shows the extent to which the big things do not happen without public involvement. They do not happen without the involvement of government. We can look at Alberta and the government of Peter Lougheed, and the amount that government invested in developing the technology that would ultimately produce the oil sands technology that has been part of driving Alberta's economy for decades now. There was massive public investment in that.

There is certainly a lesson to learn from this, and that is that public investment is required for the big things that help move our country forward. Canadians should not expect that some few people get to benefit from that investment and make off with the money. That is too often the case, as CP is reminding us by insisting on what it takes to be its right to not pay its fair share, even though there were all sorts of different kinds of public subsidies, whether preferential tax treatment or direct investment.

That is not the way these things should work. If we want to build Canada, and if we want to confront the big challenges of our time, that has only ever happened with massive public investment.

The question should not be whether the public investment happens or not. The question should be who is benefiting from that investment and how do we, as legislators and governments elected by Canadians, ensure that Canadians are the ones ultimately benefiting from that.

While there are people who make some money along the way, we have to make sure that does not get out of hand. In a country where 1% of the population now owns 25% of the wealth, we are in a position where that is getting out of hand again. This is an interesting reminder from the 19th century, which was a case study in just how bad things are when a very small number of people controls all of the wealth and resources. It is something we should be mindful of.

We should turn ourselves to the task of combatting the big infrastructure challenge of our time, which is climate change, with our eyes wide open, appreciating that in the past, when there have been big infrastructure challenges, government has had an important role to play. We should learn a lesson from this, which is that we need vigilance not to keep the public sector out of developing the future of the country, but to ensure that a few people along the way do not make mad money while others suffer in order to create that progress.

Let us deal with this today but learn the larger lesson and ensure the wealthy are paying their fair share, and ensure Canadians are benefiting to the extent that they should from investments and infrastructure that we have to make.

• (1220)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Elmwood—Transcona for his support on this motion today. I heard him mention Biggar. When driving into the town of Biggar, Saskatchewan, there is a sign that says, “New York is big, but this is Biggar”. The hon. member can take this back to his relatives: it is a cute little sign. I have been through Biggar many times. Once again, people are still trying to make that connection to Saskatchewan, because it is a great province to be from.

Today, we will deal with this motion and I thank my colleague for his support, but I would also ask one more thing. If he does have friends in the Senate, if he knows a few Senators, I would ask that he go and talk to those friends to make sure the Senate deals with this important motion as soon as possible. I would like to have his support with the next step, which is making sure this motion

Business of Supply

passes in the Senate, so that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan receive fairness and make sure that the corporation pays its fair share.

I would hope to have his assistance with that, as well.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I thank the member, and I am quite familiar with that phrase out of Biggar. In fact, it was on a T-shirt that I wore quite a bit growing up. I am quite familiar with what the member is talking about.

It may come as no surprise to the member that New Democrats are not the best people to solicit help from, when we talk about getting things through the other place. There are some historical reasons for that. I do know some senators, and I am certainly happy to talk to them, but I think it is outrageous that we need the approval of a group of completely unelected legislators who are accountable to no one in order to get something like this done.

• (1225)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciated a number of the comments the member made, especially when asking if there was something we could learn from CP and the Constitutional change, and how the Constitution reflected an agreement that pre-existed Saskatchewan entering Confederation.

Are there things that we can learn from it? For example, we have a huge investment that came from the British Columbia NDP government toward LNG, which was supported by this national government and by huge contributions from the private sector. I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts on that issue. Is that something he would support?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, the member, of course, raises his own example. The example I had in mind was the wage subsidy. It has paid out hundreds of millions of dollars just recently, without any meaningful accountability, to companies that we have seen raise their dividend payments and reward their shareholders in all sorts of ways, and that have not been asked to pay a single dime back. I think that was a terrible example of how to manage public funds.

The NDP called for controls at the inception of that program, and we pointed to other jurisdictions that were doing it better. To me, the wage subsidy program is the best example of the government not having learned its lesson.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important speech. As he outlined, this is a company that had \$3 billion in profits last year. It paid taxes for 100 years and now, because it sees that there is a loophole, it wants to go back and claw back \$300 million. This would have a huge impact on education services and health services in the province of Nova Scotia.

Could my colleague speak about the trend we are seeing happening right now, with big corporations putting greed ahead of the public good when it comes to corporate and social responsibility, and how governments need to stand up and make sure that those corporations are paying their fair share?

Business of Supply

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I think governments have created a very permissive environment that has encouraged corporations to pursue their own interests. We see that in the corporate tax rate being slashed from 28% to 15%.

I do not think that there was ever a golden era when corporations were putting the public good ahead of their private interests, but there was a time when governments required more of them in order to occupy the positions that they occupy in terms of the power and influence that they enjoy. They were required to give more back. If they were not willing to do it in the way that they behaved, at the very least they were required to do it financially, by paying their fair share of taxes. We have really seen that decline, because we have seen governments stop requiring it of them. I think that, until governments grow a spine and start standing up to big companies and making them pay their fair share, this will continue.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

There is a lot of Canadian history going on in today's debate. There is so much that I had to dig up my old university notes when preparing my speech. On that note, at this time I would like to thank my economics history 206 professor at the University of Regina, Dr. Richard Kleer, for his fascinating class way back when. If Dr. Kleer is watching, I have to say that I believe my speech today is worth at least a few bonus marks in his class.

Before I get to the Canadian Pacific Railway, I would like to talk a bit about another historic Canadian company, the Hudson's Bay Company. In the year 1670, King Charles II granted the newly formed Hudson's Bay Company a monopoly on trading posts in all lands in North America whose rivers empty into Hudson Bay, an area including parts of present-day Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec and Nunavut, and all of present-day Manitoba. Once King Charles II wrote up his royal charter and handed that piece of paper over to the Hudson's Bay Company, it became illegal for anyone else to operate a trading post in the land in North America that soon became known as Rupert's Land.

This was great for business for the Hudson's Bay Company trading posts. If any other entrepreneur opened up a competing trading post, Hudson's Bay Company could simply arrest them and throw them in jail. This situation continued for 200 years, until the Hudson's Bay Company voluntarily surrendered its trading post monopoly in exchange for compensation from the government. However, the company still exists today in the form of Hudson's Bay department stores in malls all across the country.

Imagine for a minute if the board of directors of Hudson's Bay department stores woke up tomorrow morning and decided that they wanted their old monopoly back. Imagine if they went to court and tried to shut down Canadian Tire or Shoppers Drug Mart. After all, Canadian Tire and Shoppers Drug Mart are violating the royal charter that granted the trading post monopoly to the Hudson's Bay Company way back in the year 1670.

I hope everyone in this chamber can agree that this would be completely and totally ridiculous. Even if Hudson's Bay Company lawyers dusted off the original copy of the 1670 Royal Charter or the original copy of the 1870 Deed of Surrender and found one of

the i's was not dotted or one of the t's was not crossed, it would still be completely and totally ridiculous to shut down every Canadian Tire and Shoppers Drug Mart. One way or another, we as lawmakers would not allow that to happen.

We have almost as ridiculous a situation developing today in my home province of Saskatchewan with the Canadian Pacific Railway, which is another Canadian company that is almost as historic as the Hudson's Bay Company. The construction of a transcontinental railway was a condition of the Province of British Columbia joining Confederation in 1871. A few years later, Parliament passed the Canadian Pacific Railway Act as a way to contract out the construction and operation of the new transcontinental railway. The terms were very generous: \$25 million; 25 million acres of Crown land in western Canada, including the mineral rights; a ban on new competing railways south of the main line; and certain tax exemptions for the Canadian Pacific Railway that were to last forever.

A few years later, in 1905, when Parliament decided to pass the Saskatchewan Act to create the province of Saskatchewan, the tax exemptions granted to the Canadian Pacific Railway were included in section 24 of the act and transferred to the newly created provincial government. These terms were very generous, and rightfully so. The whole idea of building a transcontinental railway in the 1800s must have been on the same scale as NASA going to the moon in the 1900s or the prospect of sending astronauts to Mars in this century. The railway played a vital role in bringing British Columbia into Confederation and the settlement of western Canada. For its contribution, the Canadian Pacific Railway was well paid.

• (1230)

However, as the saying goes, all good things must come to an end, and for CP Rail, these tax exemptions did come to an end in the year 1966. That year, federal politicians, provincial politicians from Saskatchewan and executives from CP Rail sat down and came to an agreement. At that time, all parties agreed that the tax exemptions included in section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act would be discontinued in exchange for certain railway regulatory changes, and CP Rail has been paying its fair share of taxes ever since, just like everyone else.

This is where the story should have ended. After CP Rail started paying its taxes in 1966, historians should have been able to turn the page on this chapter of our history, just like historians have long since turned the page on the Hudson's Bay Company's trading post monopoly. Unfortunately, that is not what happened. Recently, these tax exemptions, which are technically still on the books, have become the subject of a lawsuit in my home province of Saskatchewan.

CP Rail has decided that it wants to go back to the good old days when it did not have to pay taxes. It wants the tax exemptions specified in section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act of 1905 to be reactivated and brought back to life so that the company no longer has to pay taxes moving forward. CP Rail is also claiming that it is entitled to \$341 million in taxes that it has been paying over the years, when it apparently did not have to.

This lawsuit is almost as ridiculous as the Hudson's Bay Company trying to shut down Canadian Tire and Shoppers Drug Mart for violating the trading post monopoly granted to them by King Charles II in the year 1670. The only difference in this case is that technically section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act of 1905 is still on the books, so we have not quite turned the final page on this chapter of our history.

The time has come to turn the page. While I have a great deal of respect and admiration for the contributions the Canadian Pacific Railway has made to our collective history, the time has come to treat it like any other company, and that means paying its fair share of taxes. It is finally time to repeal section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act of 1905. I will be voting in favour of the motion brought forth by my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan, and I encourage all members to do the same.

● (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I hope to be able to expand upon this, but I appreciate the fact that CP did enter into an agreement back in the mid-sixties, in 1965 or 1966, as no doubt there would have been some discussions in the lead-up to it. I think it is important for us to recognize that CP as a corporation has been paying taxes. I do not know what triggered CP, whether it was a young intern or whomever, to ultimately decide this issue should be going to a court.

Is the member aware of the situation? Do we know why CP made the decision to move in the direction of going to court?

Mr. Michael Kram: Madam Speaker, the short answer is no. I have done some research outside of my economics history class, I have to say, and I have come up with no answer to that particular question. Some management and directors decided this would be a good idea, and CP Rail is giving it the old college try, but I do not know what motivated them to go down this path.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague has clearly shown that it was absurd for Canadian Pacific not to pay its taxes.

What I am having difficulty understanding is the ambivalence of our Liberal colleagues. They have seemed very hesitant to support the Conservative motion right from the start of the day. Can my colleague explain why he thinks our Liberal colleagues are being so reserved?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Kram: Madam Speaker, the question by the hon. member from the Bloc is probably best posed to the Liberals on the other side of the House. It is certainly my sincere hope that all members of the House will be supporting this motion. It is very reasonable and more than a little overdue, as I have laid out. It is my understanding that CP Rail has been paying its taxes since 1966, and it is my hope and expectation that it will be doing so moving forward.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Regina—Wascana for his contribution. It allowed us to remember the history of what we are

Business of Supply

talking about today. As a member from Vancouver Island, I cannot resist pointing out that we were promised train service and that train service ended on Vancouver Island almost 10 years ago. Maybe that is another thing we need to fix.

I want to return to something I raised earlier. The member for Regina—Wascana talked about corporations paying their fair share of taxes. As I said before, I am glad to hear all members agreeing on that, but does that zeal for paying their fair share of taxes extend to closing down the use of international tax havens or perhaps putting a surtax on those who have profited during the pandemic?

● (1240)

Mr. Michael Kram: Madam Speaker, I think everyone is in favour of everyone paying their fair share. It is our responsibility as parliamentarians to decide what everyone's fair share is. In terms of offshore tax havens, I think that warrants more than a little investigation from the CRA to see if some loopholes can be closed.

As for profiting during the pandemic, I think it is a good thing that some companies owning a brewery or distillery retrofitted their factories to make hand sanitizer or other PPE. I certainly do not want to disincentivize entrepreneurs who have responded to the pandemic in a positive way.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have heard so many questions about nothing coming from the government side on this, which confuses us. Where does the government stand on this very fair and just motion?

What did the member gather from the government's position on this important motion?

Mr. Michael Kram: Madam Speaker, perhaps some of the members on this side of the House should be in government someday. Then we could get this matter taken care of. My understanding is that all parties will be supporting this very reasonable motion, and I hope that applies to the Liberals as well.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, the word "unprecedented" can be overused for emphasis in this place, but I do believe that this is how we can describe the challenges we are facing as a nation at this time.

For some context, 60% of Canadians report that they are not confident in their ability to feed their families. Inflation has hit a 30-year high, with no end in sight and no resolve from the federal government to help lower it. Housing prices have skyrocketed, with a yearly housing inflation rate of 26% and a staggering 85% rise since the Prime Minister took power. Families rang in the New Year with an increase in their CPP tax, leaving them \$700 poorer this year at a time when they need it the most.

Now is the time to address the affordability crisis. A concrete measure that the House can take right now would be to ensure that all Canadians are treated fairly in the taxes that they pay. That is why I am very proud today to stand alongside my Saskatchewan colleague and others to debate this issue of tax fairness.

Business of Supply

Conservatives are asking the House to adopt a simple motion to enact the decision made by all members of Saskatchewan's legislature last November. It would amend the Saskatchewan Act to ensure that CP Rail is obligated to honour its tax burden, just like every other large corporation and small business operating in the province of Saskatchewan. This sounds simple and like something that our tax-and-spend Prime Minister would certainly be in favour of, so why is there the need today for this debate? It is because even with all the economic pain Canadians are facing, the government is continuing to divide Canadians by the region in which they live.

Our motion was brought forward late last year but was denied by the Liberals. The hard-working, innovative and resilient people of Saskatchewan are tuned in to this debate and are expecting a change of heart in the government benches to allow us to pass our motion for the benefit of the whole province.

Just last month, the member for Regina—Lewvan brought forward a straightforward motion to repeal section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act, a clause dating from 1905 that exempted CP Rail from income, sales, fuel and capital taxes associated with this historic main line. Saskatchewan believes that a mutual agreement between its government and CP Rail in 1966 put an end to this tax agreement in exchange for favourable federal legislation that improved the rail line. CP Rail disagrees and is now suing the Government of Saskatchewan in order to recover taxes it claims were levied unconstitutionally.

The decision of all elected MLAs in Saskatchewan, taken in November, was clear. On November 29 of last year, the legislature unanimously passed a motion in favour of repealing section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act. By extension, it fell on our federal Parliament to do the same. That is why the member for Regina—Lewvan put forward his motion just before the Christmas recess. Sadly, the Liberals rejected our motion, refusing to let it pass at that time.

Provinces have the right to amend respective sections of the Constitution when rights and freedoms or the welfare of their people are in play. When Alberta sought to enshrine rights and land titles to its Métis communities, that province took action to amend its constitution in 1990. In 1996, in order to codify internal procedures of its legislature, B.C. adopted the B.C. Constitution Act. Between 1876 and 1968, Quebec, Manitoba and the Atlantic provinces all abolished their legislative upper houses, requiring the blessing of our national Parliament. In multiple times in the past, Alberta and B.C. have established and then abolished multi-member electoral districts by amending their constitutions.

In all these instances, the federal House and the Senate recognized the right of these provinces to amend their constitutions and acted accordingly. On this side of the House, Conservatives will always respect the jurisdiction of the provinces, including the ability of an individual province to unilaterally amend the section of the Constitution concerning its internal governance.

In this case, it would be unfair to other businesses operating in Saskatchewan, including small businesses, if a major corporation were exempt from certain provincial taxes, giving that corporation a significant competitive advantage over those other businesses to the detriment of farmers, consumers and producers in our province.

It is vital that every participant in our economy be able to compete and contribute on a level playing field.

I am honoured to represent the people of Yorkton—Melville, where gems of sustainable and innovative ideas are present in the DNA of how we mine our resources, grow food for Canadians and the world, and manufacture products that are shipped worldwide.

● (1245)

One example is Failure Prevention Services, whose plants and offices are in Watson, Saskatchewan. Their advanced filtration technology systems are second to none, and they have developed filters for the oil and gas industry that can be cleaned rather than thrown away. Now they are developing similar technology for train locomotives.

I also want to mention Evraz, a wonderful top-of-the-line pipeline builder of the very best pipeline in the world. They manufacture 75% of their pipeline from recycled steel. Saskatchewan has so much to be proud of, and we are contributing to the economy of this whole nation in ways that are sustainable and that we are very proud of.

My Saskatchewan colleagues and I are so proud of the work ethic and determination to succeed in small and medium-sized businesses, charitable organizations, corporate industries and the mosaic of people who live, work and play in our province.

No one in this place is attempting to diminish the vital work of CP Rail to serve our remote and rural communities and get Canada's goods to market. We know how crucial those rail lines are to moving our wheat and the other products that we grow or manufacture in our province. Conservatives will continue to promote and protect our national railways as one of the only common threads that link our country together.

I agree with my colleague from Regina—Lewvan, who asked the question about pipelines, that there should be more, but the rail line is a system that has served us well through thick and thin since the earliest days of Confederation, and we need to sustain it. We need to do more than that. I would love to see it done properly, with another railway across our nation. We need to work to develop more ways of bringing our products across the country to our shorelines and then to the world.

When it comes to fairness and affordability for everyday Canadians, this House needs to know just how uncompromising Conservatives are, and I thank my leader and our party for this opportunity to be here today to focus on Saskatchewan and support the action that the legislature of Saskatchewan has taken for tax fairness for its citizens.

Business of Supply

That is all that we are asking for. There is no reason that a Canadian company should enjoy a permanent exemption from certain provincial taxes and cast that tax burden onto the residents of my province of Saskatchewan. I do not understand the silence, the quietness of the sitting federal government in this regard. It talks about being here for all Canadians and having an all-of-Canada approach, and today it has an opportunity to stand up with the people of Saskatchewan, with the government and all of the players in the Government of Saskatchewan to support this motion in the House of Commons. I certainly expect that we are going to see full support across the benches in the House today.

We are simply asking for this House to honour Saskatchewan's attempts to ensure all businesses and residents are treated fairly by this corporation. I know that the people of Saskatchewan are watching today and are certainly expecting that we will do our due diligence and responsibility and pass this motion today in our House.

• (1250)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I had indicated previously, my understanding is that the motion will pass. I am anticipating that it will pass.

At the end of the day, I was taken by the member's comments. It was in November when the Saskatchewan legislature passed a motion unanimously, and then a couple of weeks later, on the floor of the House, a UC motion was used to try to actually change the Constitution. Does the member feel that the debate we are having today was necessarily warranted? Did we really need to have a debate on an amendment to the Constitution?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, the reality is that this issue could have been dealt with much more quickly than it has been.

Am I pleased that we are discussing it in the House of Commons today? Yes; as a matter of fact, I see it as an opportunity for the Liberal Prime Minister and members of that caucus to come out and say some really good things about a province that they even today seem to spend very little time reflecting on in a positive way.

I would say to the member that today would love to hear more from him and from his colleagues in regard to supporting Saskatchewan, why they value Saskatchewan and why it is important to pass this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, naturally I find the idea of opening the Constitution and finally discussing the taboo of opening the Constitution extremely interesting.

It made me think. Canadian Pacific enjoyed tax breaks, free land and so forth for many decades. What about now? How many other companies have advantages that we know little or nothing about?

Does my colleague believe that it would be a good thing to study this issue so that no other taxpayer has to go through what Saskatchewanians are currently experiencing?

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, my understanding is that CP has been paying its taxes and that this is a blip in the dynamic that has caused us in Saskatchewan to do what needed to be done. Unfortunately, back in the day, as one of our colleagues indicated, there used to be more of a sense of accepting responsibility. I believe this took place initially with a handshake and not with the proper paperwork being done, so it is good that this is happening today.

As far as other corporations are concerned, I come from a province and a riding that depend a great deal upon larger corporations to set the stage for a lot of the things that take place in production, mining and manufacturing. I just want to give a shout-out that I am aware of the taxes that are being paid. I am also very aware of the sense of responsibility to community and the incredible investment that those organizations are making in Saskatchewan, so I would like to see—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Let us give time for one more question at least.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the member's speech. I know her area of Yorkton—Melville well, and of course all of Saskatchewan has good people.

I have two questions for the member.

First, why, when the Harper government was in place, did the Conservatives do nothing about this? This change is long overdue. We are supporting the motion, but why did the Harper government not act?

Second, given that the Harper government put in place massive tax loopholes that have contributed to what we lose every year now, with \$25 billion in taxpayer money going to overseas tax havens, does the member believe that these massive loopholes were a mistake that led to many of Canada's most profitable corporations not having to pay any tax at all?

• (1255)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, we have gone quite a while without having to hear the Harper word in the House of Commons. In this case, I will just say that this particular motion that has come to the House has come from the Government of Saskatchewan, which is doing its due diligence in making that change.

As far as the tax havens go, I am greatly disturbed by their existence. I believe there was a fair amount of fallout at one point with the current Liberal government when the number of connected individuals who were using tax havens was discovered. I certainly think there is a need to clean that up.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to first address the challenge put forward to me by the member for Yorkton—Melville. She wanted me to show how I can identify with the province of Saskatchewan.

Business of Supply

I am a Prairie boy. I spent a number of years living in Saskatchewan, albeit I am a Bombers fan over a Roughriders fan. Unfortunately, I have family members who are Roughriders fans over the Bombers, which I suspect goes back to the time I spent growing up in Saskatchewan with my siblings and others.

Saskatchewan is a beautiful province. Much like with all regions of this country, I would say to my family and friends that Ottawa does care when things are happening in Saskatchewan. Whether they are constitutionally related, employment related, regarding the environment or even something such as charges on pollution, all of these things matter and they are issues we take very seriously.

The government has always been open not only to what people are saying but also to listening to what other parliamentarians have been saying. I thought that is where I would start today.

There has been reference made to this unanimous motion request put forward back in December, and I was one of the individuals who said, no, I did not think we should allow, through unanimous consent of the House of Commons, something to pass through related to a constitutional amendment.

I looked at what happened in the Saskatchewan legislature, where the issue was debated. There were comments put on the record with regard to it, and I want to share some of those comments with members today. I know some people were upset when I indicated that passing a constitutional amendment through unanimous consent without any debate whatsoever in the House of Commons was not an appropriate thing to do. That is the reason I said no back in December.

As I indicated in my remarks, I will be supporting the motion that was brought forward. Since the unanimous consent was requested back in December, I have had the opportunity to become better informed. I understand there has been outreach from MLAs in the Province of Saskatchewan to ensure and provide a sense of comfort to members on all sides of the House regarding why they put in the request.

I want to go right to the floor of the Saskatchewan legislature, where we saw a minister highlight why we are in this situation. Mr. Wyant said, "As members of this House [the Saskatchewan legislature] are likely aware, CPR is suing the Government of Saskatchewan for \$341 million, claiming a broad tax exemption under section 24." He went on to say, "As a matter of tax policy and business competitiveness, there must be a level playing field for all businesses."

He goes on to highlight what I believe is a very important point, and this is one of the reasons I am very surprised a lawsuit would have even been launched. I do not want to get into the legal proceedings that much. The courts will do whatever the courts will ultimately do on the issue. However, Mr. Wyant continues to say:

● (1300)

...it's our view that the Canadian Pacific Railway company agreed in 1966 that it would forgo the tax exemption in exchange for regulatory changes made by the federal government. The federal government upheld its end of the agreement by making those regulatory changes which provided significant benefits to the CPR. It's now time to ensure that our Constitution reflects that reality.

He makes it very clear that during the mid-sixties there was a discussion that took place where CP, the province and the federal government, either directly or indirectly, engaged in a discussion about the constitution of Saskatchewan and the impact of the clause that we are debating today. The consensus and agreement going out of that meeting saw the residents of Saskatchewan and, in fact, all Canadians, ensure that CP would maintain payments or pay their fair share of taxes back then.

For those people who might be following the debate, I do believe it is important to recognize that, since that agreement between CP, Saskatchewan and the federal government, there has been a payment of taxes. That agreement was entered into in good faith. Earlier in the comments, I read that there is a lawsuit for \$341 million, which is a significant amount of money coming from a corporation. That makes me question what caused the launch of the lawsuit.

Some may question why, in 2022, we are debating this today. Members will get a better sense of that if they look at the November 29 Hansard from the Saskatchewan legislature, where there was a resolution that was unanimously passed. I just want to pick out two things from it because it is a fairly lengthy resolution. The first of the two aspects of the resolution that I want to highlight for members is that it states:

Whereas the Canadian Pacific Railway company has paid applicable taxes to the Government of Saskatchewan since the province was established in 1905...

I do not know all the taxes that CP has been paying. Hopefully there will be a response from CP or someone else as to why it is that the court action has been taken, but it is important that we recognize, as this resolution states, that since 1905 the railway company has paid applicable taxes to the Government of Saskatchewan.

The other thing I want to highlight is where it states:

Whereas on August 29th, 1966, the then president of the Canadian Pacific Railway company, Ian D. Sinclair, advised the then federal minister of Transport, Jack Pickersgill, that the board of the Canadian Pacific Railway company had no objection to the constitutional amendments to eliminate the tax exemption...

That is why I make reference to the fact of this agreement. CP was not looking to receive benefits from the tax exemption. In fact, it goes on:

The repeal of section 24 is deemed to have been made on August 29th, 1966, and is retroactive to that date.

That is, therefore, the resolution coming from the Saskatchewan legislature. Appreciating the fact that it passed unanimously, Mr. Wotherspoon from the New Democratic Party makes reference to the Saskatchewan Act and makes it very clear in his explanation stating:

This is why as the official opposition Saskatchewan New Democrats, we've called for the repeal of section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act, 1905 and why we are proud to stand united as a legislature to send this motion for approval to Ottawa, the House of Commons, and the Senate.

● (1305)

If members are interested in the details and content of the resolution, it can be found in the Hansard of the Saskatchewan legislature of November 29. Suffice to say, it passed unanimously.

Business of Supply

When I look at the Constitution of Canada and the constitutional debates, I do not believe we should, through unanimous consent motions, pass a constitutional amendment. I do not say that lightly because, while I like to think I am still relatively young, I have had some experience with constitutional amendments. First it was as someone sitting in front of the TV back in 1982 watching our then prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau sign off, along with Her Majesty the Queen, on the Constitution of Canada and bring in the Charter of Rights, which was instilled in me as a very proud moment at that relatively young age but also did a lot to bring Canadians together and instill a sense of pride. Not much longer after I had witnessed that, I was inspired to get engaged in politics in a more tangible way and had the good fortune of getting elected in 1988.

Those who are familiar with constitutional change and amendments and attempts would know that in 1988 we had the Meech Lake accord. I was a member of the Manitoba legislature when it was the only province to not sign on to the accord. Back then, because of the holdup in the Manitoba legislature, I believe the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador withdrew its original support of the Constitution. I remember the significant protests that took place both inside and outside of the legislature, and why indigenous people in particular felt empowered to a certain degree through Elijah Harper to ensure that the national and provincial governments of all political stripes understood why there was an issue with the Meech Lake accord.

If we fast-forward from that experience to the 1990s and the Charlottetown accord, I had the good fortune, or bad fortune depending on how one wants to look at it, of being around for that debate. I remember having a debate in the north end of Winnipeg with a member of Parliament who was speaking against what I was proposing. It was Bill Blaikie, the former member of Parliament for Elmwood—Transcona and the father of the current member.

In that debate I said I disagreed with Mr. Blaikie and that, in fact, the national government had a role to play in housing in Canada, because the Charlottetown accord, among other things, tried to give the direction that housing was an entirely provincial responsibility. There were a number of us, including me, who felt the federal government had a role to play with respect to national housing. I find it ironic today to hear the comments from the members of the opposition saying that we need to do something on the housing file, when the Prime Minister has clearly demonstrated a strong cabinet commitment to national housing through the national housing strategy, with hundreds of millions of dollars coming from Ottawa to support housing.

• (1310)

For example, even Bill C-8, legislation that we were debating, has a direct impact on housing. This is why I say that constitutional issues are important to all of us.

However, sometimes constitutional changes can be all-encompassing. They can consume a great deal of time and effort and they are very difficult to achieve, which is why, when I look at governments from the past since the Charlottetown Accord, I do not believe that the mood of Canadians is to see constitutional change at this time. I do not believe that Canadians want us to be focusing on constitutional changes at this time.

That said, as has been pointed out, there are different ways in which a constitution can be changed, and the type of change we are talking about today is very different from what we have talked about in the past. Members of the Liberal caucus understand and appreciate that the Saskatchewan legislature has passed a unanimous resolution. We understand why the timing of it is so critically important today, even though it was enacted over 100 years ago in an agreement that I will provide some comment on shortly. However, the point is that as things take place in Saskatchewan, we understand the need for the federal government to respond, and today is a good example.

Someone mentioned earlier today that this is an opposition motion. Well, just because it is an opposition member's motion does not necessarily mean that it does not merit passage in the House of Commons or support from the government. That is why the parliamentary secretary who spoke prior to me indicated that the government would in fact be supporting the motion. We recognize that in the last election, as in the previous election, Canadians said they want Parliament and parliamentarians to work together, and where we can, we do. We do work together when there is that higher sense of co-operation, and we are seeing that with respect to this motion.

On other issues related to this motion, there is the issue of tax fairness. This issue was brought up consistently by my New Democratic friends in particular, to try to give the false impression that members of the Liberal government do not support tax fairness. That is so wrong. One of our very first actions in government was the Prime Minister's commitment to tax fairness. He brought in legislation to put a tax on Canada's 1% wealthiest. Ironically, my New Democratic friends voted against it. We have had not one but two budgets in which hundreds of millions of dollars were allocated to try to ensure that those who are avoiding paying taxes, including big business, are held to account. We are investing more in Revenue Canada. I do not need to be told that my constituents want and demand tax fairness. We as a government, through our cabinet and with the support of the Liberal members of caucus, and I suspect even at times the support of opposition members, have brought in initiatives to ensure that there is a higher sense of tax fairness in Canada today.

• (1315)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would love to dig back on the Riders and the Bombers, but that is not the focus of my question.

When this unanimous-consent motion was brought to the House by the member for Regina—Wascana, he indicated that it was after discussion with the other parties. Now, there was discussion in the House last week when that term was not used and the individual simply said "I hope that you will find unanimous consent", but discussions were had, I know.

My question for the member is this: If he felt that there needed to be debate, and the Minister of Finance also gave us an answer on why the Liberals said no, why did they not just have that as part of their discussion and not have the fanfare in the House of Commons when they came out against the motion?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I can appreciate the question. I really can.

Business of Supply

Often members will stand up after question period and say, “There have been discussions”, but to imply that there have been discussions does not necessarily mean that there was consent. When a member stands up after question period and says, “There have been discussions”, we should never make the assumption that it means there was consent to agree to the motion. I think we do need to take a look at that particular rule in general.

The very first time I heard about that particular motion to any real degree was at the time it was actually being moved, and I sit on the House leadership team. There might have been something taking place during question period, but during question period it is fairly hectic. I would have been more sympathetic, but I still would have suggested a day of debate, at least, on the issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the passionate speech given by my colleague from Winnipeg North. There were some real gems in it.

For example, he said that he was proud of the fact that Mr. Trudeau had united Canadians and made them proud. I am not too sure about that, since the average Quebecker remembers 1982 as the year the federal government betrayed them.

The same is true for the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords, which the member also mentioned. These are two occasions where the federal government expressly denied Quebec any recognition. Those were two outright denials of Quebec.

My colleague claimed that Canadians were not in the mood for constitutional change at this time. I recognize that we are in a pandemic. I am not crazy and I completely agree with him. However, does he not think that having a nation within Canada that has never signed the Constitution is a problem? Would he want to be forced into a marriage? Would he go along with it? There is an easy question for him.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, when I reflect back on 1982, I would have loved to have seen all provinces sign on to the Constitution. As much as I reflected on my personal history with the province of Saskatchewan, my heritage was actually rooted very strongly in the province of Quebec for many generations. In and around just south of Montreal is where my family originated. Many people living in Saskatchewan today all came from the province of Quebec. There are very passionate, strong feelings from many of my friends and families, who want to make sure that Quebec, like Saskatchewan and other jurisdictions, remains a part of the Canadian family. We have far more in common—

• (1320)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have heard this member talk about the NDP voting against the Liberals' omnibus bill when they were going to impose some taxes, a very small amount, on the 1%, but they failed in that bill to make sure that Amazon, Google and Facebook would pay their fair share. They failed to close tax havens and end CEO stock loopholes. We have a health care system that is starving right now. We have seen

corporate taxes go from 28% to 15% under the Liberal-Conservative coalition to protect the super-wealthy.

Will my colleague start telling Canadians the truth? They promised not to table omnibus bills, but they did, and then they misled Canadians through this story that they are taxing the super-wealthy. Will he work with the NDP on closing tax havens, ending CEO stock loopholes and making sure the ultra-rich and super-wealthy corporations pay their fair share?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let me tell the member the truth. When I was an MLA in the Manitoba provincial legislature, the NDP continuously, on four, five, or maybe as many as seven occasions, reduced corporate taxes. At the same time, there was a need for health care funding and better management of services. As far as trying to portray the New Democrats as the only ones who fight for tax fairness is concerned, I would suggest that the member might want to do a Hansard search of the Manitoba legislature, where he will find that I was critical of the NDP for its taxation policy, which was not always advantageous to Canada's middle class.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad to hear that the Liberals have taken the time to have discussions with their colleagues over on the other side of the House to ensure that there is a good understanding about what the provincial legislature in Saskatchewan was requiring and asking for.

Would the member agree with Saskatchewan's Minister of Justice that repealing section 24 in the Saskatchewan Act would cement Saskatchewan's place as a truly equal partner in the federation?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in a very real sense, I believe that all provinces are equal here in Canada. I will stand up and debate that on any day of the week.

Having said that, I recognize that this is something that is important to the Province of Saskatchewan. It is more than just symbolic, and it is the right thing for us to be doing at this point in time.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my friend's very important speech today.

I want to delve a bit into the UC motion in question that came about in December. As my friend knows, the Province of Saskatchewan passed this legislation on November 21. The UC motion came to Parliament in December, and this is the first time we are having a debate.

I know the member has been a parliamentarian for many years. In terms of Parliamentary practice, how important is it to have a debate on an issue as important as the Constitution?

Business of Supply

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would highlight that those who want to get a better understanding and see the actual resolution that passed in the Saskatchewan legislature can always go to the Saskatchewan legislature's website. If they look at the Saskatchewan Hansard for November 29, they will find the debate and the vote that took place, which clearly indicated that the motion was unanimously passed by that legislature. It was a somewhat shorter debate, but there was a debate and an explanation and so forth provided at the Saskatchewan legislature, and one would expect that, because it is a constitutional change.

I believe that we need to revisit the way we use unanimous consent motions. Without any hesitation at all, I think we should never pass a UC motion that deals with the Constitution, given the importance of our constitutional law.

• (1325)

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

It has been kind of a history lesson here today. We have heard about the Hudson's Bay Company, the Meech Lake accord and the Charlottetown accord. It has been refreshing to go back over 100 years today as we talk about the Saskatchewan Act.

I give credit to the member for Regina—Lewvan for bringing this very important motion to the House today. I chair the Saskatchewan caucus and, for the second consecutive election, we returned 14 out of 14 Conservative MPs to the House.

It is very important that we open the dialogue today to have a wholesome discussion on the Saskatchewan Act and what it means to my province, which has a population of 1.2 million. When we see CP Rail's profit of \$341 million, I do not have to say that \$341 million to a population of 1.2 million is a very substantial amount.

We can start way back on October 21, 1880. I am going to give some history, as there has been many history lessons in the House this morning and this afternoon. It was the Government of Canada that entered into the contract with the Canadian Pacific Railway syndicate for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which we all know back then was trail-blazing. It opened this country up from east to west, part of that was Saskatchewan.

In clause 16 of that 1880 Canadian Pacific Railway contract, the federal government agreed to give a tax exemption to the Canadian Pacific Railway company, and that is what we are talking about here today. In 1905, as everyone knows, the Parliament of Canada passed the Saskatchewan Act, which created my home province of Saskatchewan. Canadian Pacific Railway has paid applicable taxes to the Government of Saskatchewan since the province was established. That has been a topic of conversation today, but I want it on the record that it has paid taxes to the Saskatchewan government.

CP is currently attempting, though, to use a clause in the Saskatchewan Act as justification to avoid paying any provincial taxes on its main line. This represents, as I said, an enormous revenue loss for the provincial government and the people of Saskatchewan, which only 1.2 million strong. It is only fair that CP, as a corporate giant, pays its share, on which I think we all agree in the House.

In 1966, Ian Sinclair, then the CP Rail president, agreed to a constitutional amendment to eliminate this tax exemption. The constitutional change is the quick and efficient way to make this happen, and it should happen without delay. The Province of Saskatchewan has adopted the motion to amend the Saskatchewan Act and the Constitution of Canada during the fall sitting.

In December, the Saskatchewan Conservative regional caucus urged the federal government to support the Saskatchewan government's approved motion to repeal section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act. Section 24 of the act contains a contentious exemption for Canadian Pacific Railway from various Saskatchewan provincial taxes. In order for this section to be removed, though, a similar motion must now be passed at the federal level, here in the House and also in the Senate. That is why Canada's Conservatives are calling on the federal government to listen to the Saskatchewan government and support the motion that we have put forward today in the House to repeal section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act.

The tax loss to Saskatchewan would hurt provincial services if the Liberal government refuses to stand up for tax fairness and ensure that CP Rail pays its fair share to the people of Saskatchewan. CP Rail, as I mentioned, is a corporate giant. There is no reason it should enjoy an exemption from provincial taxes. There is also no reason the government should delay responding to the provincial government's request.

• (1330)

Canada's Conservatives are always on Saskatchewan's side. Those tax dollars need to stay right at home in my province of Saskatchewan.

CP Rail and the Saskatchewan government have been engaged now for about 13 years in a legal battle with the railway seeking roughly \$341 million. It is coming out now because the provincial legislature in Saskatchewan passed a motion unanimously on November 29, 2021.

In Saskatchewan legislature, just to fill us in, there are only two parties. The Saskatchewan Party is the official government and the official opposition is the NDP. Here we have the Saskatchewan Party and the NDP agreeing on one thing, that the Saskatchewan Act has to come to the House of Commons and later to the Senate.

I have spoken to the Saskatchewan justice minister, Gordon Wyant, a couple of times, dealing with the Saskatchewan Act. The Saskatchewan justice minister was quoted as saying, and I quote, "We are going to vigorously defend the claim that has been brought by the railway to defend the interests of the people of Saskatchewan". This resolution needs to be approved by the federal government, passed through the House of Commons right here in front of 338 members, and then on to the Senate.

Business of Supply

Minister Wyant has had conversations, I know, with the federal justice minister on the issue of the Saskatchewan Act. We are hoping today that the motion will move forward. It is my understanding that several MLAs in my province have even reached out to Saskatchewan senators to start the dialogue. If we can pass the motion through here, it goes to the Senate. The conversations have started not only here today in the House of Commons, but also, more importantly, in the Senate where they will have to deal with this.

As members of the House are likely aware, CP Rail is suing the Government of Saskatchewan for the \$341 million. They claim a broad tax exemption under section 24. This matter is currently before the courts, so most of us really do not want to talk about that, because it is before the court.

Therefore, the Government of Saskatchewan believes that today it is time to repeal section 24 regardless of whether it is in force or not. If the tax exemption remains in force, I do not have to tell the members of the House, it creates a substantial inequity within our own province. \$341 million would be eliminated from the taxes of only 1.2 million in our province. As a matter of the tax policy and business competitiveness, there must be a level playing field for all businesses in our province of Saskatchewan.

We all agree that all businesses should pay their fair share of taxes, and by supporting this motion, it would send a strong signal to my province of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewanians desperately want the motion today regarding the Saskatchewan Act passed. It would show federal support from that side of the house and the opposition parties. It would show that we do care about the province of Saskatchewan.

This is an important motion put forward today by the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan. He was a member of the Saskatchewan legislature before he became a member of Parliament. He knows very well the pressures on the provincial government in Saskatchewan. He was in their caucus for a number of years and he knows first-hand that Saskatchewan, being a small province, does not have a lot of corporate businesses. CP Rail is one of the biggest, and as has been mentioned today, it makes a lot of profit. Profit is good, but at the same time, CP Rail must pay its fair share of taxes.

On behalf of residents of Saskatoon—Grasswood, it has been a pleasure to speak to the motion moved by the member for Regina—Lewvan on the Saskatchewan Act.

• (1335)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood that the Saskatchewan caucus in our party is absolutely supportive of this motion, and of course, our government is supporting this going forward.

I do want to ask the member about the Senate. I know there is an independent group of senators in the Senate. What kind of measures and discussions has the opposition had with senators to get this through the Senate?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member from across the aisle. We are here today in the House talk-

ing about the Saskatchewan Act. It would be premature for many of us to reach out to any of the senators.

However, I can tell the hon. member there has been discussions from MLAs, maybe a couple of the MPs from Saskatchewan too, and our only Conservative senator in the Senate. We have five senators from Saskatchewan. They have signed a letter of intent. I have not seen that letter, but before Christmas I understand they did sign the letter and that is the first step moving forward in the Senate.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, we agree that Saskatchewan should get its due from Canadian Pacific, because it has been owed for a long time. As I was saying earlier, Canadian Pacific received free land and tax exemptions, among other benefits.

Furthermore, I hope someone has been in touch with the Senate, and that no one in the other place has a vested interest in Canadian National that would make it possible for CN to avoid paying taxes in Saskatchewan.

I hope everyone in the Senate realizes that these taxes are owed to the people. CN has had enough benefits.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, I think the dialogue really started on November 29, 2021, in the legislature in Saskatchewan with unanimous consent on the Saskatchewan Act. That includes the NDP and the Saskatchewan Party, which has several Conservative and Liberal members in it, as it forms the majority in our province.

They have reached out I am sure. Gordon Wyant, the Attorney General of Saskatchewan, has reached out to the justice minister, and I am sure they have had conversations in the Senate. Unfortunately, we only have five senators. We can have that discussion, hopefully after this motion passes, and maybe we can talk to all 105 senators to feel them out on the Saskatchewan Act.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleague from Saskatoon—Grasswood. As we do know, the Senate has tabled a motion very similar to the motion that was tabled here in the House of Commons, so they will be ready to move on that hopefully as soon as we have broad support from all parties when we vote tomorrow.

How does the member think that some of the money we would be saving from CP could be used better for taxpayers in Saskatchewan? Where could some of that money go? We all agree that corporations should pay their fair share.

Business of Supply

I want to tell the people of Saskatchewan that we are here for them, and we are always going to be on their side. I would like the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood to explain what he could do with some of that money and where it could be better spent.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Regina—Lewvan for his advocacy on this. He has been stellar for the province of Saskatchewan in bringing this motion forward today as an opposition day motion. The Conservative government will always respect the jurisdiction of the provinces, and that is what we are talking about here. The province of Saskatchewan is very small in population.

What could we do with that \$341 million? I am not the finance minister, but if I were the finance minister of Saskatchewan, I am sure I would quickly have a list from Regina to Saskatoon.

• (1340)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood, for his excellent history lesson and for representing the city of Saskatoon and the great aspects of that. I will try to speak a little more to rural aspects of the impact of this.

It is my honour to rise in the House to speak on today's opposition motion regarding the amendment to the Saskatchewan Act in our Constitution, to repeal Section 24. While it has been some time since I have been able to physically be here in the House of Commons chamber, I feel very fortunate to be present today and am happy to see everyone's faces in person rather than through a screen. I know that, just like me, many Canadians are also looking forward to a return of some normalcy after the tumultuous last two years.

As this is my first speech in the House in this 44th Parliament, I would like to thank the great constituents of Souris—Moose Mountain for re-electing me for the third time. Like all Canadians, they are experiencing and living with the frustrations and inconsistencies of the government, as well as with the many inconsistencies that have existed in our national legislation.

Today's motion is just another example of that, and how it treats Saskatchewan differently from other provinces. Today's motion is extremely important for a number of reasons, and I am grateful to have a chance to speak on it in support of my provincial counterparts in the Saskatchewan legislature. I would like to thank all of the MLAs, their staff, the experts and the leaders at the provincial level who worked diligently to ensure that this issue was brought to Ottawa so that it could be addressed at the federal level.

I know that I and my colleagues in the Conservative Saskatchewan caucus will do everything in our power to compel the government to act swiftly and decisively on the matter, and to end the unfair tax exemption given to the Canadian Pacific Railway, CPR.

I would just like to point out that this is a great example of political unity, as the motion to repeal section 24 was unanimously supported by all members of the Saskatchewan legislature. They were able to put their differences aside and see the benefits that this motion had for the entirety of our province, regardless of political affiliation. This is the kind of thing that Canadians want to see here in

this Parliament, yet the federal level blocked the original version of this motion, prolonging the process even further.

The stalling on this matter only serves to deepen the divide that the Prime Minister has already created with western Canadians. Canadians expect their government to work together: to come up with ideas, to discuss, to debate and to resolve issues. I hear from many of my constituents that they expect to see a little give-and-take in a minority government, not the “my way or the highway” approach that the Prime Minister and the Liberal government have shown. We could just look out at Wellington Street to see how well that attitude is working.

What this issue really comes down to is fairness. Every corporation in this country is required to pay taxes, so it is simply not fair to require all other businesses to pay while the CPR receives an exemption. This situation is in Saskatchewan alone, thanks to section 24. The CPR is a large profitable corporation, and in this day and age it should not have a competitive advantage over other transportation companies because of a 140-year-old contract. All Saskatchewan businesses, small and large, deserve a level playing field.

Speaking of fairness, exempting the CPR from paying taxes means that everyone else has to make up the difference and pay more than their fair share. As I previously stated, this puts all other transportation companies at a competitive disadvantage, something that is rarely a benefit to the regional or national economy. Competitiveness is an integral part of the fabric of Canada's economy, and we need to foster and encourage it in every logical sense.

Ultimately, every Saskatchewan small business, every Saskatchewan professional, every Saskatchewan employee, union or non-union, every farmer, every rancher, every trucker, every Saskatchewanian will have to pay out of their pocket if this is allowed to linger.

One of the phrases I often use in my speeches here in the House is the trickle-down effect, and it is certainly relevant in discussing this tax exemption. If the CPR is tax exempt, that means everyone else pays extra. While on the surface it may look like this only affects other large transportation companies, the trickle-down effect means that each and every resident of Saskatchewan would have to help foot the costs through increased taxes of their own. When one adds the continuous raising of taxes such as CPP, EI and the Liberal carbon tax, life quickly becomes unaffordable. This is not to mention the increased costs to local communities, RMs, towns and villages due to the RCMP pay increases that are being downloaded to them.

• (1345)

In my riding, an increase to already high living expenses is the very last thing that residents need, but it is unfortunately what they have come to expect under the Liberal government. Many communities have already suffered due to things such as the Liberal phase-out of coal-fired power, and the government's unfulfilled promises to those affected by it. People are experiencing fear and uncertainty for their futures, and the threat of higher taxes only makes that worse.

Business of Supply

The Just Transition Task Force gives money for groups to study the transition, but little for the future. Putting some money up to fix roads may help, but when all the young people move away to find jobs elsewhere in the country, who will pay the taxes to keep these businesses and roads in good condition?

There is also the matter of how keeping section 24 could hurt small businesses across the province, including those in communities that are already grappling with how to make ends meet. I cannot stress enough the importance of small businesses in my riding. In rural areas such as Souris—Moose Mountain, they do not just serve as places to buy necessities. They are also informal gathering places for the community, and many small business owners generously give back to that community when they are able to.

We need to do everything in our power to ensure that our businesses stay viable, especially following the hard two years because of the pandemic. I know that we Conservatives are intent on ensuring that not one cent of tax revenue owed by a profitable corporation is picked up by the Saskatchewan people, and I hope the Liberals are as well.

The respect for, and support of, jurisdictional authority is fundamental to the successful operation of this country. In matters such as this, it only makes sense to allow any individual province to unilaterally amend the section of the Constitution that deals exclusively with its own internal governance, and we Conservatives support this measure.

Furthermore, Saskatchewan is the only province in the country that is having to rectify an issue such as this one, which should provide even more incentive for the federal government to do whatever is possible to level the playing field.

As MLA Wyant stated in his remarks to the Saskatchewan Legislature on November 29, 2021:

Section 24 is a relic of an earlier time when Saskatchewan was not treated as an equal partner in Confederation.

My province and its residents should not be penalized simply because Saskatchewan entered Confederation in 1905 rather than in 1880, when this contract with the CPR was signed. Unfortunately, many people of Saskatchewan have lost faith in the federal government's ability to treat them equally or to act in their best interests.

The Prime Minister says a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, but I can tell you that my constituents do not remotely feel that. They are not even equally treated by the Liberals. That is evident from the fact that the candidate they had in the last two elections never showed up during the debate, or at any time in the riding, and received less than 4% of the vote.

The Prime Minister continues to talk the talk, but fails to walk the walk and the divide between western Canadians and the rest of Canada keeps getting wider. One only needs to walk outside to see how badly the Liberals have failed to foster any sense of national unity. They sit on their hands and make empty promises. It is no wonder that western Canadians are feeling disillusioned by a government that continually ignores them.

It is also on the current government to make progress on reducing outdated and ineffective red tape, so that other jurisdictions will

not have to deal with issues like this in the future. This is a win-win situation: The federal government gets to remove some red tape. The province has clarity on the matter going forward. The people of Saskatchewan will not have to pay increased taxes because of the exemption to a profitable company. I can see no reason why the Liberals would block this motion, unless it is to punish the people of Saskatchewan for not giving them a single seat in the last two elections. They may say otherwise, but based on their past disregard for the west, it is not difficult to read between the lines.

To briefly quote MLA Wotherspoon from the Saskatchewan legislature, "The elimination of this jurisdictional inequity is important". We agree with that. Saskatchewan deserves the same recognition from the federal government as all other provinces and territories, and until this motion is passed the province will remain at a disadvantage.

In conclusion, it is truly in the best interests of all parties to take the lead set by members of the Saskatchewan legislature and vote unanimously in favour of today's motion. It will only have positive implications and increased fairness for Saskatchewan's businesses and individuals. I call on the Liberals to do the right thing and vote in favour of repealing section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not quite understand the speech that the member has just delivered. One would think he had given it on the assumption that the government was not supporting the motion. The government has been very supportive of all things within Saskatchewan. Here we have a motion that is rooted in an all-party, unanimously supported motion from the floor of the Saskatchewan legislature, which we have said that we are supporting. That means we are voting in favour of the motion.

I do not know why the member espouses hatred from this government toward the people of Saskatchewan or the west. I am from the west, and I think that things are looking better today than they were during the Stephen Harper era. Why will he not recognize a good thing and support the Liberals supporting—

• (1350)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for his illusionary thought, because the history of the government has indicated that the Liberals do not show that support for the west. Perhaps forgive me if I do not take the member at his word, but until I see that hand raised during a vote, I do not trust the Liberals to say what they are going to say. Canadians in western Canada and in my riding do not trust the current government.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We do not raise hands to vote in this chamber.

The hon. member for Drummond.

Business of Supply

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I made a note of that for later.

I echo what the member for Winnipeg North said a few minutes ago. There seems to be a consensus on this motion, and yet the Conservatives still thought it was a good idea to make this the subject of an opposition day. My question is mainly one of curiosity.

After the motion is adopted by the House of Commons, what other obstacles are our colleagues concerned about in this file?

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's point. Ultimately, there is a lot that we need to move forward with in the government and in this Parliament. What I am trying to get through is that Canadians want to hear that. They want to see people sitting around and talking. They want to see, in a minority government, this individual coming up with an idea, us coming up with an idea and the Liberals coming up with an idea, discussing that around the table and then bandying it about so that we can have a uniform answer. Unfortunately, we are not seeing that.

The prime example is what we see with the truckers on the street. Some of them just want to be heard and have that conversation, such that we can put that out as a uniform package as opposed to one group individually.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to stand today as a person born in Saskatoon who spent many summers at my grandfather's farm in Asquith, Saskatchewan. I just want to give a shout-out to the Saskatchewan NDP members who have been fighting for this for years, and I thank all of the House for what looks like it could be a unanimous vote on this.

Does my colleague agree that there are opportunities to close tax loopholes for other large corporations that are benefiting off the backs of Canadians right now?

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Madam Speaker, I am so glad to hear that my colleague is from Saskatoon originally, that she has been to rural Saskatchewan to see exactly where things are, and that she truly understands the rural challenges that rural Canadians have. I appreciate that.

The member's comment is good. The issue is on big businesses, etc., and how we need to look at that. However, again, it comes down to the same discussion. We need to have that conversation. We need to discuss it and come up with ideas and work together to make this happen. That is what is expected by Canadians at this time. They want to hear that throughout Canada from every one of us. They want to hear us talking together. They want to hear us expressing that to everybody, and they want to see it here in the House. I ask, and implore, that this continue.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is great to be here with all my colleagues, both physically here in the House and virtually. I am honoured to take part in this debate, as a westerner by birth and someone who lives in Ontario now. It is always great to support my colleagues in the beautiful province of Saskatchewan.

Today we are considering a request from Saskatchewan to amend a part of the Canadian Constitution. It is a small part, it is true, but such a request deserves our immediate attention because it is long overdue. Parliamentarians who wish to do so should have a say. We are having this debate because on November 29 of last year, the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan unanimously passed a resolution to repeal a section of the Saskatchewan Act.

History buffs, and I know there are many in the House, will know this act received royal assent in 1905. It is best known for having created the Province of Saskatchewan, and it was adopted at the same time as the Alberta Act, creating the Province of Alberta. Both were created from parts of the Northwest Territories. Alberta and Saskatchewan became the eighth and ninth provinces of Canada on September 1, 1905. Both acts were enshrined in the Canadian Constitution in 1982, and this why the change requested by Saskatchewan requires an amendment to the Canadian Constitution.

The resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan specifically calls for the repeal of section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act. This section relates to the clause of a contract signed in 1880 between the Government of Canada and the founders of the Canadian Pacific Railway company.

I want to note that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre.

At the time, Saskatchewan was not yet a province and Sir John A. Macdonald was the Prime Minister. In a nutshell, the clause exempted the CPR from certain federal, provincial and municipal taxes.

As noted in Saskatchewan's resolution, a large corporation should not be exempt from paying provincial taxes. I agree with this assessment. Our government has been very clear that everyone should pay their fair share of taxes, and that certainly includes corporations.

● (1355)

We are focused on strengthening the middle class and building an economy that works for everyone. To do that, Canadians need a tax system that is fair and equitable. It is why we cut taxes for the middle class and asked the wealthiest 1% to pay a little more. It is also why we want to make sure companies, including large digital corporations, pay their fair share of tax in Canada.

Corporations need to pay a fair share of tax in the jurisdiction where their users and customers are located. Whatever the historical context, there is no reason in this day and age the CPR should get the benefit of a tax exemption that no one else receives. It is not consistent with Canada's current tax policies, nor with its fiscal policies.

Statements by Members

If the Government of Saskatchewan wants to make the tax system fair, it will wholeheartedly find support on this side of the House. It is great to see collaboration among the parties. It is what Canadians sent us here for: to work for their interests and make this country a better place.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed new light on the importance of delivering services to Canadians in a timely and efficient manner. Our economic response plan has helped Canadians and businesses weather the storm, including the wonderful and kind people of Saskatchewan. Let me share some of the specifics with the House.

Thus far, the federal government has allocated more than three million doses of COVID vaccines to Saskatchewan. Several million rapid tests have also been shipped to the province. All of that was free of charge.

The Canada emergency wage subsidy has protected more than 100,000 jobs in Saskatchewan. About 30,000 loans totalling \$1.6 billion have been made to Saskatchewan businesses through the Canada emergency business account. More than 240,000 Saskatchewan residents received support through the Canada emergency response benefit at some point. Out of a population of 1.1 million, that is more than one in five people, or over 20%. In addition to this, in 2021-22, Saskatchewan is receiving \$1.3 billion through the Canada health transfer and an additional \$478 million through the Canada social transfer.

Canada works best when governments work collaboratively in the interest of Canadians. In this regard, I would like to point out that the “land of living skies” is one of the jurisdictions with which the federal government has entered into an agreement to build a Canada-wide early learning and child care system.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will interrupt the hon. member for Statements by Members. He will have five minutes after question period to conclude and take questions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[*English*]

LEONARD BRAITHWAITE

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am so proud to stand here in the House of Commons today during Black History Month to recognize Canada's first Black parliamentarian. Mr. Leonard Braithwaite passed away in March 2012, but his legacy lives on, and I am personally grateful for the path he paved for me and many others.

Mr. Braithwaite's career and commitment to this country were extraordinary. He served in World War II in the Canadian air force, graduated from Harvard Business School, obtained a law degree from Osgoode Hall, practised law, was elected as a school board trustee and city councillor, received the Order of Canada, served as a bencher in the Law Society of Upper Canada, and in 1963 broke barriers when he became the first elected Black person and parlia-

mentarian serving at the Ontario legislature. However, he will be remembered most for ending the segregation of schools in Ontario and for welcoming women to serve as pages in the Ontario legislature.

I thank Mr. Braithwaite for his commitment to building a better country and for inspiring so many Black Canadians who have followed his path to serve.

* * *

GOLD MEDAL CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am rising today to celebrate the accomplishment of a local hero in Barrie, Alex “Ali” Massie. Ali, at the age of 16, and in the prime of his athletics, was in a horrific wakeboarding accident that left his left leg amputated from the knee down. Ali was in the hospital for 13 weeks. During this recovery time, he was informed that he would no longer be able to pursue his much-loved sporting activities. Ali's determination and willpower did not allow him to accept this outcome. With the full and unwavering support of a loving and caring family, Ali persevered to continue with his sporting pursuits. He showed incredible perseverance and determination over many years, which has culminated in great success.

On January 22 of this year, Ali and his teammate Tyler Turner won the gold at the World Para Snow Sports Championships in Lillehammer, Norway, in the snowboard cross team event. I hope this good-news story encourages everyone, regardless of their abilities, to learn from Ali's example of what can be accomplished with determination, courage, hard work and a positive outlook.

What a great job by Ali. We will be cheering for him in the Paralympics. He is a true hero and inspiration to all.

* * *

JOAN KING

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, late last month, our North Shore community lost someone very special. Joan King was a community builder, an ardent supporter of local organizations and an early champion for the environment, spearheading issues like biodegradable bags.

Joan was very engaging. She knew exactly how to bring people together and rally them behind an important issue. She never let politics get in the way of what was best for her community.

Joan served the people of North Shore tirelessly for over 20 years, first as a school board trustee and then as a city councillor beginning back in 1985. Even after leaving city council in 2000, Joan remained very involved and continued to advocate for our community.

Joan has had a lasting impact on our community, and I know her memory will continue to inspire many of us for years to come. I am very proud to have known her.

[Translation]

DENIS VILLENEUVE AND JEAN-MARC VALLÉE

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to recognize the absolutely outstanding work of Denis Villeneuve, an extraordinary filmmaker whose most recent film received no less than 10 Oscar nominations.

Dune: Part I is nominated for best picture, best adapted screenplay and best production design, overseen by Patrice Vermette. We are once again amazed at the extent of Villeneuve's genius, and we wish him and his team the best of luck at the Oscars.

While one of our great filmmakers is being honoured in Hollywood, I cannot help but think about Jean-Marc Vallée, who passed away less than two months ago. This brilliant filmmaker who brought us *C.R.A.Z.Y.*, *Dallas Buyers Club* and *Big Little Lies* was a master at portraying human nature. He was clearly one of the artists who contributed to the incredible development of Quebec cinema and the international recognition it has achieved. He would certainly be proud to see his friend Denis Villeneuve's success today.

* * *

TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 40 years ago, one of my high school teachers organized a field trip to visit Parliament in Ottawa. Little did she know what a profound influence this visit would have on my life. This visit sparked my passion for politics, and it put me on the right track to proudly represent the people of Alfred-Pellan today.

[English]

My admiration for the teaching profession knows no bounds. I tip my hat to this noble profession, for teachers are artists who sculpt the minds of our youth to shape our future.

[Translation]

As we celebrate Teacher Appreciation Week, I tip my hat to these talent makers who are dedicated to shaping our leaders of tomorrow.

Thank you to all educators.

[English]

I thank them for caring for our children.

* * *

● (1405)

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, prior to my time in Parliament, I served in municipal government. I was encouraged to speak up on behalf of the people who put their trust in me.

I am concerned I do not have the same freedom to ask legitimate questions about the government or popular narratives of society. In the past two years, many of the people in my riding have expressed concerns about their rights and freedoms. We say every Canadian has individual rights and freedoms, but our right to free speech is

Statements by Members

under attack. I am not talking about hate speech, but about having one's own opinion or questioning the government or society's popular narrative. For me, it seems that if someone asks questions about or does not agree with this narrative, their voice is shut down by hateful rhetoric, labelling them racist, misogynistic or a conspiracy theorist.

What has happened to our freedom of speech? I hope we can all work to re-establish this core principle in our democratic society.

* * *

GLOBAL VACCINE EQUITY

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need to vaccinate the world to save lives, protect our economic recovery and prevent the next variant. As it stands, of the 10 billion doses administered to date, only 10% have been administered in low-income countries. This not only falls short of our moral obligation to those who have less. It also means continued supply chain disruptions and the potential for a dangerous variant that could undo all of our sacrifice.

We know that the best way to prevent the next variant is to stop unconstrained spread, and that requires vaccine equity. That is why I have introduced Motion No. 43 to call on our government to expedite its committed donation of 200 million doses, provide at least an additional \$1.1 billion in the coming budget towards the ACT-Accelerator and contribute to global manufacturing capacity, including support for the TRIPS waiver.

When we look back at this time in history, we should see that Canada played a leading role in addressing global vaccine equity, the most important intervention to end the greatest crisis in our lifetimes. Having spent hundreds of billions on our own domestic pandemic response, we should spend a fraction of that to save lives around the world and to prevent the next variant.

* * *

FOREIGN ORPHANAGES

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a unique collaboration between two remarkable Yukon women, Morgan Wienberg and Kelly Milner, is poised to change how the world looks at international orphanages and child exploitation.

Statements by Members

In 2010 after a devastating earthquake struck Haiti, a young high school graduate called Morgan Wienberg travelled to help. Ten years later, Morgan has slowly unravelled the story of corruption in many child orphanages, not just in Haiti but around the world. While helping to reunite children with their rightful families, Morgan founded a small organization called Little Footprints Big Steps that aims to protect children coerced into so-called orphanages and reunite them with their families.

This journey and Morgan's call to action to stop voluntourism and address human trafficking in orphanages around the world is explored in Yukon filmmaker Kelly Milner's documentary film, *Not About Me*.

As Morgan and Kelly continue to raise this critical issue, it is time for us to rethink and reform our support for foreign orphanages.

* * *

HEART MONTH

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, February is Heart Month in Canada, and the Heart and Stroke Foundation is running its annual fundraising campaign.

Approximately 750,000 Canadians face a daily struggle with heart failure, and last November following a heart attack, I became one of them. I encourage everyone listening to learn and regularly review the signs and symptoms of a cardiac episode. Swift action and diagnosis could be the difference between life and death. I personally thought my symptoms were minimal, but I got checked out anyway and thank goodness I did.

I must recognize my doctors at Estevan, Dr. Sheikh and Dr. Tsoi, for their quick action and continued care. I would like to thank the staff of Regina General Hospital cardiac care unit, including the doctors, nursing staff and technicians, for their commitment to providing quality care for their patients. I would like to specifically mention my cardiologists, Dr. Lavoie and my angioplasty specialist Dr. Booker. These incredible doctors are the reason I am still here speaking to the House today, and I cannot thank them enough.

Finally, to those who say politicians do not have a heart, I now have surgical proof I do.

* * *

• (1410)

CHILD CARE

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today on an issue that is important to the residents of my riding of Davenport: child care.

Located in the downtown west part of Toronto, Davenport is still largely a working-class to middle-class riding with many households struggling to make ends meet. Since the Government of Canada announced its ambition for a \$10-a-day early learning and child care plan across the country, the federal government has signed agreements with every single province and territory except for Ontario. Indeed, in some provinces, families are seeing a reduction of overall child care fees of 20% or more.

At a time when the Canadian economy is struggling with higher costs largely due to the global supply chain, every additional dollar makes a big difference. Our federal government has been and is willing, ready and able to sign a deal with Ontario. On behalf of the residents of Davenport, I am asking the Province of Ontario to not waste any more time and step up to sign the child care agreement that would deliver much-needed savings for the hard-working families of Davenport.

* * *

COVID-19 RESPONSE MEASURES

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has been absolutely devastating for Canadians. During the last election, the Prime Minister ran an extremely divisive campaign and, since that election, I have heard from so many Canadians and people in my riding, people who lost their jobs due to vaccine mandates and people who had to have their children vaccinated to play hockey. They are hurt. They are exhausted. They deserve better.

Conservatives have been calling for a plan, a plan to stop dividing Canadians and a plan to lift restrictions and get us back to normal. I am so proud that the member for Louis-Hébert has shown so much leadership, recognizing the devastating consequences of lockdowns and the lack of a plan to move forward. If only the Prime Minister had the courage and the leadership shown by the member for Louis-Hébert.

Unfortunately, our country and Canadians will continue to suffer from the Prime Minister's lack of leadership and his divisive attitude.

* * *

COVID-19 RESPONSE MEASURES

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I applaud the courage of the member for Louis-Hébert, who stood up to the tone-deaf Prime Minister, calling on his government to stop politicizing the pandemic and stop dividing Canadians. Those speaking out against the mandates and restrictions are not white supremacists or extremists like the Prime Minister tries to label. They are everyday Canadians who just want a clear path forward out of this pandemic so they can get on with their lives.

Canadians' lives, businesses and mental health have all been devastated and our Conservative team has been asking for this clear path forward for the last year. True leadership unites people no matter their views, but the Prime Minister demonizes anyone who does not agree with his ideologies, calling people racist, even though he did blackface and kicked strong ethnic women out of his caucus who stood up against his corruption.

Statements by Members

It is time for the Prime Minister to stop politicizing the pandemic and start listening to Canadians who have suffered enough. Canadians need hope. They need leadership and they need action now for a path forward out of the mandates and restrictions. We all owe it to Canadians to keep our land united, strong and free.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, supporting small businesses is very important, especially during COVID-19. Last month, my city received a grant of \$945,000 from the “My Main Street” local business accelerator program. This will go toward supporting and improving six main street business communities in Brampton.

Residents of Brampton know how important our small businesses are to our city. People go to them for a cup of coffee, to shop for new clothes and to gather with their families for meals, but like so many businesses, they were hit hard by the pandemic. This is why this grant will help to rebuild them across the city.

Our government recognizes how uncertainty and COVID have impacted small businesses, which is why programs like “My Main Street” and others have been developed to help owners support and grow their businesses in Brampton and across the country.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Pat, a senior in Nanaimo—Ladysmith, is one of many seniors being punished for rightfully accessing CERB. As a result of GIS clawbacks, she is now left with a budget of only \$70 a week for groceries. Since the clawbacks, she has barely been able to keep food in her fridge.

Organizations in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, such as Nanaimo Family Life, are working tirelessly to support vulnerable seniors throughout the pandemic. One of their frontline staff recently told me the GIS clawbacks were like pouring gasoline on an already dire situation for low-income seniors who are struggling with the affordability crisis. Pat and others like her should not be held responsible for the government's mistakes.

It is time for the government to do what is right and put this much-needed income back into the pockets of seniors now.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CREE NATION AND QUEBEC

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago, Grand Chief Ted Moses and Premier Bernard Landry signed the Paix des braves, an historic agreement between the Cree Nation and the Government of Quebec.

Twenty years ago, the Cree Nation and Quebec entered into a crucial economic partnership that helped both of our nations. More

importantly, it marked the official beginning of a genuine nation-to-nation relationship, a relationship based on respect.

Twenty years later, the relationship between the Cree Nation and Quebec is not perfect. It must be maintained. The Paix des braves is not universally embraced, does not erase history, and cannot take the place of reconciliation. However, it is clear that this agreement marked an economic, social and diplomatic turning point.

While signing a modern treaty like the Paix des braves is neither the first nor the last step toward self-determination for indigenous peoples, it can be seen as a major step. Twenty years later, it is still in that spirit that we must look to our shared future.

* * *

[English]

COVID-19 RESPONSE MEASURES

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been an eventful several weeks in Ottawa, but earlier today, Canadians witnessed a moment of true courage from the Liberal member for Louis-Hébert and the chair of the Quebec Liberal caucus when he spoke out against the Prime Minister's dividing and stigmatizing of Canadians.

It is also encouraging that other members of the Liberal caucus may have also seen the light. The Quebec caucus chair said, “I can tell you that I am not the only one” to have a certain discomfort on different levels regarding the direction the government is taking.

Canadians have been looking for leadership from the Prime Minister, and we can see from the protest outside that he is still hiding. I encourage all my colleagues on the Liberal benches to speak out against the Prime Minister's divisive approach and discrimination against Canadians. After all, as the Prime Minister said, “a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian.”

* * *

[Translation]

ELEANOR COLLINS

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members know, February is Black History Month. Today I want to pay tribute to an exceptional Canadian woman, the legendary singer Eleanor Collins.

Oral Questions

Eleanor, now 102 years old, had an illustrious career as Canada's first lady of jazz. She was the first woman and first Black artist to star in her own television show in Canada. Eleanor Collins broke down racial barriers, paving the way for more diversity on the stage and in the entertainment world.

Eleanor Collins's music brought together people from different cultures and backgrounds during a time of strong racial tension. Music has the power to bring people together, spread love and touch our souls.

Eleanor made our lives just that much more beautiful.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to lockdowns and mandates, we are seeing things change very quickly, and rightly so. Dr. Tam has said that vaccine mandates should be re-evaluated, and today the chair of the Quebec Liberal caucus clearly and strongly stated it is time to end the divisiveness, end the politicization and end the mandates. We Conservatives could not agree more. This cannot be a slow and dragged-out process simply because of the Prime Minister's ego, pride or denial. Canadians are too tired. Canadians need hope.

Will the Prime Minister follow the science, follow the evidence, end the restrictions and end the mandates?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone is sick and tired of lockdowns, of the measures we have had to do, of the sacrifices we have had to make, but Canadians have continued to step up over the past two years. They have been there for each other, have been there to get vaccinated. That is the unity we have seen across the country of people who have been there for their neighbours, who have been there for their frontline health workers. That is what Canadians are going to do. That is how we get through and get back to the things we love.

We are going to continue to follow the science. We are going to continue to have Canadians' backs. We are going to continue to protect people's lives.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, countries like Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Israel, the Czech Republic, the U.K., Spain and Denmark are all removing restrictions and mandates, and they are all countries that have a lower vaccine rate than Canada. Here in Canada, though, we have a Prime Minister who refuses to lead and instead is being divisive. I have to agree with the MP for Louis-Hébert when he said, "People don't know where public health ends and politics begins."

Canadians want their lives back, so again I ask the Prime Minister, will he follow the evidence? Will he follow the science, end the mandates and end the restrictions quickly?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we have had Canadians' backs by following the science, by working closely with—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Leader of the Opposition asked a question. She is trying to hear, but she cannot hear above all the heckling and shouting that is going on. I am going to ask everyone to just keep it down so that she can hear the answer coming from the Prime Minister.

The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of this pandemic we have followed the science and we have had Canadians' backs. We have actually seen a less severe impact on lives, on livelihoods and on our economy than many other countries, including the ones that the Leader of the Opposition named.

We will continue to follow the science. We will continue to lean on each other as Canadians as we make it through this pandemic. We know it is tiring and we know it is exhausting, but we also know that having each other's backs is the way through this pandemic.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has politicized the pandemic and been divisive. Even his own members are seeing it. Now countries around the world are opening up, and even here in Canada, provinces are opening up. They are following the science and the evidence, whether it is from Dr. Henry in B.C. or Dr. Moore in Ontario. They all agree we have to learn to live with COVID. Conservatives believe that living with COVID means opening up and ending the mandates, and I believe there are some Liberals who believe the same thing.

Will the Prime Minister follow the science, end the lockdowns and let Canada once again be the true north, strong and free?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to hear the Conservatives finally talking about following science, because that is something that they have fallen down on throughout this pandemic, whether it was not choosing to get vaccinated or whether it is continuing to debate the effectiveness of public health measures. Fortunately, we have been working with provincial premiers right across the country to bring in the kinds of restrictions and the kinds of mandates that have saved Canadian lives.

Unfortunately, we see Conservatives continuing to both call for an end to the protests from in here and support them out there. They need to be more responsible leaders to get through this and to play less politics.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the truth came out this morning.

The member for Louis-Hébert and chair of the Quebec Liberal caucus said, “I can’t help but notice with regret that both the tone and the policies of my government changed drastically on the eve [of] and during the last election campaign. From a positive and unifying approach, the decision was made to wedge, to divide and to stigmatize.”

Did the Prime Minister himself make that decision to divide people so he could win the election?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the decisions the government made during the pandemic were made to save lives. As we know, a record number of Canadians have been vaccinated, and we lead the rest of the world in vaccination rates.

Canadians know that being there for one another is the best way to get through this pandemic. I get that people are fed up and tired. They want this to be over. The only way to do that is through science, not by playing political games, which is what the Conservative Party is doing, unfortunately.

• (1425)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did not answer my question.

One of his own MPs, the Quebec caucus chair and member for Louis-Hébert, is calling for an end to vaccine mandates. He believes that his government's decisions are not sufficiently backed by science. He was very clear in saying that someone in this government has deliberately chosen to take a divisive approach that stigmatizes certain people.

Was this decision to politicize the COVID-19 crisis for partisan purposes taken by the Prime Minister himself, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I completely disagree with the hon. member, because all government decisions have been made to keep people safe and to get us through this pandemic. This includes vaccine mandates, which help prevent further restrictions.

People who are vaccinated can get back to the things they love. The Conservatives have unfortunately been fighting against this from the beginning, but we are here to encourage vaccination and to make sure we get through this pandemic.

We are all fed up. We all want to get through this, and the way to do that is with science.

* * *

COVID-19 PROTESTS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the situation is far from perfect, but we are making progress. Order has not yet been restored, but an injunction has reduced the number of honking horns. Quebec City worked together with the Government of Quebec to set the course for dealing with

Oral Questions

the protests. The Prime Minister reappeared in the House, which is good.

A crisis task force was created. A crisis task force is a means, not an end. It has to be accountable to the highest authorities, including Parliament. Has the Prime Minister brought in a measure to ensure that Wellington Street and Parliament Hill will be liberated this Friday?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have spent two years fighting the pandemic. They are tired. We have heard them. Now the people of Ottawa need things to go back to normal.

We are doing everything we can to help the City of Ottawa regain control of the situation. This afternoon, I will be talking to Mayor Watson again to discuss how we can best support him. My goal is to help the people of Ottawa get the support they deserve. We will all stick together to get through this challenging time.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us hope that this Friday is not going to kick off another weekend like the previous ones.

Another voice has been added to those of Quebec and the provinces. According to the member for Louis-Hébert, the government's position on health transfers is nothing less than untenable. Increasingly, we are realizing that a more robust health system would have reduced the need for restrictions and perhaps would have prevented some of what we are seeing and experiencing in the streets today.

Is the Prime Minister ready to reconsider our proposal of holding a summit on funding for health care?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois knows full well that health care summits are not held with the Bloc Québécois but with the provincial premiers. These conversations with the provincial premiers are ongoing.

I can point out that in addition to the \$43 billion that we transfer every year for health care systems, over the past two years the federal government has invested an additional \$63 billion in health because of the pandemic.

We will continue to be there right now to invest in health, but also in the years to come to support the provinces as they deliver our health services.

Oral Questions

[English]

COVID-19 PROTESTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have truckers who are stuck at the Coutts border crossing in Alberta. We have truckers who are stuck at the Ambassador Bridge crossing in Windsor. We have protests breaking out across the country. Here in Ottawa, we are on the 12th day of the occupation, all because of the convoy protests. I have spoken with some of the residents and small businesses in Ottawa, and they tell me they are terrified, they are intimidated and they feel abandoned by the government.

People who feel abandoned want to know this: What has the Prime Minister done to help people in this crisis since it has begun?

● (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, we have been there to offer support and assistance to the City of Ottawa as it deals with this.

We have been working closely with the province to ensure that resources get to the City of Ottawa to be able to handle this protest. We will continue to be there to support not just the citizens of Ottawa who are impacted by this protest, but also folks across the country, including hard-working truckers stuck at border crossings because of protests that are affecting and impacting and limiting their fellow citizens.

I call upon the Conservative Party to be consistent in here and out there and call for an end to these protests.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, truckers are being held up at the border crossings in Coutts and Windsor, and today is the 12th day of the occupation in Ottawa, all because of the trucker convoy protests. This situation is untenable.

I have spoken with some of the small business owners and residents in Ottawa who told me that they are terrified and that they are being intimidated and harassed by these protesters. They also feel abandoned by the government.

What exactly has the Prime Minister done to help them?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with the City of Ottawa and the province from the very beginning to ensure that they have all of the resources required to end these protests.

Although Ottawa residents are particularly affected by these protests, they are not the only ones. These protests are also hurting our economy and our constituents, as well as truckers and people across the country.

That is why we will continue to support science and law enforcement agencies to put an end to these protests and the pandemic.

[English]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's Prime Minister is pandering to politics by division, stoking anger and fear. The rhetoric he used towards those Canadians who sup-

port lifting the mandate adds fuel to the fire. These are not the actions of a Prime Minister.

A senior member of the Liberal caucus has publicly criticized his tone, his language and his approach to the pandemic. Will the Prime Minister act like a Prime Minister? Will he listen to the opposition, listen to his own caucus and listen to Canadians, or will he continue with this divisive rhetoric?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the pandemic, our government has been laying out, with great transparency, what we believe is the best way out of this pandemic, and that is vaccinations. I want to give credit to the 90% of Canadians who have taken up that cause, including the 90% of truckers who have taken up the cause of vaccinations to ensure that the wheels of our economy continue to turn.

As for those who are outside, the government is working very closely with the City of Ottawa to provide the police with all the tools and resources that they need to end this convoy as quickly and as peacefully as possible.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians, including a senior member of the Liberal caucus, are speaking loud and clear—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to have to ask the hon. member for Foothills to stop while the members on his side are heckling him. I will let him continue now.

The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow: Canadians, including senior members of the Liberal caucus, are speaking loud and clear. Canadians are looking for pandemic leadership. Canadians are standing up right now, grabbing this moment in our history, because they know there is something fundamentally wrong when a Prime Minister refuses to listen.

Countries around the world are changing direction, but here in Canada our Prime Minister resorts to playground antics and calling names. If ever there was a time for inspired leadership, it is now. Will the Prime Minister grow up? Will he do his job? Will he listen to Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased and grateful for the member's use of "pandemic leadership". This is exactly that. This is pandemic leadership.

We all have the responsibility to work together, to listen to each other, to listen to science. What science has told us and what science—

● (1435)

The Speaker: I am going to have to interrupt the hon. Minister of Health. I am having a hard time hearing him. I really wanted to hear the answer, and I am sure the hon. member for Foothills, who asked the question, would like to hear the answer too.

Oral Questions

I am going to ask the hon. minister to start right from the top so we can hear the whole answer.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to do that, because I thought the question was the right statement.

The hon. member spoke about pandemic leadership. That is exactly the point. We need to be leaders in managing the pandemic. We need to be united together, working together and listening to each other. We have a hard job to do, which is to look after the health of millions of Canadians who depend on us to protect their health and the health of those they love.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the chair of the Quebec Liberal caucus proved us right. For months now, we have been asking for greater clarity, for science-based decisions and, most of all, for a unifying rather than a divisive approach.

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister has been doing the opposite for the past two years by demonizing everyone who disagrees with him. Will he finally admit that he is playing petty politics and just making things worse?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Quebec City. He knows my colleague from Louis-Hébert, and he knows how much respect we have for his work in his riding and in and around Quebec City.

The member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles talked about unity. That is a great word, because Canadians are united in fighting this pandemic. If there is one thing that unites us, it is vaccination. That is why we have to keep it up. It works, and 99% of public servants are vaccinated, which means they are protecting themselves and their colleagues.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the member for Louis-Hébert and chair of the Quebec Liberal caucus made himself very clear. He asked his government to provide a roadmap, a game plan for where we are going with all this.

That is what we have been asking of the Prime Minister for the past two years, but there has been no response from him. The Prime Minister chose to politicize the pandemic that is dividing Canadians. He had no intention of listening to advice from opposition members or even his own MPs, as far as we can tell. Many Canadians agree with us on that.

Will he get the message at last? He needs to stop dividing us. As the member for Louis-Hébert said, he needs to show us a plan, a roadmap.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles is right that we have had a plan for two years, since the start of the pandemic, and our plan is working to prevent deaths. With the measures we have put in place by listening to science, we have prevented nearly 50,000 deaths in Canada compared to what we have seen south of the border.

We have also saved a big part of our economy. With all due respect, if we had listened to the economic advice of the official op-

position, we would be in an economic crisis right now, and unfortunately, it would be impossible to get the economy going again.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a year ago, the Prime Minister rejected vaccine mandates, calling them “extreme measures that could have real divisive impacts on [our] community and country”. Since then, no one has created more division than the Prime Minister, pitting Canadian against Canadian and using vaccine status as a dangerous political weapon. In the words of a senior Liberal today, “Now that we have one of the most vaccinated populations in the world, we’ve never been so divided.”

When will the Prime Minister stop dividing Canadians and end his punitive vaccine mandates?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I particularly appreciate the emphasis on vaccination status. When I get vaccinated, I am doing it for myself, but also for my parents. When I visit my parents after getting vaccinated, I know I am protecting them. When my son gets vaccinated, I know that he is protected, and I am glad he is, but I also know that he will be protecting all the seniors he might run into.

Not only is it a very important personal decision that we make when we have the right vaccination status, but it is also a kindness to the people around us that we love.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is double-vaccinated, had his booster and just contracted COVID-19, so using mandates to discriminate against Canadians based on their vaccine status is absolutely punitive and discriminatory. A senior Liberal called on the Prime Minister to stop dividing Canadians on the issue of vaccine status.

When will the Prime Minister start listening to science, start listening to public health officials, start listening to his own members of Parliament and end his campaign of discrimination and division against Canadians?

● (1440)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak with respect, but also with honesty. I am a bit troubled by what I hear, which is the belief that vaccination does not work. Vaccination does work. About a year ago, science gave us the gift of vaccination. We had waited for that for an entire year. Since then, millions of Canadians have chosen to do the right thing, which is to get vaccinated. I am very troubled by the fact that on the opposite side of the House, there are still people who do not believe in vaccination.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. If I could have the House's attention, I want to remind everyone that we are in question period and we want to hear the questions and answers.

Oral Questions

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.
[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, downtown Ottawa has been under siege for the past 12 days, and this mess will not go away on its own.

As we heard again yesterday in his speech, the Prime Minister's plan for getting out of this crisis was to tell the protesters to go and get vaccinated. I have a news flash for him. At this point, they are not likely to go for that.

What is the government actually doing, aside from antagonizing the protesters? What action will the Prime Minister take? What kind of deadline will he give the protesters? When will he finally realize that magical thinking will not clear the streets of Ottawa?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning, the federal government has been there to support the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Police Service by providing 275 RCMP officers. The RCMP remains ready to provide additional assistance to the Ottawa Police Service in the form of additional personnel as requested by Mayor Jim Watson.

I will be speaking with him, along with the entire team on this side of the House, and we will continue to work closely with the city to provide all the necessary resources.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is day 12 of the occupation of Ottawa, and the federal government is still not stepping up its efforts to resolve the crisis.

Yesterday, the Minister of Public Safety said, "I am proud that our government has done everything it could from the start to enforce the law". He said that after pointing out that the government has made 275 RCMP officers available to the City of Ottawa. The city is calling for 1,800 officers. That represents 15% of the city's demand.

Is that all the government can do after 12 days of being under siege?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, I am very proud of the government during the pandemic and I am very proud of the RCMP's contribution on the ground to provide more officers and help to the Ottawa Police Service, which is doing good work right now. There has been a lot of progress in the past two days.

We now need to put an end to this convoy, and the government and the City of Ottawa will work together to achieve that goal.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is not surprising that the siege is dragging on.

On the one hand, we have a Minister of Public Safety who waited 11 days before creating a crisis task force and who refuses to fully deploy the RCMP. On the other hand, we have a Prime Minister who still believes that the occupiers will listen to him, decide that he is right and go home to get vaccinated. That is the Liberal Party's idea of crisis management.

At this point, what is surprising is not that the member for Louis-Hébert is speaking out against his own party, but that he is the only one to do so.

When will the Liberals wake up?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps my colleague has not been watching the news.

From the start, we deployed many resources. We added officers to help the police of jurisdiction. We will continue to work closely with the City of Ottawa, the Government of Ontario and everyone to resolve the convoy situation.

* * *

• (1445)

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I remember clearly in March 2020 making a pandemic plan for my regional hospital. At that time and ever since, the government has been too little, too late or not at the right time.

Canadians need hope for their futures. When is the Liberal government going to show leadership and give Canadians a much-needed plan to learn to live with COVID-19?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising that important question.

We have been working together since March 2020 to fight the biggest health crisis in 100 years in Canada. We have gone through this crisis successfully, certainly with respect to many other countries in the world, and it is because we have worked together and helped each other, the provinces and territories and the federal government. We have invested eight dollars out of every \$10 in total economic support, with \$63 billion on health and safety investments, in addition to all the other investments we have been making for many years.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, most provincial medical officers of health have begun to speak of living with COVID, and even Health Canada's own Dr. Tam has said that the virus will be endemic. Nova Scotia's Dr. Strang has spoken of initial steps needed to move forward.

When will the government rely on science, not the spin doctors, and the advice of its own experts and remove lockdowns, restrictions and mandates? Give Canadians the date.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a very key signal to be against vaccination is to be in favour of lockdowns. The only way to fight lockdowns is to be in favour of vaccination. That is why I will again invite all opposition members, including the new Conservative leader, to exert new leadership and ask all members of the Conservative Party to be vaccinated. That is the only way to avoid lockdowns.

Oral Questions

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a senior Liberal has shared his concerns that the government mandates are divisive and harmful to the Canadian people. The Prime Minister and his government need to stop politicizing the pandemic, because it is fracturing our society and dividing Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister listen to the voices within his own party and present Parliament and the rest of Canada with something, anything, to end the mandates, end the restrictions and allow us to start living with COVID?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will say something that my hon. colleague already knows, most likely: The lockdown measures to which she refers are provincial decisions made by the provinces and territories. I believe no one in the House is confused between federal and provincial responsibilities. The federal responsibility has been and will be to support the provinces and territories moving forward.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, somebody needs to tell the minister that it is 2022. The redundant PCR testing for asymptomatic, fully vaccinated travellers does not make any sense. Permanent travel restrictions are not the answer, because the current ones are ineffective. The government's duplicative arrival testing regime is out of step with the world. It takes up to a week for the results. That means forced quarantines and high costs for families.

When will the government join our allies and drop these ineffective travel restrictions?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, working with our allies is exactly what we had to do and what we did. We have obviously worked with the United States, which is our closest ally, very successfully over the last few months. The mandate to which she refers, the border mandate in particular regarding vaccination, is entirely symmetrical and in line with what the United States is doing. We will continue to work with our allies.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I want to remind hon. members that some of you do not realize how strong your voices are. Even if they are muffled with face masks, they really echo through. I ask members to respect each other and not shout at each other.

An hon. member: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Apology accepted.

The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

* * *

• (1450)

COVID-19 PROTESTS

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the Liberal government's watch, online platforms were used to fund the ongoing occupation in Ottawa. Millions of dollars have been raised for convoy organizers whose stated purpose is to overthrow the government. Canadians are rightly concerned that these platforms have become tools used to help foreign actors undermining our democracy. In response to the lack

of federal leadership, I brought a motion to the public safety committee to examine how this could be allowed to happen.

Will the government ensure that foreign funds and anonymous donations are never again used to help those attacking our democracy?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my hon. colleague for the impending work he will do in conjunction with the committee on standing public safety matters.

This is a very important matter. Certainly over the course of the last number of days, we have seen GoFundMe take appropriate actions in asking the right questions about where certain funds were coming from and what they would be used for. Certainly to that extent, the committee will be looking at this issue very closely.

We all need to be seized with the landscape as it exists around foreign interference, and any funds that may be used to undermine public safety.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about being seized with urgency, but it is 12 days that health care workers, small business owners, Ottawa residents and others have been harassed by some members of the convoy. Far-right extremists in the U.S. and elsewhere are trying to bring their radical views to Canada. They are funding extremists. They are empowering racism and anti-Semitism, and they are threatening to overthrow our government.

Why has it taken so long to respond to this ongoing crisis and the foreign-funded interference that is threatening our citizens, our country and our democracy?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my colleague that we have very strong laws to prevent the kind of illegal conduct she has referred to. Any funds that would go toward undermining public safety, national security or indeed our democracy will be taken with the utmost seriousness by our law enforcement as well as our intelligence community.

I look forward to the work that the committee will do. We will receive the report in this chamber, and we will continue to unite around the need to ensure our laws are upheld. Yes, we will have vigorous debates, but always in accordance with the rule of law.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized to my constituents in Kitchener—Conestoga and to all Canadians how crucial it is to have access to reliable and affordable high-speed Internet. Investments in broadband connectivity create jobs and improve access to online learning and health care services.

Can the Minister of Rural Economic Development provide an update to this House on the government's progress in delivering high-speed Internet across this country?

Oral Questions

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout the pandemic, families and businesses without access to affordable and high-speed Internet were faced with additional challenges accessing online learning, putting their businesses online and connecting with loved ones.

In the last few weeks alone, we have announced over \$8 million in funding to projects to connect an additional 4,000 households throughout rural Canada. We have a plan to connect every Canadian to high-speed Internet all across the country, and we are delivering on that plan.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the rising cost of living continues to affect the everyday lives of my constituents in Beauce.

With inflation at a record high, Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. The lack of leadership from this government is unbelievable. The price of gas in Beauce has hit \$1.60 per litre. Grocery bills are going up by 5% to 7%, which adds up to \$1,000 for a family of four.

The people of Beauce want answers. Why is the government not looking for ways to help Canadians through the final stages of this pandemic?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do not need any lectures from the Conservatives about helping the most vulnerable Canadians cope with the cost of living.

We created the Canada child benefit, which is indexed to inflation and has brought 300,000 children out of poverty.

Our government increased the guaranteed income supplement, which is also indexed to inflation and which has helped more than 900,000 seniors.

• (1455)

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only thing this government knows how to do is stick to its talking points. Sure, seniors get the guaranteed income supplement, but, let us be honest, indexing falls far short of the inflation rate we are seeing.

What should I say to constituents of mine who do not get the guaranteed income supplement or to seniors in my riding who can barely pay the rent?

Instead of upping income tax to cover its excessive spending, when will the government wake up and get serious about helping Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are at it again with their false economic narrative.

The fact is, Canada is resilient, and our economy is strongly recovering from the COVID-19 recession. Our GDP grew 5.4% in the third quarter, outperforming the U.S., Japan, the U.K. and Australia.

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, polls say that fewer than one in five Canadians expect their financial situation to improve this year. Almost 60% of Canadians are having a tough time putting food on their tables, and the average family grocery bill will go up \$1,000 this year. Constituents are emailing me copies of the highest home heating bills they have ever received, and payroll taxes will take about \$700 off the average family's paycheques this year. People are being squeezed.

Why is the government not addressing the unmanageable squeeze that is being put on hard-working families, making it difficult every day to just pay for basic necessities?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will take no lessons from the Conservatives when it comes to supporting the most vulnerable Canadians. It was our government that introduced the CCB, which is indexed for inflation and which has already lifted almost 300,000 children out of poverty. It is our government that increased the GIS. That is also indexed to inflation, and it has helped over 900,000 seniors.

When we formed government in 2015, more than five million Canadians lived in poverty. By 2019, that number had dropped to 3.7 million.

* * *

HOUSING

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of King—Vaughan, constituents are concerned with keeping their homes. Years ago, I worked in banking and met many people returning the keys to their houses because they simply could not afford to make the payments with the skyrocketing interest.

What has the government done to ensure we do not go back to the 1980s and 1990s, a time when we saw many Canadians lose their homes?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. Since 2015, our government has invested nearly \$30 billion for affordable housing, brought in Canada's first-ever national housing strategy, and we have a plan worth over \$70 billion, which has already helped over one million Canadians find the homes that they need.

We have more work to do, and we will work with provinces and territories, and municipalities as well, to make sure we are building more housing supply to ensure that every Canadian has a safe and affordable place to call home.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***SENIORS**

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for the past eight months, the government has been making cuts to the guaranteed income supplement for seniors who received CERB. We are talking about seniors who have to work part time to pay for the basics, such as their rent or medication.

This morning, after eight months, the government introduced a bill to right this wrong. Do my colleagues know when this bill will come into force? It will be in June.

If the situation of seniors is serious enough to give rise to a bill, why is the government continuing to make cuts until June?

[English]

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know just how difficult this pandemic has been on seniors, and on this side of the House, we have been there to support them. As announced in the fiscal update, we will be delivering a one-time payment to fully compensate those affected in 2020, and today we introduced Bill C-12 to exclude any pandemic benefits for the purposes of calculating GIS going forward.

I hope that we can count on all parties' support to quickly pass this bill to prevent any future reduction in GIS for low-income vulnerable seniors who took pandemic benefits. I hope we can all get behind this.

- (1500)

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by the time this government stops making cuts to the guaranteed income supplement for seniors, the government will have been depriving them of the basic essentials for 11 months.

During those 11 months, inflation had time to reach the highest levels in 30 years. For 11 months, seniors had to leave more and more food on the shelves at the grocery store because it is too expensive. Their rent has probably gone up. For 11 months, all of their expenses went up while the government cut their benefits.

Is this how seniors deserve to be treated?

[English]

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government's priority has been there to support those most vulnerable, especially those seniors, and that is why we worked so hard to strengthen income security for seniors, including the increases to the GIS, which has helped over 900,000 low-income seniors. That is also why we introduced Bill C-12 to exclude pandemic benefits for the purposes of calculating GIS going forward. We are also making major investments through a one-time payment for seniors affected.

On this side of the House, we will always be there for seniors.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for 130 days the government has refused to fill the position of the federal ombudsman for victims of crime. To be clear, the ombudsman's job is to make sure the federal government meets its responsibilities to victims. The government is still pushing ahead with legislation that would make life easier for violent criminals by eliminating mandatory jail time, all while this critical role for victims is being silenced.

Could the minister tell the House why this important position remains empty?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, indeed we share that concern for helping, protecting and working with victims of crime to ensure that the criminal justice system works not only more efficiently, but also more empathetically and passionately with respect—

[Translation]

The Speaker: The member for Salaberry—Suroît is rising on a point of order.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, the interpreter is unable to do their job properly because the sound quality is poor.

[English]

The Speaker: We are going to ask the hon. Minister of Justice to do that over again and make sure his microphone is in the right place.

I will ask him to repeat his answer, and hopefully we can hear him.

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question, and I share his concern about helping—

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt the hon. Minister of Justice and ask the hon. Minister of Public Safety to answer while the technical issue is being taken care of.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we can all relate to having technical difficulties in one way or another. I believe what my colleague, the Minister of Justice, would say is that we are obviously very concerned with filling this position as quickly as possible so there is an ombudsperson in place and we will make sure that we do that.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no matter who answers, the message is the same: Victims do not matter to the government. Leaving the ombudsman position empty is a deliberate decision by the government. In 2016, the Liberals immediately replaced the outgoing ombudsman for federal offenders, but they will not show the same respect for victims.

We should not be surprised that the Liberals put the rights of criminals ahead of victims yet again. The mandated review for the victims bill of rights is already a year overdue. The message the justice minister sends over and over to victims is clear: Victims do not matter.

Oral Questions

Again, when can victims expect the ombudsman position to be filled?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the work that this government continues to do to uphold victims' rights. In fact, this government restored many of the cuts that were made under the last Conservative government as a way of demonstrating the concrete, tangible support for victims.

We will continue to use our open, transparent and merit-based process to fill this position. I know that is something that the Minister of Justice is very much seized with.

• (1505)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that Liberals are soft on crime in words and action. It has been four months. Victims of crime do matter and it cannot be swept away like yet again, one of the Liberal scandals.

Silke from Bonnyville is scared and feels unsafe in her own home. She says, "With every strange noise we look out the window and a false alarm from our shop sensor gives us adrenaline overload. Every slow-driving vehicle makes our hairs stand up".

That is normal in Lakeland. It has been four months. When will the Liberals appoint the federal ombudsman for victims of crime?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the sentiments of my hon. colleague, and I understand that it is important that victims have an office they can approach. That is why I know the Minister of Justice will appoint this position as quickly as possible.

In the meantime, this government will continue to invest in all of the resources and supports that are needed for victims. We know that throughout the pandemic there has been an alarming increase in gender-based violence, and we will always be there to support victims.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, investments in infrastructure are investments in strong and healthy communities. Investing in important local projects ensures that families, residents and businesses across New Brunswick have the infrastructure they need to grow and thrive.

Can the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities tell us what the government is doing to invest in safer and more efficient water services and to help keep our communities healthy, green and sustainable?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank our colleague from Madawaska—Restigouche for his question.

Investing in green infrastructure in our communities will ensure residents have a safe, reliable source of drinking water. That is why our government is investing over \$2.2 million to upgrade the water

supply infrastructure in two rural New Brunswick communities, Saint Hilaire in Madawaska and Tide Head.

I think that all members thank the member for Madawaska—Restigouche for his outstanding work.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the IISD Experimental Lakes Area in my riding is a state-of-the-art and world-renowned freshwater laboratory. In their latest election platform, the Liberals promised a \$37.5-million investment to support its work.

Is the government still committed to keeping this promise? Will we see the funding in the next budget?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague. It is a very important scientific centre. I find it somewhat ironic that he would ask the question, since it was the Conservative government that cut funding to this very important international experiment, but we will be there to continue to finance good science in Canada.

* * *

COVID-19 ECONOMIC MEASURES

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, new businesses get no support from the government. It is 2022. We are entering the third year of the pandemic. Did Liberals think no one would open a new business in those three years? In my riding, Spirit Tree Estate Cidery is shutting down indoor dining for at least a year. Other businesses in my riding have closed or are on the verge of closing.

Does the Liberal government not realize it is literally killing new businesses?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really time for the Conservatives to pick a lane and decide what side they are on when it comes to the big issues facing our country. Half of their questions are about how there is too much government spending and how our government should not be supporting Canadian businesses. In fact, these are the Conservatives who voted against Bill C-2, which provided much-needed lockdown support. I now hear from them that there should be more support. It really is the party of flip-flop.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year, Parliament unanimously passed my private member's bill that would help Canadians register as organ and tissue donors through their annual tax return. Support from all parties was an encouraging sign to thousands of Canadians awaiting a life-saving transplant. Sadly, nothing has happened since. The minister has not even given me the courtesy of responding to my request for an update. She owes all members in the House an update.

Will the minister tell us why we have not seen any progress from her or the Canada Revenue Agency?

• (1510)

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the passage of Bill C-210, the Canada Revenue Agency will start discussions with its provincial and territorial partners. Although these discussions take time, the CRA is acting as quickly as possible on this initiative. That being said, it is unlikely to be implemented in time for this tax season.

I thank my colleague for his ongoing efforts, and I invite him to contact my office for updates.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the flooding experienced in British Columbia last November was the most devastating agricultural disaster in our province's history. Farmers and food processors suffered extraordinary damages as a result of the extreme weather event.

Can the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food please update the House on how our government is supporting farmers impacted by the floods in B.C.?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada stands with farmers and communities that are feeling the impacts of extreme weather conditions in British Columbia. Impacted producers will have access to up to \$228 million in federal and provincial support to help farmers return to production and support food security in years ahead. We are here to help them do what they do best, which is producing high-quality food for Canadians and the world.

* * *

COVID-19 PROTESTS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 12 days later, the consequences of the convoy are spreading across the country. Things are only getting worse and the Prime Minister continues to ignore advice from outside his Ottawa bubble. In Windsor, the Ambassador Bridge has been forced to close. This has devastated not only truckers but also businesses, residents and essential workers who cross the border every single day to save lives.

The disrespect for our local economy is one thing, but it is clear that there is no plan for border communities and we want a plan.

Oral Questions

The NDP has proposed a safe border task force. It has been ignored for two years. Why has this not been acted upon? Why can we not get in front of doing the right work and the right—

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know my hon. colleague's advocacy will be very important in the coming days. He reached out to me earlier and he and I will be having a conversation. I also want to assure him and everybody in the Windsor area that we are working very closely with CBSA officials who are coordinating both with Windsor police as well as the mayor, with whom I have also had contact.

There is a full-court press to ensure that we keep supply chains moving on the Ambassador Bridge. We have diverted some of those traffic lines to alternate ports of entry, and we will be sure that we continue to work very closely with all orders of government and law enforcement to get this result.

* * *

COVID-19 ECONOMIC MEASURES

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just last week, Statistics Canada reported a job loss of 200,000 jobs during the omicron wave. That is 200,000 Canadian families who are struggling with a benefit system the Liberals created that is inadequate to the task. It does not pay \$500 a week, people are waiting far too long to get access if they qualify, and even the special measures that the Liberals brought in just days after passing the bill are set to expire in the next few days.

What is the government's plan, and will it work with us to increase the benefit to \$500 a week and make sure that all those Canadians out there who are experiencing job loss, still as a result of the pandemic, actually have access to help instead of—

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree that every single lost job is a Canadian tragedy. That is why I am so pleased that, even after the jobs lost in the necessary omicron lockdowns, Canada has recovered 101% of the jobs lost in the depth of COVID compared to just 87% in the U.S. When it comes to support for workers, I would like to say, with the deepest possible respect, that workers are getting support today because of Bill C-2, which I am sorry to say the NDP voted against.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: During question period, we have had some technical difficulties with our reception here. Regarding the hon. member for King—Vaughan, I know that the answer to her question was garbled. I am going to ask the hon. member to repeat her question and hopefully we will be able to hear an answer, both because of the technical reparations that were made and hopefully because of the hospitality that will be displayed in the chamber.

The hon. member.

* * *

● (1515)

HOUSING

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of King—Vaughan, constituents are concerned with keeping their homes. Years ago, I worked in banking and met many people returning their keys to their homes because they simply could not afford to make payments with the skyrocketing interest rates.

What has the government done to ensure that we do not go back to the 1980s and 1990s, where we saw many Canadians lose their homes?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on making sure that every Canadian has a safe and affordable place to call home. Since 2015, we have invested over \$30 billion, introduced the national housing strategy and worked closely with provinces, territories, municipalities and the non-profit and private sectors to ensure that more affordable housing and more supply of housing is there for Canadians.

We know that there is more work to be done. We are working to make sure that we turn more Canadian renters into homeowners through the rent-to-own program and introduce measures to facilitate and accelerate housing supply in partnership with municipalities.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

The House resumed from February 7 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:16 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the first report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

Call in the members.

● (1530)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 20)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Angus	Arnold
Ashton	Bachrach
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benzen	Bergen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blaikie	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Bloch	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Chong
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferrieri	Findlay
Fortin	Gallant
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Green	Hallan
Hoback	Hughes
Idlout	Jeneroux
Johns	Julian
Kelly	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Martel	Masse
Mathysen	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
McPherson	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrice
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
Normandin	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Plamondon	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Savard-Tremblay

Schmale
Shields
Simard
Singh
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Thériault
Thomas
Tolmie
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson
Zimmer — 173

Seeback
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Small
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Therrien
Tochor
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zarrillo

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Baker
Beech
Bennett
Bittle
Blois
Bradford
Carr
Chagger
Champagne
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Coteau
Damoff
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Gerretsen
Guilbeault
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hutchings
Ien
Joly
Jowhari
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada

Alghabra
Anand
Arseneault
Atwin
Bains
Battiste
Bendayan
Bibeau
Blair
Boissonnault
Brière
Casey
Chahal
Chatel
Chiang
Cormier
Dabrusin
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fergus
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fry
Garneau
Gould
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jaczek
Jones
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Lalonde
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
Maloney
May (Cambridge)

Business of Supply

McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Miller	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Ng	Noormohamed
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara	St-Onge
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thompson
Trudeau	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koevorden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Virani
Vuong	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zuberi — 156

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF CANADA
(SASKATCHEWAN ACT)

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 15 minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to resume the debate today on the opposition motion and see unanimity between the government and the official opposition party.

I was talking earlier about our support for the Province of Saskatchewan throughout COVID. Some of the numbers I announced or detailed earlier are that more than 240,000 Saskatchewan residents received support through the Canada emergency benefit at some point. That is approximately 20% of the population. In addition, Saskatchewan is receiving \$1.3 billion through the Canada health transfer and nearly \$500 million this fiscal year through the Canada social transfer.

Business of Supply

Canada works best when governments work collaboratively and in the interests of Canadians. In this regard, I would like to point out that the land of the living skies is one of the jurisdictions the federal government has entered into an agreement with to build a Canada-wide early learning and child care system.

I want to point out the fact that during the election in 2021, the Conservatives campaigned against this early learning child care system. In fact, they would have scrapped it had they won. However, they did not win, and we are proceeding forward, with all provinces and territories having signed, except for the Province of Ontario. I encourage the Province of Ontario to come to an agreement with our government. I have a great respect for all the ministers involved, who are working judiciously and diligently, and I know that at a certain point in time we will get there.

I would like to announce that all Canadians will be covered, hopefully sooner than later, with a national early learning and day care plan. That is not only good for the economy, which I talk about quite a bit in this place, but is great for families, including my own. With a four-month-old at home, I hope to take advantage and have the opportunity to utilize lower day care fees, especially in the area of York Region, where fees can be anywhere from \$1,000 to \$2,000 a month in after-tax dollars. By the end of this year, Saskatchewan families will see a 50% reduction in average parent fees for children under the age of six in regulated child care. That is real progress with respect to affordability for Canadian families, in this case Saskatchewan families.

In addition to significantly reducing the costs of child care, federal funding of close to \$1.1 billion over the next five years will also lead to the creation of 28,000 new regulated early learning and child care spaces in that beautiful province.

Providing services to the public requires an ongoing commitment on the part of governments to ensure that everyone pays their fair share. This is something we need to keep in mind as we look at the provincial government's request. I support the province's request to amend the Saskatchewan Act. This amendment would be made under section 43 of the Constitution Act of 1982, because this change affects only one province.

This amending formula has been used before. For example, it allowed enshrining the equality of New Brunswick's English and French linguistic communities in the Canadian Constitution. It allowed for the construction of the Confederation Bridge to replace the requirement for a ferry service to Prince Edward Island. It allowed Quebec to abolish its Catholic and Protestant school boards and replace them with an education system organized along linguistic lines. It allowed for the name of the Province of Newfoundland to be changed to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. In all these cases, the provincial legislatures adopted the change, and the House of Commons and the Senate did the same after considering the matter judiciously, as we are doing today.

These changes reflect what Canada is today, and so does Saskatchewan's request. The amendment would strengthen the fairness of Canada's tax framework, as our government has done and has continued to do since 2015, when in our first mandate we raised taxes on the wealthiest 1% of Canadians because it was the right thing to do. We also brought in two middle-class tax cuts, one in

2015 and one in 2019, which have returned literally billions of dollars to middle-class Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Saskatchewan is one of our partners in Confederation, and it can be sure that the federal government is there to support it, not only in this matter but also in getting through the pandemic.

Those are my remarks this afternoon. I look forward to entertaining questions and comments from my hon. colleagues.

● (1535)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be able to ask a question of the hon. member.

Certainly in the province neighbouring Saskatchewan, I hear each and every day about the deep divisions within our country. I am encouraged that the Liberals appear to be supporting this measure to help ensure that our provinces actually have a voice.

My question for the member is quite simple. Would he support other measures to help ensure that we can actually unify this country at a time when it has never been more divided than it is now?

● (1540)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, when we are looking at an amendment to the Canadian Constitution and the Saskatchewan Act, it is the right thing to do to work with the provinces.

A collaborative fiscal federation, which Canada is, requires responsible leadership. That is what our government has demonstrated on this file by working with the Province of Saskatchewan and the official opposition and ensuring that the province's requests are listened to and acted upon. This is the right thing to do for the Province of Saskatchewan and all the wonderful people who currently reside in that province.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. I would like to ask him a general question about this correction to the outdated tax exemption. We do not oppose this, quite the contrary.

However, I would like him to comment on the possibility of Quebec also enshrining certain things in the Constitution, specifically something adopted by the House in the previous Parliament that identified Quebec as a francophone nation with a single common language, French.

I imagine that, if my colleague agrees with the proposal for Saskatchewan, then he also supports the Quebec proposal.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

[English]

I want to comment on the importance of the French language for me and my family. Since I was elected in 2015, I have taken it upon myself to learn French as well as possible, but more importantly, both of my daughters are in French immersion.

[Translation]

French is very important to me and my family. My daughters are studying the language so that they can speak it proficiently.

Speaking French is quite difficult for me.

[English]

I hope it will be easy for my daughters to learn French and be fully bilingual. I will be very proud at that moment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this motion, a dated contract signed well over 100 years ago, is before us today because the Saskatchewan legislature has brought it to our attention. The Saskatchewan legislature passed a motion unanimously, and now it requires passage in the House of Commons and the Senate. We have had the opportunity to have this discussion, and the right thing to do is support this motion in order to make a change that is probably long overdue. We are talking 100 years or so.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North for all the work he does in the House.

This is the right thing to do. Canadians sent us here to work collaboratively with all members of this House to get things done. This is, yes, long overdue. It will provide for a fairer taxation system for the Province of Saskatchewan and for the residents of Saskatchewan, and we will work with the Province of Saskatchewan to get this completed.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the aisle and I have worked together on a couple of committees, and I appreciate that he has voiced his support for this motion.

I wonder if there are things that we can work together on. He just talked about taxation. The Saskatchewan government has put forward its own carbon pricing system, but it was denied outright. I was wondering if we could work together on this with a sense of decorum and friendship as well, and move it forward. I am sure the Saskatchewan government would like to hear if it could work with the Liberal government on its new environmental plan as well.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, we have a wonderful Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Environment and Minister of Finance, and our bar is very high on reducing greenhouse gases across Canada and transitioning to a low-carbon economy. If the Province of Saskatchewan meets that bar, then it would implement its own carbon pricing model, but until it does, the federal government's model will be the one in place.

• (1545)

Hon. Jim Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to take part in this debate and to thank the people of Winnipeg South Centre, who have sent me back to

Business of Supply

this very special place for the third time now. I am honoured by their confidence.

The transcontinental railroad plays a starring role in the mythology around the formation of Canada. Rarely is the polished history of Confederation complete without some telling of how the ribbons of steel bound us together from sea to shining sea, coming together with the driving of the last spike.

Of course, there is some truth in that. However, the creation of the Canadian Pacific Railway was ultimately a political act to bring provinces into Confederation. It was also a business enterprise in a practically unfettered time that few of us here can possibly imagine. It was part of Canada's colonial pursuit to populate the Prairies with waves of settlers pledged to the Crown, no matter that thousands of years of indigenous civilization predated them.

Many agreements were made, and no doubt some broken, to make it happen. It is very important today to acknowledge that national unity through CP Rail came at a cost. The land grants to the railway and other corporate interests left out indigenous peoples. Treaties could never compare to the cultural loss of their sacred lands.

There were also those who benefited from this railway. It brought people and manufactured goods in and exports like wheat and potash out. Towns and villages bustled with activity due to branch lines, and grain elevators dotted the landscape. Modern-day Saskatchewan would not exist if not for railroads like the CPR. Our commodity production and supply chains continue to depend on rail service. Saskatchewan is a landlocked province that still feeds the world because of trains.

Hon. members know well the history that has brought us to this debate. It is not always as polished as some want it told, not always as idyllic as the murals in the Centre Block, but it is still important to the people and economies of our nation.

There is another constitutional dynamic to this history, and we are being asked to help the people of Saskatchewan to correct an historical anomaly. In 1880, Canada and the CPR reached an agreement that included a provision known as clause 16, which exempted the CPR from certain federal, provincial and municipal taxes forever. Twenty-five years later, that exemption was put into the Saskatchewan Act when the province was admitted into Canada in 1905. In 1966, the Government of Canada reached an agreement with the CPR whereby the CPR would begin paying taxes to bring the transportation legislation up to date.

Business of Supply

The problem was that the Constitution was not amended to reflect this, mainly because the Constitution was not patriated until two decades later. The tax exemption was never formally terminated. On November 29, the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan unanimously adopted a resolution requesting an amendment to the Constitution of Canada to repeal section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act and make it retroactive to 1966. If we all agree and if Canada and Saskatchewan agree on the outcome, and if we have the means to do so, it makes sense that we should seriously consider the opportunity to make the changes requested by our colleagues in Saskatchewan.

A strong relationship exists between Saskatchewan and the Government of Canada, a relationship we can see up close with the important work of PrairiesCan, the economic development agency formerly known as Western Economic Diversification. PrairiesCan has been a critical strategic investor in Saskatchewan's economy, and part of the minister's mandate is to advance Saskatchewan's economic interests in Ottawa, the same as for Manitoba and Alberta.

In the last five years, PrairiesCan approved investments of over a quarter of a billion dollars in projects to develop businesses, industries and communities across Saskatchewan. The result has been good jobs that people and their families rely on.

● (1550)

Recent examples that add value in key Saskatchewan sectors include PrairiesCan support of the Global Agri-Food Advancement Partnership in Saskatoon, as well as the Agtech Accelerator established in Regina. Over the last two years, the pandemic created challenges for the prairie economy, but also opportunities to come together and support one another. PrairiesCan has been at the forefront of keeping businesses alive during the pandemic. Over \$38 million in support has gone to 300 Saskatchewan companies and organizations from the regional relief and recovery fund. Through budget 2021, this government is continuing to make a difference by investing millions more to help communities across the province recover with new programs such as the Canada community revitalization fund, the tourism relief fund and the jobs and growth fund.

We have started something important by making PrairiesCan a stand-alone economic development agency dedicated to this region, something long advocated for by members of the Liberal caucus. In addition to investing, PrairiesCan is putting a priority on convening and pathfinding for clients and stakeholders, and advocating for prairie economic interests to inform decision-making in Ottawa. The department will soon expand its footprint with new service locations in Regina and Prince Albert.

Saskatchewan relies heavily on trade, and rail transportation continues to play a critical role in the economy. Because we are present on the ground in Saskatchewan, we see that CP Rail can also be a point of pride in our communities. Consider the city of Moose Jaw. It is, and always has been, a rail town. Not only is the CPR vital to Moose Jaw, but the city is vital to CP. Five hundred people work for CP there. Last April, CP named the Moose Jaw terminal as the company's terminal of the year. It is a prestigious award that recognizes employees' high efficiency and safety standards.

Let me conclude by saying that this is an important issue for the other prairie provinces as well. CP Rail has been, and continues to be, an important partner to provide efficient and reliable transportation of Saskatchewan goods to the market. It is also our duty to thoughtfully consider any historical agreement to ensure that our country's current values align with our federal and provincial economic interests. Our colleagues in the Saskatchewan legislature argue that now is the time to amend the Saskatchewan Act, and I agree. The amendment is due a thoughtful and considerable debate, as we are doing today.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member has it heard often, especially in the position he had under the previous Parliament when there were no Liberal members of Parliament from two of our prairie provinces. I would ask the same question I asked the previous Liberal member.

Canada is divided: I hear it each and every day. Many of my constituents have reached out and suggested that Canada is simply not worth fighting for anymore. That is heartbreaking. As a proud Canadian, it is absolutely heartbreaking that this would be the attitude of many Canadians.

My question is very simple. Will the member, in the spirit of collaboration that we found with this initiative, work with the opposition and other prairie members of Parliament to try to bridge some of the divides that are taking place across our country?

Hon. Jim Carr: Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes. I appreciate the question especially in light of the private member's bill I just introduced in the House, which would actually mandate and encourage co-operation among all levels of government, indigenous communities, the private sector and its employees. During this pandemic, we learned, among many other things, that Canadians expect governments to be aligned and to work together toward a much better conclusion than partisanship and bitterness lead to.

Yes, I am with the spirit of the hon. member's question.

● (1555)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will try again to get an answer to my question.

The Bloc Québécois is in favour of the motion. In our view, it is reasonable to correct the anachronism. However, if a western province can enshrine something in the Constitution, Québec should be able to do so as well. That seems logical to me.

Business of Supply

Earlier, I asked one of my colleagues whether he agreed with what we voted on in the previous Parliament, specifically that Québec wants to enshrine, in its part of the Constitution, the fact that it is a francophone society with a single common language, French.

Logically, my colleague should agree with that. Does he?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Carr: Mr. Speaker, one of the beauties of Canadian federalism is its flexibility. In a nation as diverse in its geography as its linguistic makeup, we all know how important the French language is, not only in Quebec but all over the country. Some of my children have graduated from French immersion, which has really enriched their lives. The key answer to the member's question is the flexibility of our federalism, which is proved all the time.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg South Centre spoke about the role that Canadian Pacific plays in some Prairie communities with some admiration. At the same time, this company has been in court for 13 years arguing that it should not have to pay taxes, and in fact that it should get the taxes that it has already paid back from the people of Saskatchewan.

Could the member help me square these two facts?

Hon. Jim Carr: Mr. Speaker, the fact that matters most is that the government is committed to fair taxation.

We also understand that there are many transportation issues that face prairie Canada, including Saskatchewan. If we look at air service, train service and bus service, especially in smaller communities, we know there is an awful lot of work to be done, and it must be done because transportation is an essential element of how we keep the country together.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I love talking about taxation and the fairness of taxation, especially in the transportation sector.

One thing we have heard from Saskatchewan residents is that the Saskatchewan government has put forward an environmental plan very similar to that of the Maritime provinces of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. It was dismissed outright by the current government. I know the member was the former envoy to the Prairies for the Prime Minister.

I am wondering this. Could the member talk about some more things we could work together on, such as the environmental plan Saskatchewan delivered? Hopefully he could speak to the Prime Minister about accepting that plan from the Saskatchewan government.

Hon. Jim Carr: Mr. Speaker, there are many things that the governments of Saskatchewan and Canada can work together on using the federalism that we know, and maybe even being creative about the federalism we aspire to move into for our children and beyond. That is a spirit and a commitment to collaboration to align the priorities of our governments, and that would include four or five areas where we would immediately agree there has to be more collaboration than there has been in the past. I am committed to that, and I look forward to working with the hon. member.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to note that I am splitting my time with the member for Saskatoon West.

We know that the strength and unity of our Canadian federation is at the heart of today's debate. Anybody who has been following the debate knows that has been the common thread. Our collective pursuit of fair treatment for every and any Canadian province will only serve to strengthen our Canadian federation. In matters of taxation and in all matters of its own governance, the Province of Saskatchewan should be entitled to the same authority as other provinces in this country.

From following the debate today, we know that the Canadian Pacific Railway's position is that it is exempt from certain provincial taxes in Saskatchewan, based on an agreement struck in 1880 and included in the Saskatchewan Act. It will ultimately be decided by the courts. However, the House has the opportunity, and I believe an obligation, to support the Province of Saskatchewan in its effort to achieve a permanent resolution to this matter.

The Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan unanimously passed a motion to address this inequity. Saskatchewan has moved to repeal section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act, which contains this exemption. The province has made a clear ask to the federal government and to the members of the House: We have been asked to pass the necessary motion and to do so as quickly as possible. The member for Regina—Lewvan presented the House with the opportunity to do just that this past December.

That motion presented the House with the chance to swiftly show unanimous support for the Province of Saskatchewan's resolution. It would have offered tax fairness to my province of Saskatchewan. The unanimous adoption of that motion would also have affirmed the principle that Canadian provinces can amend sections of the Constitution that deal exclusively with their own internal governance.

That is a principle that my Conservative colleagues and I believe to be fundamental to unity and to the functioning of our freedom. Not surprisingly, it was very disheartening that the Liberal government blocked that motion. As we revisit this matter today, I implore my colleagues in this chamber to respect the will of the Province of Saskatchewan. The case to repeal section 24 is straightforward and, I would say arguably, obvious. It is outlined quite clearly in the motion itself.

First, it is simply unfair that Saskatchewan is unable to impose taxes on a company operating in its province, while other provinces have the authority to impose similar taxes on that same company. The date that Saskatchewan entered our Canadian federation should not limit its ability to levy provincial taxes. Provinces in our federation must have the same jurisdictional authorities.

Business of Supply

If members of the House truly view Saskatchewan as an equal partner in our Confederation, there really is no room to question the removal of section 24. This section limits the jurisdictional authority of our province in a manner that is not applied to other provinces. The Province of Saskatchewan has clearly expressed its opposition to it. On that alone, I would suggest that the motion being debated today should have the support of every member of the House.

Above and beyond that point, there is also the issue of tax fairness within the province. If CP, a large, profitable, national company, is not required to pay taxes in Saskatchewan, it places a greater tax burden on others. Businesses operating in our province, and the hard-working people of Saskatchewan, are paying their fair share, so why should CP not pay its own fair share?

Saskatchewanians should not be responsible for paying a single cent of tax revenue owed to the province by a profitable corporation. This exemption also places CP at a competitive advantage within the province. By upholding section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act, other transportation companies operating in the province of Saskatchewan are placed at a competitive disadvantage, as they are not afforded the same exemptions.

● (1600)

With respect to the rationale of a provincial tax exemption to this railway company, the justifications for a tax exemption that existed long ago no longer apply today. As highlighted in the motion we are debating, it is important to note the Canadian Pacific Railway company agreed to relinquish this tax exemption in 1966 in exchange for federal regulatory changes. These regulatory changes benefited the company and were made by the government of the day.

As I have said before, I believe the case to support this motion is straightforward. I also want to add that in the current political climate, it is an important marker to demonstrate to the people of Saskatchewan that they are an equal partner in our federation.

Recent years have been particularly difficult for my province of Saskatchewan, as our people and our economy have repeatedly suffered at the hands of the Liberal government's political agenda. Certainly, I know Saskatchewan is not alone in that respect. The reality is that since coming to power, the Liberal government's agenda has largely failed to respect the interests of Saskatchewanians. The Liberal government has, on a number of occasions, failed to truly work in partnership with the province.

The Liberal carbon tax that continues to be imposed on our province is a prime example. The carbon tax unfairly punishes rural communities like the ones I represent. It is why my province, as we heard throughout the debate, presented a made-in-Saskatchewan plan to protect the environment that recognized the unique regional realities of our great province of Saskatchewan. The Liberal government rejected it and went so far as to reject a second plan proposed by our province that was modelled on another province's existing policy.

These actions speak volumes to the people of Saskatchewan, just as the Liberal government's repeated attacks on our Canadian energy sector do. It is a main economic driver in our province and in

my riding of Battlefords—Lloydminster, and the government's policies that favour international foreign imports of energy over our own Canadian energy are, to put it politely, quite insulting. Whether it is the costly carbon tax, inaction or a failure to stand up to trading partners, our agricultural sector, which is another main economic driver in our province, has also suffered tremendously at the hands of the government. We would be hard pressed to find any Saskatchewanians whose lives and livelihoods have not been negatively impacted either directly or indirectly by these Liberal policies.

The Liberal government has caused division and stoked the flames of separatist sentiment. The growing disunity is a cause for serious concern. We only have to take a few steps outside of the House of Commons to get a sense of the growing fractures in this country. We cannot ignore the fact that this is the context in which we are having this debate today.

Fortunately, the motion before us is in the opposite spirit. The passage of this motion will serve to strengthen our Canadian federation. It is incumbent on any federal government to seek to unify our great country, and our federation will undoubtedly be strengthened by this motion, as it would affirm Parliament's respect for provincial jurisdiction. Every province should have the ability to unilaterally amend the section of the Canadian Constitution that deals solely with its own internal governance. By respecting the will of the Province of Saskatchewan in this matter, the passage of this motion would recognize Saskatchewan as a true equal partner in our federation.

Whether it is British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador or any province in between, every province should be afforded the same jurisdictional authorities. In this outdated taxation matter, this motion would do just that for the province of Saskatchewan. It would also ensure that a profitable, national company like Canadian Pacific Railway pays its fair share instead of creating a greater burden on the backs of hard-working Canadians living in Saskatchewan.

Repealing section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act is in the interests of the people of Saskatchewan, and by helping to unify and strengthen our country, it is also in the interests of all Canadians. I fully support the motion before the House that respects the will of the Province of Saskatchewan, and I implore every member of the House to do the same.

● (1605)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to start off on a positive note, all members on all sides of the House are recognizing the importance of what the Saskatchewan legislature did in passing a unanimous motion to deal with something that has been around for well over 100 years. It is about time, and we are glad the Saskatchewan legislature has led us to the point where we are today by passing that motion back in November.

My colleague across the way made reference to the price on pollution. In that reference, she somewhat implied that she opposes a price on pollution, or the carbon tax, as she refers to it.

Business of Supply

The Conservatives were originally against it and then they were for it, under the previous leadership. Are we to believe now that the Conservative caucus is once again against it? Have the Conservatives done a triple somersault on this particular issue?

• (1610)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, I thank the colleague across the way for giving me a chance to reaffirm my record. Anybody who looks at the record in Hansard will see my position on a carbon tax. It is ineffective and makes life more expensive for Canadians. The member opposite would know that I have always been against a carbon tax. It does not work in rural Canada, especially in a landlocked province where every commodity or product that is produced has to be shipped out.

One great way to reduce pollution is to look at pipelines. They take our oil and energy off the rail line, which gives us an opportunity to put our agricultural commodities on there. This was mentioned earlier by another Liberal colleague. It would feed the world.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debate, and something is bothering me, specifically the rather jovial unanimous agreement we have reached to rescue Saskatchewan, which wants to keep the \$341 million.

I cannot help but compare this to more acrimonious debates. When it comes time to help Saskatchewan, to amend the Constitution to help a western Canadian province, everyone is on board, everyone is pleased, everyone is happy. When it comes time to help Quebec, however, which would like to amend the part of the Constitution that concerns it, things get more complicated. We saw this in the spring, when the Bloc Québécois introduced a motion seeking recognition for Quebec as a nation with only one official language, French. Nine Liberal members abstained; they had better things to do. They went for a walk or a smoke, but they did not vote.

Does my colleague not think that we have a double standard?

[*English*]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, I believe this is actually about fairness. I support any province that wants to amend the Constitution, as it gives the province the ability and authority to exercise its own governance.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the situation before us really highlights big corporations' ability over time to get special treatment and, in this instance, a tax exemption. The NDP absolutely agrees with the motion and we think this should be addressed forthwith.

The other question it raises is the issue of tax fairness. Many corporations today have special treatment from the government and can exercise a variety of loopholes to avoid paying their fair share. The NDP has been calling for changes to close these loopholes for a very long time.

Does the member agree that this needs to be done? Should the Liberal government close all the loopholes for big corporations

stashing their dollars offshore and other loopholes that are available to them so that they are made to pay their fair share?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government should do a lot of things, but this does not necessarily mean it is going to do them. We have heard that today throughout the debate. However, this is a great place to start. There is this 13-year legal battle between CP and the Government of Saskatchewan worth \$341 million, and the people of Saskatchewan should not have to pay. CP should have to pay so that the people of Saskatchewan can render services, whether in health or education. That burden should not fall on Saskatchewanians.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure, as always, to speak to this important motion today, and I am proud to be speaking on behalf of Saskatoon West.

Saskatoon is the economic engine of Saskatchewan. For example, in January, there were 6,000 jobs in Saskatchewan and 4,000 of those were created in Saskatoon. My riding is west of the river in Saskatoon and includes the downtown commercial district with all the high rises. It has industrial parks for our oil and gas sector, the energy sector. There is much manufacturing and food processing. For agriculture, we have grain elevators and farm equipment manufacturing in my riding. Of course, it is also a transportation hub. We have highways going in all directions, there is an airport and of course there are trains. About 75,000 individuals live in my riding, from multi-generation Canadians to new immigrants, and we have the fourth-highest urban indigenous population in Canada.

What I do here in Parliament matters to the people in Saskatoon West, and what the Prime Minister and the leader of the NDP do also matters to the people of Saskatoon West. Today's motion is about the most fundamental bedrock that this country is built on. Today, we are debating Canada's Constitution and Saskatchewan's part in it.

The motion would rewrite the Saskatchewan Act, which is the legislation that brought our great province into Confederation. Currently, Canadian Pacific Railway may have an exemption under the act that excludes it from paying taxes to the province. This is a concession that was granted to the railway well over 100 years ago in exchange for its role in building the infrastructure of our province. This point is in dispute and is before the courts, with over \$300 million in taxes to the Saskatchewan government at stake. Our motion would amend the Saskatchewan Act to remove any ambiguity about this issue to ensure that CP, like its counterpart CN, pays its taxes like all corporations are required to do. It would also settle the \$300 million-plus tax question hanging over the provincial treasury.

I want the people of Saskatoon West to know that today I worked with my colleagues throughout Saskatchewan and throughout the House to get this done for them. As MPs, we can get great things done as Canadians when we work together.

Business of Supply

For a little context, the economy, of course, is critical in Saskatchewan, and energy is 26% of the economic activity in the province. We produce an average of 13 million barrels of oil per month, which is about 500,000 barrels a day. For context, Canada as a whole consumes about 2.5 million barrels a day. Saskatchewan has another 1.2 billion barrels of oil in reserve. According to the City of Saskatoon, there are almost 40 businesses in my riding that are directly involved in primary energy production, and hundreds more in secondary manufacturing and service-sector jobs that service the energy sector. Of course, many workers who live in my riding drive to drilling locations all over western Canada.

As I mentioned earlier, Saskatoon has the fourth-largest urban indigenous population in the country. Our companies want to work with indigenous communities on energy and other projects, and many are.

I want to highlight the work of the Saskatoon Tribal Council and what it does in our city. Its website says:

STC Economic Development creates business and industry partnerships to promote sustainable wealth creation for our First Nation Communities. Industry Partnerships are collaborative agreements between key industrial stakeholders in Saskatchewan and the Tribal Council that are participation driven rather than profit driven.

STC's Industry Engagement Strategy was developed in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Call to Action, # 92-ii which calls for, 1) equal access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector and, 2) long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.

While I am talking about the Saskatoon Tribal Council, I want to give it a shout-out for the great work it is doing with its temporary shelter in Saskatoon. Saskatoon faced a housing crisis this winter, and on very short notice back in November, various stakeholders came together. Within weeks, the STC put together a plan to create a shelter facility with 50 beds for the winter. I visited this facility about three weeks after it opened, and it was a very smooth-running operation, which is amazing considering they had such a short period of time to get it going. They are providing such a critical service in Saskatoon. This is a great example of different organizations and different levels of government working together to creatively solve a problem in a very short period of time. I congratulate Tribal Chief Mark Arcand and all the staff who are working in the shelter to look after Saskatoon's people to make Saskatoon a better place.

STC has multiple business partnerships with companies such as SaskEnergy, the largest energy company in the province; Saskatchewan's largest construction firm, KPCL; and Nutrien, the biggest developer of fertilizer on the planet.

• (1615)

Let us talk about Nutrien a bit. Nutrien is a Saskatoon success story. It is the single largest fertilizer manufacturer on the planet with over 20,000 employees worldwide. Where are its corporate headquarters? They are in Saskatoon West, in my riding. Everybody must be fed and to feed those people takes a lot of plants or animals that eat plants. All plants require four elements: oxygen, nitrogen, carbon and potassium. Nutrien extracts potash from the ground and potash is the potassium component of that equation.

The areas around Saskatoon have some of the highest naturally occurring potash reservoirs on the planet and PotashCorp, the Saskatoon-based predecessor to Nutrien, merged with Agrium three

years ago to form this new company. Today, no matter what we eat, it has been grown with fertilizer supplied by this company based in my riding.

That brings me to agriculture in general. The lush cropland surrounding Saskatoon makes my riding the perfect hub for all that product to come into. Wheat, canola, pulse and speciality crops, beef, pork, dairy, chicken, it all has to move through my riding to its destination. If it is cattle or pigs, the animals are on trucks for hours until they reach slaughterhouses in Alberta or Manitoba. The grains and crops make their way to Asia, Europe, Africa and throughout the Americas. For that, they need to go to Chicago if it is going south, west to tidewater or east to Thunder Bay for the Great Lakes.

All of this takes trains. CN's largest switching yard between Winnipeg and Kamloops is on the edge of Montgomery in Saskatoon West. CP has its track that runs through the core of the city, right by my constituency office. Farmers, manufacturers and energy companies all depend on these railways to get their products to market.

Canada was built on these two railways. CN was an amalgamation of a bunch of railways that made up the Yellowhead route between Winnipeg and Kamloops in B.C. These railways helped develop the farms and settlements that made up Saskatoon in northern Saskatchewan. CP, of course, traces its roots back to Confederation. The colony of British Columbia joined Confederation on a promise of CP Rail and Sir John A. Macdonald won and lost his government over the CP Rail scandal.

The railways are so critical to our country that they have their own section of the British North America Act. Standing Order 130 of the House of Commons lays out a special procedure to deal specifically with railway legislation, separate from regular government business, and today we are debating a motion that deals directly with Canada's Constitution and the requirement of CP to either pay taxes or not in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now 116 years ago, the Saskatchewan Act created my home province and CP was granted an exemption related to its land concessions exempting it from provincial taxes. CP has been a good corporate citizen and has been paying taxes regardless, but now the railway is seeking \$341 million in damages from the province in relation to those taxes.

The province argues that CP gave up the right not to pay the taxes over 60 years ago and is not owed that money back. That brings us to the caboose. Where is the train today? Just three months ago, the Saskatchewan government introduced a constitutional motion to clear up this issue and all MLAs supported it. There was perfect unanimity in the Saskatchewan legislature and that is rare.

In that spirit, I will quote NDP MLA Trent Wotherspoon who spoke on behalf of the official opposition in the provincial legislature. He said:

This is an important action for us as a province. And it represents history in the making because if this motion succeeds, it would be the first time the Saskatchewan Act and our Constitution has been amended with a motion that originates from the Saskatchewan legislature.

He is right. The process for amending the Constitution of the province under the Constitution Act is, first, that the motion has to be passed in the legislature of the affected province, and in this case it was. Second is that the motion has to pass both chambers of Parliament, and third, once it is approved, it then goes to be published under the Great Seal of Her Majesty. Step one is done. Hopefully, step two can happen today in the chamber and then the motion in the Senate can pass soon after.

Given that we are in Her Majesty's 70th jubilee year, this would be the perfect present for her to bequeath the people of Saskatchewan with this motion under her Great Seal.

These are weighty issues. We are talking about a constitutional issue with real economic consequences for my riding. The energy sector, the agriculture sector, corporate headquarters, jobs and indigenous development are all tied together with the growth of the railways. Saskatchewan and Saskatoon West need the railways to remain strong and healthy. They also need the railways to remember they serve the economic good of the people. Without our people thriving, the railways cannot survive.

It is time for CP, the province and the House to turn the page. I encourage MPs from every party to stand up and support this motion.

• (1620)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague touched upon the importance of agriculture. I know, sitting on this side of the House, having been in the class of 2019 with the member for Saskatoon West, I am proud of the work the government has done to increase business risk management programs. We were there during the drought this summer, providing the AgriRecovery framework.

I had the opportunity to speak with the Hon. Ralph Goodale this weekend, talking about the importance of irrigation in the Prairies. I know this was something that Scott Moe's government had signalled.

Given that the member is from Saskatchewan, could he highlight to me where the government might be, at the provincial level, in terms of advancing irrigation projects that the Government of Canada might be able to partner with in the days ahead?

• (1625)

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, I am not a spokesman for the Government of Saskatchewan, so I cannot comment on that. I can

Business of Supply

say that, obviously, water is a key component of agriculture in our province. I indicated in my speech how important agriculture is to everything we do in the province of Saskatchewan.

Obviously, we need good solutions for water and we need reliable solutions for water. I know the project my hon. colleague referred to is something that is being worked on. Hopefully, that will all come together. The key is that we need to be very smart with our water. We need to use it wisely, cherish it and protect it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, something struck me earlier in my colleague's speech.

We are studying a motion to recognize the constitutional amendment requested by Saskatchewan to make a company, Canadian Pacific, pay the taxes it should pay like any other good corporate citizen.

However, in my colleague's speech, most of what he said was about how important he thinks oil transportation is. I am trying to understand whether he thinks that rail transportation has other, more valuable and more important purposes than transporting oil.

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, of course, rail is, as I mentioned, very critical to many of the things we do in our province. Our province is a resource-based province, whether we are talking about oil, minerals, potash or agriculture. All of these things require various forms of transport.

The best way to transport oil is, of course, through a pipeline if we can. We would love to have pipelines built to allow us to do that. If there is no pipeline capacity, then it does go on rail. Rail is critical to so many of the primary industries we have in our province. We need to keep going with that and encourage and have good partners in our rail suppliers in the province.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the hon. member was here earlier to hear about my grandfather's farm in Asquith, but I spent many of my summers there driving from Saskatoon to the farm in my car as we were checking the herds.

The construction of the rail line was important, I am sure, in those times. Those deals were made in a different time. Today, we have similar deals being made with large corporations in Canada. I am just wondering if the member agrees with the NDP's position that we really need to be taxing corporations fairly from the start.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, I was not present when the hon. member was speaking about Asquith, but that is adjacent to my riding so I know the area well.

Business of Supply

What is critical in Canada are jobs. We need jobs in our country and we need employees to fill those jobs. The way we get those jobs is by encouraging healthy competition, healthy businesses and strong corporations. Yes, they need to pay their taxes and they need to be fair, but we need to level the playing field with everybody and encourage companies to create jobs and to build wealth in order to help us build wealth in our country.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say, once again, it is great to see all the connections to Saskatchewan that so many members in the chamber have.

I have a quick question for my friend from Saskatoon West who gave a great speech. Are there other areas where perhaps the federal government has not been listening to the Saskatchewan government or the people of the Saskatchewan for some of the needs they might have going forward?

I could think of the environmental plan and a few others, but are there any other things that we would like to get on the record that we would like to work together to make sure we get it done for the people of our province?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, there are many things. He mentioned the environment and that is a key one. We need to be able to work together. We need to be able to recognize our unique situation with agriculture being so key and our ability to store so much carbon in the ground. Agriculture needs to be recognized with the federal government. That is something we need to work on.

Also on the agriculture file, we need the federal government to step up when there are issues and problems in that area and really help us out to ensure we have a stable Canadian food supply.

* * *

• (1630)

[Translation]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-207, An Act to change the name of the electoral district of Châteauguay—Lacolle.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF CANADA
(THE SASKATCHEWAN ACT)

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on this important motion. Before I get into the details of the motion, which is about whether we amend the Constitution to remove the tax exemption of the Canadian Pacific Railway that is contained in the Saskatchewan Act, I want to speak about the importance of railway

in Canada and the role it has played in developing Canada and helping our business community and the economy.

Canada's history is somewhat tied to the railway because, when the Constitution was written and passed in 1867, part of that plan was to open up construction in the four major provinces at the time. It was going to be the new Confederation, the new Canada, which was Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec. I am so proud to be from Nova Scotia. I want to thank the legislature and the people at the time, because I know back then it was a very tough fight to join Nova Scotia with the other three provinces, but we did succeed. It was well worth it and we need to continue to support each other.

Part of the Constitution was the construction of the railway to expand or develop western Canada. What is really remarkable is that the engineers at the time were able to put that together. Not so long ago, I was watching a movie on the History channel that was talking about engineers and the role engineers played.

I apologize. I got so excited that I forgot to say I want to share my time with my colleague from Pickering—Uxbridge, who will follow my speech today. When the Speaker started bringing up some information from the Senate, it took some time out.

The Deputy Speaker: I did not interrupt the member's time at all.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, the railway not only helped to build the country, it also played a major role with our businesses, communities, transportation and growth. It is hard to believe it, but there are 43,000 kilometres of rail across this great country. Just thinking about, it is unbelievable. Of course, the Canadian National Railway and Canadian Pacific Railway, the CN and CP, have ownership of most of that ground, along with the responsibility. Last year alone, the rail industry shipped 324 million tonnes of goods right across the country and internationally, in connection with others.

Not only does the railway play a role on developing communities but also, as I said, in moving our natural resources, which is so important for the forestry, mining, chemical and petroleum sectors. There is also the farming sector and, of course, the automotive sector. We have auto transport right in my riding. It plays a very big role in the shipping and moving of automobiles right across the country. That plays a very important role in what we call supply management in that industry.

I remember when I was a kid with my dad. He was very upset because they were closing one of the train stops from Sydney to Halifax. It was not far from a small island of 3,500 people, 14 kilometres by 11 kilometres. He was a businessman, and this was going to be an interruption. It would also have additional costs for travel, etc. I remember that from way back when I was a kid, and the rail lines still play an important role today. I think we should keep that in mind.

Now, CP and CN did and continue to invest in the infrastructure of industry and services, but so did our government. Our government continues to do so through various investments, such as the national trade corridor fund to help reduce the bottlenecks that are created in certain areas. That is where investment is most focused because it allows for more efficiency.

Also, our government plays a role in legislation and the regulations around it. As an example, that is why we brought forward the Transportation Modernization Act in 2018, delivering a range of measures and various supports for transportation with strategies for their plan until 2030. It is a lower emission mode of transportation. It allows us to fight climate change as well. We have seen a move from coal to wood to steam to electric to diesel, etc.

Not only did the railway help to build the country, but Canadians helped build the railway and helped build the country as well, not just physically but through significant cash funds, land grants and, of course, exemptions, such as the one we are talking about today. That is why I feel so good about giving my thanks to Canadians who contributed in various ways to that.

Today we are discussing the passing of the constitutional amendments that would put an end to the exemption from CP. This is not the first time that we are talking about exemptions. Let us keep that in mind that, back in 1966, during the modernization of transportation, the Government of Canada and CP came to an agreement for that exemption would be removed. However, it was never formally done through the real avenue of amendments to the Constitution of Canada. That is what brings us today to this point.

CP has been a very profitable company. In 2019, for example, it had revenues of \$5.8 billion, so do they really need a tax break? Is that fair to its competition? Is it a fair playing field? Those are important questions that we could ask ourselves.

Is it also fair to the people of Saskatchewan? Of course there are those who may not gain for having to pay more to make up for the loss of revenue. We understand that as a government, and we understand that this discussion is very important for Canadians as well.

• (1635)

Prompted by the court case and the unanimous motion in the legislature in Saskatchewan, the province is seeking to formally and finally remove the exemption from the Constitution of Canada, and we are revisiting that question today. I cannot predict the future or the end game of this debate, but any debate and sharing of various strategies to move forward is always very positive.

I know our government will work with parliamentarians to do the right thing, as our railway transportation system is a very important piece of our success and growth in Canada.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to see my friend rise to speak in the House. I am glad we are on the same side and that the Liberals will be able to support this motion. I have a question that I have asked a few of his colleagues as well.

We have talked about other issues for Saskatchewan that the Liberals have not been as supportive of, such as the environmental plan

Business of Supply

put forward by the Saskatchewan government. I am wondering if they would have a chance to revisit that decision. I know the Prime Minister dismissed it out of hand a year ago, but it is very similar to a few of the other environmental plans put forward by other provinces that were accepted, such as those from the maritime provinces, and the member would know that.

Therefore, I wonder, in this new sense of coming together and great decorum in the chamber, if they would take another look at the environmental plan put forward by Saskatchewan Premier Moe and his government to see if it would meet their standards.

• (1640)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I believe the member has been here two years now and has had the opportunity to see the strong climate plan we promised Canadians. We were quoted as having the best one in the country of all the parties, including the Green Party and the NDP, so we are staying focused on delivering for Canadians. In areas where Canadians are paying a price on pollution, there is a rebate that allows them to gain through that return of revenue. Our plan has been solid, but we are always open to working with all provinces and all members of Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like my hon. colleague to tell me if he believes it is immoral or unethical to give a tax break to Canadian Pacific, which made more than \$2 billion in profit last year.

Mr. Darrell Samson: There is no doubt that \$5.8 billion is a huge amount of money in that sector.

With respect to the exemptions, the situation was not the same at the time because we needed to develop this means of transportation and to have companies that would invest. Since then, the situation on the ground has changed dramatically and we therefore need to make the changes required to ensure that the people living there and Canadians benefit more.

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is about the fair treatment of Saskatchewan in Confederation. Saskatchewan deserves to be treated equally with the other provinces, and it has been denied that. This also privileges one big corporation. I want to give a shout-out to the members of the Saskatchewan NDP, who have been really strong advocates on this issue and who pushed for these changes. It is great to see the cross-partisan collaboration to push this forward.

Business of Supply

These unfair tax breaks for corporations are only one example of an outdated system that gives immense power to the big railway companies. They also continue to run their own private police forces, which allows them to investigate themselves when real accidents occurred. That happened in 2019, with the CP Railway derailment near Field, British Columbia, in which three workers were tragically killed. Does the member and his government think it is time to end these outdated special privileges for the big rail companies?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this bill would do and why members of Parliament from all parties in the House today give their support to having those discussions and improving the taxation and revenues for all Canadians, including of course for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we are talking about the rail lines, I thought maybe it would be a good time to ask the member a question about opening up more access for our farmers to ship more of their grain and if they would consider building more pipelines in order to get more access to farmers on the rail lines.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, the good thing about federation is that we work closely with all provinces and territories to find ways of moving our products. There are various ways of doing that and lots of efficient ways to do it. There are a lot of ways to do that while respecting climate change, so the answer to the member's question is yes.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to discuss the amendment to the Saskatchewan Act put forward by the Government of Saskatchewan.

The relationship between federal and provincial partners has perhaps never been more important. As we continue to fight against the end of COVID-19, we are dedicated to a team Canada approach. The Government of Canada is committed to further building on this open and collaborative relationship with provinces and territories.

COVID-19 has profoundly affected the physical and mental health, as well as the social and economic lives, of Canadians. Federal, provincial and territorial governments have been collaborating in these unprecedented times to support Canada's pandemic response. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, close co-operation between all governments has been integral to keeping Canadians safe.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Prime Minister has held 36 first ministers calls to coordinate the governments' response to COVID-19 at the most senior level. Discussion topics have included border measures, vaccine rollouts, testing and personal protective equipment. Importantly, these meetings led to the FPT Safe Restart Agreement, which was announced on July 16, 2020, and is an investment of more than \$19 billion to help provinces and territories address key priorities, including testing, health care system capacity, vulnerable populations, procurement of PPE, child care and sick leave.

The safe return to class fund announced on August 26, 2020, is an investment of up to \$2 billion for provinces and territories to adapt learning spaces, improve air ventilation, increase hand sanitization and hygiene, and purchase PPE and cleaning supplies. The government also invested \$2.2 billion to top up the Canada community building fund in 2020-21, along with other direct transfers to the provinces and territories.

From day one of the pandemic, our government has provided eight out of every 10 dollars spent to fight COVID-19 and support Canadians. As the economy continues to recover from the pandemic, we remain committed to working with provinces and territories to build a more resilient economy. Our economic response plan has helped people and businesses weather the storm, including the people of Saskatchewan.

In the Speech from the Throne, our government put forward new commitments to finish the fight against COVID-19, expedite the economic recovery, improve health care, advance indigenous reconciliation, make housing more affordable and accelerate the transition to net zero.

The recent surge of COVID-19 cases in regions throughout Canada underscores the need for ongoing co-operation, vigilance in pandemic monitoring, preparedness and response. Thus far, the federal government has allocated more than three million doses of COVID vaccines to Saskatchewan. Several million rapid tests have also been shipped to the province. All of that was free of charge.

In addition to this, in 2021-22, Saskatchewan will be receiving \$1.3 billion through the Canada health transfers and \$478 million through the Canada social transfer.

The Government of Canada is committed to having positive bilateral relations with all provinces and territories. One I would like to touch on is our ongoing relationship and work with the Government of Saskatchewan. The truth is that governments will not always agree on every issue. However, there are a number of recent examples of agreements that truly benefit the people of Saskatchewan.

In April 2020, our government announced a historic investment of \$1.7 billion to clean up orphaned and abandoned oil and gas wells, \$400 million of which has been provided to Saskatchewan. This investment will create up to 5,200 jobs while reducing environmental and safety risks in western communities.

During the pandemic, and in response to a request for assistance from the Government of Saskatchewan in the fall of 2021, Canadian Red Cross and Canadian Armed Forces personnel were provided on the ground to support hospitals in Saskatchewan. The Canada-Saskatchewan Integrated Bilateral Agreement was signed in 2018 and resulted in the allocation of \$896.3 million for Saskatchewan.

• (1645)

Budget 2021 included a \$1.5-billion investment to establish a clean fuels fund that will support private sector investments in the production and distribution of low-carbon and zero-emission fuels. In August 2021, the Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan announced an agreement that will support an average of \$10-a-day early learning and child care for Saskatchewan families by the end of 2025-26. In addition to significantly reducing the cost of child care, federal funding of close to \$1.1 billion over the next five years will lead to the creation of 28,000 new regulated early learning and child care spaces.

Our respective governments have also reached an agreement to extend the Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. The Government of Canada will provide over \$68.5 million over the next four years to increase access to affordable, inclusive and high-quality child care spaces. In 2022-23, the Government of Saskatchewan will receive \$1.9 billion through major transfers in the Canada health transfer and the Canada social transfer. The Government of Canada is committed to continuing to work with Saskatchewan to build on this momentum and tackle other important issues, fostering greater innovation, improving supply chains and internal trade, and addressing housing challenges, among other things.

As it pertains to the amendment to the Saskatchewan Act in question, I want to be clear on where we stand and the importance of such an amendment to our relationship with the province. At the end of the day, this issue is about fairness for the people and businesses of Saskatchewan. As many members will know, on November 29, 2021, the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan unanimously adopted a resolution requesting an amendment to the Constitution of Canada to repeal section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act retroactive to 1966. Section 24 provides an exemption on certain taxes for the Canadian Pacific Railway. This exemption was provided to recognize investments in building the railroad, a railroad that to this day we depend on, but we need to take into account when that initial agreement was made and how it has aged over time.

In accordance with the section 43 amendment procedure in the Constitution Act, 1982, the Government of Canada will support Saskatchewan's amendment request when the parallel resolution is moved in Parliament. Under the Constitution, following resolutions of the Senate, the House of Commons and the legislative assembly considered, the amendment is made by proclamation of the Governor General. This is an important pillar and process of our democracy as our nation evolves. It is something that calls on all of us to work together in order to review requests specific to the unique circumstances of each province with the attention and care that they deserve. These are important decisions that we cannot take lightly, but ultimately we must do what is best for Canadians and what makes the most sense for the times we live in.

Business of Supply

Our government recognizes the importance of working closely with our provincial and territorial partners and respecting the unique perspectives we all bring to the table so we can make life better for everyone. Building on our common priorities and finding ways to collaborate, even when we have diverse opinions, is a critical part of making sure we move forward on the issues that matter most to Canadians.

• (1650)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to listen to the member opposite talk about how important federal-provincial intergovernmental co-operation is and seem to tout the government's record on that front. The facts and the reality on the ground in western Canada could not be further from the truth.

I am glad that on this issue we can count on the Liberals' support on an initiative that has practical effects in western Canada, but when it comes to the environmental plan that the Saskatchewan government put forward, it met and in fact exceeded the targets that the Liberals put out. However, that was not good enough, because it did not follow their tax-on-everything mentality. Instead of even just having a conversation, they rejected it out of hand.

In this new spirit of collaboration that we seem to have in the House today, which I am thankful for, will the Liberal member commit to a renewed conversation about how we can find other ways to work together for the good of the Canadian federation?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, in my speech I went over all of the ways we have been there as a government to support Saskatchewan throughout this pandemic.

Also in my speech I talked about how, just in the last two years since the beginning of the pandemic, the Prime Minister or the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs met with provinces and premiers over 36 times. I ask the Conservatives, and let me just double-check, how many times the previous Conservative prime minister met with provinces and territories—oh yes, he decided he did not want to meet with premiers anymore.

Forgive me if we take no lessons on intergovernmental relationships from a party that refused to meet with premiers.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we cannot discuss the Constitution without addressing the elephant in the room. Quebec did not sign the Constitution of 1982, which was imposed on it by the English Canadian majority. This considerably reduces the autonomy of Quebec's National Assembly, for example on language policy. French is in decline across Canada, but also in Quebec.

Business of Supply

As the Bélanger-Campeau Commission found 30 years ago, there are only two acceptable solutions for Quebec: independence, or major changes to the Constitution that would create a confederation of independent states.

I just want English Canadians to realize that we will be revisiting this issue, because Quebec and Quebecers cannot survive as a people without full control of their social, economic and cultural development. That is what is called the right to self-determination.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about this.

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we certainly know that the importance of the French language in Quebec and around Canada is paramount. This is why we support the government's initiatives to work with all provinces and territories, but in particular with Quebec, to promote language and to help reverse the decline of the French language in Quebec.

However, this particular amendment is in regard to tax fairness, and we support that for Saskatchewan in this House today. I look forward to future debates with the member opposite about what more we could do to promote the French language.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the entire discussion today is a reminder of how Canada's major railways have enjoyed immense power and totally unacceptable benefits and privileges for decades. This is still true, because they have often become corporate citizens that are not very good for their communities.

Recently, a 31-year-old woman died on the outskirts of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and Mile End because there was no level crossing where there should have been one.

Are the Liberals prepared to work with the NDP and the City of Montreal to ensure the safety of Montrealers and make CP put in the level crossings we need?

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, I send my sincere condolences to the family and friends of the young woman that the member opposite spoke about.

Rail safety is of key importance to our government. We will absolutely continue to work with all members in this House and with all communities to ensure that the safety of citizens is paramount. I look forward to the continuing conversation.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, which is right beside the riding I represent and home to Canada's most notorious member.

I am very happy to see our first Conservative motion in 2022 dedicated to my home province of Saskatchewan, the land of living skies. It is an even greater honour for me to speak on its behalf today. It is another reminder of where I come from and who sent me to Ottawa in the first place, so in my first speech since the last election, I will first take a moment to thank the constituents of Cypress Hills—Grasslands for their support. It is always humbling to re-

ceive their trust and to serve as their representative in this place. I also have to say I would not be here without my family's love and the support they have shown me throughout my time in office, and of course I could not go without mentioning the many volunteers who have also helped to get me here as well, and board members who have also worked very hard on our local EDA.

Today, the official opposition is calling for the federal government to finalize a process already started by Saskatchewan in managing its own affairs. Back in November, the provincial legislature voted unanimously to amend the Saskatchewan Act under the Constitution. Since then, what remains is for a constitutional amendment to be authorized by proclamation issued by Her Excellency the Governor General under the Great Seal of Canada. In other words, the House and the other place will need to pass it. It might seem like a simple housekeeping item, and it could be handled as that, if the government so chooses, but that does not mean this is not a priority. It can be resolved easily and quickly, but only if the Liberals are willing to do it.

Instead, the government House leader waited for the last sitting day in December to say there would have to be a take-note debate in February. I hope all my colleagues here can see and appreciate how much time has already passed by and added up with this task we have taken on. We have not even started talking yet about passing anything through the actual parliamentary process. Of course, I can only hope the legislative agenda and procedure will run smoothly whenever that time comes. If not, how long is it going to take after it finally gets started?

In a minority Parliament we have done some good work through collaboration among all parties, and there is no reason for it not to happen here again as well. If the House leader's plan is to have a take-note debate, which still sounds good enough to some people, I will draw their attention to what the guide on parliamentary procedure has to say about it. Take-note debates "solicit the views of Members on some aspect of government policy and allow Members to participate in policy development, making their views known before the government makes a decision."

Of course, the government can and should ask for input from different parties in Parliament. To be frank, I wish the Liberals did it a lot more often for developing policy and making decisions. This country would be much better for it. Hopefully this will become a new habit for them, but it is a bit confusing to see it happening on this file, if we should even really call it that.

Business of Supply

What policy are we developing, exactly? Are the government members signalling that they have not yet even made a decision on what they are going to do about it? Are they going to oppose the amendment from Saskatchewan? If they are going to decide to authorize this change, why bother with a process that is supposed to be open to different options? If they somehow are trying to drag this out for some reason, it certainly seems like they are, but why? Would they take the same approach if the former member for Regina—Wascana was still in cabinet? I could say more about that later.

First, I want to focus on what is happening in Saskatchewan and in my riding. Apart from historical arguments, we can plainly see a situation in which a large railway company has not only tried to get out of paying taxes, but has tried to get taxpayers' money back after paying tax for decades. If this happened, there would of course be a huge business advantage over smaller competitors, but what is good for one company is not necessarily good for the market as a whole. When we consider everything together, it is not as surprising as it might sound that the Saskatchewan Party and the provincial NDP voted for the same motion. They have significant differences, but they share consensus here, because the case is closed.

As with so many other things, there are real benefits if we promote competition and smaller local businesses. In this case we are dealing with short-line operators. They highly deserve a shout-out in this discussion, as well as our thanks and substantial support. My riding is home to two of them: the Great Sandhills Railway and the Great Western Railway. They have strengthened and served their rural communities very well. I have heard that 90% of a particular company's operating budget goes back into the rural communities where they are stationed. As one example, when Great Sand Hills bought its line in 2009, there were only seven employees there. Deciding to start with nine employees, they have since increased to 60 people.

• (1700)

The positive effects of their investment and success on the many communities along the line they operate are undeniable. Business is growing, where larger operations without having a special connection to a place are more likely to let certain locations simply fade away, as is tragically the case with many small-town communities across this country.

As a result, people can find more jobs now. They can buy homes and they can support local charities and initiatives. They can create or maintain their way of life in rural Canada. Short-line railways are proving to be efficient, environmentally responsible and safe, while at the same time reducing burdens on publicly funded transportation. What is not to like? These railways need all the help they can get to continue on with their important work.

Knowing the current Liberal government, the answer might turn out to be that this all has to do with just Saskatchewan. For two elections in a row, the Liberals have failed to win a single seat in our province. The message from voters has been absolutely clear. Something is probably wrong with a national government that fails to connect to and win support from an entire region within our great country. It is nothing for the Liberals to be proud of, and it never should be ignored.

However, in so many obvious ways over the years, the Prime Minister's team has shown that it will prioritize petty politics over what is best for Canadians. It is definitely not a way to gain anybody's support, if the Liberals will keep treating our province disrespectfully. The Liberals will often interfere with our provincial government's attempts to improve the lives of our citizens, whether it is declining a better rebate for the carbon tax or unfairly attacking the delivery of health care services during the federal election.

Even though this might seem like a minor issue compared with other ones, it is a good opportunity for the Liberals to start treating Saskatchewan with respect. They should show us some goodwill and courtesy by delivering something for the betterment of our province. We really have to wonder if the Liberals would be handling this issue in the same way if it were another province trying to make a constitutional amendment.

There is no limit to the favours the Liberals will give out to their supporters. That is precisely the opposite of responsible leadership. That is why, as a Saskatchewan caucus representing every part of our province within the official opposition, we are leading the charge here in Ottawa. We are calling for the government to resolve this issue sooner rather than later. It really does not have to be so complicated. It does not have to be very difficult. Let us get it all done. We have a good spirit of collaboration happening here today. My message to all the members across the aisle, and to the other opposition parties, is let us get this done. Let us do what is right for Saskatchewan, and let us show that we are willing to work in the best interests of the provinces here in Ottawa.

• (1705)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been focusing on Saskatchewan, and the member has been mentioning that he wants Ottawa to be more involved and more supportive. I wonder if the member could comment on the success of the supercluster in Saskatchewan, the plant protein-based supercluster. I have a personal interest because I am a vegetarian, and one of my favourite snacks, chickpeas from Saskatchewan, comes from Three Farmers.

Can the member comment on how that has gone? That was a great joint collaboration between the federal government and the provincial government.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, it is great that every now and then we see some successes from some government programs, and we can clearly say that is one really good example of success.

There have been some other issues. We saw the government hand out lots of money to a multi-billionaire from the U.S. to create a pulse-processing plant in Saskatchewan. I do not think he necessarily needed taxpayer money for that.

Generally speaking, though, what the member has referenced here is a good thing, and if we are spending taxpayer money, I would like to see more targeted investment to make sure we get the best possible result for Canadians.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the question I would like to ask was raised briefly by my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert a little earlier.

Members are unanimous on Saskatchewan's request, which seems very reasonable to us all. However, how is it that no one seems to realize that one of the country's provinces has not signed the Constitution we are talking about? This is not news, it dates back to 1982. I find it odd that that does not bother anyone but us, and I would like to understand why.

[English]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I was not alive in 1982. I was not born until 1987, but I wish I could have lobbied a little more for all the provinces to sign on to the Constitution. I think we would be willing to hear and see Quebec do so, but a Conservative government would be more than happy to work with all the provinces, regardless of whether they had signed the Constitution or not, to make sure that all provinces are treated fairly within a united Canada.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the heart of the issue is, of course, around tax fairness. We are seeing a situation dated long ago with a big corporation, CP Rail, able to get a tax exemption. As it stands today, big corporations are able to get all kinds of loopholes and preferential tax treatment from the government. It is time, I believe, and the NDP strongly believes, that we close all these tax loopholes, and big corporations should no longer be able to get away with not paying their fair share of taxes.

Would the member agree that we need to close all the tax loopholes for big corporations, including the loopholes in which they can stash their money in offshore accounts?

• (1710)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, we want to make sure that tax dollars for Canadians are respected. We want to make sure that businesses are paying their fair share, of course, but in the same breath, we also want to make sure that we find the right balance between incentivizing growth and job creation by these corporations to make sure that their money stays in Canada. We can look at some specific, targeted measures to make sure that those dollars are staying in Canada, and I am all for taking a look at that.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, having been born in Regina, I consider myself an honorary Saskatchewanian.

In my riding of Essex, Line 5 is very much threatened, and about the only way we are going to get new oil, if we do not have a pipeline, is going to be on rail cars and/or transport trucks, which will be a massive issue. The member spoke about getting grain up for the local farmers, and the member from across the way spoke about automotive issues, which I have in my riding as well.

I wonder this. Does the member feel the same about the issue with regard to the pipeline itself?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. The safest and most environmentally responsible way to transport oil is through pipelines, and we need to see more of that. Again, it would help free up rail capacity to ship other products that

are essential and critical and that cannot be shipped any other way. We can also avoid disasters such as we have seen with incidents in Lac-Mégantic.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand today to speak to our motion to advocate for the rights of the people of Saskatchewan. This motion is especially important to my riding of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, as we are a major rail hub for not only CP but also for CN Rail.

I am not a native of Moose Jaw. I came to Moose Jaw as a pilot in training with the Royal Canadian Air Force. When I moved to Moose Jaw, prior to leaving Bagotville, Quebec, where I was doing on-the-job training in a fighter squadron, I was told that I would meet a girl behind every tree. The problem is that there were not a lot of trees in the area of Saskatchewan I was going to be in. My wife is 5'11", so she is as tall as a tree. When we walk down the street, I have to hold my hand up, and it looks somewhat pathetic. I married up.

This motion is especially important in my riding. The history of the rail line being built in our city has a connection to Moose Jaw's notorious past. The Soo Line was a direct line linking Moose Jaw to Chicago. Everyone knows that during Prohibition, Al Capone hid out in the tunnels of Moose Jaw while trying to escape from the heat. When I say heat, I mean law enforcement.

As I am sure everyone here is aware, many towns across the Prairies were developed along the rail lines. Communities popped up all across western Canada, and many flourished. These communities became trading posts where people, farmers in particular, were able to bring their goods to market. These railways helped transport not only raw materials, but also value-added agricultural goods.

Some may know that in 1910, Robin Hood in Moose Jaw had the largest flour mill in all of western Canada. Also relevant to my riding and others in Saskatchewan, rail is used to transport potash, which is a necessary component of fertilizer. This product is sent globally, using the railway to both east and west ports. Ethically produced energy, used as fuel, is also transported. It is essential to helping Canadians getting out of the pandemic and getting back to work. Obviously, there is also food, both raw and processed. We are the breadbasket, and we have given the world the gift of canola.

Moose Jaw is a major transportation hub, having two major rail lines and highways No. 1 and No. 2. Clearly, this issue is of local, provincial and national importance. What we need to look at is co-operation by recognizing the province's authority and request. Rail companies have always been good corporate citizens and partners with our communities. As we have heard throughout today, the issue at hand is an outdated agreement and Saskatchewan's right to tax companies operating within its borders.

The parties have been engaged in a 13-year legal saga, with CP Rail seeking over \$300 million in taxes that it has already paid. This has gone on for far too long, and we need to find a resolution. CP contends that it is exempt from various provincial taxes based on a contract struck over 140 years ago. This was before Saskatchewan was even a province. Meanwhile, Saskatchewan contends that the exemption ended in 1966, when CP's then president rescinded the deal in exchange for regulatory changes.

● (1715)

It is not disputed that CP paid taxes for over a century. The issue to be determined at trial is whether the company was legally obligated to do so and, if not, whether it is entitled to a return of the money paid.

This past November, the Saskatchewan justice minister, Gordon Wyant, put forward a motion to repeal section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act, which contained this exemption. This motion received the unanimous consent of the Saskatchewan legislature. As members of Parliament, we should all be supporting unanimous decisions dealing with provincial rights.

I would like to ask the people of the House to imagine something. Imagine a company with a market cap of \$66 billion. Should that company pay its fair share in taxes? Then, imagine that same company turns around and sues the federal government for taxes it has already paid in the past. The lawsuit is not for excess taxes paid but for all taxes paid. Their market cap is higher than companies such as CIBC, Bell or the outfitters for our Olympic athletes, Lululemon.

On a side note, it would be prudent for me to wish good luck to Moose Jaw's own Graeme Fish, who will be racing for Olympic gold later this week in the 10,000-metre race, and good luck to Ben Coakwell, who is part of Canada's four-man bobsled team. I would also like to extend my thanks to all the other Canadian Olympians for their efforts.

I am sure that everyone in this place would agree that this company should pay its fair share of taxes. That is what we are asking for, a fair share. However, as we have all heard today, that is exactly what is in the courts right now in this legal battle.

In support of the province's unanimous motion and to recognize its provincial autonomy, my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, put forward a motion in this place to finalize the process at the federal level. It is important to remember that at this point this motion has led to unanimous support of every politician in Saskatchewan, every provincial MLA from both sides of the aisle and every federal MP from Saskatchewan. I am asking the House to show that same solidarity and respect Saskatchewan's

Business of Supply

rights. Excess red tape like this will hurt any jurisdiction's ability to be competitive.

I understand that the provincial and federal justice ministers have discussed this issue and I trust it will receive a speedy resolution. This is not complicated and it is not partisan. In recent days and recent weeks, Canadians have been looking to their elected officials to improve the tone. They are asking us to open up dialogue. They are asking us to look for ways and things to unite us. They are asking to be recognized and valued. Above all, they are looking to us to show grace to one another and a spirit of humility.

In that spirit of humility, I am asking the House to support this motion today and recognize Saskatchewan's equal place in Confederation.

I offer thanks for the chance to speak to this important motion, and I look forward to questions.

● (1720)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier this morning, we will in fact be supporting the motion.

I just want to highlight very quickly what was said at the Saskatchewan legislature by the minister responsible. I quote specifically the motion, which says, "Whereas, the Canadian Pacific Railway company has paid applicable taxes to the Government of Saskatchewan since the province was established in 1905".

I think it is important that we not try to give any sort of impression that it has not been paying taxes. My understanding is that it has been paying taxes. It is unfortunate that how this lawsuit came into being has really forced the issue. Again, here is another quote from the minister from Saskatchewan. He said, "As members of this House are likely aware, CPR is suing the Government of Saskatchewan for \$341 million, claiming a broad tax exemption under section 24."

There is a need for us to make the amendment and indicate to the Province of Saskatchewan that it has the full support of the House of Commons.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, I also have a quote from the Saskatchewan Minister of Justice, Mr. Gordon Wyant: "We're going to vigorously defend the claim that's been brought by the railway to defend the interests of the people of Saskatchewan."

I thank the member very much for the olive branch and his comments. I look forward to the member supporting the motion that has been brought forward.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for a bit of history and stories. I always like to hear the stories and real-life experiences of members in the House and their constituents.

Business of Supply

I want to ask the member about the opportunity to activate other tax loopholes. Is the member aware of any other tax loopholes or havens that CP Rail could activate to avoid fair tax payment if this motion passes through the House and the Senate?

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, the point of this conversation and dialogue is to talk about Saskatchewan's place in Confederation and to recognize its entitlement to make a decision on businesses that operate within its borders. It should be a fair share of tax, not overtaxing or undertaxing.

As for her question, I am not aware of any other loopholes, but this agreement was struck over 140 years ago. It needs to be updated and that is what we are trying to bring light to.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I really liked one of the points my Conservative colleague raised in his speech, when he said that this motion addresses Saskatchewan's place in Confederation.

What I find interesting is to see how calm and serene the debate is. Everyone appears to be saying that the answer is obvious and that we will support them in their demands. How is it that people do not react that way when Quebec makes constitutional requests?

[*English*]

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, I can tell my hon. colleague that I know his doppelgänger. He lives in Moose Jaw. I know his identical twin. He is on my EDA board. Every time the member stands, it freaks me out a bit. I would like to get a selfie with the member, if he does not mind.

This is important to Saskatchewan. We believe in a strong Confederation and in a strong nation of Canada. Making a stronger Saskatchewan makes a stronger Canada. That is what I am speaking about today. That is what we are discussing and that is the opportunity before the House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the House for allowing me to speak here today. I want to point out that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean. He too will have something to say.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention that this is the first time I have had a chance to deliver a speech here since I was elected in 2021. It is now 2022, but the 2021 session was too short to give me this opportunity.

I would therefore obviously like to take this opportunity to thank the voters of Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères for their trust. This is the third time they have placed their trust in me, and I am immensely grateful. I will continue to work as hard as I have in the past to stand up for them in Parliament and make sure their voices are heard.

The motion before us today was moved by the Conservatives and relates to a constitutional amendment. It is interesting because I think this is the first time that a constitutional motion from an oppo-

sition party will be adopted or voted on. It sets a precedent. This is important to note because the Bloc Québécois might want to make similar proposals in the future, and we hope that they will be as welcome as the motion moved by the Conservatives has been so far.

This is a very popular subject in the Bloc Québécois. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to speak on these constitutional issues, because I think everyone in my party would have liked to address this subject. We could talk about it for quite some time.

The motion before us deals with a somewhat trivial issue that everyone essentially agrees on. That is why I think today's debate should go a little further. I do not mean to be reductive by using the word "trivial", because I do not think it is trivial for a company worth billions of dollars on the stock market to sue a government simply because it does not want to pay taxes.

In 2021, CP reported \$2.85 billion in profit, \$21 billion in assets and \$8 billion in sales. This company would like a tax rebate of \$341 million.

I find it very reprehensible for a company to have such business practices and for it to say that it is going to shortchange a government. The company was created with assistance and funding from just about everyone in this country, but today it is changing its mind and declaring that it owes nothing, but that it is owed money by Canada. These are reprehensible practices and I hope that CP will answer to the public for that. I do not see how this type of attitude can be defended.

Canadian Pacific has history. For those who do not know, one of the company's founders was a certain John A. Macdonald, a father of Confederation and Conservative MP. This shows how the constitutional file, Canadian Pacific, the creation of Canada and the motion we are studying are all tied to one and the same person, John A. Macdonald.

Incidentally, I am always surprised every time my House of Commons colleagues extol the virtues of John A. Macdonald. I get the sense that it comes from a place of either hypocrisy or ignorance, but I think it behooves us to dig a little deeper into who he was. This is the perfect opportunity to point out some aspects of his life that tend to be ignored or that my colleagues from other parties may simply be unaware of.

John A. Macdonald was not just one of the fathers of Confederation. His face is everywhere. Every time we pull a \$10 bill out of our wallet, there is his magnificent likeness, reminding us of his tremendous historical significance, which I in no way dispute because it is most certainly true.

In fact, most Quebecers remember him for one specific reason, one famous quote, words every single Quebecer is familiar with, except maybe the former heritage minister, the member for Ahuntsic-Cartierville, who said how amazing it would be to learn about his vision.

• (1730)

Maybe she was unaware of his vision for Quebec.

There is a great quote about the hanging of Riel that left a life-long impression on me even though I was not even born yet.

The Métis uprising coincided with the construction of the CPR, the famous coast-to-coast railway. The Métis wanted to assert their presence, make themselves heard, be respected and advocate for their rights. John A. Macdonald was Prime Minister at the time and the founder of the famous CPR. Maybe the definition of conflict of interest then was not the same as it is now.

Macdonald's answer was to send in the army and crush the Métis, a people who were living in peace and harmony. The Métis were a people of mixed origins, descended from francophones from Quebec who went exploring out west and indigenous peoples, who were living in peace and asked for nothing more than to be able to continue living in peace. The answer to that was to send in the army, crush them, nearly exterminate them and treat them like traitors.

There were several stages, but at one point the Métis appointed Louis Riel as chief to represent them and defend their claims. They even elected him to Parliament, but he never made it to Parliament because he was an outlaw. He never set foot here. It is rather incredible.

Canada's prime minister at the time, John A. Macdonald, was so fed up with Riel that he had him arrested and sent to prison. He then ordered that Riel be hanged. In Quebec, this caused an uproar. They were going to hang our brother Louis Riel, who fought for the rights of francophones, Métis and indigenous peoples, who just wanted to live in peace. Macdonald's response was to say that Louis Riel "shall hang though every dog in Quebec bark in his favour".

I think it is important to repeat this so that it is recorded in the proceedings of the House and remains for posterity: "Riel shall hang though every dog in Quebec bark in his favour." What a source of Canadian pride.

Of course, his shining record is about more than just how he treated and viewed Métis people and Quebecers. He also did all sorts of nice things, like banning people of Asian and Mongolian origin from voting. It is quite obvious that he had an inclusive vision and wanted to work with everyone to make a better world. This founding father of the Canadian Confederation, Mr. Macdonald, also had great appreciation for American slave owners. He once worked as a lawyer for the Confederates, who held him in high regard. He also had a very high opinion of Black people and Africans. In 1885, Mr. Macdonald said these fine words:

If you look around the world you will see that the Aryan races will not wholesomely amalgamate with the Africans or the Asiatics. It is not to be desired that they should come; that we should have a mongrel race; that the Aryan character of the future of British America should be destroyed by a cross or crosses of that kind.

Business of Supply

Let us encourage all the races which are cognate races, which cross and amalgamate naturally... But the cross of those races, like the cross of the dog and the fox, is not successful; it cannot be, and never will be.

These words were said by the founding father of Canada. I hope that my colleagues on the other side of the House and those on this side who glorify him and his accomplishments will learn about the man behind Canadian Pacific, this founding father. If I were them, I would be ashamed.

This is not unlike our struggle to get Quebec's claims heard. If they learned one thing from Mr. Macdonald, let it be that. Every time Quebec calls for a constitutional amendment or asks for something, people start to freak out, and I do not get it.

I am probably out of time, but I would be happy to come back and talk more about this.

• (1735)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate many of the comments from my friend. One thing Quebec and Manitoba share in common is a passion for Louis Riel. For many years I was a member of the Manitoba legislature, and when I would look in the backyard of the Manitoba legislature building, I would see the Louis Riel monument. There is also his gravesite in Saint Boniface, which is a wonderful, flourishing francophone community. We owe a great deal of who we are today as a nation to the Métis nation and President David Chartrand.

My question takes a look at CP. It played a positive role to the extent that it connected Canada. It is important for us to recognize that it has been paying taxes. Ultimately, this amendment will remove an aspect of the Saskatchewan Act that needs to be dealt with, which was amply explained during the debate in the Saskatchewan legislature.

I would like to get clarification on the Bloc's perspective. I understand its members support the motion, as we do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, as my colleague opposite pointed out, there is no reason for us to oppose this logical request. Every company should pay its taxes, just as everyone else does.

As for the other part of my colleague's question, I would like to come back to one point. My colleague mentioned that he is from Manitoba. I had the opportunity to visit Winnipeg and the St. Boniface region in Manitoba, and I was very saddened by what I found there. Going there was kind of a pilgrimage for me.

In previous speeches, my colleague opposite has often mentioned that he is from Manitoba and proud of Louis Riel. I am surprised and disappointed to see that he does not have a stronger interest in the French language and that he cannot speak that language in the House, even though he has francophone ancestors.

Business of Supply

Mr. Alexandre Bouleric (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and his historical reminders complete with quotes that are indeed shameful in this day and age now that we have zero tolerance for racism.

I would like to ask him a question. Today's debate takes us back to a time when the federal government was the board of directors for the Canadian bourgeoisie. Are things fundamentally any different now?

Consider the fact that the government did not dare confront web giants that were not paying taxes here or force them to support our local journalists and media. Consider the fact that the Liberal government has been dragging its feet for years and is doing nothing to crack down on tax evasion and the use of tax havens. Given all that, can we really say that things are fundamentally any different now than they were then?

• (1740)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his excellent questions and for sharing his thoughts on the matter.

We could add other companies to that list. Today, we are talking about CP, but we could be talking about CN and the self-regulation of railway companies. We could also talk about the air sector. In Canada, we have a hard time distinguishing the corporate interests of big Canadian business from the interests of the people. That may be because it is a small world or because the elites, the executives and some politicians are just too cozy with one another.

The best example of that is refunds for Air Canada tickets cancelled because of the pandemic. A corporation like Air Canada was too big to refund customers, too big to be forced to do what was being done everywhere else around the world. For example, various European governments, the U.S. and many other countries asked airlines to refund their customers because no service was provided.

That is just one example. We could also talk about oil companies. In this country, it seems like there is one select group of big corporations whose interests always take precedence over those of the people. That is clearly very problematic, but it is also baked in to how this country operates.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): What a pleasure to see you again, Madam Speaker. I think this is the first time I have had the opportunity to address you in the chair, and it is a great privilege. Once again, congratulations on your appointment.

Before I begin, I would like to thank the hundreds of people in Quebec and the rest of Canada who have expressed concern via Facebook, email or phone about a member of my family in Lac-Saint-Jean who got COVID-19 last week. I want everyone to know that my daughter, Jeanne, is doing well, and that is because she is vaccinated, as many others have pointed out. I wanted to share that with you because I know you were worried, Madam Speaker.

Never in a million years would I have missed an opportunity to talk about the Constitution and the taxation of a billion-dollar corporation.

As a separatist, I think this offers another wonderful perspective on what Canada is, namely, a state built on railways and run by the wealthy, a state lacking in long-term vision. It is a boring version of Ticket to Ride, a board game that my family and I play. Any mothers and fathers here must be familiar with this game. I see that some of my Conservative colleagues are nodding.

Canadian Pacific is claiming that it is entitled to a tax exemption under section 24 of the Saskatchewan Act. Canadian Pacific has been paying taxes for some time. However, now it is saying that it never gave up its right to the exemption and it is asking for a refund of \$341 million in taxes. The tax exemption for Canadian Pacific would not be so ridiculous if it had not taken Parliament 142 years to consider doing away with it.

In 1880, the construction of the Canadian Pacific railway required significant investment and generated little revenue. It is true. I am not saying differently.

However, Canadian Pacific has been a profitable company for far too long. As my colleague said a few minutes ago, CP made a \$2.85-billion profit in 2021. There is no reason why it should be exempt from paying taxes. It goes without saying that it should pay taxes, just like any other company.

Throughout Quebec and Canada, SMEs are either struggling to make ends meet or falling short, especially in these difficult times. It is almost indecent to see what is happening. We can no longer let this happen without doing anything.

That is one of the reasons why the Bloc Québécois supports the Conservative Party motion. In fact, we are especially pleased that this will shed light on what the sovereignist movement has been trying to make Canadians understand for decades: the Canadian Constitution is outdated. We have also been trying to tell Canadians for a long time that the Constitution Act of 1982 is inconsistent with the autonomy of Quebec and the provinces. It makes no sense for Saskatchewan to have to go through Parliament to tax a railway company.

Constitutional amendment via opposition motion is definitely not the norm, but it would set a great precedent. It would prove that Quebecers are not the only ones who can see that it is not working and it is all out of whack.

No conversation about Canada's Constitution would be complete without a mention of the elephant in the room: Quebec did not sign the 1982 Constitution.

Thirty years ago this year, the Bélanger-Campeau Commission found that the constitutional status quo was unacceptable for Quebec. We had two choices: a complete overhaul of federalism that would give Quebec the legislative and fiscal autonomy crucial to its development as a nation, or independence. Thirty years later, none of the issues have been resolved. The second option, independence, would be the most beneficial to Quebecers. The federal government is constantly sweeping the dust under the rug with its empty rhetoric, so much so that talking about the Constitution has become taboo. The status quo, meanwhile, has become a reflex.

Back to the subject of trains. Although not up there with the fate of a people, this is nonetheless the second time in a year that a western province has demanded changes to the Constitution.

• (1745)

Just before Saskatchewan, Alberta held a referendum about requesting constitutional talks on equalization. The Bloc Québécois noted the result of Alberta's referendum and was open to having discussions. That is still the case today.

The Canadian Constitution is anachronistic, outdated and obsolete. The distribution of powers and resources is completely dysfunctional and incompatible with Quebec's status as a nation, which the House has recognized several times. That is also the very essence of a confederation. If today's motion eliminates the taboo about it, all the better. Civilized people can have a conversation, as we are seeing today.

Better late than never, and I hope that Quebec will come into its own and that the House will be invited to become a preferred partner of Quebec. In any event, I am going to keep a close eye on what my NDP and Liberal colleagues are going to do. If the motion were to be adopted, it would be the first time that the Constitution is amended as a result of an opposition motion. Think about it. My father was an opposition leader during a period like the one we find ourselves in, but he never even dreamed that this could happen. All joking aside, the adoption of today's motion would be a first and would afford Quebec some exciting opportunities.

Since 1982, Quebec's powers have been limited by the Canadian Constitution against its wishes. Quebec never signed it. All attempts at constitutional reform to allow Quebec to sign have failed. Quebec rejected the Charlottetown Accord in 1992 because it was not enough, and the rest of Canada rejected it because it was too much. All this to say that a matter of trains or a national issue in Canada is a constitutional matter. If we are talking about trains today, we could be talking about Quebec soon, I hope.

Today, the House of Commons is discussing Saskatchewan's constitutional status. It cannot keep pretending that the Quebec nation issue does not exist. We can all see that, by putting an end to the constitutional taboo, the Conservative motion is a potential step forward for Quebec. That is why the Bloc Québécois supports it. Saskatchewan has the right to tax CP as it sees fit because the train passes through its territory, just as Quebec has the right to have the autonomy it needs to control its own social, economic and cultural development and what passes through its territory.

However, I would like to point out that it would have been legitimate for Saskatchewan to amend its constitution itself without go-

Business of Supply

ing through Ottawa. The Bloc Québécois would have recognized that right without hesitation. Provincial governments have every right to make decisions about their future, in particular the Government of Quebec, which did not sign the 1982 amendment; only English Canada did. I will say it again. Saskatchewan's legislature adopted a constitutional amendment motion on November 29 to revoke section 24 of its constitution. I am very open-minded, and I defer to the legislators in that province, who surely know what is best for them. Let us make it easier for them.

Lastly, I hope that my Conservative friends will have the same open mind when, one day, Quebec drafts a motion on its constitutional future and the Bloc Québécois, perhaps, tables it in the House.

• (1750)

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the comments my colleague put on the record, and I thank him for his support of the motion going forward. I do have kids and I have played many games of Ticket to Ride. We have more in common, my Quebec colleagues and I, than we think.

Another thing we have in common is a respect for provincial jurisdiction. I thank the member for the support. Premier Moe called for an increase in health funding, so that is another thing Quebec and Saskatchewan have in common.

Given the constitutional amendment, are there other areas where the current Liberal government has let Quebec down? We probably have more things in common than we expect. Could he put some of those on the table so we can learn more about each other?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his extraordinary question, but I do not have enough time to answer, because it would take me at least half an hour.

I will name one that is obvious these days, namely health transfers. That is something concrete. The federal government's job right now is simply to transfer health payments to Quebec and the provinces. That is all we are asking. We are not asking it to set conditions. We are asking it to do its job. According to the health act of 1962, the federal government was to pay 50% of health care costs. We are asking only for 35%.

That is a concrete example that anyone can understand. The premiers of the territories, the provinces and Quebec are unanimously calling for this, as are more than 90% of the people of Canada and Quebec.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what we are talking about is a constitutional amendment to the Saskatchewan Act, and we need to recognize what precipitated it. Before Saskatchewan was a part of the federation, there was an agreement with CP Rail, a contract, that ultimately gave it exemptions from paying taxes. On the floor of the legislature in Saskatchewan, it was made very clear that this is about section 24 within the Saskatchewan Act, and there is a process that is, in fact, being followed, both by the Saskatchewan legislature and here in Ottawa.

I am wondering if the member could reflect on what we are doing with respect to the Saskatchewan Act. It is truly unique compared with, let us say, the changes to the Meech Lake accord and the Charlottetown accord that were proposed at one point.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I think it is amazing to hear one of my Liberal Party colleagues say that we must absolutely respect an agreement from 1880 and possibly amend it, while also asking us to respect the Constitution Act, 1982, which Quebec has never signed. The Liberals have never openly admitted that Quebec was betrayed on the night of the long knives.

Today we are being asked to talk about an agreement that was made in 1880. We are being told that it would not be a big deal to amend the agreement, when in actual fact it would require a constitutional change.

When Quebec wants to talk about its independence and the Constitution, the Liberals are the first to stab it in the back, like they did in 1982 when 74 members from Quebec, who were present, voted in favour of patriating the Constitution.

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to say how much I really appreciate this debate in the House tonight. We are entering into a new era of awareness with regard to equity and history in Canada. I am seeing genocide, elitism and cronyism, and we have the opportunity to speak about that.

I want to ask the member from the Bloc, in this spirit, about finances, because unfortunately the Liberal members want to speak specifically about finances when there are so many greater things to talk about. I want to get back to the financial piece and ask if the member believes that large corporations must assume their fiscal obligations and should pay their fair share of taxes.

• (1755)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, that is what we call teamwork. I thank my colleague from the NDP for that very important question.

Let us not forget that in the last budget the government said it would address tax evasion. It seems like the Liberals have been

talking about that for decades. They say they will address tax evasion because they are good Liberals.

In the meantime, there was the sponsorship scandal, the lack of compliance with the Canada Elections Act during the referendum, and they have never addressed—

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

[English]

The hon. member for Prince Albert.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to get up in the House for the first time this year to talk about my home province and the importance of this motion to the province of Saskatchewan and its people. To make my colleagues in the Liberal Party aware, I will not take the full 20 minutes, because, as one of the sayings I had in my previous life in sales goes, when everybody is saying yes, maybe we are better off just shutting up, getting on with it and getting it done. I know it is nice to hear that.

It has been interesting listening to the debate in the House. The member for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam is from Asquith, Saskatchewan. My wife is from Asquith. The Summach family that used to work with Flexi-Coil is from Asquith too. I know that town very well. There are other members who have a relationship with Saskatchewan, and Saskatchewan has exported some wonderful people. It is nice to see them showing up in other parts of the country and coming here to the House of Commons and taking on that Saskatchewan spirit. I am sure they are all Riders fans too. Otherwise they could not have come from Saskatchewan.

I will point out that CP and CN are very important to our province. Saskatchewan is an exporting province. We grow more than we could ever consume, so we have to export it. We have to get it to port and they have been there. If it were not for them in the past and going forward into the future, we would not have the province we have today, a vibrant province, and the economy we see in Canada and Saskatchewan, with the growth we are having and the great people who come from there. They are very important to us.

However, in the same breath, \$340 million goes a long way in a province. I know that money has been collected and the Province has spent some of it, but do members know what it was spent on? It was spent on hospitals, road crossings, schools and highways. These are the key basics that we need in our province or anywhere else across Canada for the economy to thrive and grow. These are things that give us a better standard of living, a higher quality of living. Furthermore, the people who utilize these facilities are CN and CP employees, so everybody gets the benefit. When we pay taxes, it is not always a bad thing. In fact, on the farm, we used to kind of joke that if we were paying taxes, we had a good year. It is a good sign and means that we are doing well.

Business of Supply

In this situation, there was preferential treatment that had run its course. CP had said that it no longer deserved it, and the Province of Saskatchewan unanimously agreed that it had run its course. For CP to come back now and say that it does not want to pay taxes is kind of rich since all the benefits it has received from our province far exceed the \$340 million it is asking for. If we think about how much that rail line pulled out of the Province of Saskatchewan, it was billions of dollars over the years and it established the company. A good reason the company is here today is the grain shipments and forestry shipments coming out of western Canada and Saskatchewan in particular. I look at this as righting things and making sure that everything is done properly. It is about making sure that things are fair. That is what we are doing here today.

I always like to see parties come together and agree. We have seen that here today and I have enjoyed it. Even the member for Winnipeg North was agreeing with us today. Now, he had some comments, but he is from Winnipeg North. Having said that, this goes back to my original point: We see agreement.

I talked to the Minister of Justice, and he was on board with this. His only concern with the unanimous consent motion was that we needed to have a day to talk about it, and I agree with him on that. When he explained this to me, it made a lot of sense. This is a constitutional change. This is a big deal, and we do not do this lightly.

I want to thank the member for Regina—Lewvan for bringing forward this opposition day motion so we could talk about it, think it through as a group of colleagues and ask if there are any downsides or upsides. That we actually came to the same conclusion just shows us that the House can work together. I wish more people in Canada could see the House on a day like today when it is functioning properly. I wish more people in Canada could see committees when they function like this, because this happens a lot. Of course, they never see that, and it is unfortunate.

I want to thank all the parties for being good partners with us folks in Saskatchewan, for helping us get this done and for doing something that is important for the people of Saskatchewan. If it is important for the people of Saskatchewan, it is important to the people of Canada.

• (1800)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will once again agree with my colleague. It is important to recognize that in a situation like this, if it is good for Saskatchewan, it is good for Canada, especially when we get something that is of a serious nature for obvious reasons. In the Saskatchewan legislature, it was passed unanimously. When we take a look at the facts, we see the importance of what is being asked, and we should stand up and make a collective statement that we are behind Saskatchewan. It is very much apolitical. It is a very important issue, and it has been a pleasure to hear many of the comments.

Saskatchewan as a province has been really highlighted today, which has been nice to see. Even I have roots connecting to the province of Saskatchewan. It is the birthplace of my mother and older brother, and I worked in the town of Moose Jaw pumping gas

when I was 11 years old. We all have connections, directly or indirectly, to this beautiful province.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, will someone pinch me? He agreed with me twice.

I want to thank the member for showing that goodwill, and I want to bite my lip, because we always want to come back in the House of Commons with some sort of jab. I just want to thank him. I appreciate the goodwill that his party is showing toward the people of Saskatchewan. The \$330 million staying in the people of Saskatchewan's pockets has been spent wisely and will continue to be spent wisely as they are taxed into the future.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is great to see the cross-party support for this change. People in Saskatchewan need their tax money to go to the public services they rely on, like health care.

Here at the federal level we also know that big corporations have ways of avoiding paying their taxes. We need tougher laws and action from the federal government to stop corporations from using international tax havens to hide their wealth offshore. The government has been in power for six years. It has done absolutely nothing meaningful to close these loopholes for big corporations and the ultra-rich. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Canada is losing \$25 billion a year in tax avoidance. That money should be going to help Canadian families, to increase health transfers or to invest in the low-carbon economy. These companies are cheating hard-working Canadians.

Does the member agree that the government needs to stop helping them do it?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member on the point that when companies are cheating, they are cheating, and we have to go after them. If they are breaking the law, stealing or taking money out of our pockets and hiding it in Panama or somewhere else, then we need to do everything we can within the rule of law to get those funds back, because they belong to the people of Canada.

I also think we have to be very cautious when we start talking about general taxation on all corporations, because a lot of corporations pay a lot of taxes. A lot of corporations hire a lot of people. A lot of corporations are the blood, sweat, tears and backbone of our economy here in Canada, so let us make sure everything is done properly and fairly. I would not stress that all corporations are crooked and that all corporations need to pay more taxes. Let us make sure they pay a fair level of taxes and that they are in a situation that allows them to compete globally and provide jobs for people here in Canada.

Business of Supply

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise once again on this very important constitutional amendment. We have heard a lot of talk from the member for Winnipeg North on the UC motion that was brought forward in December. Once again, I was the member who brought that UC motion forward. We did have some initial conversations, but hearing everyone today putting their opinions and statements on the record about why they want to support this constitutional amendment for Saskatchewan and support that unanimous decision from the legislature, I think, is an important and good process to go through.

My friend and colleague from Prince Albert is dead on when he said it is great that the House of Commons can work together like this in collaboration to get things done. I wish the people of Canada would see this more often than what we see during the theatrics of question period.

Another thing my friend hit on is what the \$350 million has been used for in terms of public services for the people of Saskatchewan. I was an MLA for eight years, and something I would like to put on the record is that probably one of the best initiatives we did was the STARS air ambulance coming to Saskatchewan. It helps everyone across the province from rural Saskatchewan to Regina and Saskatoon, because that helicopter is a lifesaver. When we hear it in the air coming to land, it is a life-saving initiative. We should be very proud, as a province, that we brought that forward.

I wonder if my colleague would like to put a few other comments on the record about how, moving forward, we want to thank our colleagues across the chamber for supporting this initiative and making sure we get this done and ensure this also passes on the floor of the Senate sooner rather than later.

● (1805)

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Regina—Lewvan for his tenacity in making sure he continued on to get this done and pushed it through. I appreciate that.

STARS is a really good example, and again it is another example people do not know about where parties worked together in the background to make something succeed. I remember when STARS's Rod Gantefoer, a retired MLA, approached the Saskatchewan caucus and said they needed new helicopters in Alberta and Saskatchewan. I remember the former member for Malpeque and finance chair Wayne Easter asking if there was any way we could get these guys in front of the finance committee as they did the pre-budget consultations. He moved some mountains and he made it happen, because he knew it was the right thing to do. He got it in front of the finance minister and we got some funding for some helicopters.

That is the type of thing Canadians do not hear about, and that is the type of thing they want to hear about. Those are things that are important to Canadians, when parties work together and have the emotional intelligence to put the partisan differences aside and actually get things done for the people of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I liked my colleague's measured and unifying tone.

I find it interesting that we are debating a constitutional matter and that the debate is a rather jovial one. I guess talking about the Constitution is not so bad after all. It is possible.

I would like to know whether my colleague would be just as open to the claims Quebec might make at a future time.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party has been open to ideas from Quebec in the past. I think of the example of a nation within a nation. That is an example of the Harper government actually agreeing to see that go forward on behalf of some of the people from Quebec who wanted to see that. There are examples in the past of Conservatives working with people from Quebec, and we will continue to work with people from Quebec. As long as it is in Canada's interests and Quebec's interests, why would we not?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to benefits, and there have been huge benefits to having CP in Canada. The original idea is one of the things that brought Canada together as a nation. We can talk about examples of this in Moose Jaw or even go to the north end of Winnipeg with the CP yards. Yes, there is a need for this legislation, but let us not forget many of the positive things this corporation has done for us as a nation. I am wondering if the member could comment on that.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, the member is right. Again, as a farmer, I have a love-hate relationship with railways. When it is 40 below and they do not run, I am really mad.

I will use the example of CP right now. There are cattle producers in southern Alberta who are low on feedstock. CP has stepped up to the plate and I believe has allocated four or five trains of corn to make sure they have enough cattle feed to get their livestock through the winter. CP does do things in the background. I think of Hay West, when we had droughts previously, and CP and CN stepped up and moved bales from Ontario and eastern Canada into western Canada and did not charge anybody a dime.

They have been good corporate citizens in the past and they have been part of building our country. There is no question about that. There will be times when we will be mad at CP and CN, which is the nature of railways, but they are a big and important part of who we are. If they were not there, I do not know what this country would look like.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to participate in the debate on this important issue. In order to truly come to grips with the issue before us, an important question relating to the taxation of the Canadian Pacific Railway, I think it is important to take a moment to reflect on the evolving relationship between Canada and the Canadian Pacific.

Business of Supply

Canadian Pacific, or CP for short, and this great country share much history, but in addition to our past, we also share a present and a future, for CP is and will continue to be, as we have heard, an important part of the Canadian economy as we continue to grow our economy for the benefit of all Canadians.

Let me say, I have my own personal history with Canadian Pacific. My grandfather, an immigrant from Scotland, worked by day in the CP Rail Weston shops in Winnipeg for over 40 years and by night was the icemaker and manager of the CP Rail Curling Club on William Avenue, where I grew up, and which subsequently became the Victoria Curling Club.

The Canadian Pacific Railway originated in the years following Confederation when Canada's leaders saw the need to connect the vast territories that make up what we now know as Canada, as it became Canada's first transcontinental railway. I am certainly aware of the painful colonial history associated with those times, but that is for another speech.

Of course, since those early days, CP's network has continued to expand, along with its role and support of the Canadian economy. Through the years, though it was primarily a freight railway, CP was for decades the only practical means of long-distance passenger transport in most regions of Canada. Its passenger services were eliminated shortly after being assumed by Via Rail Canada in 1978.

Today, CP operates one of Canada's two national rail networks, owns over 13,000 kilometres of track in Canada in seven provinces of Canada, stretching from Montreal to Vancouver, and in 2019 had over \$5.8 billion in revenues in Canada. CP plays a crucial role in the Canadian freight rail network that moved over 324 million tonnes of goods in 2020. It is through this rail network that CP has been able to situate itself as a key pillar of Canada's economy and facilitator of Canada's trade agenda. Whether it is moving bulk commodities like Canadian grain, potash or coal; inputs like lumber, steel or chemicals; or intermodal containers packed with the consumer goods we all take for granted, there is no doubting CP's significance both historically and in the present day.

However, it is not just a railway. The employees are hard-working members of communities across this country and CP, itself, makes important contributions to those same communities. Whether it is through its charitable contributions or its annual holiday train, we know that CP's contributions to Canada go beyond simply moving rail traffic.

Just recently, following the devastating flooding in British Columbia, we saw the commitment and co-operation of both CP and CN in working to find solutions to support local communities while also working 24-7 to restore rail service and get supply chains moving again in incredibly difficult circumstances.

Any relationship is bound to have its ups and downs, let alone one that has lasted over 140 years. Certainly the relationship between the Government of Canada and CP has had its share of difficulties, and we do not always see eye to eye, as a number of speakers have mentioned. That is healthy and indeed necessary. The federal government today has a crucial role to play in regulating Canada's railways to ensure they operate safely and effectively in a

manner that respects our communities and our environment while also effectively supporting our economy.

This is a significant responsibility and one that our government takes very seriously. As we contemplate the proposed constitutional amendment put forward unanimously by Saskatchewan's legislature, we must not dwell on the past but instead consider what is in the best interests of Canadians moving forward.

• (1810)

We are not being asked to debate whether the significant government investments and tax concessions to support the establishment of Canada's first transcontinental railway were necessary and appropriate at the time. Instead, the question before us is whether these considerations are in the public interest now, in the year 2022.

Should a railway company with billions of dollars in annual revenues be exempt from certain taxes, even while its competitors and countless other businesses of much more modest means pay such taxes every year? Is it fair to deprive Saskatchewan of essential tax revenue necessary for the provision of services, thereby shifting additional tax burden onto the people of Saskatchewan? Is this what the legislators at the time imagined when they granted those exemptions 140 years ago? Could they ever have imagined that the CP Railway would one day be earning billions of dollars a year in Canada alone, let alone its earnings from its network in the United States? Those are the questions we must all ponder as we determine how to move forward on this important issue.

While it is true that the agreement reached in 1880 between Canada and CP included a provision, generally known as clause 16, that exempted CP from certain federal, provincial and municipal taxes along its western main line, the fact is that in 1966 the federal government reached an agreement with CP in which the company would begin paying taxes and agreed to forgo its clause 16 exemption as part of the modernization of transportation legislation. However, the Constitution was not amended to reflect this, in part because it had not been patriated at that time. As such, the tax exemption was never formally terminated and is, in effect, an outdated relic of a past arrangement.

Ultimately, as parliamentarians we will collectively decide whether this exemption remains in the public interest, but whatever we decide does not diminish the importance of CP Rail to Canada's past, present and future. It remains an important part of our history, plays a crucial role in Canada's economy and is a valued member of and contributor to communities across this great country.

• (1815)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for adding his voice in this chamber and for his support for this motion.

Business of Supply

I have asked a question of a couple of Liberal members who spoke today, and I am wondering if there are other areas where we can support Saskatchewan with other measures in his file. We know the environment plan put forward by Premier Moe is very similar to those of other provinces, such as New Brunswick and P.E.I., and those were accepted by the government.

In the spirit of collaboration, I am wondering if the member would be another advocate for Saskatchewan in trying to ensure that Liberals could take a second look at the environmental plan that Premier Moe and the minister of environment for Saskatchewan put forward. Maybe we could move forward together in this new spirit of happiness. They could take another look at it so that we can make sure Saskatchewan is once again being treated fairly by the federal Liberal government.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, I have been directly involved in environmental co-operation with the Province of Saskatchewan. The hon. member will know that through Western Diversification, now PrairiesCan, we did a water study looking not only at how we could protect the environment and adapt to climate change but also expand the agricultural footprint of Saskatchewan.

We know that Saskatchewan is an agricultural powerhouse. The protein industries supercluster that is located there is resulting in three major agricultural facilities plants on the order of \$300 million, \$400 million, \$500 million, including Merit in Winnipeg and Roquette in Portage la Prairie, but I am forgetting the name of the one in Saskatchewan.

I think the hon. member will agree that we have had one of the worst droughts in memory and we need to get a handle on water, which can only come through co-operation among federal, provincial and municipal governments.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, what I got out of my colleague's speech was that he thinks it is important for us right now to look ahead, review the legislation from the 1880s that exempted Canadian Pacific from taxes, assess its relevance today and what benefits it might bring to the public, and then amend it as needed.

I think this is necessary, absolutely, and I think that everyone in the House agrees. I find it fascinating that we are debating amending a constitutional text that today is putting people at a disadvantage and making them unhappy, leading them to call for an amendment.

I want to ask my colleague about another potential constitutional amendment. In 1867, the British North America Act was passed, imposing a constitutional order on Quebec. The same thing happened in 1982, when another constitutional order was imposed on Quebec, an order that Quebec has never supported or endorsed. To this day people in Quebec are calling for change and openness.

I would like to know whether my colleague thinks that the existing constitutional framework is satisfactory, compared to the old one, given our present demands and needs. Does he think it has been adequately adapted? If not, how does he plan to address this?

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, as a previous speaker mentioned, the Parliament of Canada recognized Quebec as a nation, and we recognize its unique position in Confederation. Just so the hon. member knows, I am learning French later in life. Both my daughters are bilingual. Quebec adds so much to this beautiful nation we all call home.

Of course, I think it is the wish of all of us that someday Quebec will sign the Constitution. Hopefully like the member, I look forward to that day.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for speaking about the importance of the jobs that the CPR brought to this community and to our country.

My father-in-law, Rocco Zarrillo, came to Winnipeg in 1966 and worked in the north Winnipeg yards, which I think were called the Weston shops, for almost 30 years. He brought four kids with him and had two more here in Canada. I want to say how wonderful it is that he is still with us here and what a wonderful career he had with CP Rail. I know a lot of families in Canada started and were raised through CP Rail. I just wanted to make that shout-out to my father-in-law.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, let me echo that shout-out to the member's father-in-law. Perhaps her father-in-law and my grandfather knew each other. I would not be here if it were not for my grandfather and Canadian Pacific, so perhaps we can give a shout-out to CP.

When my grandfather was working on the railway, it was, for the most part, Scottish men, at least in our community in the Weston shops. It really is amazing how far CP has come as an employer. Its workforce is dynamic and diverse, and it adds so much to our community of Winnipeg. I know some of the senior executives. They care about our community.

Again, as other speakers have said, farmers in particular were not always happy with the railways for what they would charge and for the sometimes slow pace of delivery of our grain, but they really are part and parcel with our community and an important part of it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in June of last year we talked about another amendment to the Constitution of Canada. It was for the Province of Quebec, after the leader of the Bloc party introduced an opposition day motion.

That day, the province of Quebec was highlighted, as well as the beautiful French language and how it has had such a wonderful and positive impact throughout our nation. Today we are highlighting another province, one that I know my colleague and friend is very fond of, the province of Saskatchewan. We have another opposition motion with respect to making a change to the Constitution of Canada. I wonder if he could provide his thoughts on why it is so important, from Ottawa's perspective, to entertain it. If we can listen to how we can help facilitate that to make our country healthier, we should do just that.

• (1825)

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, I think the Weston shops, if not in the member's riding, might be just outside, but certainly some of his constituents would work there.

I really miss Centre Block, because when we look up in Centre Block, we see the coats of arms of all of the provinces and realize what a special place on earth this is.

If I am not mistaken, I think the tiger lily is the flower of Saskatchewan. Indeed, I have been to Saskatchewan and the Prairies to see those beautiful flowers and the environments of Saskatchewan in person. I am a prairie boy.

I would say to some of the other folks from Saskatchewan who have spoken that we are doing so much together that I do not think we realize how much we do co-operate, such as in the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization, which is producing the vaccines of the future for animals and humans in this country. STARS was also mentioned, which was championed by the Hon. Ralph Goodale, who unfortunately is no longer with us. I mentioned water as well.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleagues from Saskatchewan for introducing this motion.

On this day, great tidings of joy came to Saskatchewan when our premier announced he was ending the vaccine and mask mandates. By the end of the month, people will no longer have to wear a mask in Saskatchewan. We are thrilled to see these restrictions being lifted in our home province. Freedom is coming back to Saskatchewan, the first province in Canada to put an end to the government's interference and its overreaching into people's lives. We are very excited.

This motion is also making people excited, because they see an effective opposition. We may be on the verge of history here. I do not know that any opposition party has ever amended the Constitution of Canada. That is historic. When Saskatchewan sent 14 Conservative members of Parliament, it sent a message that Saskatchewan wants us to fight for its interests against this government's policies, which have so hurt our province. Therefore, I am thrilled and grateful to see that all parties will be supporting this common sense amendment to the Constitution of Canada. Whatever the reasons were for granting a rail company this kind of exemption so many years ago, it is certainly clear that there is no need for it today. It would represent a huge loss to Saskatchewan if this change is not made, so I am very grateful to have support from all parties in the House, which I hope is a sign of something new for the Liberal government.

Business of Supply

One thing about the Conservatives MPs in Saskatchewan is that we can always be counted on to stand up for Saskatchewan. We are always on our province's side.

Let us look at what the current government has done. In the middle of an election campaign, the Prime Minister said he would claw back Saskatchewan's health care transfers. These are transfers that every province gets, yet he singled out Saskatchewan specifically. When our government proposed an environmental plan based very closely on New Brunswick's environmental plan, the Liberal government said no to Saskatchewan, even though it had said yes to other provinces.

I see that I am getting the signal that I have to sit down. I want to congratulate my colleagues in Saskatchewan. I am excited for this motion to pass so that we can ensure that Saskatchewan does not lose out on any of its fair share of tax revenue. This is a great moment for our province.

• (1830)

The Speaker: It being 6:30 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

• (1835)

The Speaker: 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.

And a member having risen:

The Speaker: I see that we will require a recorded division.

Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 9, 2022, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvas the House, you would find unanimous consent to call it 6:45 at this time so we can begin the take-note debate.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Friday, February 4, 2022, the House shall now resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider Motion No. 6 under government business.

[*Translation*]

I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

*Business of Supply***OPIOID CRISIS IN CANADA**

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 6, Mr. Anthony Rota in the chair)

The Speaker: Before we begin this evening's debate, I would like to remind hon. members of how proceedings will unfold.

[*English*]

Each member speaking will be allotted 10 minutes for debate, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments, pursuant to an order made Friday, February 4, 2022. The time provided for the debate may be extended beyond four hours, as needed, to include a minimum of 12 periods of 20 minutes each.

Members may divide their time with another member, and the Chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions, or requests for unanimous consent. We will begin tonight's take-note debate.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.) moved:

That this committee take note of the opioid crisis in Canada.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Yukon.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

I join you today from the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, where we honour all indigenous peoples who paddled these waters and whose moccasins walked this land.

[*English*]

I want to begin by thanking the member for Yukon for his unbelievable hard work and dedication, both as Yukon's former chief medical officer of health and now as its member of Parliament, to end the toxic drug supply and opioid overdose crisis in Canada. I would also like to thank him for advocating so strongly for this important national debate to take place here in the House of Commons.

Our hearts go out to all the loved ones in communities of those we have lost to the worsening toxic drug supply and to opioid overdoses. For decades, effective drug policy has had four pillars: prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement. Unfortunately, progress on harm reduction has met significant obstacles based upon ideology and not evidence.

Our government is working with provinces, territories and communities to develop a comprehensive, evidence-based strategy to address this ongoing tragedy. Over 20 years ago, Insite, the first safe consumption site, opened in Vancouver. It continues to save lives. The evidence is clear. Harm reduction measures save lives.

Since 2017, supervised consumption sites across Canada have reversed 27,000 overdoses without a single death on-site. Communities across Canada now have increased access to lifesaving naloxone, including remote and isolated indigenous communities. Our government will use every tool at our disposal to end this national public health crisis.

People are dying from toxic substances in the drug supply, and we will not turn the tide of the growing death toll until we address

that reality. The pandemic has led to an even more uncertain and dangerous illegal drug supply, resulting in significant increases in overdose-related deaths. The provision of a safer supply of drugs is essential to help prevent overdoses, and it is a vital part of our comprehensive approach to the opioid overdose crisis.

Our government has invested over \$60 million to expand access to a safe supply of prescription opioids. We also need to divert people who use drugs away from the criminal justice system and toward supportive and trusted relationships in the health system.

The Public Prosecution Service of Canada has issued guidance stating that alternatives to prosecution should be considered for simple possession offences. My colleague, the Minister of Justice, has also introduced Bill C-5 to get rid of the previous government's failed policies, which filled our prisons with low-risk first-time offenders who needed help, not to be put in jail.

This legislation would provide further space to treat simple drug possession as a health issue. Health Canada is also currently reviewing several requests from Vancouver, British Columbia, and Toronto Public Health for section 56 exemptions under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to decriminalize the personal possession of drugs.

[*Translation*]

We are working closely with our provincial, territorial and municipal partners and with other key stakeholders such as the impressive network Moms Stop the Harm, with more than \$700 million to reduce the risks, save lives and give people the evidence-based support they need.

Canadians can rest assured that fighting the opioid crisis remains a priority for this government. We will continue to do everything possible to save lives and put an end to this public health crisis.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the government was elected, 25,000 lives have been lost in this country due to a poisoned drug supply. There was no mention of this in the Speech from the Throne, and nothing in the mandate letter to the health minister. It ranked sixth in the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions's mandate letter.

The courageous answer to this crisis is full decriminalization, regulated safe supply, record expungement, treatment on demand by a public health system, prevention and education. These are all things recommended by the minister's expert task force on substance use.

I have to ask the minister a question. We have had applications from B.C., Toronto and Vancouver for section 56(1) decriminalization exemptions sitting on her desk since last June.

This has had the formal support of council, public health officials and Vancouver police chief Adam Palmer. Hundreds of people have died in the city while the government dithers.

When is she going to give an answer to their applications? When is she going to put the expert task force's recommendations into place? Will she support an NDP bill that is a blueprint and a road map for her to take action on this crisis, which is not a crisis but an emergency? It is a national health emergency, and she needs to call it that. This government needs to act like it is an emergency, as they did with COVID-19. Where are the Liberals? Lives are at stake.

It cannot be about votes. This cannot be about votes and getting re-elected. We were elected to do the right thing. When it comes to saving lives, that is the right thing to do. She needs to act now.

• (1845)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his passion and for the private member's bill that he has now tabled, which we will be able to work on together. I look forward to being able to work on these things, particularly safe supply, as he knows. At this moment, the public prosecution service has given guidance that people possessing small amounts of drugs should not be arrested.

It is the toxic drug supply that is killing people. It is the need for safe supply. We have put \$60 million into safe supply, but in terms of those 17 projects, we need to do more. That is what I heard when I walked in the Downtown Eastside. People who use drugs should not die doing so. We cannot help people who are dead.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for starting off tonight's take-note debate. This is a very serious subject in my home province of British Columbia, as was raised by the previous questioner.

In 2016 and 2017, former minister of finance Bill Morneau put in his budget \$50 million every year and touted this as a new approach for dealing with opioids. Just to break down the numbers, it was \$50 million a year for five successive years, broken down by 10 provinces and three territories.

Places such as Princeton, or even more urban areas such as Kelowna, do not show that the resources from the federal government are being fairly distributed. Neither the new minister nor the new finance minister has put in place a comprehensive plan to deal with this.

I have a question for the minister. What has the minister done differently? I ask because people in my home province of British Columbia, especially during this pandemic, have suffered. Their families have suffered. I have been told time and again there are not

Business of Supply

the resources, and that no federal or provincial government cares about this problem.

Can the minister start off by addressing that?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, that could not be further from the truth. My very first trip was to go and learn from the people doing this life-saving work every day in Vancouver and to listen to people with lived experiences. What they are saying is that we have to move forward on safe supply. We have to get the ideology out of this and have pharmaceutical-grade narcotics available for people using drugs.

We had put \$700 million into this program, in terms of substance use and addictions, and another \$500 million into the platform. We will get this done, but it needs to be a comprehensive approach with all of the modalities. All of the creative, innovative things that are happening across this country need to know they have a serious partner with the federal government.

The Speaker: If I can have the hon. members' attention, I know we ran into a bit of a problem last night when we tried to get as many questions in as possible. I just want to ask hon. members, if they can, to be as concise as possible so everyone gets a chance to speak, not only with the questions, but also with the answers.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Yukon.

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for allowing me to share her time. I thank her for all she has done so far in her new role as Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Two days ago, there was another burial in Yukon after yet another fentanyl overdose death. This was not just a person. This was somebody's child. In the Yukon, mothers and fathers are burying their children. Children are losing their parents before they are old enough to know what is going on.

[*Translation*]

These people should not be dying. Parents should not have to bury their children. Children should not have to become orphans because of overdose deaths.

[*English*]

In Yukon last month, eight people died of an overdose. I can tell members that the scale of eight lives lost in rapid succession sent us reeling, and it is enough for Yukon to continue to lead the country by far in per capita deaths. We feel the pain of these deaths. We know that each of these deaths was preventable.

Business of Supply

For very complex reasons, people took a single dose of a toxic drug and died. They often died alone. They died seeking a last high. They died without realizing that this high would be the last ever, or worse, they died not caring because the high was more important than the risk of dying.

In our small territory, we all know someone who has died, or someone who is close to someone who has died. Opioids have struck in urban and rural settings, in first nations and non-indigenous settings. The vulnerable and the known addicted have succumbed, as have successful sons and daughters, aspiring students, professionals and elders.

● (1850)

[*Translation*]

We are witnessing the death of all manner of people. No class, no race, no group of people has been spared.

[*English*]

In the past weeks in Yukon, some first nations, particularly Mayo and Carcross, and citizens of Vuntut Gwitchin in Old Crow, have been hit hard. People already grieving from pandemic strains and losses now have to endure the unimaginable grief of young ones lost to sudden, drug-driven deaths. In Canada, we have lost more than 25,000 people to overdoses since 2016.

[*Translation*]

Opioids kill 20 Canadians a day.

[*English*]

I was serving as Yukon's chief medical officer of health back in 2016, when the first fentanyl fatality occurred in the territory. Since then, we have introduced many improvements in prevention and care, and much of our progress occurred thanks to the work of community partners and the support of Yukon's government. Much of it was through federal spending and support.

In fact, if it were not for the array of solutions we have put in place since the onset of the opioid epidemic, such as better clinical management of addiction, increased awareness, take-home naloxone, and harm reduction measures, this crisis would have been far worse. We have also had groundbreaking interventions, such as the Kwanlin Dün first nation community officer safety program. It has saved lives in that community, and is a program that could be amplified around the territory, but we must do more.

[*Translation*]

The scope of the crisis exceeds our efforts to solve it. The opioid crisis requires intervention on the scale of the pandemic.

[*English*]

The debate tonight is an opportunity to share how this opioid crisis has touched our lives and our communities. It is an opportunity to share our concerns and our ideas of the steps we can take to address it. It is an opportunity to talk about best practices in Canada and around the world, and to consider where we can go from here.

No single government or body can solve this crisis alone. We need all hands on deck, including the voices of people who use drugs, to continue to keep us honest. We need everyone, every level

of government, experts in addiction medicine, harm reduction and mental health, community and indigenous leaders engaged in a dialogue and looking to address this crisis.

[*Translation*]

Sometimes legislative and strategic changes are required as well as a debate about making the required changes.

[*English*]

I look forward to participating in those debates in the House, and we need every option on the table. We must learn for this country to handle simultaneous crises. Like a busy global emergency ward, we no longer have the luxury of only one emergency at a time.

What gives me hope is that we have successes around this country, and we have experts and evidence that tell us there is much more we can do to save lives and to protect our children. Let us work together across the country and protect Canadians from a toxic drug supply. We can work together, and we can save lives.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Yukon for his leadership on this issue. The House is better with his contributions.

Earlier, the member for Courtenay—Alberni shared his passion on this issue, as well as the fact that he has put forward a private member's bill that would do what so many in the House have spoken of, which is to move toward this crisis being treated as a public health crisis as opposed to a criminal justice one.

Would the member for Yukon comment on his openness, and potentially that of others in the governing party, to working with other parliamentarians toward bringing that bill to fruition?

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for highlighting the important private member's bill from the member opposite.

I support the development of a bill that looks at the spectrum of the opioid crisis in the country, as well as at what policy options we should be looking at, including, as the minister referred to, the question of decriminalization and supporting people toward a safe supply.

In my previous role as CMOH, I spoke many times to the subject of decriminalization and ensuring people had a safe supply when they were using drugs. I look forward to working with members on the development of this private member's bill.

Business of Supply

• (1855)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that affects so many northern communities so profoundly, as the member indicated in his remarks. There was a Health Canada expert task force on substance use just last year that issued a number of recommendations, and those recommendations are reflected very closely in the private member's bill of my colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni.

The bill seeks to decriminalize simple possession of drugs listed in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, provide a path for expungement of conviction records for those convicted of simple possession, and develop a national strategy to show the federal leadership needed in helping provinces, territories and municipalities manage the harms associated with substance use.

Does the member support those tenets, and can we stand together in the House and prevent the kinds of needless losses of life we have seen in all our communities across the country? Will he stand with us?

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge the struggles that northern B.C. and the entire province are facing. I look forward to working with the members opposite on the development and passage through process, including in my role on HESA, the health committee, and to seeing it reviewed and studied there. I believe the tenets in the bill are important ones to address the urgent nature of the opioid crisis in our country, and this is an avenue for a way forward.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

On April 29, 2003, I got a call at home from my brother Dan. I remember everything about that moment, exactly where I was in the House, the fact that I just finished an episode of *24*, then in its second season. It was a beautiful spring day and there was a light breeze coming in through the patio door. I had done an ab workout that afternoon for the first time in forever and the memory of the physical pain from that workout is an odd remnant that will stick with me for the rest of my life because of Dan's next few words: "Mike, are you listening to me? Are you listening to me, Mike? Dad died this afternoon."

Our father, Mark, was 59 years old. The news was gut-wrenching but it was not surprising. As a dad, my dad was absolutely wonderful. He told us he loved us all the time. He was free with hugs, kisses and those regular "I love you's", something that I did not always appreciate growing up but cherished as an adult. Not only did my dad not miss a single one of our hockey games, he almost never missed a practice. I could always count on seeing him with his trademark Grizzly Adams beard, standing behind the glass by the net. I do not remember him without that beard. He started growing it right after I was born in 1969 and never ever shaved it off.

As an adult, he also had a perpetual beer gut. Like his father and his sisters, his hair was a beautiful snowy white. He told me during our last conversation that he was finally embracing the idea of being Santa Claus during the next Christmas season. Quite honestly, he could have pulled that off when he was in his thirties. He never went to college but he was one of the smartest people I have ever

met. He was very sensitive, genuine and powerfully connected with vulnerable people, I think because he could relate to them very personally.

I believe my dad started smoking and drinking around the time he was 11 or 12 years old. I do not know why. When he was 15, his father passed away and at 16 he joined the navy, likely a decision after a few too many drinks. He quit soon after when he realized he was prone to sea sickness. Again, the drinking probably did not help. About 15 years before he died, my dad quit drinking. While he had difficulty breaking some of his other negative habits, his drinking had started to affect the family. His love for his family was the one thing strong enough to give him the motivation he needed to quit.

I do not know when my father was first prescribed OxyContin. It was probably sometime in 2002 or 2003. Old football injuries and years of carrying the extra weight had caused him to experience significant pain in his back and hips. I believe at first the medication helped, but I really do not know how much he was taking. We did not then understand OxyContin the way we do now, but I did know my dad. Over time, something was changing. He seemed to be a little fuzzier. It is hard to describe, but he did not look well over the last several months of his life.

At some point not long before he died, my dad decided he wanted to get off OxyContin. At times, those of us closest to him had gently let him know that we were concerned that he did not seem to be himself. He would be a little defensive, something I was used to from my years trying to convince him to quit smoking.

The exact timing of events in April 2003 is a bit foggy for all of us 19 years later, but I know this. We had a get-together for Easter around April 20, nine days before he died. My mom and dad planned to come separately. My mom arrived, but two hours later my dad still had not shown up. I was worried enough that I drove 30 minutes to their house and went in, quite anxious, not sure what to expect. I shouted for him. I was relieved when he walked out groggily and said that he had just fallen asleep.

My brother and I debated this next part as we were reflecting on it the other night. I believe that my dad decided to try to get off OxyContin after that day and went back on it the night before he died. My brother thinks this might have happened earlier. What we agree on is that this withdrawal resulted in his being in agonizing pain. Dan tells me that he told him he thought he was going to die, something he also told me multiple times.

Business of Supply

The ultimate irony is that a couple of months after he died, when I received the call telling me that the cause of his death was a lethal dose of OxyContin, I was also told that the autopsy showed that other than the OxyContin, his overall health seemed surprisingly good. His death, at least at that age, wasn't as inevitable as he thought it would be. After 19 years, my memories of my father are very good ones, and I am so thankful that, as imperfect as he was, he was my dad.

• (1900)

If I am being honest, I also have some other thoughts, and I hope that sharing those thoughts out loud can help us find solutions so that others do not face similar tragedies in their own lives.

I wish that he had not started smoking and drinking at such an early age. I wish that he had been better able to manage his physical health, a driver of so much of his pain in his fifties. I wish that, in his case, OxyContin had not been prescribed, and I wish that he had had access to better tools and guidance when he tried to get off of it. Most of all, while I understand that stories are very powerful, I wish that I did not have this one to tell, that instead my father could have known me as a member of Parliament and one he would be incredibly proud of.

I wish that we all had so few stories to share that a night like this, set aside in the Canadian House of Commons for this purpose, would not be necessary. However, all the wishes in the world will not change the past and they will not change the current reality. It is way past time we took meaningful action to tackle the opioid crisis and other significant issues of mental health in this country.

Tonight I have hope, hope that one day people will speak about this as a time when their elected Parliament set aside hyperpartisanship to find evidence-based solutions to a significant crisis, hope that one day someone will talk about how the trajectory of their life changed for the better because of what we are doing here tonight.

I am honoured to be with friends here, now, with the responsibility of turning this hope into action. Let us get to work.

• (1905)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I first want to express my deepest condolences for the loss of the member's father. I was reflecting while he was sharing his story that it is clear that the opioid crisis does not discriminate. I have seen too many loved ones lost as a result of the opioid crisis and, in my work in addictions prior to becoming an MP, I saw it time and time again.

Would the member be in support of the recommendations of Health Canada's expert task force on substance use? These recommendations were supported by police chiefs, health experts, substance users and frontline workers. These recommendations were clear: full decriminalization, regulated safe supply, record expungement, treatment on demand via the public health system, prevention and education.

Could the member share with us today whether he is in support of these recommendations put forward by experts?

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, I am broadly supportive any time we can bring experts together to discuss issues as important as this

one. We are at such a unique time right now in our parliamentary history. We have just gone through an election campaign where every single party had major promises and a lot to say about not just the opioid crisis but mental health in general. I look forward to working with members on all sides to find common ground on the things that we agree on and move forward in a meaningful way that will save Canadian lives.

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for sharing his story. I can say, as a naval officer who also gets seasick, we are so grateful to have had his father's service.

As I noted in my question for the Prime Minister last week, opioids claim the lives of 19 Canadians per day and, sadly, my riding of Spadina—Fort York has the second-highest fatality zone of 57 deaths.

It is not just the one death. It is death by a thousand cuts, 24,626 cuts. These are sisters, brothers, parents, grandparents, children and friends whose lives have ended too soon, 24,626 lives. The number of deaths and the destruction to our communities is staggering. I saw this first-hand during a community safety walk with Toronto police, where they had to stop to respond to two overdoses then and there during our walk.

What does my colleague want to see in an effective national strategy and when does he want to see it? We have to end this carnage.

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, there are a few things. One of the things that is not talked about enough in this country is the concept of recovery. I know for some people there are all sorts of different connotations when we start talking about recovery, but more than anything, I would love to have my dad able to be up in the gallery as I am giving a different speech in this conversation because he was able to recover. That has to be one aspect of a strategy.

If we are going to have a meaningful impact, members on all sides from all parties in the House have to be open to ideas that perhaps they have not thought about before. That is absolutely critical. It does not mean we are going to come to an agreement on everything, but my hope is that we come together in a common understanding that this is a major crisis that is the costing the lives the member talked about, and many more than just the ones we share in our personal stories.

If we are going to tackle a problem this big, we have to come together with minds and hearts open, and with a common vision and mission to save those lives.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly sad that I have to rise today, because I rose in this chamber to speak to this same subject in 2019. In the winter of 2019, we had an emergency debate on opioids, and we are here again.

Business of Supply

I know we are going to hear a lot of stories, very personal ones like the one we just heard from my Conservative colleague. However, I want to note more than anything that this problem has not been solved. I asked the minister earlier what new improvements she has made, and I did not get a clear picture. Maybe that falls on me, but we are still here. I have some stories, because in my riding we have rural areas that have been forgotten about, and whether it be the flooding or the opioids, they need to be considered.

I bring a story today from my riding that many people may not want to hear and may consider partisan, but these are the stories we hear. I do hope that all members will listen. They can hold me accountable if they do not like the story, but this is something I promised a father I would tell.

Unfortunately, this pandemic has made a bad situation in my riding worse. We here in Ottawa in this place are partly responsible for that, and I would like to explain why.

I will never forget meeting with a father who wanted to share with me the story of his 19-year-old daughter. She was a recovered drug addict who had been clean for over a year. She was finishing up her courses to graduate from high school and she had a part-time job. Her family was happy to have their daughter back. Then COVID came along, and I hate to say this, but then came programs like the Canada emergency response benefit. Now, despite living at home and being fully supported, this 19-year-old was able to apply and receive it. Sadly, receiving \$2,000 a month with few expenses proved to be too much to handle. A relapse occurred, and all the progress that family had made and that she had made was lost.

I do not want to share the rest of the story, because the details are too saddening. However, not long after I met with the father, I heard from an RCMP officer who shared with me the frustration of being the first on the scene of a recently deceased individual. Their CERB cheque was freshly cashed and the balance of the funds after buying drugs was still in their pocket. This individual had died of an opioid drug overdose.

This is not particular to the stories shared with me personally. As the Penticton Herald reported in May 2020 in an article called “Relief money refuelling opioid crisis”, operators of supportive housing facilities, places where people go to try to rebuild their lives, saw this too. To quote from the article, “the money has inadvertently refuelled the pre-existing opioid drug crisis, says the operator of the Burdock House and Fairhaven social housing projects in Penticton.” It goes on: “In some buildings, we’ve seen double-overdoses in a day with the same person”. Let me underline one particular quote: “But what we also see is people with such severe addictions that have no ability to emotionally regulate or behaviourally regulate (receiving) what for them is a vast sum of money.”

I will pass on one more quote, because this has to be heard: “We just emerged after a very, very challenging time working with this population with regards to the COVID-19 crisis, and now we’re dealing with basically a financial windfall that has beset this population and is further compromising their ability to seek any form of recovery.”

Make no mistake. The CERB played a role in destroying these people's recovery and, in many cases, tragically ended their lives.

Obviously, no one in this place ever wants to see that happen. I am confident when I say that all of us who voted in support of some of these measures did so at the time with the best of intentions. Unfortunately, what was not known to many of us was the exact manner the Liberal government would decide to deliver them and what safeguards were put in place to help protect the most vulnerable. Now we know there were none. As the operator of one supportive housing facility stated, “None of the people living at this facility met the criteria for the CERB, but there was nothing preventing them from receiving it.”

I have more to say on this issue, but I want to point out that when we do things in this place, they do affect things back home. I would like to see the government tackle this with new policy. Many New Democrats and many Conservatives want to see the government change its approach. I understand that the government does not have the answers to everything, but let us first promise ourselves to first do no harm.

I appreciate that these stories are hard to hear, but I look forward to hearing more of them. I thank everyone for their kind attention.

● (1910)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the opioid crisis has ripped through families on Vancouver Island, where I live in B.C., and across the country. In British Columbia, since 2016, there have been close to 6,000 overdose deaths. This is thousands of British Columbians who are community members and family members, many of them young people like the woman the member spoke about in his speech.

I have spoken to so many parents who have lost children, and as a new parent myself, it tears my heart to think about what that would be like. Most people do not even want to think about that possibility, but we have to talk about this. Health experts, advocates and even police are calling for a different approach to tackle the opioid crisis and the toxic drug supply. It is time to end the stigma to save lives.

My colleague from Courtenay—Alberni's private member's bill echoes these calls. I am curious if the member agrees. The Health Canada expert task force has recommended decriminalization and providing a safe supply. Does the member believe these are essential steps?

● (1915)

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member for Victoria is a fellow British Columbian and someone who listens intently to constituents. I promised this family that I would raise their story today. What I am saying is that whatever we do, let us make sure that the other actions we take here in this place do not add fuel to the fire.

Business of Supply

As earnest as the member for Courtenay—Alberni is in his private member's bill, two years ago we had a debate and we are back here today. The government has a new minister responsible for addictions, yet it is not the government producing new legislation and doing this; it is other members.

For a comprehensive approach, a transformative approach, ultimately the government has to do something different. Then we can debate it. It should not be up to private members to try to fix everything, because they do not have an army of researchers, experts and lawyers who can help them craft changes. The government needs to start putting in policy or start explaining why it is not working.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what we are hearing is very touching, and the facts I will share in my speech will be just as touching.

I think we are at a critical point. I am sorry to hear my colleague say that these initiatives keep dying on the Order Paper. I arrived here in 2019. How is it that, in 2022, with all the means and ideas that my colleagues are proposing and that I will be proposing later, we are unable to resolve this crisis?

An election campaign does indeed kill everything on the Order Paper, but I need more information. What does the current government still need in order to act? What can be done for us to collectively understand that it is time to address this issue? I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member is here to share stories.

My home province of British Columbia put in place a minister for addictions several years ago, and now the Prime Minister has done the same thing with his government in this new cabinet. We have two governments that say they care about this. We have two governments that say they understand the problem. We have two governments that say, “but, but, but”. They have to start answering the question. They cannot just point to words. I know this is an opposition thing to say, but the government, more than any other government ever seen, is good at words and very bad at actions. The Liberals do not explain themselves.

Thousands of families are without a loved one and the government keeps saying, “but, but, but”. It should not be up to individual members to put forward legislation. I feel for the member for Courtenay—Alberni. He is trying his best. However, the government and the provincial government in my home province need to finish the sentence. They need to tell people why they are not. Is it because they need to raise taxes, or is it because the changes they have are too controversial? We need an answer and more action if they really mean it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is so much to say, but I really only want to take 10 minutes.

Today, we are talking about the opioid crisis, which affects every province. Quebec is no exception. The problem is that long-term

opioid use can build tolerance and therefore lead to the use of higher doses and ultimately addiction. We all have someone close to us who can be physically or psychologically affected, which can obviously lead to an overdose.

Why is this an opioid crisis? It is because overall opioid use has been on the rise since the 1980s. In fact, since 2016, opioid-related deaths have increased dramatically, from 3,000 to 6,000.

Quebec, which was relatively spared, has been experiencing an increase in overdoses in recent years. Tragically, COVID-19 has contributed to this increase. This gives us justification to take the time to look at drug policies and approaches, here and elsewhere.

I would like to explain what has been done and what is being done in Quebec. I think it could contribute to this debate. We heard some recommendations earlier. It has been clear from the outset that this is a matter of public health.

The action plan that Quebec has developed includes surveillance through a system that monitors opioid use and collect statistics on deaths and hospitalizations, among others.

Overdose prevention interventions also provide monitoring opportunities. This is very important. We consider that making naloxone universally and freely accessible and ensuring that frontline workers, such as firefighters, paramedics and police officers, are able to administer it when needed, is an important part of responding to overdoses and practising harm reduction.

I want to commend all the work done by Le Dispensaire, a community organization near my riding of Laurentides—Labelle. This organization, led by none other than the legendary Dr. Robert, as well as executive director Hugo Bissonnet and all his team, serves the entire region by providing information, handing out naloxone kits and supporting people experiencing homelessness.

Information on how to use naloxone in the event of an overdose is a key piece of the puzzle. It is important to know how to use it to counteract any harm associated with opioid use.

Quebec has also implemented guidelines for the community organizations and health and social service facilities that want to provide supervised injection services to injection drug users. This allows them to reach vulnerable populations, reduce the number of overdose deaths, lower health risks, reduce public disturbances and provide care.

The Bloc Québécois believes that injection sites are a powerful tool against the opioid crisis. This has been proven in Montreal. The Bloc is calling on the federal government not to hinder the deployment of this tool. We will give the federal government all the necessary tools to convince it of the tremendous usefulness of the work of organizations and health care facilities in connection with this plan of action.

● (1920)

Quebec has changed its medical practices with respect to prescriptions and research to account for the risk of opioid abuse. That is the best way to make positive changes to our response to the opioid crisis when it comes to medical practice, the social sphere and public policy.

Quebec is playing a leading role in the fight against opioids because health care falls under its jurisdiction. The federal government can also contribute in a positive way, but the last campaign highlighted the differences between the parties, in addition to creating a consensus: drug-related problems are a public health problem.

The Liberal, Bloc, Conservative and NDP members all spoke favourably about this change in vision. That was the first major step. We have to take action.

The process that should be put in place is one that would decriminalize simple possession. The whole thing should be supported by frontline health services. In practical terms, what that means is that an individual who was arrested for possession would be given the possibility of taking training or a detox program in exchange for the charges being dropped. That measure currently exists in Montreal and in Puvirnituq, Nunavik, but we would like it to be in effect throughout Quebec.

Again, funding is obviously the key to success. The Premier of Quebec, Mr. Legault, said that very thing again today. The government is very familiar with that request. I think we must have called for funding 152 times. It is unprecedented.

The Bloc Québécois is calling on the federal government to increase its contribution for health to 35% of the cost of the system. That represents \$6 billion a year, indexed at 6% a year thereafter to allow its contribution to keep pace with inflation and the increased cost of health care.

The Bloc Québécois is emphasizing this initiative because it aligns with what we want for society: a universal public health system worthy of a G7 country. Without that, we cannot adequately address health care problems related to drug addiction, or any other health care problem.

I would like to thank all our organizations in Laurentides—Labelle, including Maison Lyse-Beauchamp, a shelter that helps the vulnerable who are homeless to overcome difficulties. According to the testimonials we hear, access to social housing is the foundation for giving these people all the power they need.

My colleagues now have recommendations for additional funding. For social housing it is simple. It is 1% of the annual budget. That is what will help us make up for the time that has been lost since 1995.

Business of Supply

● (1925)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Laurentides—Labelle for her speech and her very relevant comments. I also thank the various Quebec stakeholders who are trying to address this major crisis.

This is a Canada-wide crisis. In the past six years, nearly 25,000 people have died in Canada, which is an average of 20 people a day. This number is particularly high in British Columbia, which sees six deaths a day, out of a population of about two million.

For those who have not experienced the impact of the opioid crisis first-hand, I recommend watching the documentary series *Dopesick*. This series teaches us a great deal about the origin and spread of these drugs.

I have a specific question for my colleague from Laurentides—Labelle. My colleague from Courtenay-Alberni has introduced an extremely specific private member's bill that will reduce harm by decriminalizing simple drug possession. Decriminalization is proven and supported by experts. It removes the problem from the purview of the police and the courts and makes it a health and public health issue.

Will the Bloc Québécois commit to supporting the bill of the NDP member for Courtenay—Alberni?

● (1930)

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, I have some good news for my colleague. In light of the recommendations and these proposals, we obviously agree that this is a public health issue.

Decriminalization also needs to be revisited. As I mentioned, we will support it. If the overall situation is similar to what is happening in Montreal, we need to act quickly. We would be pleased to examine everything so that, in 2022, we can take another crucial step for people.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleague will forgive me not asking my question in French. I am not quite there yet.

I am glad that we are bringing up safe injection sites. I want to localize it to my community of Spadina—Fort York. As I am sure my colleague knows, there are 38 in the country. Of the 38, there are nine in Toronto. One is in my riding and the other eight are in very close proximity to my community.

Business of Supply

Safe injection sites are important tools, as the member says, but they are also not the be-all and end-all. We also want to look further downstream in terms of the impacts this crisis is having, the cycle of addiction and how it brings about homelessness and so many other challenges. There are eight respite shelters in Toronto, and over half of them are in my riding. My community is bearing the brunt.

I am curious to hear from the member what her thoughts are in terms of how we break the cycle of addiction beyond safe injection sites.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, before I was elected, I did frontline intervention in the 2000s. One of the most remarkable things I witnessed was the key moment in the lives of vulnerable people who are given access to substances to help them with this problem.

Obviously, when we talk about being there for people and providing them with resources to prevent them from becoming even more vulnerable, this includes making a social commitment whereby a society ensures that means are in place to support prevention. The next step is to find ways to empower these people and support their recovery.

Right now, in 2022, there are people knocking on my office door. These people are not in that situation. Instead, they are in a situation where they cannot afford groceries or adequate housing because of the bubble and the inflation we are experiencing. Today, we are focusing on the distress that can lead to opioid addiction.

I listed a number of steps earlier, and I am certain that this year we will get the necessary tools by using every possible winning model. I had to help people far too many times and, unfortunately, we did not have sufficient resources.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will attempt to speak in French for the first time. I apologize for any mistakes I make.

Health experts agree with the NDP that the government should be asked to use its powers under the Emergencies Act to declare a national public health emergency. This would, for example, allow the Minister of Health to designate overdose prevention sites as emergency clinics, thus making them legal and eligible for federal funding. Does the member opposite agree?

● (1935)

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Victoria, because her French is excellent. I understood her very well.

I am pleased to see that there are some things that can be done. It is what I was talking about earlier. A pioneer in this field, Dr. Robert, in Montreal, has created a model that works precisely to give people access to sites that help them avoid this tragedy.

Can we provide such sites in all areas where this vulnerability exists?

Once again, I congratulate my colleague on her French. I will have the opportunity to speak my other official language in another context.

[English]

The Speaker: Are there questions and comments? Seeing none, we will move on.

Before we do, I just want to remind everyone that I know this is an emotional and very difficult subject, but please place your questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to each other. I do not expect any arguments to break out tonight, but it keeps everything a little more in order.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the good member for Edmonton Griesbach.

Last year, the government's Health Canada expert task force on substance use, with 18 esteemed experts in this field, came together. They cited in their recommendations and report that bold actions are urgently needed, including decriminalization and the development of a single public health framework to regulate all substances and the expansion of safer supply. This is in response to the 25,000 lives that have been lost.

The task force was mindful of five core issues: stigma, disproportionate harms to populations experiencing structural inequity, harms from the illegal drug market, the financial burden on the health and criminal justice systems, and the unaddressed underlying conditions.

The Prime Minister, just last week, agreed that this is a health issue and not a criminal issue. He had already told the nation, before calling an unnecessary election, that his government would be informed by the recommendations of this expert task force. In May 2021, we heard from the experts and were informed by its nearly unanimous recommendations. I urge all members to consider these recommendations, which mirror the measures proposed in the bill I tabled, Bill C-216, which is a blueprint for a truly health-based approach to substance use.

We agree on all sides of this House to consider the advice of public health officials in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. It is now time to act on the advice of experts about the overdose crisis, which is killing increasing numbers of Canadians from coast to coast to coast. It is killing 20 people a day.

We continue to hear from medical health officers from all provinces and territories, as well as our new good friend, the member for Yukon, who has been advocating that we tackle this issue. In our larger cities we hear it from law enforcement and from frontline workers who struggle daily to save lives in the midst of this overdose crisis.

We hear the same advice from those with lived experience, those who have used illicit drugs or continue to do so. There are many reasons, including trauma in their lives, poverty, homelessness or addiction. We have also heard from thousands of family members who have lost loved ones.

On Thursday, we will hear from the chief coroner of British Columbia. She reports on the numbers of overdose deaths in my home province for 2021. While I dread her report, I welcome it as more overwhelming evidence to act.

The expert task force recommendations are straightforward and common sense. They are evidenced-based and rooted in the fundamental need to save lives. It is harm reduction.

The expert task force found that criminalization of simple possession causes harms to Canadians and needs to end. These are not my words; the words come from this body of esteemed experts, gathered together by the government to guide the actions needed to save lives.

It has been more than nine months and hundreds of deaths since the City of Vancouver applied for a section 56 decriminalization exemption with the support of its medical health officer and the chief of police. This is the exact same process Vancouver used to get the first supervised consumption site almost 20 years ago. The federal government of the day backed the city against provincial opposition, as the need was so great. That took courage and political will, which is what we need right now. The need is more dire today, if that is possible, but for whatever reason, the Vancouver application, now joined by applications by British Columbia and the City of Toronto, sits on the minister's desk.

The government was informed by its expert task force that "As part of decriminalization, the Task Force recommends that criminal records from previous offences related to simple possession be fully expunged." This should be complete, automatic deletion, and cost-free. Simply because those Canadians are burdened with criminal records for simple possession of illicit substances, they often face insurmountable barriers to employment, housing, child custody and travel.

The bill I have tabled calls for a national plan to expand access to harm reduction, treatment and recovery services across Canada. Importantly, this plan must include ensuring low-barrier access to a regulated safe supply for users, instead of leaving the drug supply to gangs that are driven to maximize profits at the expense of lives. We must support the domestic production and regulation of a safer supply that is readily available to users.

Unfortunately, even though these common sense reforms are supported on a daily basis by public health professionals, law enforcement, media, frontline workers, substance users and their families, they have been given very little attention by the government. This overdose crisis is not identified in the mandate letter to the Minister of Health. It is barely mentioned in the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions's letter. There is nothing in the Speech from the Throne.

I ask all members of this House to take the politics out of the overdose crisis. This crisis must be treated with urgency. Slow-walking essential reforms through protracted political and bureau-

Business of Supply

cratic deliberation, or worse, ignoring them altogether, will only result in more preventable deaths.

● (1940)

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Courtenay—Alberni for his words of wisdom. He seems to know a fair bit about this problem and seems quite passionate about it.

I do not know if he knows anything about this, but I know part of the problem with the opioid crisis is that so many drugs are laced with fentanyl. People will be smoking what they think is crack, but it is laced with fentanyl. As a result, they have an overdose of narcotics and they die of that overdose.

Does the member have any suggestion or know of any policy interventions that can address this problem?

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question. I appreciate my colleague's bringing up that point.

Not only do we have fentanyl on our streets, we have carfentanil. Carfentanil is 100 times more potent than fentanyl. It is 4,000 times more potent than heroin and 10,000 times more potent than morphine. It is killing people.

People who use drugs and people who are addicted to drugs need a regulated safe supply; otherwise, they are going to die. That is why we are here. That is what my bill is about. It is about addressing that and giving a response to that.

We need to decriminalize so that people are not using drugs while they are home alone and are not using harm-reduction supports, but they also need access to a safe supply. It is time for us to have courage and not worry about just votes and getting re-elected. We were elected to do the right thing: to save lives in a crisis like this. There were 25,000 lives lost in the last six years.

I am urging the government and all members to come together to listen to the expert witnesses, the health experts, the police chiefs and the frontline service workers. This is what they are calling for.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a big thanks to the member for Courtenay—Alberni for bringing his private member's bill forward.

Business of Supply

Vancouver East has been trying to raise this issue for many years now. In fact, I still recall the late Bud Osborn, who spearheaded the harm reduction approach and called for decriminalization decades ago. VANDU in my riding has been very active on this issue and has been continuing in pursuit of it, and Moms Stop the Harm has been very active in highlighting this issue, but yet, so many years later, the government continues to refuse to take action.

Why does the Liberal government refuse to acknowledge the lives that have been lost as a result of the opioid crisis, refuse to declare a national health emergency and refuse to grant the City of Vancouver the exemption that it is seeking? Why does it not bring forward a bill that will save lives?

• (1945)

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, my colleague has been at ground zero of this fight from the beginning. They fought for Insite, and not a single person has died at Insite in its 20 years. It is remarkable

It is because politicians are so worried about votes. They are so worried about getting re-elected instead of doing the right thing. That would be my answer. I also believe that these lives do not matter to those politicians. It has to change, and people are holding their politicians to account when they are ignoring expert recommendations from their own top public health officials, from their own police chiefs and from their own family members.

No one is untouched by this, no one in this country, especially in the province I come from. There is not an MP in this House who has not received a phone call from a constituent who has lost a mom or a dad or a daughter or a son. Everybody has been impacted.

It has been six years and 25,000 lives. Why are we not responding in the way we responded to COVID? We have demonstrated that we can respond.

I want to thank my colleague, and I will work with her and all members of this House to move quickly, because 20 people are going to die today, and more tomorrow. Every day that we wait on implementing these common-sense reforms, people will die.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Courtenay—Alberni for his powerful statement, but moreover his powerful actions. I thank the member for tabling this critically important piece of legislation, Bill C-216. This bill has the framework to finally address the drug poisoning crisis like the crisis it is: a public health care crisis.

This crisis is killing Canadians, 20,000 of them in the last five years. This is truly an emergency, and it is one the government can no longer ignore. This crisis affects all Canadians, but in particular young people, indigenous people, Black people and people of colour. This crisis is affecting Canadians unequally, and it is not by coincidence or chance. It is because of the historic and ongoing violence and systemic racism that has existed and continues to exist in Canada today, violence like the residential schools that existed until 1996; violence like the sixties scoop that tore apart thousands of indigenous families, including my own; violence like the government's ongoing apprehension of indigenous children; and violence

like the underfunding of critical services, such as providing clean water.

Many of my fellow indigenous people now live in urban centres; more than 50%. My constituency of Edmonton Griesbach is home to some of the largest urban indigenous populations in Canada, and this reality could not be more visible. What many of my neighbours and I see in the community is the large number of folks living without homes, being continually harassed and criminalized and ultimately incarcerated. They are then thrown right back out on the streets with a criminal record, struggling to find housing and employment and left feeling hopeless.

Just this weekend, I was out in my community with a group called Boots on the Ground handing out care packages of naloxone kits, coffee and other much-needed items. Within about an hour, we had given out over 200 packages. I can tell members first-hand the need to address this public health care crisis in my constituency is great and urgent. This crisis falls directly at the feet of governments, both Conservative and Liberal, that have time after time ignored the calls to action by health professionals, indigenous leaders and harm reduction groups like Moms Stop the Harm and Bear Clan Patrol.

We cannot treat a public health care crisis with arrests and incarceration. Health care workers know this, substance users know this and my constituents know this. Groups like the Alberta Medical Association have said this. City councils in Alberta are calling for this.

Decades of history and evidence from around the world show us that the current approach of criminalization simply does not work; it only leads to more harm and deaths. Health Canada's own experts know this. Last year, its expert task force on substance use published a groundbreaking report about alternatives to criminal penalties for simple possession of controlled substances.

The task force, which is made up of some of Canada's leading experts, described the federal government's current policies as follows:

Current public policies on substance use, and criminalization chief among them, are part of a vicious cycle that is fed by and continues to feed inaccurate, stigmatizing perceptions of people who use drugs. Canada's current policies are based on an outdated and deeply problematic position, which the Task Force members reject, that devalues and dehumanizes people who use drugs by labelling them as immoral, "addicts", or weak.

Health Canada's experts do not hold back about the racist realities of Canada's drug policies. The report goes on to say:

The legislation criminalizing drug possession is part of historical and ongoing structural racism and continues to have disproportionate effects on Indigenous and Black populations, which are more often targeted for prosecution for simple drug offenses.

These are only two of the reasons the task force unanimously recommended that Health Canada scrap all criminal penalties for simple possession.

Business of Supply

I want to conclude by thanking those on the front lines of this crisis every day, groups like Boots on the Ground Edmonton, Water Warriors YEG, the Bear Clan Patrol and Moms Stop the Harm. They are shouldering the burden of this public health care crisis because governments refuse to do what is right.

This is our chance to rectify it, to undo some of that harm and to set a better path forward. Governing is about choices. With Bill C-216, we are giving the House and the government a choice, an opportunity to listen to the experts, and a chance to do what is right and save lives.

• (1950)

We can choose to end the war on drugs, and I urge all members of this House, whether government or opposition, to make the right choice and pass Bill C-216 into law.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Edmonton Griesbach, like me, has a riding with a large indigenous population. I wonder how much he thinks the answer to the opioid problem is a matter of directly dealing with opioids and how much of the answer involves dealing with the underlying socio-economic inequality, which is certainly part of the problem and fuels the crisis.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's question strikes to the core of the issue, which is the long-term, historic and ongoing systemic discrimination, particularly against indigenous people, that has led to this unfair outcome.

Indigenous people have been hit the hardest in the opioid crisis, in the mental health crisis and even in the crisis of COVID-19. We have to address things like residential schools and the sixties scoop in order to get a true grasp of the issues facing indigenous people today.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I particularly appreciated your choice to quote directly from the report of the expert task force on substance use. I was curious if you would be open to sharing more with the House on recommendation no. 7, which reads, "The Task Force strongly urges Health Canada to respect the sovereign rights of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada and support their governments in providing appropriate prevention and treatment approaches."

Would you be open to sharing your advice with parliamentarians on how to ensure that this is brought to fruition?

The Speaker: I would remind hon. members to place their questions through the Chair and not directly to each other.

The hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach.

• (1955)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, how we respect indigenous people is a matter of how we understand indigenous people. Part of the understanding is knowing that indigenous people are on the front lines every single day protecting one another, protecting communities and doing what we can with the resources we have.

When we make mention of the things the report calls for us to do better, it is respecting that indigenous people have a right to ensuring health care is provided and that the nation itself has the tools to provide that service in a culturally appropriate way.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Qujannamiik Uqaqtittiji.*

The member has made a powerful statement. First Nations Health Authority in British Columbia has shown that indigenous people are five times more likely to experience an overdose and three times more likely to die than other residents. This demonstrates that Canada's colonial efforts to "take the Indian out of the child" continue to have impacts on the mental health of Inuit, first nations and Métis. We have also heard many times in this House about the over-incarceration rate that exists among Inuit, first nations and Métis.

Could the member expand on how criminalizing drugs contributes to the ongoing cycle of violence that indigenous peoples have suffered in Canada?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Nunavut and I have a lot in common. Part of what we have in common is our fight and pursuit for indigenous justice. When we think about what indigenous justice in Canada looks like today, we cannot go any further than looking at our criminal justice system. We cannot do this work right without bringing those who are most affected along with us.

Our nations are in pain, and this no coincidence. It is the government's own doing through the Indian Act, in large part, as well as the discriminatory policies that look at indigenous people as wards and the existing policies that continue to harm indigenous families, such as the CFS system. These systems are still in place today, and they continually disenfranchise and discriminate against indigenous people, resulting in their contribution to the cycles of violence that our people find themselves in. These cycles of violence come with painful outcomes for our own family members.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sharing my time tonight with the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River. I am joining the House today from the Robinson-Superior Treaty territory. I am actually on Fort William first nation as we speak.

[*Translation*]

We are deeply saddened and concerned by the number of people losing their lives because of opioids and addiction. It is a serious problem that affects every region of the country.

[*English*]

Before COVID, Canada, like other countries, was in the midst of an opioid crisis, but the pandemic has made this crisis even more acute. The reasons are many, but the results are devastating for so many people and families across this country. All too often it is indigenous people who bear a disproportionate burden of grief in this crisis.

Business of Supply

Last week I spoke with Chief Evan Yassie of the Sayisi Dene First Nation following the tragic passing of a young community member. Chief Yassie rightly describes the situation as an epidemic within a pandemic.

In 1956 the Sayisi Dene community was forced to relocate. What did that mean for his relatives? It meant leaving an area rich with tradition, natural foods and safety. It meant being dropped off at a new location with less food, little to no shelter, and no way for the community to manage a looming and brutal winter. The community experienced this relocation trauma not once but twice, and as Chief Yassie told me, many people died of exposure, grief or trauma.

Their community is located in the far northern part of Manitoba, with no all-season roads. Resources are flown in, and in the winter, for increasingly few weeks, resources are transported on winter roads. The remote nature of this community means that gas has had to be rationed as they await this year's winter road, and the rationing has had direct impacts on their ability to care for each other, to conduct wellness checks and to support each other.

Despite these challenges and their most recent loss, Chief Yassie points out that, like other indigenous, Inuit and Métis communities, access to culturally informed mental health services that provide wrap-around care and re-connection to culture and the land are critically important. We talked about the fact that we cannot find our way out of this crisis unless we reduce the demand, indeed the need for substance use as a way to self-treat deep and intergenerational trauma.

It is our duty to acknowledge that the act of colonization through displacement, discrimination and systemic racism has caused intergenerational trauma for indigenous peoples, and that issues such as remoteness cannot stand in the way of doing everything that we can to reconcile. To reconcile means that we must move forward on equality, on truth, on self-determination and on services that are not Eurocentric but rather designed by and for indigenous peoples with sufficient funding and supports in place so that people can access them.

I am someone who has worked on the issue of mental health and substance use for a long time. I am also someone who loves people who use substances, and I have lost a few. I am critically aware that there is no one approach or program that can help. Prevention, for example, starts early. It is things like decent housing and education opportunities, skills training and access to culturally relevant supports. It is making sure that kids get the best start they can. It is working across agencies, governments and sectors. Of course, it takes all of us, at every level, in every community, and it means that we help each other, and we lean in to listen.

My department is working closely with first nations, Inuit, and Métis partners to improve service delivery. What does that mean? It means supporting better and more access to culturally grounded wrap-around care. It means treatment with medication, traditional practices, on-the-land healing, case management, counselling and aftercare. It means making sure that federally funded programs support organizations with flexibility to support people in ways that will help them stay connected.

One of our government's first actions in 2015 was to restore harm reduction supports as a key pillar in addressing the opioid crisis. When someone dies of an overdose, it is too late. We must do everything we can to help people stay alive as they work towards recovery, and recovery is possible.

That is why another key element of our approach is collaboration. Everyone is affected, and partners in health, in justice and at every level of government must put people and families at the centre. We must all ask what more we can do to support people to find and stay in appropriate treatment, to support families and groups like Moms Stop the Harm, and to help each other get through this crisis together.

● (2000)

[*Translation*]

As we know, emotional trauma must be understood and treated as a risk factor so that fewer people end up facing neglect and isolation.

A crisis of this scale requires a response from society as a whole, including representatives from all levels of the community and government. It is of the utmost—

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I apologize, but we have to go to questions and comments.

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

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Chair, a report that was produced in my riding, the community drug and alcohol strategy for one of my counties, stated that mental health and addiction services are spread across many different ministries and funding bodies, both provincially and federally, and are significantly underfunded, relative to the federal spending on physical health.

Individuals and families seeking help to address mental health, substance abuse and other needs such as housing are required to navigate a complicated system of supports and reconcile conflicting policies, information, attitudes and options.

Knowing the role for the minister, and as well with respect to indigenous services and having two reserves in my riding, what steps has the federal Liberal government taken to consolidate responsibility in making access support easier for all vulnerable Canadians?

Business of Supply

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, the federal government has an important role to play in supporting provinces and territories to deliver on their responsibilities for health care, including mental health and substance use care. Beyond that, we also have an important responsibility to provide support for first nations and indigenous communities and ensure they have the right supports as they choose and that those supports are appropriately funded, and designed and led by indigenous people.

We will continue to work with all partners to make sure we can increase capacity for communities to support people who use substances and their families who love them.

• (2005)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Chair, the war on drugs is now universally regarded as an utter failure. It has wasted billions of dollars and hurt millions of people. We now know that criminalizing drug use and addiction not only does not work, it adds to the harm and actually makes things worse. Leaving the toxic supply of drugs to street level criminals is literally killing thousands of Canadians every year and, in fact, more every year since the Liberals have been in power since 2015.

Given these facts, and the fact that the major source of criminalization is federal law, why would this member's government not respect the evidence and act now to decriminalize drug use, create a regulated, low-barrier safe supply and make prevention, education and universal access to treatment the policy of her government?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I think the member opposite knows that is exactly the journey we have been on. We have been working with provinces and territories on making sure people can access safer supply. In fact, just a few months ago, prior to being the Minister of Indigenous Services, I was so pleased to announce funding for four safer supply projects in British Columbia.

Of course, this relies on those strong partnerships with provinces, territories and, indeed, the entire health care sector. We need to support providers so that they feel comfortable and safe to prescribe safer supplies for people who use substances. The federal government has been doing that in partnership with provinces and territories.

Finally, we must note that, in fact, it is not one approach that is going to help save lives and stop this tragedy. It is going to be multiple approaches, as appropriate and as determined by people in communities.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Chair, for the last hour and a half we have been discussing proposals that seem to reflect all of us a bit.

I have a question for the minister. We are talking about a diversion process for simple possession with the support of frontline health services. This support would change everything and allow for training or detox treatment, an appropriate option in exchange for dropping charges.

I would like to hear her thoughts, because that is exactly what is happening right now in Montreal and Nunavik.

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, there is a lot of work happening at various levels of government to consider decriminalization. As I said earlier in response to other colleagues, I believe that there is no one perfect approach. It will be multiple things that will help people who use substances and that will help their families.

The first thing we have to do, and I fully agree with my colleagues in this regard, is to treat people who use substances with respect and compassion. There is no path forward if we do not get that right.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am happy to speak to this issue, an issue that I have been involved with one way or another for about 30 years or more.

As a long-time emergency room doctor, many of those years in Thunder Bay but other places as well, I have seen a lot of overdoses. ICU doctors who work in Thunder Bay and also work in a lot of other places tell me that Thunder Bay is second only to Vancouver in terms of the number of people going to the ICU as a result of overdoses.

A few years ago in the Thunder Bay emergency room, we started to notice something different with overdoses. I remember someone coming in unconscious and because of his pinpoint pupils and his slow breathing, I figured he was a narcotics overdose, so I gave him Narcan or naloxone and sure enough he woke up. After he woke up he asked what happened to him. I said he overdosed on narcotics and he said that he did not because he was smoking crack.

Drug dealers have started putting fentanyl and at times carfentanyl, which is the veterinary drug equivalent, which is far stronger, into all kinds of other drugs. People are getting hooked on narcotics and overdosing, not even knowing that it is narcotics they are doing.

When narcotic overdoses make it to the emergency room, they usually are okay, but a lot of people unfortunately do not make it to the emergency room. They are either pronounced dead in their house or they arrive VSA, vital signs absent. We try to resuscitate them and unfortunately we cannot.

Besides knowing about this problem from my position as an emergency room doctor, I am also familiar with it from my personal experiences. I know a lot of people who have family members and friends who passed away because of overdoses, kids who are growing up without a parent because of an overdose, or parents who lost a child because of an overdose.

Business of Supply

I also know about this problem because, going door to door in two successive campaigns, a number of people told me about people they lost, usually their children. I know as a parent there is nothing worse than losing a child. Although I would say that certainly it is probably equally as bad for a child to lose a parent.

I also know the extent to which drug addiction, mental health, homelessness and crime are intertwined. Last year on the INAN committee on which I sat, we had several women tell us of the problem that indigenous women from farther north communities have when they come to Thunder Bay and they meet some guy with flashy clothes and a flashy car who invites them to a party to try drugs. They try drugs and they get addicted to drugs, and then they are asked to go into prostitution to pay for the price of those drugs.

Although our government has done a lot to address addictions, mental health and the opioid crisis, I do not think we have been as successful as we would like to be. Unfortunately, I do not know of any jurisdiction in the world that has been really successful in addressing this problem.

As a doctor, we spend a lot of years treating people with overdoses and hopefully maybe saving a few of them. I know the fix I provided in the emergency room was a temporary fix. People would often overdose again, so what is the answer? As a long-time doctor, I think one of the most important things to say as a doctor when we do not know is “I don't know”. I certainly say I do not know what the answer is to the opioid problem, but I do know that we need to do better.

I also know that there are many people in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario working tirelessly to find solutions on a case-by-case basis, and I really commend them for all their hard work. I would also like to make special mention of one group in my riding, a group who will not take no for an answer and have made it their mission to make a difference and that is Team DEK. DEK stands for Dayna Elizabeth Karle, who died due to an accidental overdose this past September. Her mother, Carolyn, and a bunch of like-minded determined women established Team DEK with the goal of establishing a long-term addiction treatment program for women in Thunder Bay, both indigenous and non-indigenous. This project has a lot of support both in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario.

It is really great to see on the issue of the opioid crisis all parties feeling passionately about this. Although we may have different views as to what the best answer to this problem is, hopefully we can leave partisan politics aside and not let it prevent us from considering all options because the only thing that really matters is preventing more needless deaths.

● (2010)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Chair, first, I give my thanks for all the member's work on the Afghan file over the last year and a bit. I know he has been a big advocate.

I want to talk about solutions and get his take from another rural riding. In my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound a harm reduction outreach pilot project called SOS, supportive outreach services, is under way in Owen Sound and Hanover. The project is a collaboration among various community partners and is operated through

in-kind contributions from partner agencies. Grey County paramedic services has been instrumental in moving this forward, and the project provides wraparound health and social services to individuals who experience barriers to accessing traditional health services. This project just began in October and ends this April, and early outcomes show that it is quite successful in connecting the vulnerable community members to those necessary resources.

In the member's opinion, for programs like this that are coming up with innovative solutions for particularly rural Canada, should the federal government be providing more support to them and more investment, and leveraging the lessons learned from these types of projects?

● (2015)

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Madam Chair, I certainly agree that we ought to be doing more for this. I have to point out that I think our government has done quite a bit in terms of addressing the opioid problem. Just since the pandemic, there has been \$4.5 billion in top-ups to the transfers to the provinces; \$100 million for mental health interventions for the people most severely affected by the pandemic; \$500 million toward people suffering mental health problems, homelessness and substance abuse; and \$66 million was announced in a recent budget for 30 new substance use and addiction programs.

However, I think the real difference is made at the grassroots level, and it is all those people who are working at that level, tirelessly, to try to find a solution where often solutions are not easy to find, who really contribute the most. It is not just all about—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Chair, I want to thank my hon. colleague for making mention of two really important parts, and I am hoping he can comment on them.

First, he was not sure about some jurisdictions that had done this before. Portugal, in 2000, was one of the jurisdictions that did this, and we have seen some record results in making things safer for them. We know those kinds of results could exist here in Canada. In regard to the second portion, making sure we have a non-partisan review of this issue and a non-partisan solution, I think that is a really good and encouraging statement to make.

My colleague from Courtenay—Alberni tabled Bill C-216. Would the member consider voting in favour of this important bill?

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Madam Chair, I would like to thank the member for Edmonton Griesbach for his reference to Portugal, where I believe they have decriminalized drug use. Certainly, from what I know, as a result of that decriminalization there has been some improvement in the problem in Portugal, so I think it is certainly an interesting case study. I cannot say I know enough about decriminalization to give any definitive answer about it, but I do think it is something we ought to be seriously considering.

As for Bill C-216, I admit I have not read it, but I look forward to reading it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Chair, I have a simple question for my colleague, who has expertise in the health field.

Earlier, I spoke about interventions to prevent overdoses. One response to overdoses was to make naloxone universally and freely available. In Quebec for example, firefighters, paramedics and police officers use it to save lives.

I would like to hear my colleague's views on this universal, free access to naloxone.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Madam Chair, I will try to reply in French.

I agree, the solution to overdoses of narcotics is indeed naloxone. I think that all first responders should be able to administer naloxone. It really is the right answer to overdose problems.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Foothills.

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

It is unfortunate that I have to get up once again to speak about the opioid crisis in Canada. Unfortunately, it seems we are doing this on a fairly regular basis.

My colleagues will know that I am not necessarily one to stand up here and talk about statistics and that I try and focus on real stories and anecdotes, but the stats, especially for the province of Alberta, show that opioid deaths have increased substantially over the last couple of years, and suicides are a part of that. Just to put that in perspective, across Canada there were 1,700 apparent opioid toxicity deaths between July and September of 2020. That is the highest quarterly number since we started measuring these stats in 2016. That is a 120% increase from year to year over that same time frame the previous year. There were more than 3,300 apparent opioid toxicity deaths, representing a 74% increase just between the six months of October 2019 and March 2020. That is 1,900 deaths.

These are significant numbers. Yes, they are numbers but they are also friends, relatives, sons, daughters, mother and fathers whom we have lost. I know I am not the only one in the House, many of my colleagues and friends have also lost loved ones, friends and people who are close to them due to an opioid overdose or suicide. We knew this was a crisis going into the pandemic, but the pandemic has certainly exacerbated the mental health crisis we are facing in Canada, and as a result, the opioid crisis that comes along with that.

Over the past year, I had the honour of chairing a Conservative working group where we focused on the opioid crisis and mental health. We talked to stakeholders across Canada and around the world. We asked them what their insight and advice was to address this, what we were missing and what tools we were overlooking in our tool box. There are a couple of things I want to share in my

Business of Supply

speech that I learned from those stakeholders, from doctors, nurses, counsellors and family members who had lost loved ones, as well as from those who have been through opioid addiction and recovery.

What I learned is that there is no silver bullet. There is not one program that, as a federal government in partnership with our provinces and territories, we could implement tomorrow that we know would resolve the issue, this crisis. It is not a one-size-fits-all. We need a suite of programs and initiatives to address this crisis, but I think the most important thing is that we need to do it now.

Certainly, we heard some platitudes from the government. I do not want to make this overly partisan, but we heard from many levels of government that they understand it is a crisis, but very few are actually doing something about it. We have had emergency debates on it in the House in the past and I have not seen a lot of changes. That is concerning. We cannot carry on like this.

The one thing we have heard is that the programs have been underfunded and there has not been a true priority put on addressing the opioid crisis. When I say “underfunded”, I do not think, from what we have heard from stakeholders, there is a lack of funds going to some of these programs and initiatives that are out there. The problem is underfunding with respect to setting priorities. One of the things we heard from just about every single stakeholder we spoke with during the last year and a bit, going through this discussion, was that there are no metrics to measure which programs are successful and which are not.

We could take a shotgun approach and throw money at just about every program that is out there, but unless we have a way to measure what is working and what is not, we are wasting our time and money. That is what we heard from so many of these groups. It is not that we are lacking resources, but there are so many programs out there. Some of them are working and some of them are working exceptionally well, but some of them are not. We want to ensure that those that are getting the funds are doing a good job. It also empowers them to make sure they are using taxpayer dollars to the very best benefit.

Another example we heard from many of the stakeholders is the need for a 988 national suicide hotline. This would be a very easy solution that the Liberal government could implement immediately and the House could support unanimously. How can Canadians trust the Liberal government to take this seriously if it cannot even implement a simple 988 suicide hotline?

● (2020)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Chair, the member and I have engaged on this subject in the past here in the House. It feels a bit like déjà vu, and many more people have died since.

Business of Supply

Recently, in June, the expert task force on substance use recommended bold action on three fronts. I do not think this is sufficient, and I think we need to expand treatment options. We also know that thousands of Canadians are dying because of a poisoned drug supply.

As an interim measure to save lives today, would the member support a safer drug supply? This is not a permanent fix for down the road. We have to figure out a long-term solution, but what about the short term, as a matter of saving lives today?

● (2025)

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Chair, I appreciate that we have had discussions on this, but one thing is missing. I also appreciate what the member is trying to say. Some colleagues have brought up the Portugal model, for example, but the thing they forget to mention about Portugal, where drugs were decriminalized, is that it has invested substantially in treatment and recovery. The number of beds it has for treatment and recovery far outweigh what we have here in Canada. If we want to talk about decriminalization and safe supply, the first thing we have to talk about, which must be in place first, is a strategy and regime around treatment and recovery, and ensuring we have the resources in place for those who are going to need it.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Chair, I listened to the member's speech, and I agree that real stories are important and that we should always bring it back to the people. What we know is that in the last six years, 25,000 lives have been lost, unfortunately. However, for years, the Conservatives have been trying to discredit clear and overwhelming evidence that supervised injection sites save lives. We want to talk about something we can do, and something tangible we can do is increase the safe supply and increase harm-reduction supports. Instead, we are seeing increased marginalization of the most vulnerable and the criminalization of people struggling with substance use.

I wonder if the member could clarify something. Does he agree that we need to increase harm-reduction supports in order to save lives?

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Chair, I appreciate the member's question, and I hope she listened to my speech when I said there is no silver bullet that resolves this problem. There has to be a suite of different programs, and harm reduction is one of them.

The issue that bothers me with this position is that harm reduction and an increased safe supply is the one and only solution. However, it is not a solution at all. All it would do is perpetuate addiction, unless we have a focus on programs that ensure there is a way to divert people who are using supervised safe injection sites to recovery and treatment. That is the key element that is missing in too many of these programs, and there is a perpetual cycle. We must be able to divert people who need it into treatment or recovery. Otherwise the cycle does not end.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Chair, I heard my colleague talk about the need for statistics and monitoring.

I will repeat the suggestions I made in my speech, and I would like to know if he believes that they make sense.

When we talk about monitoring and intervention for overdose prevention and harm reduction, are activities that seek to provide information and raise awareness a good thing in his opinion? Do we need to improve medical and pharmaceutical practices for opioids and pain management? What does he think of access to integrated and adapted services for people receiving treatment for opioid use that requires the use of a drug, as well as training, research and assessment?

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Chair, the member brings up a very good point. The pharmaceutical companies that have been peddling these opioids have to be held accountable. They are saying there is a 90% chance a person will not get addicted, but it is a ridiculous stat and we know the consequences of it.

Something I would like to propose is the establishment of a centre of excellence for mental health and addictions. This would be the hub where these programs would ask for funding and it would be funnelled through them. We would have metrics of success, and would also be able to hold pharmaceutical companies accountable for what should be out there and what should not. There would be consequences in place if they are misleading Canadians on the addiction levels of the products they are peddling.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Chair, it is an honour to be here late in the evening at this take-note debate to talk about the opioid crisis in Canada.

Sadly, overdose deaths outpaced COVID-19 deaths in British Columbia last year. Constituents from across Kelowna—Lake Country continually reach out to me about the mental health and addictions issues playing out on our streets. However, the opioid crisis also affects everyday families, and of course the biggest tragedy is the people who are struggling with addiction and the people who are trying to help them.

I have met with residents of Rutland, in downtown Kelowna, and other areas who see first hand the tragic impact that opioids and drug addictions have in their neighbourhoods. I have met with mothers who have lost a child to overdose. Their stories are heart-breaking, and I cannot imagine what they have gone through.

Business of Supply

The government's continued response has been to push off the responsibility, and it has been left to our provinces and municipalities to deal with. There needs to be federal leadership on the opioid crisis, here in Ottawa. I am not new to this issue. I spoke about Kelowna—Lake Country's addictions crisis during my maiden speech in the previous Parliament. I called on the government to introduce actionable items that would deal with bringing those addicted into recovery while ensuring criminal accountability for keeping illegal drugs on our streets. Since then, I have told the government of families watching loved ones slip away, of the desperate need to fund recovery and treatment centres and of the struggling surges in rates of overdoses in my community and my province. We keep hearing from the government what we have always heard: hearts going out, action plans coming, awareness and moving forward. However, there have not been any specific actionable plans.

Kelowna—Lake Country and British Columbia are left with yet another year of tragic statistics. The year 2021 surpassed 2020 as the deadliest year for illicit drug deaths, and now, six British Columbians a day are lost, according to B.C.'s chief coroner. Kelowna has gone from counting drug deaths in single digits just 10 years ago to now having many dozen a year in my community alone.

I hosted a mental health round table in my community last year, and conversations were geared toward talking about addiction. There were many stakeholders there from my community and they gave really good input, which helped lead into our platform in the previous election.

I have talked to first responders, and they are exhausted by the continual calls of overdoses and seeing the tragedy every day. Let us recognize and thank them here today. They are on the front lines of the opioid crisis every day. B.C. Emergency Health Services responded to over 35,000 overdoses in 2021, an increase of 31% compared with the previous year and nearly triple the number it responded to when the government was elected in 2015. New substances with even more significant toxicity continue to appear in Kelowna, with a public health warning issued of a new substance just this past January.

There are a number of organizations, including those in Kelowna—Lake Country, that provide treatment in supportive living environments for those struggling to recover from addiction. They are trying to bring hope and healing to people so they can become productive members of society. However, many of these organizations do not meet government models to receive funding and have to self-fund in the community and rely on generous volunteers and donors. We need to use all the tools available, such as drug-treatment beds, community recovery centres and wraparound services.

The opioid crisis is a national emergency and an urgent health issue, and COVID-19 has made things worse. People have been isolated, out of work and unable to see friends and family. My community has been very clear about what is needed to help them. The federal government has received clear recommendations from British Columbia's municipalities, including Kelowna, while leaving them without much-needed treatment. We must act for the people who need recovery and treatment and act for the families and communities where we live. We must all work together in the House to help people and families, and we must act now.

• (2030)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, since 2017, supervised consumption sites have had 2.9 million visits with no on-site deaths recorded to date, over 120,000 referrals to health services and 27,000 reversed overdoses.

Given these metrics, does the member agree that our decision to approve 37 consumption sites since coming into office was good and that we should continue this way?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, this is one tool in the tool kit, and really it is the only tool that both levels of government have been using. Although it has been useful for many people and has saved lives, as we know, it is simply one tool. There are so many other tools we are not using.

When we look at the numbers that I cited in my speech, we can see how the numbers are increasing. It is not solving all of the issues. It is just one tool. We need to be looking at all other options out there in order to best help and resolve the situation.

• (2035)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Chair, I am pleased to participate in this evening's debate. My colleague is right. We are currently in the midst of a terrible crisis.

However, I do not agree with her that it is a federal responsibility. The opioid crisis is a mental health issue. Mental health to me means health, and health is a provincial jurisdiction.

Every day, young people, people on the streets of Longueuil, would like to see psychologists, but they cannot because psychologists are underfunded and there are none.

Does my colleague agree that health transfers should be increased? That would make it possible to increase mental health services for those who want them, to provide better working conditions for nurses, to foster hiring, and to provide support for people struggling with addiction. Health transfers must be increased. That is an inescapable fact. Ottawa has the money, and health is a provincial jurisdiction. The federal government must transfer the money.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, again, we have to utilize all the tools that are available. They are provided through funding, and the federal government can be a leader on that. It is one of the reasons that, on this side of the House, we have been asking to increase the health transfers to the provinces. That is just one of our tools, and then the provinces can utilize it the best they can. We also have to look at national strategies that can be implemented across the country so there is some consistency as we go from province to province.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Chair, I think we all know in the House that prohibition did not work to reduce alcohol use and the war on drugs has not worked to reduce drug use. It is said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. That is just common sense, because to address a problem, one has to correctly identify the cause of it. Experts in addiction tell us that the cause of drug use and addiction is pain and trauma. Therefore, arresting, jailing, criminalizing and adding pain and trauma to drug users will never work, and it has not.

Does the member think that criminalizing drug users and forcing them to purchase poisoned drugs from street dealers is something this Parliament and her party should continue to allow to happen in Canada?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, if we want to back this up and look at the causes, let us talk about the drug dealers who are out there. Right now, we have legislation before the House that looks at reducing sentences for drug dealers for smuggling. If we are going to back this up and look at some of the causes, let us start where people are getting some of these very harmful drugs, and let us address it there as we are going through all these other steps.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Chair, at the outset, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver Centre.

I also want to thank the member for Yukon for ensuring that this take-note debate happened. I very much appreciate his advocacy and the health-focused advocacy that he has.

The sheer scale of this crisis is hard to fathom. We have lost 25,000 Canadians since the beginning of 2016. Every one of those has a personal story, of course, impacting many more family, friends, co-workers, loved ones and others, but it is not just opioid-related deaths. We should describe this problem as what it is: It is a poisoned drug crisis. I think a recent report from Public Health Ontario and the Ontario Drug Policy Research Network described it accurately as an opioid toxicity crisis, and we should all describe it in this way.

We know the laws on the books are ineffective. The police chiefs have told us the laws are ineffective, but it is worse than that. The laws actually contribute to these deaths because they push people away from treatment. We know that on the evidence. They stigmatize people and they push people away from treatment. What is worse, prohibition is the absence of regulation. When it is left to the black market, what we get is poisoned drugs and those poisoned drugs are killing people. It is prohibition that is killing people.

We know that it is getting worse, of course, in this pandemic. It was bad before the pandemic, but it is getting worse. What is the answer? I have heard colleagues say they do not know the exact right approach. I have heard the Prime Minister say that decriminalization is not a silver bullet, and it is not. We absolutely need to do everything we can to stop the scale of death. Let us listen to the experts. There was a recent substance use task force that included a police presence, that included a presence from mental health experts, and that included a range of different voices. Do members know what they called for? They called for bold action for decriminalization, and for a regulatory approach. Let us talk about regulating a safer supply and expanding that safer supply.

Do members know what the answer to a poisoned drug crisis is? It is ensuring that the drugs are not poisoned. It is as simple as that to save lives today. Decriminalization is not a silver bullet, but do members know what it does? It ensures that we treat drug use as a health issue, and that we encourage people to seek treatment.

I worry when the Portugal conversation comes up. By the way, Portugal still was probably more coercive than I would like, but if anyone wants to get up and support the Portugal approach, we should do that immediately because it would save lives. It not only removes the stigma and encourages people to seek treatment, but in Portugal they also wildly expanded treatment. That is also what we have to do, but not in steps when so many people are dying. We do it all at once.

If we want to talk about Portugal, I would push back a little bit on my Conservative colleagues. I would say that Portugal decriminalized and rapidly expanded treatment at the same time because it was facing a crisis. Do members know what we need to do? At the same time, we need to rapidly expand treatment options.

There was \$500 million promised in a platform that builds up \$150 million from a previous Parliament. We need to deliver that money in the budget to make sure there is evidence-based treatment. That should go hand in hand with removing ineffective criminal laws, and those are not my words but the words of police chiefs, that push people away from the very treatment we want to provide. We need a safer supply, because a poisoned drug crisis is killing people.

Members should not listen to me. They should listen to CAMH. Listen to the police chiefs. Listen to the experts on the substance use task force. Listen to every single expert who has looked at this issue with any seriousness to say what we are doing is killing people. Let us do something differently and, yes, let us do it all at once. This level of a crisis demands that we do everything we can, all at once, to save lives.

Business of Supply

● (2040)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Chair, my colleague for Beaches—East York had powerful remarks. I have been deeply moved by the stories that the constituents of northwest B.C. have shared with me: heartbreaking stories about the loss of their loved ones, and particularly stories from parents who have lost their children. They plead with me to do something immediately in the House. I heard that urgency in my colleague's remarks. My colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni, has brought forward a bill that will come forward very soon in this Parliament for debate. It represents some of the very solutions that my colleague has outlined in his remarks.

My question to him is this, because I cannot imagine that he would not support my colleague's bill. What will he do to work with us to build unity in the House and pass this bill immediately, or as soon as possible?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Chair, I have jointly seconded that bill. I will happily support that bill. I will support any legislation that moves us closer to a safer supply and that moves us closer to an evidence-based approach that treats drug use as the health issue that it is.

We do not treat gambling addiction with the criminal law. We do not treat alcohol addiction with the criminal law. However, we think this is different: It is an illicit substance, which is only illicit, by the way, because of past racist policies directed at particular communities if we track the history back in this country. We treat different levels of addiction very differently.

I am happy to support that bill, but fundamentally we need the government to put more dollars on the table, and we need provinces to take those dollars and to follow the evidence.

● (2045)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Chair, I want to thank my colleague. As I have said, we have had lots of discussions about this, and I certainly appreciate his passion.

However, many of the members in the House continue to mislead a bit on the comments by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, when they talk about their support for decriminalization. The one key to their statement was that they would support decriminalization if police officers across the country had the resources to divert those who needed it into sufficient treatment and recovery, which does not exist right now.

Would my colleague not agree that it is critical, if we are going to go down this road, for the chiefs of police and police forces across Canada to ensure that proper treatment and recovery beds are in place first if we are going to divert people into those programs?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Chair, I will say two things. I worked closely with the president of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Bryan Larkin, to ensure that a bill I introduced in the House had their support. By the way, that bill is now part of Bill C-5, and that bill has their support.

Regardless of new spending, that bill will have the support of the chiefs of police, and I hope it has the support of my Conservative

colleagues. It is my genuine hope that we rally across parties in the House and we do the right thing.

Of course we need more money to expand treatment options. I would say I actually do not want police to be the first responders for what is fundamentally a mental health crisis in an individual's life. I do not think that is the appropriate response. I think Portugal is probably too coercive, and Bill C-5 is probably too coercive in that way. We should get police focusing on criminals, not focusing on people suffering from mental health problems.

Ideally, that is the answer. To the member's point, we absolutely need much more significant funding to expand treatment options. That is an area I think we could work together on.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Chair, all evening, we have heard horror stories, but we have also heard some potential solutions.

As my colleague was saying, we also need funding, beds and resources. Education is important for stakeholders and for families, starting in early childhood. This will require an enormous amount of time, money and commitment.

The topic we are debating tonight is unfortunately one that comes up often. Where is the commitment? When will the government turn words into real action?

[*English*]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Chair, far be it from me to commend the government for certain actions, but I will say that, on this particular crisis, we have seen significant action since 2015. We have seen an expansion of supervised consumption sites. We know that those save lives. We have seen hundreds of millions of dollars in funding, including to expand treatment options. We have seen the restoration of harm reduction as a central pillar of our drug strategy.

My criticism is different. It is not to say we are not taking action. Certainly we are taking much more significant action than past governments in this country, but there is the scale of the crisis: the number of people who are losing their lives. These are preventable deaths. If we change our policies, these are preventable deaths.

The government is acting, but is the government acting quickly enough, proportionate to the scale of the crisis? That is where the criticism lies.

Business of Supply

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am so excited to participate in this debate. I think my colleague just said it all. We talk about a crisis. A crisis sounds like something existential. This is real. In my province of British Columbia, 6.5 people a day are dying from preventable deaths. This is a mental health issue. This is a mental health problem, and there is a way to deal with it. We can talk about decriminalization, and we can talk about a whole lot of other things. The only thing that would stop people dying from a toxic, illicit supply of illegal drugs is a safe supply of drugs. That is it. That is simple.

Since 2015, we have heard from my colleague that our government has done a great number of things. We have expanded safe consumption sites, and we have been able to allow everyone to have naloxone readily available to them, for if they have an overdose. However, we have also learned some other things.

Things have changed since this began. Now, 70% of street users inhale opioids. They are not using them intravenously any more. They are inhaling them. We need to deal with that. We are finding out that about 35% of people who are dying from an overdose are dying in private homes. About 50% are dying in social housing, in hotels and everywhere else. Only a small percentage of people are dying on the street. This mythical figure we have of some homeless person lying in the gutter using opioids is not true. Clear evidence tells us opioids are being used by professionals, families, people with children and middle-class persons. It is killing them. We need to stop it.

I think our government has done a great deal. We have brought in naloxone, as I said. We have been able to increase the number of safe consumption sites, and we have been helping with field operations to deliver harm reduction in cities across the country. We have been doing all of this, but the number of people dying each day is increasing.

I wanted to point out that, no matter what we have to say about safe consumption sites, in the most recent report from British Columbia there were no overdose deaths in safe consumption sites. Of these deaths, 28% were in hotels and single-room occupancy housing and social housing, and 55% were in private homes. Let us get this picture right.

The majority of people who are dying from overdoses are men under the age of 59. These are people in the prime of their lives: productive Canadians whose lives have been lost. We have it in our power to prevent this, and what we need to do is go with a safe supply.

We need to look at how we provide the right kind of safe supply, though. Right now, in Vancouver and in other places across the country, you can get intravenous drugs given to you in small clinics that do not reach everybody.

However, if people are inhaling the drugs, we need to be able to look at using a drug that has been used for 25 years in Europe. It is called diacetylmorphine, or DAM. DAM has been used with success. People who are taking it are beginning to live productive lives. They are going to work, they are having families and they are doing normal things because they do not have to worry about dying. I think the most important question to ask is this: How do we

get diacetylmorphine into the hands of the people in Canada who need it?

One of the big things we found out is that the provinces are unwilling to do this. They are afraid. The political risk for them is too high, so we talk about decriminalization as if it is a magic bullet. It has nothing to do with anything. What I would like to suggest is that the federal government has it in its power to use the substance use and addictions program to deliver small amounts of money to pilot projects, driven by clinical practitioners in their practices, by physicians and nurse practitioners through telehealth, and by other ways of getting inhalable diacetylmorphine into the hands of people.

It is simple. It is an easy thing to do, it is clinically proven and it is evidence-based. The outcomes are great in Europe, where they call it heroin-assisted treatment.

Let us stop having ideology about this and stop moralizing about this. Let us save lives, people. We have it in our power to do so.

• (2050)

If we allow for SUAP to be given to the clinicians and nurse practitioners who want to use it through telehealth and other ways of getting this out to real people, then we can save those lives.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Chair, the toxic drug supply is taking lives. There has been a lot of talk tonight about the Portugal model. It has decriminalized the use of all drugs and unleashed a major public health campaign to tackle substance abuse, investing significantly in treatment and recovery. Crucially it decriminalized and, ever since, drug addiction in Portugal has been treated as a health issue and a social justice issue, not a criminal justice one.

I know the member of Parliament for Beaches—East York supports decriminalization. He just gave a scathing indictment of his government's lack of action on this issue. The member for Vancouver Centre just said that decriminalization has nothing to do with it. Experts disagree and the science disagrees. The member says that provinces are too scared to act, but her own province, my province, is asking the federal government for an exemption so that we can have a safe supply.

When Dr. Bonnie Henry, the public health official, is advocating for decriminalization, when chiefs of police are advocating for it, how can she say this has nothing to do with it?

• (2055)

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Chair, decriminalization does have something to do with it. It removes the stigma. We are already moving forward with that as a federal government. We have asked attorneys general, federal and in every province, not to give criminal records to people who are using certain amounts. The City of Vancouver is willing to work on this.

Business of Supply

I am in support of it, but the thing that saves lives, which is what I am focusing on tonight, is safe supply. When we look at the evidence, yes, Portugal has had some success, but the greatest successes are occurring in Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries where they are using safe supply. We need to recognize how people use it. It is not being used intravenously anymore. It is being inhaled. We see all kinds of people using it. We need to move forward to save lives.

Decriminalizing is important. It is one of the many tools that we have, but everyone is focusing on that and nobody is really talking about access to safe supply. The federal government has been giving access to safe supply and funding safe supply in every province that has asked for it. The thing we are talking about is how to make this inhalable drug available to 70% of users and how to ensure that we are using a tried and true for the past 25 years drug that has been shown not only to save lives but to get people into rehabilitation—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I have to give other members an opportunity to ask questions.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Chair, we are having yet another debate on this issue, saying some important things with lots of great sentiment.

The member has been a member of Parliament for a long time and was a minister at one point in time. One would think she would have influence within her own party, especially with her credentials. I am wondering what specific action her government has taken that she can point to and what demonstrable results those actions have resulted in to tackle the opioid crisis. The numbers do not seem to indicate any action or impact whatsoever.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Chair, I will start by saying that we actually opened up safe injection sites, safe consumption sites, across this country, which were blocked and stopped for 10 years by the Conservative government. That is the first thing we did.

Second, we made naloxone available, which can immediately save someone who is dying of an overdose and prevent them from dying. We have been giving access to drugs to many provinces that have been able to accept it. The problem is that it is not reaching everyone. I talk all the time with colleagues of mine who are also physicians. They are telling me that the thing to do is to use what has been successful for 25 years in Europe, in Switzerland and Scandinavia, which is diacetylmorphine. It is an easy drug.

I have told my colleagues in government, because we recently found out this is something that is easily done, to provide a substance use and addiction funding program to doctors, nurse practitioners and others to give this drug, in its inhalable form and its intravenous form, to people who need it. The SUAP grant funding will make it happen because right now in the province of British Columbia, it is not being allowed by the provincial government.

My friends may say—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Chair, let me begin by saying this is one of the most informed, incredible debates I have seen in the House of Commons since I was elected. I am going to be splitting my time with the member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

A lot of the statistics I wanted to raise and some of the points I wanted to raise have been shared already. I have been focused recently on the Parliamentary Budget Officer when he said that we spent over \$300 billion on COVID-19 measures since 2019 alone. Looking beneath our ongoing public health debates is what we are discussing here tonight and that is the opioid crisis, which is particularly bad in my home province of British Columbia.

I had this internal debate a few times throughout the last two years. Imagine if we spent just a fraction of what we were putting into COVID-19 to keep people home and directed those funds to some of the treatment options that have been shared here tonight.

For the purposes of expediency, let me raise a couple of points on first nations. A 2017 report by the First Nations Health Authority and B.C. Coroners Service found that status first nations were five times more likely to experience an overdose and three times more likely to die from one. Some people within first nation communities are continuing to use opioids even after receiving life-saving treatments three to five times through naloxone. This is devastating.

Another area that requires some attention and it was raised by the last speaker from Vancouver Centre is about men. Men are disproportionately impacted in their thirties by this devastation in the opioid crisis, particularly, in the B.C. construction industry. This is one of the largest employers in my province and anyone who has ever worked in construction knows that it is hard physical work and workers often suffer a higher rate of injury on the job. As has also been discussed tonight, in this male-dominated industry, workers are statistically less likely to discuss mental health and substance abuse problems due to stigma.

The impact of stigma on drug use is real. Fear of stigma prevents some people from seeking help. Labels like “drug abuse” or “drug abuser” dehumanize how people are suffering and can impact the quality of care they might consider accessing. That is an important point to raise. We really need to look through the lens of the 30-year old male who seems to be disproportionately impacted by this and indigenous people.

Business of Supply

For the purpose of time, I called up a friend of mine, Jesse, who works for the 5 and 2 Ministries in Abbotsford. They get lots of contracts with the Province of B.C. and the City of Abbotsford to deal with issues like the opioid crisis. It is important to mention in the context of treatment that we need to find hope. Based on what an expert told me today, people are going to recover and get past this, despite the debate about safe supply and everything else, if people have hope and they have something to live for. That needs to be part of any conversation we have today.

My community of Abbotsford and my entire riding of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon have seen the devastation first-hand. My office is directly beside Haven in the Hollow. I just had a report that there was a death there the other day. There were also 19 naloxone treatments in one month.

In conclusion, I am going to propose and throw out some new policy ideas that might help and add to the discussion tonight. First, we need to do more to empower civil society. Imagine if we gave tax breaks to Canadians who want to support a treatment centre, similar to what we give those who support political entities in this country.

Second, in British Columbia we have talked a lot about the other side of drugs and that is money laundering. FINTRAC, the ability of the RCMP to stop the people importing illicit drugs into Canada, that is not taking place. That is one area where the Liberal government has not taken action to address the real and dangerous consequences of money laundering.

• (2100)

Third, we need to give more control to first nations to address this issue as well. We need to give them more control over housing and we need to apply culturally appropriate methods to address the opioid crisis.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, the supply changes so quickly people do not know what they get. There are also signs the street supply of fentanyl is being laced with far more potent opioids. I would like to hear my colleague's comments on how important supporting safe supply is, as it is such an essential component of turning the tide on the alarming rise in opioid deaths from the toxic drug supply.

• (2105)

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, regarding a safe supply, I know for a fact, when I spoke to Jesse at 5 and 2 Ministries today, that his organization and other similar ones are often called by Fraser Health and told about this new illicit pill that is being passed around. People can literally watch people being brought into hospitals who are having overdoses because our police officers and the Canada Border Services Agency do not have the capacity to do their jobs effectively in the way they see it.

I have not completely informed my own opinion about the merits of a safe supply. In some context, it might be part of the solution.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Chair, the opioid crisis affects people for different reasons, such as mental health issues or pain. My colleague gave a good explanation earlier,

especially with respect to construction workers who suffer serious injuries.

That comment reminded me of a conversation I had a few weeks ago. This person told me that assistance programs, such as workplace injury programs, are now costed by accountants instead of actuaries. Actuaries are the ones who see the long-term impacts on top of the short-term costs.

It may be worth taking a long-term perspective instead of focusing on the money when it comes to helping injured construction workers or people with mental health issues.

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

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, at the very least, organizations working with people experiencing the effects of opioids must be given the tools.

I also believe we should give the provinces more money through health transfers to improve the situation.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Chair, I know that whenever we raise the issue of needing to advance decriminalization and safe supply people say there is no silver bullet. Nobody ever said that this would be a silver bullet. We need a whole host of tools, but first and foremost I have to say this. Dead people do not detox. We need to keep them alive. We need to save lives, and maybe there will be a process for them that one day they can embark on that would take them on a different path.

Will the Conservatives support the private member's bill that my colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni, has tabled to decriminalize so that we can start saving lives?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, I have not had an opportunity to review this recently tabled legislation, so I cannot comment on a bill I have not read. That said, the Province of B.C. already has de facto decriminalization, yet the deaths and the challenges are still present. I am not opposed to decriminalization necessarily or even a safe supply, but I would need to do more research and look at the bill. I would welcome a further conversation with this member if she would like to explain it to me in more detail. In good faith, I have not read this bill yet, so I cannot comment.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Chair, Cassy was a daughter, a sister and a friend. She met the intersection of mental illness and addiction, and the system failed her.

Cassy's lifeless body was discovered at a local music store in my riding of Peterborough—Kawartha on election day, September 20, 2021. Cassy was one of 17 people a day in Canada who died from opioid poisoning. She tried to get help and her family tried to get her help, but it was not there.

Let us talk about the stats. In my riding of Peterborough—Kawartha, from March 2020 to December 2021, 75 people, including Cassy, died from an opioid poisoning, and 25 people died from COVID. How is our opioid crisis not a state of emergency?

Our hospital in Peterborough has double the opioid death rate of the rest of the province—double. We also have the highest unemployment rate in Canada and a housing crisis. These things are not exclusive of each other.

We need a national plan. We need to look at the return on investment when we delve into prevention, treatment and recovery. Right now we are caught on a merry-go-round. EMS respond to an overdose call; they take the patient to the already maxed-out and resource-depleted ER, and the patient is released, only to overdose within hours or days, and the cycle continues.

I want to share a message I received from a constituent. I do not have permission from the family to share his name, so I will call him Johnny.

Johnny lost his mother and father to cancer within a few years of each other, and then lost his small family to a breakup. He turned to the streets. He overdosed and was hospitalized for a bit. He overdosed again last month, except this time he sat in the ER for hours without being attended to. He was apparently kicked out by security for being loud, vulgar and argumentative. He left on foot without a coat. His body was found in a local park the next morning. He froze to death.

One of my favourite quotes is from Mr. Rogers: Anything mentionable is manageable. We cannot manage what we do not acknowledge. This pandemic has magnified an already mounting crisis. People cannot manage the stress of trying to pay bills, taking care of kids and losing their jobs.

Mental health is physical health. One cannot separate the two. We need to change how we talk about mental health and addiction and we need to change how we treat it. I have a saying that education equals awareness equals change. We can be the change, but we have to acknowledge what the opioid crisis is. It is a desperate attempt to escape from both physical and mental pain.

Canada needs a government that will invest in offering recovery and healing. By definition in the medical world, opioids are prescribed to manage pain, and that is what they do, but it is not always physical pain the patient needs escape from. Canada has a chance to be a leader in how we treat pain. We have a chance to change how we help people heal. It will not be easy and it will take time, commitment and a lot more than just money to solve this crisis. We need a cultural and policy shift in how we provide health care, but we can do it. We are ready.

There is no effective strategy dedicated to the cause of the opioid poisonings. On a given day during my campaign, I would see EMS respond up to four times to an overdose call in the same area. How

Business of Supply

much is that costing? Imagine if we invested this money spent on resources to solve the problem rather than to react to the problem.

We need to invest in complete wraparound services. We need innovative treatment and recovery healing centres that do not just manage the addiction but look at the cause and manage trauma. We need to invest in the research to learn why someone turns to opioids. We need to evaluate how and when doctors are prescribing opioids.

With the right intervention and strategy, Cassy and Johnny could have been more than another statistic.

• (2110)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Chair, much like the thousands of other Canadian deaths from all regions, Cassy's loss of life is significant and impacts all of us, not just the families and friends. We extend our condolences.

The member highlights, as others have, the severity of the problem. As I have been listening to the debate, one of the things that comes to my mind is that it is not the responsibility of just one level of government. There are roles for the federal government, provincial governments, municipal governments and non-profit organizations to play, as well as the valuable input from first responders.

I am wondering if the member can provide her thoughts on how important it is, as a community and as a society, to take a holistic approach at trying to resolve the thousands of deaths that occur every year because of this sad story.

• (2115)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Chair, I think tonight has been so emotional and profound for so many, because we all know across this House that it is a crisis. I absolutely agree with what my colleague, the member for Foothills, said tonight: We need a strategy. We cannot have a shotgun approach.

Before I came and spoke this evening, I messaged our chief of EMS in my region, who said the same thing, that we need a strategy and wraparound services. We cannot have these single, individual whack-a-mole approaches, for lack of a better term. We need to come together. We need a streamlined strategy.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Chair, I have a very simple question for my colleague.

Business of Supply

Over the years, construction of new social housing units has fallen by the wayside. Now that we are confronting the harsh consequences of the past 20 years, my colleague seems to think, based on what I heard in her speech, that opioid use and addiction happen because people are seeking an escape. When people have financial difficulties or do not have access to quality health care, that can lead to homelessness.

I would like to ask my colleague if she agrees that we should try to make up for years of neglect in this area?

Does she think 1% is enough to make up for the decades during which there was not enough affordable housing for people with this issue?

[English]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Chair, I wish I could respond in French. Hopefully in a couple of years I will be able to, but my French is not quite there yet.

Absolutely, the national housing strategy is a key partner. This opioid crisis, as we heard tonight from many members, is a spider-web of a multitude of factors that come into play. As with everything in politics, we need to address one thing to help something else. So often when I saw Cassy, whom I spoke about in my speech, she did not have a home or anything to eat, so to manage that pain she often turned to addiction. Getting people into housing is a critical piece in managing the opioid crisis.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, when former prime minister Stephen Harper made his apology for residential schools in 2008, the Conservatives acknowledged the importance of moving toward reconciliation with Inuit first nations and Métis. The Health Canada expert task force on substance use also recommends “respecting the sovereign rights of indigenous peoples in Canada to support their governments and provide appropriate prevention and treatment approaches.”

Does the member agree with the experts that the funding of culturally appropriate prevention and treatment approaches is important? *Qujannamiik*.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Chair, the member is absolutely right. One of the reasons I chose to run to become an MP was our campaign strategy to provide \$1 billion over five years to boost funding for indigenous mental health and drug treatment programs.

To answer her question, yes, absolutely.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Chair, I will be sharing my time with the member for Parkdale—High Park.

The year 2021 became British Columbia's deadliest year for overdose deaths, with 1,782 people losing their lives and two months' worth of data still to come. In October alone, there were 201 deaths, which roughly equates to six and a half a day, but behind each and every number are beloved sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, and the families and loved ones they leave behind.

I want to take this opportunity to honour two parents in my riding by telling the stories of their late children.

First is the story of Annie and her son Alexander.

Alexander was an athletic and creative soul who loved his family deeply, especially his daughter Bella, but he had experienced several traumatic events in his life, including the murder of his best friend. As a result, he struggled with anxiety, depression and PTSD. After a car accident, he was prescribed oxycodone by a doctor, but his struggle with mental health left him vulnerable to addiction, and he became dependent on it. Despite this, Alex managed to stop using by himself in 2016 and was able to maintain his sobriety until the pandemic hit. Unfortunately, Alex died on January 18, 2021, from carfentanil and benzodiazepine poisoning just days before his 29th birthday. Alex died alone on the floor of his locked bathroom, trying to hide his addiction. His death left a hole in his family, as his mother Annie lost her only son and as eight-year-old Bella lost her father.

Equally tragic is the story of Clint who was a kind and successful young man who had a loving family and was just about to move in with his girlfriend. Clint had managed to score his dream job and went out with his friend to celebrate. His friend brought cocaine, which Clint had never used before, but because he was celebrating, he decided to take some. Later that night, he died. It turned out that the cocaine had been cut with fentanyl, and Clint overdosed on a drug he did not even know he was taking.

The loss of Alex and Clint are unimaginable tragedies, passing in the prime of their lives, leaving behind loving families and promising futures, but these stories are all too common in British Columbia, where it is hard to find someone who is more than a couple of degrees removed from such a tragedy.

Since the loss of her son, Annie has been driven to make sure that others do not go through the same thing that she and her family have been through. Through her work with Moms Stop The Harm, she is fighting to make sure that we end the stigma around addiction and ensure that those who need it can get help and do not take tainted drugs.

I want to thank Annie and Clint's father Al for their advocacy and tell them that we are listening, but we have more work to do so that those who are struggling with addiction can get the help they need.

When simple drug use no longer needs to be concealed out of fear of criminal prosecution, government programs that provide for safer supply will be possible, and we can create the space for treatment to rehabilitate those who are suffering from addiction.

This method has shown success in communities across my riding and has overwhelming community support. In February 2021, an overdose prevention site opened in Squamish. In Sechelt, the Sunshine Coast's first sanctioned safe consumption site was established in July of 2020. There, trained staff provides support, which includes access to naloxone, counselling, overdose response and education, drug-checking and detox treatment options. These facilities work, as despite record-high opioid deaths, not a single person has died under a supervised consumption or overdose prevention site in B.C.

We need to support these sites that keep people safe, particularly in communities where indigenous people are disproportionately impacted by the opioid crisis. We need to build on the \$200-million investment in substance use prevention and treatment services for first nations and the \$116-million investment through budget 2021 to fund projects through the substance use and addictions program, but we also need to ensure that those who are suffering from addiction are able to get the help they need without fearing prosecution. Addiction must be recognized for the health issue that it is and not be treated as a criminal issue.

Our government has proposed taking steps in this direction with Bill C-5, which would require police and prosecutors to first consider diverting people to treatment programs and support services instead of charging and prosecuting them.

Preventing avoidable deaths needs to be the fundamental priority for our country. This starts with safe supply projects, including overdose prevention clinics and the financial tools with the substance use and addictions program. We have to work with jurisdictions when they are ready, but we also need to work directly with physicians to give them the tools they need to prescribe life-saving alternatives.

We will continue to work towards ending this crisis so that nobody else has to suffer the loss that the families of Alex and Clint have endured.

• (2120)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Chair, I thank the member for his speech and for the stories that he shared.

I want to ask the member about accountability for some of the companies that have been responsible for in some ways causing and certainly fuelling the opioid crisis. There has been a lot of litigation in the United States targeting Purdue Pharma and the Sackler family, as well as McKinsey, and they have been forced to pay significant amounts of money that have been able to be used towards compensation for victims as well as treatment.

My sense is that in Canada we have been far behind in terms of the government trying to hold some of these corporate bad actors accountable for fuelling the opioid crisis and for pushing misinformation about the addiction risk associated with opioids. As one of the stories the member shared shows, most of the people who struggle with substance abuse disorders in the context of opioids started with prescription opioids, and for many people that was at a time when there was a great deal of misinformation that was aggressive-

Business of Supply

ly and pointedly pushed by some of these companies about the risks.

I would ask the member this: Why is the government not doing more, and should the government do more to hold these actors—Purdue, the Sackler family and McKinsey—accountable?

• (2125)

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Madam Chair, I absolutely believe that we need to hold such companies accountable for their actions. As the member mentioned, one of the stories I brought up was about an addiction that started from a pharmaceutical drug that was prescribed. However, it is not up to government to direct those prosecutions. That happens through an independent service, the Public Prosecution Service.

While we need to really focus on that and need to ensure there is justice, we also need to take the steps right now to ensure we are dealing with this as the crisis that it is. That includes some of the things I mentioned in my speech, such as having more safe supply and making sure people get the treatment they need.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for sharing these stories with us.

The stories we are hearing are all very moving, and we could spend days listening to them. However, the members of this House have a responsibility to come up with and implement concrete measures.

I was pleased to hear my colleague talk about diversion and his government's plans to address it. The Bloc Québécois will be there and will collaborate 200%. We heard about supervised sites, but they come under provincial jurisdiction.

I have a very simple question for my colleague. Everyone is well aware that we need to invest in the health care system and in social housing. The level of underfunding of social housing is appalling. These two problems are directly related.

First, can my colleague explain how he feels about being part of a government that refuses to increase health transfers, when we all know the needs are many and pressing?

Second, can we count on him to lobby his caucus to release funds and increase transfers to the provinces so we can support people—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for his question.

Business of Supply

I agree that we need to invest in affordable housing. We have implemented the rapid housing initiative, which aims to build a lot more affordable housing units. This is important, and we need to do more. These people need housing the most. Without such programs, they could end up in a situation where they will use opioids.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Chair, one thing the member talked about, which I was glad to hear him say, is that this is a health issue, not a criminal issue. He recognizes that. However, in this country today, the personal possession of drugs is still a criminal issue. We heard this from the member for Vancouver Centre, and she said the same thing: The police are not enforcing it. People who use drugs are worried about their drugs being taken. They are not getting harm reduction supports.

Why are we here? It is because people are using drugs and there is a poisoned drug supply. They are not getting out and getting the help they need, and people are dying. It is a war zone right now in many communities.

The member says to do this when communities are ready, but British Columbia is ready. It is our home province; he and I share it. It has asked for an exemption, but the Liberal government has not responded. It has been seven or eight months and this is still sitting on the desk of the minister.

Does my colleague support decriminalization or not?

• (2130)

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Madam Chair, I want to thank my colleague for his advocacy and action in this space.

He mentioned some things on the section 56 application for exemption. I know that our minister is looking at this very closely. There are some questions about the quantum of the two proposals that really need to be discussed because it is important that we do this right. As a lot of folks have mentioned, at the same time as we are pursuing such a strategy, we need to make sure there are appropriate treatment facilities in place.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is a pleasure to join this evening's debate. I want to thank the member for Yukon for initiating the very important subject matter we are discussing today in the chamber.

Something my constituents in Parkdale—High Park speak to me about regularly is the issue of opioids, opioid use and the opioid crisis that is claiming lives in Parkdale—High Park, in Toronto, in Ontario and right around the country. The deaths were occurring prior to any of us ever hearing about COVID-19, and they have continued throughout the pandemic, in some months exceeding COVID death rates. Unfortunately, these deaths will likely continue once we have finished with the pandemic. This underscores the urgency of taking action on this pressing issue.

The history of what we have done as a party was underscored very recently in this debate: treating the issue of opioid use, and drug use generally, as a health issue, not a criminal issue. I there-

fore want to turn back the clock a bit and remind Canadians about where we were prior to the election in the fall of 2015.

At that time, we had a government led by Stephen Harper that was basically denying this health nexus. That government was denying supervised consumption sites, or supervised injection sites as they were then referred to, from proceeding. With the inability of the previous government to grant exemptions under the relevant federal legislation to allow supervised injection sites to occur, this ended up at the Supreme Court of Canada in a case called *Canada v. PHS Community Services Society*. In a unanimous 9-0 decision, which is somewhat rare for the Supreme Court of Canada, written by the chief justice, the court affirmed the constitutional rights that were at issue and sided soundly with the applicants in the case, going against the Harper government.

I am going to read into the record part of what was said. In paragraph 136 of that decision, the court said, "The Minister made a decision not to extend the exemption from the application of the federal drug laws to Insite." Insite was the applicant seeking to run the supervised injection site. "The effect of that decision," the court wrote, "would have been to prevent injection drug users from accessing the health services offered by Insite, threatening the health and indeed the lives of the potential clients." There is the nexus. By denying that ministerial exemption, drug users' lives were threatened.

The court continued: "The Minister's decision thus...constitutes a limit on their s. 7 rights," which would be the rights to life, liberty and security of the person. The court went on to say, "this limit is not in accordance with...fundamental justice. It is arbitrary...[and] grossly disproportionate". It said, "the potential denial of health services and the correlative increase in the risk of death and disease to injection drug users outweigh any benefit that might be derived from maintaining an absolute prohibition".

There the court said in a unanimous decision that what we are doing by denying the ability to run a supervised injection site is threatening the lives of Canadians. That is what was so heinous about the approach of the previous government. In October 2015, an election occurred, and we have had a different orientation on this side of the House since we have taken power.

What have we done since then? We got to work and approached this as a health care issue and an addiction issue, as opposed to a criminal matter. We passed legislation in the 42nd Parliament on it, Bill C-37. Rather than withholding discretion, we started to provide discretion, subject to the parameters that were outlined by the court in its jurisprudence. Supervised consumption sites then blossomed.

Since 2016, the record of this government has been to provide 38 different supervised consumption sites, which are operating, and grant the exemptions that have been required. We are trying to empower supervised consumption sites. We are also taking a fundamentally different approach toward diversion and toward treating drug use differently.

Business of Supply

As to what that comports with, I can talk about Bill C-5, which has been tabled in this House. I had the honour to speak to it in December. We are taking an approach that is endorsed by the director of public prosecutions, who is at the federal level in the prosecution service, and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. They have said that rather than using police resources to criminalize people who are using drugs, we should be approaching this from a different perspective by offering them treatments and getting them out of the revolving door of the criminal justice system.

That is the approach we have taken, but much more needs to be done. It is why participating in this debate is so critical this evening. I am looking forward to advocating on behalf of my constituents, who want to see the needs of drug users attended to so we can avert the concerns we are facing now with the opioid crisis.

• (2135)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Chair, my question is about diversion and its effectiveness if there is nowhere to take the patient. We absolutely do not want to criminalize addiction. It is absolutely a disease. I think we have all heard that this evening. However, if there are no resources, and there is nowhere to take someone, like a recovery centre, and no bed to take them to, how are we supposed to implement diversion tactics?

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Chair, I welcome the member for Peterborough—Kawartha to the chamber.

That is absolutely accurate. We need to encourage diversion, but we need available resources. What we are seeing on the part of our government is tens of millions of dollars being committed toward treatment. We saw the appointment of a mental health and addictions cabinet minister, a first in Canadian history. That is the kind of emphasis we are placing on this issue in terms of cabinet appointments and in terms of the dollars we are using to back it up. We need treatment systems and programs available so that diversion can be made to those very programs, and that is indeed what we are doing as a government.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Chair, this has been a very moving evening, but I am worried that those feelings will not translate into solutions.

Earlier we talked about health. In my opinion, this is clearly a mental health problem. It calls for an increase in health transfers to the provinces. Every solution starts there. Earlier we talked about housing. Investments in social housing have been lacking for 30 years.

The link between opioids and homelessness is quite clear, but bricks and mortar are not enough. For 30 years, Quebec has been developing a social and community approach to homelessness that has proven to be effective and that is even envied across Canada. It takes money to pay stakeholders to support people who might be having drug problems. Once these individuals find housing, they need support so that they do not end up back in the drug trade two or three months later. It takes psychological support, but someone has to pay for it.

It takes investments in health and housing, as well as comprehensive and community support to combat homelessness. I think these are good solutions.

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Chair, I did not hear a question so I will simply comment on the situation my colleague mentioned.

I would like to note that we are here to support the provinces and establish a partnership with those who want to treat this situation as a health problem rather than a criminal justice issue. For example, as I mentioned, we already earmarked \$66 million in the 2020 fall economic statement for care related to this specific problem.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Chair, I thank the member for the trip down memory lane with respect to the Harper administration and its approach to addressing the drug addiction issue. It failed and the Supreme Court struck it down. However, now we are here in 2022, and it is within the Liberal government's authority to move forward and not adopt the approach the Conservatives took. The government can do so by supporting the member for Courtenay—Alberni's private member's bill to decriminalize to save lives.

Will the member support the private member's bill and decriminalize so that we can really move forward to save lives? He mentioned he wants to do something for his constituents. He can by voting for that bill.

• (2140)

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Chair, on the issue of decriminalization, we know there are applications under section 56 before the minister. They relate to the province of B.C., the city of Vancouver and indeed my city. We know the public health officers in those two cities in particular have taken a strong stance in this regard.

One thing we have been able to do as a government juxtaposes this notion that we are somehow following the Harper model when completely and antithetically we are not: We are providing what is called a safe supply. We know that the majority of drug deaths in the opioid context occur because people simply do not know what they are using, nor the potential dangers of what they are using. In my riding of Parkdale—High Park, I made an announcement of over \$550,000, which is dedicated toward providing a safe supply to ensure those who use are using with confidence and with the understanding that what they are using is not laced with fentanyl. That is how we save lives. That is the approach to harm reduction we have taken as a government, and those are the types of policies we will continue to pursue.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge. I am sure he is going to do a great job, and I am looking forward to his discussion.

Business of Supply

I might just say that I respect tremendously the member who was just speaking, but I did not respect necessarily the tone of that speech. I would love to see us work together collaboratively. There can be no greater victory for our 44th Parliament as a team than for us to work to have a prolonged and permanent solution to the opioid crisis. I would hope that all members would have that tone of consolidation and collaboration, and not retell a past of seven years ago.

I rise today on a very serious topic. This opioid crisis is endemic. It is ravaging our communities. My community, which is in rural Canada, is just as exposed as every other community.

This is one of the largest public health crises of our time. Canada-wide, there are 17 deaths daily due to the opioid epidemic. There were 27,604 people hospitalized with opioid-related poisoning between January 2016 and 2021. In 2020 alone, there were 5,240 cases.

There is actually a direct connection between the COVID-19 pandemic and the opioid crisis. We have seen a huge increase in the use of fentanyl. Analysis was done of major Canadian cities, including Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver. After the lockdown was put in place, just months after the lockdown, the use of fentanyl had gone up by two and even three times. People are hurting. People are in pain. They do not want to hear partisan bickering. That is why I am here, and that is why I am speaking today.

As I say, it hits right at home. In my riding of Northumberland—Peterborough South, we are covered by the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit. There have been 265 hospitalizations of confirmed opioid overdoses and nine more in January alone. However, this does not tell the story. Numbers just do not carry it.

There are literally thousands of families across this community who have been ruined. They are promising young people. They are persons who could have grown up and cured cancer and those who could have spoken eloquently in this very House, on whichever side of the aisle. Their lives are ruined, sometimes beyond repair, by these terrible substances. There is nothing more that we could do as the 44th Parliament that would be more important than providing a lifetime cure.

I would like to talk about a couple of individuals in my riding who have been outspoken on the front.

Chief Paul VandeGraaf, a police chief in Cobourg, has been working and fighting the opioid epidemic every single day. He has talked about the fact that we need to not necessarily have police at the front line of this epidemic, that we need to have therapists, doctors and community leaders on this.

Another individual I would like to talk about whom I respect deeply is Chief Laurie Carr of the Hiawatha First Nation. She has made it a community effort to fight the opioid epidemic. She has gotten together therapists and knowledge keepers and has had community meetings where they fight this crisis, person by person by person, trying to get as many people as possible off of these horrible substances. Her work is being undermined, as the member from

Peterborough said, because the nearest treatment centre that will support indigenous peoples is six hours away.

Anyone who has been touched by substance abuse in their life knows that when someone is willing to get treatment, they need it right now. Too many people are left out. They want help. They want to get better. They want their families. They cannot get help because they do not have the resources they need. Quite frankly, we need them now.

That is why I am so proud to rise on this issue. I beg every member in here to make this a top priority. Let us have a prolonged, lasting solution to this horrible, terrible crisis.

● (2145)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Chair, given the very nature of what we are talking about, I can appreciate that there is a great deal of passion and emotion. We are talking about life-and-death matters. As I pointed out to the member's colleague, all 338 of us, including the Speaker, could actually cite examples. The numbers are endless.

I would ask the member to reflect on the same question that I asked his colleague. As much as the federal government can play a significant role, and many, including me would say even a strong leadership role, the best way for us to overcome this issue, help it go away or minimize it is to get the different stakeholders to come together. I listed some of them: governments, first responders, non-profits and so forth. Could I have his thoughts on that?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Chair, I absolutely agree with the hon. member's comments. I would even widen the audience or the interactions we need to have. We need people who have battled through addiction and even people who are engaged in the battle against addiction. There should be nothing about people without them.

We need to bring all people to the table. We cannot wait. We need action. This crisis is now decades old. It is decades in the making. We need for a family who is dealing with someone who has been addicted to know where to go and when to go get help. We need to get help for all Canadians.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Chair, first, I want to thank my friend and colleague from Northumberland—Peterborough South for his passion and compassion.

He talked about the lack of support for treatment. Clearly, that is an issue. I am really glad to hear Conservatives advocating for that. About 15% of people who are suffering with opioid disorder, with addiction, want to get treatment, but people cannot access treatment if they are dead. We are dealing with a poisoned drug supply.

I am glad to hear Liberals talk about a safe supply, but they need to scale it up rapidly. We have heard from the experts that the politically courageous answer is full decriminalization, regulated safe supply, record expungement, treatment on demand via the public health system, prevention and education.

These are things that are going to make a lot of us uncomfortable. It is going against societal norms, but as my colleague says, we have to do things differently. Is he willing to have the courage to step out and do things differently to save lives? This cannot be about votes. We got elected to do the right thing and listen to experts.

Clearly, people are dying. With 20 people dying a day, we need to move rapidly.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Chair, I am willing to discuss. All options are on the table. As the member said, people are dying, so all options are on the table.

I will say that ultimately my dream would be to have a Canada where no one is using these substances and we are not just managing the crisis but actually overcoming it. I am open. Let us have discussions. Let us work it out. I always enjoy the member's collaborative approach.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Chair, it makes me very happy to hear the member say that he is open to suggestions, even the possibility of diversion, which is not generally in line with his party's policies.

What does he think about the need to increase health transfers to the provinces and Quebec and to increase funding for social housing? Both of these issues are directly related to this problem and are in dire need of funding. It is also essential to note that direct intervention in health care falls under the purview of Quebec and the provinces.

• (2150)

[English]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Chair, it is astonishing. I will say that throughout this pandemic that the government does not appear to have even contemplated increasing health transfers. One of the pressures on our system has been, of course, COVID-19, but we also are, in many cases, lacking the sufficient ICU beds and hospital beds that we need. Like I said, we are always open to collaboration and discussion.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is good to be here this evening to share some thoughts. I want to thank the members from all sides for discussing this very important issue, which is something that touches us here and touches Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We probably all know people, loved ones, who have been impacted through drugs or through overdosing and dying.

In British Columbia, where I am from, 2,700 people have died from COVID since the pandemic began. During that time, almost 3,700 have died through the opioid crisis. That is 1,000 more people than died from COVID. It is very serious. COVID is serious, but this is a very serious issue that is impacting Canadians. Since 2015, we have seen an almost 500% increase in drug-related deaths in British Columbia, from 400 to now approaching 2,000 people. It is a crisis, and opioids can be unforgiving. One hit and someone can be dead.

Business of Supply

I know different people who have died. I think of a young woman, a beautiful lady, who had a child. She was very outgoing and friendly. She was a bridesmaid at my niece's wedding. The next I heard, she had died. She and her boyfriend had died. It can hit so quickly.

I have been to thousands of doors in the past couple of years, and I do not know how many people I have met who have lost loved ones through this.

On December 14, 2021, a Canadian Press story quoted Dr. Nel Wieman, who is a deputy chief medical officer with one of the B.C. health authorities. In the story, she says that deaths were declining in 2019, but that lockdowns forced people into isolation and more people used drugs alone. She said:

The unintended consequences of the public health measures related to the COVID pandemic has exacerbated the toxic drug events and deaths.

That is difficult. For example, in February, 2020, there were 78 deaths in British Columbia. Then in March, when COVID struck, we had 119 deaths. These were not COVID deaths. They were drug overdoses. In April, there were 128 and in May, there were 187. In July, there were 185.

People are dealing with mental health issues. These are big issues, and they are leading to people going to drugs. They are feeling isolated. I talked to the RCMP superintendent at the Ridge Meadows detachment, who said the number one issue is mental health. The opioid crisis goes hand in hand with mental health.

I am indigenous. I am Métis. It is very troubling to hear that indigenous people are five times more likely to overdose, and three times more likely to die from an overdose. It is a terrible situation.

Last spring, I presented a motion to look at a framework for addiction recovery. I think that is something we need to look at. What we are doing right now is not going in the right direction.

We need to do something more, and there has been a real lack in the area of investment into recovery programs.

I visited some recovery places in my constituency. I think of Tiffany. When I talked to her, she told me that after she had been an addict for 20 years, the recovery place had given her the tools she needed to love herself so she could go home and be the mother her children needed. Another young woman told me she had been addicted to drugs and supported her habit through prostitution. She told me that she would be dead if it was not for the help she was now receiving.

Joanna is the manager of Hannah House in my riding. She said that a lot of money is being spent helping people stay sick and addicted. She said it is heartbreaking, and that it is important, and essential, to keep people alive. There is no doubt about that, but how about finding a way for them to be truly able to live?

Business of Supply

That is it. We want to keep people alive, but we want them to have a life. That is where recovery comes in. We need a lot more investment in this at the different levels. I asked Joanna why there was so little funding from the government, from her perspective. She said that abstinence-based recovery was not really politically correct. That was interesting.

• (2155)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his speech, particularly for speaking about indigenous Canadians in his province.

It is true that the opioid crisis continues to have a disproportionate impact on the health and well-being of indigenous people. We are investing \$425 million annually for community-based services to address the mental wellness needs of first nations and Inuit.

Would my colleague agree that those investments would help make it easier to access medication, to allow overdose prevention sites to be rapidly established, and to respond to immediate COVID-19 needs in communities?

Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Chair, there could be investments, for sure. However, the member used the word “medication”, and I believe that is code for giving people drugs, whether it be methadone or other drugs.

The objective needs to be seeing people actually recover, fully, and to give them help to move on. That takes a tremendous amount of work. It is mental health and all sorts of different things. It is not a simple solution. I think we need to come together. What are some ways? I believe that recovery has to be at the forefront.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Chair, a homelessness initiative was started in my riding during the pandemic. A whole lot of these resources have emerged in Quebec and across the country. The pandemic has taken a toll.

What we are hearing tonight is that the pandemic has had major consequences in terms of mental health and opioid use. I think that cases have doubled in all provinces across the country. Some people have succumbed. They lost their job and started using.

There is a homelessness initiative in my riding. Although there was a little funding during the pandemic to support these people and these kinds of resources, that well has dried up. The government has not made any announcements about what will happen at the end of March. Organizations are waiting to pay people and keep the resource open.

Does my colleague agree that the government should extend funding for homelessness beyond March 31?

Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

He asked what the alternatives are. I truly believe that recovery centres are essential. As I mentioned earlier, the pandemic has undoubtedly had an impact on the number of people dying.

The director of one recovery centre told me that many people living on the streets were receiving money that they were not really

supposed to receive. Many of these people were negatively impacted as a result. That is one of the problems that was noted.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Chair, I just want to tell my neighbour, the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, that I know how deeply this affects his community, and I know how hard he and other elected officials in his community are working to make sure that people are housed and cared for in Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

The other thing that the member and I share is the reality that the opioid crisis is responsible for the declining life expectancy of men in the province of British Columbia. We know much of it is related to tradespeople. Unfortunately, tradespeople do not have access to the care they need: the health care and the doctors they need to deal with the pain they are dealing with every day.

I just wanted to extend my wishes to the member that our communities remain healthy, and also ask the member if he supports the bill from my colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni, in relation to decriminalizing possession of small amounts of drugs, so that those who are working, who are trying to work through pain and trying to work through any type of opioid addiction are not at risk of losing their employment.

• (2200)

Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for her comments and, yes, we are right across the river from each other. I know one of the organizations in my riding that is helping those to recover is Hope for Freedom. I know there are also facilities in her riding that are doing great work. It gives me hope to see people's lives changed and for them to be able to come out of this. It does give me that hope, so I am happy to work with her.

As far as the Conservatives' position goes, we are not for trying to go after the drug users but more those who are in the distribution and pushing on a large scale. That would be our focus. I would have to look at the bill before I comment further, but I do thank her for her questions.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Kitchener Centre.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this very important issue that has tragically touched so many lives right across the country and of course in my riding of Vancouver Granville.

British Columbia has been seized by the opioid crisis as we have heard from other members. It does not matter whether we are rich or poor, urban or rural, likely we know someone who has either lost their life or been touched in some way by this awful crisis. The impact of the opioid crisis is devastating individuals, families and communities. We all know it has become worse through the COVID-19 pandemic with isolation, stress, reduced access to services and toxic supply now entering the mix.

As a result, we saw a 74% increase in opioid-related deaths during the first six months alone of the pandemic. When we think about the opioid crisis, too often we fall back on stigmatized characterizations of people who use drugs. The ongoing effects of the opioid epidemic are pervasive. These overdoses are claiming the lives of thousands of Canadians of all ages from all walks of life. We continue to hear so many devastating stories from people who have lost a loved one to this epidemic.

I heard these stories during my more than 10 years as a volunteer and a board member at Covenant House in Vancouver, and I have heard them from my constituents about their loved ones, whether they are doctors, lawyers, teachers or kids. To this day, I am absolutely haunted by the stories of young people for whom the possibility of death from an opioid was just all in a day's living.

I was also moved by the desire of so many who were desperate for a way out, a way out that meant that they could get clean and stay clean and not worry about dying in the process. These young people, those who survived and those who did not, continue to be a reminder of why we have to act.

Those who were impacted by the opioid crisis still remain stigmatized by the public, and the stigma remains a huge barrier to ensuring that people who use drugs can receive safe, culturally competent and trauma-informed care. Harm reduction, safe supply and addressing this as a health care issue is what we must do.

Substance use is a health issue that requires care and compassion like any other health condition. It requires vision like that shown by Vancouver's late mayor Philip Owen and his four-pillar approach for addressing Vancouver's drug crisis.

The four-pillar approach reflected a comprehensive approach to the drug crisis by treating it as a public health issue and not solely as a law enforcement issue. Instead it involved a mix of prevention, enforcement, treatment and harm reduction. This approach was critical in changing the shape of how Vancouver approached the drug crisis in the early 2000s. Now almost 20 years later we know that there is lots more work and collaboration that we need to put into place, but we know that harm reduction saves lives and we know that we need critical action immediately to reduce the harms of the worsening toxic drug supply.

It is often said that Canada's opioid crisis started in B.C. and it has to end in B.C. I am proud of the work that we have done to date. In 2017, my colleague from Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam introduced the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act, which provided limited legal immunity to those bystanders who called for help if they witnessed an overdose.

Since 2017, supervised consumption sites across Canada have received more than 2.9 million visits and have reversed nearly 27,000

Business of Supply

overdoses without a single death at a site. We know that supervised consumption sites save lives by providing a safe, clean space for people to bring their own drugs to use and to be able to test these drugs safely.

To continue to effectively address this crisis, we know that we have to collaborate with all levels of government in effecting a meaningful response. As we move forward in addressing this crisis, we know that a comprehensive, collaborative, compassionate and evidence-based approach is what is going to work to end this national public health crisis.

We have to consider all options, from safe supply to drug checking, to stop this unending and preventable loss of life. We have a chance to lead on ending once and for all the heartbreak and devastation that is caused by this opioid epidemic. We do this by working with communities, law enforcement across all levels of government and, above all else, by keeping in mind that this is about saving the lives of our fellow Canadians. That should be reason enough to act.

● (2205)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Chair, I want to probe one aspect of the member's speech. He talked about the issue of safe supply, and other members have talked about safe supply policies. The term safe supply can be used in different context.

I would support, for instance, providing substances like suboxone that can be used in treatment. Suboxone can help treat opioid dependency and also has the benefit of being quite tamper-resistant. I would also support allowing doctors to have the discretion and flexibility to provide prescriptions to patients in the context of understanding their own situation or their own health needs. That could be considered a form of safe supply.

What I would not support is a policy whereby a broad range of dangerous drugs were made more easily available outside the context of treatment and not under the supervision of a physician. I wonder if the member could clarify what kinds of safe supply policies he supports. Is he talking about physicians making substances like suboxone more available, or is he talking about just a general policy of government funding and increasing the availability of dangerous drugs?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Chair, we have to work with the provinces and the cities where we are going to be putting this in place to understand what makes the most sense. There is lots of opportunity for us to look at SUAP, the substance use and addictions program, and ways in which we can direct funding from there to work with physicians to deal with safe supply.

Business of Supply

There are so many options available to us, and we need to explore all of those options. I know the minister dealing with mental health and addictions has been putting a tremendous amount of time and effort looking into this. We can come up with solutions that work to serve Canadians in the most meaningful way possible, and hopefully with the support of all in the House.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Chair, the member for Vancouver Granville talked about how he listened to the stories of people struggling with addiction. Some of the most moving stories I have heard from my constituents have been from people who have struggled with addiction. Some of them have overcome it and are back with their families or forming new families, which is so moving. He outlined some of the paths we need to take to get people to that place.

My colleague from Courtenay—Alberni has tabled a private member's bill, Bill C-216, which will be debated here very shortly, that will tackle each of those things. It will tackle decriminalization of small amounts of drugs and it would form a national strategy with the provinces to talk about dealing with the harmful medical effects such as safe supply. I am wondering if he will support this bill.

• (2210)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his advocacy on this issue. There are many elements we need to consider. Working with the provinces is key. Vancouver and British Columbia have already put in applications for exemptions. These are tangible things we can put into place right away.

All of these opportunities are ones for us to take up in partnership with the provinces and the cities. It is how we are going to get this done. It is how we are going to make sure we are addressing these issues in all the different ways required, from ensuring there is safe supply all the way to ensuring there is wraparound care for mental health and addictions, all of which are interlinked in many of these situations.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Chair, I have a background in education, and school boards and schools in Quebec have a need and a duty to prepare action plans. These plans must include objectives and state how they will be reached, how long it will take and who is responsible for doing it. Is it not time that we did the same for the opioid crisis? We have plenty of solutions to offer.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Chair, the time has come to work together and tackle this problem. We must work with all the provinces to find solutions that will work for their regions and for the cities facing this crisis.

We will work together, because that is what it will take to find these solutions and solve these issues in an effective manner.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Chair, I want to start by thanking the member for Yukon for his leadership in ensuring we have this conversation this evening. It is such an important conversation to come back to the critical need for us to save lives in the midst of a poisoning crisis.

Before we talk about that crisis, I want to share that in Waterloo region alone in 2021, there were around 155 overdose poisoning deaths. As a baseline, to give members a sense, we had 145 deaths from COVID-19 in Waterloo region. As many members also know, the average is now 19 deaths a day across the country.

For those in this place who like talking about the economics of decisions that are made here, in 2017 we spent \$6.4 billion on policing, courts and correctional costs with respect to criminalized substances. Tonight and often, I have heard many folks say that this should be a public health matter, not a criminal justice one, and I could not agree more. The good news is that we have advice for all parliamentarians on how to ensure that our legislation reflects that, because the fact is that today it is not true. It continues to be that we are criminalizing unregulated substances across the country. To do that, I would encourage all parliamentarians to review the expert panel's advice from Health Canada on substance use.

This is why I am so supportive of the member for Courtenay—Alberni's private member's bill. It is taking a road map from this third-party advice to move toward legislation that would do exactly that. It would treat this as a matter of public health and, because it is a crisis, which is a view that every speaker this evening has shared, we should move forward with the urgency it deserves.

That is why I would encourage all parliamentarians to support the private member's bill. Specifically, in doing so, that bill includes recommendations from the expert panel, including the decriminalization of simple possession of unregulated drugs, expunging or wiping clean the records of folks so they do not have that discrimination throughout their lives and a national strategy that would include low-barrier access to a safer supply.

As we do that, I also want to point out the need, which was mentioned by the task force, to talk about the social determinants of health while also directly addressing the poisoning crisis we are in. We know that, for those who are currently addicted to unregulated drugs, that is heightened by the lack of access to quality, dignified and affordable housing. It is heightened by the lack of truly universal health care across the country and the lack of proper income supports.

With the rest of my time, I would love to share a quote from a frontline worker in Waterloo region. This is from Alice, who works at the Sanguen Health Centre, who supports and works with people every day who are on the front lines of this crisis. Her words are the following:

Business of Supply

Regardless of the political climate, we are going to spend every minute of our day caring about people who use drugs, honouring their lives, their perspectives and their expertise, and advocating with them when their needs are not met. We will continue to build and create relationships that are based on mutual respect and love and walk with people in their times of joy and in times of heartbreak. We will remember each life that has been lost in preventable overdose deaths as the vibrant, complex and beautiful spirits that they were instead of cold statistics, and we will continue to refuse to accept the status quo: that people who use drugs are considered less important than other people in our communities. We will proudly declare to anyone who is listening (and many who aren't) that people who use drugs are a welcome part of our community, not people happening to our community, just as we have every day for many years.

● (2215)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the member mentioned that a lot of money has been put in the justice system. We introduced legislation that, among other measures, would require police and prosecutors to consider non-criminal responses to some drug-related offences. I would ask my colleague if he agrees that alternatives to prosecution should be considered for simple possession offences.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Chair, I do agree, and to go a step further, we recognize that mandatory minimum penalties, as has been called out in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, need to be moved away from. I would actually encourage the governing party to go further with that legislation to ensure that we follow through on the calls to action from the TRC.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Chair, I want to very strongly agree with the aspect of the member's speech where he talked about affirming the immutable human dignity of everyone in our society, recognizing that those who suffer from substance abuse disorders need to be greeted with love, care and empathy.

Many members of the government, as did this member, spoke about advocating for the further liberalization of drug laws, such as decriminalization, and some members support full legalization. I think one of the problems with these arguments is that they do not take into consideration the fact that, in certain contexts in Canada, we already have, practically, very liberalized drug law realities at the local level. The reality, for instance, in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver is not formal legal decriminalization but effective legalization as well as the concentration of services. However, it just is not working. If we look at the regional context where there is a practical liberalization of drug laws, we continue to see very high levels of overdose deaths.

I do not agree with the member, but I would ask him to explain further why he assumes that further liberalization is going to solve a problem that it has not solved up until now.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for the question and for the tone with which the question was asked. It sounds like it comes from a place of genuine curiosity.

My perspective is to follow the expert advice that parliamentarians are being given, and that expert advice from the task force on substance use shares very clearly the need to move away from criminalization alongside other recommendations, many of which are reflected in Bill C-216, that would ensure that we would not only save lives but better take care of people across the country.

● (2220)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

We have talked about a lot of things this evening. For me, there are four takeaways: diversion; increased health transfers because health care is under provincial jurisdiction; increased investment in social housing because the federal government has neglected it for 30 years; and long-term investments to fight homelessness.

Which of those four ideas does my colleague think we should prioritize in tackling this crisis?

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

My priority is Bill C-216, which was introduced here in the House.

[*English*]

It is a mix of policies. We do not need to choose one over the other, as we have in front of us a bill that would allow us to do a mix of what experts are already calling for.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Chair, I want to pick up on some of the barriers that these people face. They face many barriers, but when I talk to people who work with those struggling with addictions in my riding, in my hometown of Penticton, places like Discovery House, Pathways, Moms Stop the Harm, one of the big barriers is the stigma that many people have against those struggling with addiction.

I had the opportunity to have dinner with the Consul General for Portugal last summer, Marta Cowling, and we talked extensively about Portugal's experience with this. One of the big successes in Portugal when it decriminalized possession of small amounts of drugs was a great reduction in the stigma. When something is criminalized, these people are seen by many as criminals, and they are not. They are people struggling with a medical condition. I wonder if my colleague could comment on that.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Chair, the three-word answer is that we need support, not stigma. We need to recognize that this is part of a vicious cycle. The stigma is part of why we need to move toward decriminalization. That is what helps us move away from this, which was one of the five core challenges the task force called out, as we move toward decriminalization.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be a part of the discussion despite the late hour.

Business of Supply

We are gathered here this evening to address a major public health problem, the opioid crisis. We are here because the member for Ajax tabled a notice of motion on February 4 calling for a take-note debate on the opioid crisis in Canada to take place tonight, February 8, 2022.

The opioid crisis is not an especially divisive issue. I believe everyone here would like to stop it. Our approaches to achieving that, however, can be very different indeed. In a nutshell, the Bloc Québécois wants to implement diversion for simple possession, with the support of frontline health care services.

Let us begin by defining opioids. Opioids are natural or synthetic substances that act on one of three main opioid receptors in the central nervous system. Whether injected or ingested, these substances can have an analgesic or depressive effect. Just to be sure we are all on the same page, here is a list of some opioids: oxycodone, morphine, hydromorphone, fentanyl, codeine, heroin and methadone.

Whether prescribed or not, these types of drugs cause users' tolerance to increase over time. Users might need to increase the dose to feel an effect. This goes hand in hand with the obvious psychological and physical dependence that can lead to overdose. Opioid deaths in Quebec and Canada increased from 3,000 in 2016 to over 6,000 in 2020. In four years, the number of deaths doubled. The same statistics are seen in the United States. This is huge. It is sad. It is a crisis. It is unacceptable.

Although this crisis is now occurring from coast to coast to coast, Quebec has historically been spared, to some extent, relative to the western provinces and Ontario. I will get to that. I am not bragging about Quebec, but I think Quebec has been wise and proactive. We did not wait for this to reach national crisis proportions before taking action and creating the 2018-20 national strategy for preventing and responding to opioid overdoses.

This strategy was based on compiling reliable data. It talks about science, awareness raising, information, access to integrated and adapted services, and, of course, prevention. For instance, Quebec has been successful in reducing overdose mortality by providing free, universal access to naloxone, an opioid antidote, and ensuring that first responders can administer it to anyone who is, sadly, experiencing an overdose.

Quebec has set up supervised injection sites. We in the Bloc Québécois are very much in favour of this. In our view, these sites have myriad benefits, such as the ability to reach vulnerable populations, reduced numbers of overdose deaths, reduced health risks, and better care for drug users. I would like to point out that the Bloc Québécois considers supervised injection sites to be a powerful tool for fighting the opioid crisis.

• (2225)

We are asking the federal government not to undermine the roll-out of these tools by interfering in Quebec's drug access policies. Quebec currently has the situation under control. Even if Quebec's mortality rate is not what it should be, it is nevertheless lower than in the rest of Canada. I would appreciate it if the federal government would let us work on matters within our jurisdiction.

Opioid overdose deaths are common. In the vast majority of cases, the drugs were purchased illegally on the streets, such as fentanyl mixed with heroin.

For that reason, the Bloc Québécois is advocating for diversion for simple possession of these drugs, with the support of frontline health care services. In concrete terms, this means that an individual arrested for simple possession of heroin could undergo training, rehabilitation or another appropriate measure in exchange for the charges being dropped. We have to treat these people as what they are: drug addicts, not dangerous criminals.

I would like to remind the House that my first degree was in criminology, so I am looking at this debate through that lens. People need opportunities to get treatment for their addiction. They do not need to be sent to crime school. We could kill two birds with one stone because helping drug users recover from addiction would also ease pressure on our legal and prison systems. These people are not criminals; they are addicted to a drug. We must prioritize recovery over punishment.

I think everyone here would agree that the opioid crisis is a public health matter, not a criminal matter. If members have any doubts, I want to emphasize that the phrase "public health" is very important in my speech.

The Constitution Act, 1867, states that health care is a shared provincial-federal jurisdiction with clearly defined roles. The Constitution states that the provinces are responsible for health care, the practice of medicine, professional training, the regulation of the medical profession, hospital and health insurance, and so on. The provinces are responsible for all of that.

It is therefore clear that Quebec is responsible for delivering the vast majority of prevention, treatment and harm reduction programs in a public health crisis such as the opioid crisis. However, the federal government is responsible for funding research, initiatives and pilot projects and promoting awareness.

To that end, Quebec and the Bloc Québécois are calling for an annual supplementary health care contribution of 6%, as well as an increase of the federal share from 22% to 35% of Quebec's health care costs, which are directly related to this pandemic.

As my colleague from Jonquière said yesterday, the federal government's chronic underfunding of health comes at a cost. There is a price to be paid for pushing health care networks to the limit. Today, Quebecers are the ones paying the price.

I think it is imperative for the Liberal government to take note of this consensus and to sit down with its provincial counterparts to discuss it.

Business of Supply

• (2230)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, are we to understand from my colleague's comments that he agrees with Bill C-5, which seeks to eliminate policies that have filled our prisons with people who needed help and that ultimately targeted vulnerable and racialized Canadians?

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I completely agree. I am a humanist with a background in criminology. In Quebec and the U.S., half of all inmates are incarcerated on drug charges ranging from possession to trafficking. It is time to shrink the number of these criminals and pseudo-criminals and send them home or help those who really need help and are not criminals.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague raised a number of important points, including access to naloxone.

I would like to hear the Bloc Québécois's opinion on whether companies like Purdue Pharma, the Sackler family and McKinsey, whose products fuelled this crisis, should be held accountable.

Does he agree with me that the government should pursue these companies for compensation and use those resources to provide more funding for treatment?

• (2235)

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, to be honest, I am not sure I understood my colleague's question.

If putting more money into either the health care system or the federal system fails to meet the need, we have to change course to get it right.

To be honest though, I am not sure I understood my colleague's question, so I am sorry.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague clearly demonstrated the consensus surrounding the need for diversion. He also made the point that health transfers are primarily the jurisdiction of the provinces and Quebec, but I will not go there.

I would like to hear the member's thoughts on a potential connection between social housing and the opioid crisis. What does he think the federal government can do in that regard?

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

If I had had more time, I would have gratified my colleague, who is the Bloc Québécois point person on social housing, by taking a few minutes to talk about this issue.

The Bloc Québécois is calling for 1% of federal revenues to be invested in these programs. This is not without reason. There are huge needs in terms of social housing, but there are clearly some connections to the topic we are debating this evening. What I mean is that there are vulnerable people in need who are struggling with drug addiction and are living on the streets. Some of these people

are homeless, some live in social housing, and some are among the least fortunate.

This is a priority for the Bloc Québécois. That 1% is important. We are advocating for it now and will continue to do so.

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Chair, I thank the member for speaking of the compassion we need to show in this crisis. I agree with the member wholeheartedly on the need for increased health care transfers to provinces, and I just wanted to confirm tonight that I think we also agree on decriminalizing those small amounts for personal possession.

I just wanted to ask the member this. Will he support the bill, Bill C-216, from my colleague for Courtenay—Alberni to decriminalize simple possession?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague.

I did talk about compassion. However, we need more than compassion. My comments this evening were also based on science. Two parties are battling, and they are both in favour of science and all that. My own university studies and training led me to science. They led me to something that is not absolute, but that guides us toward satisfactory answers to the difficulties we are experiencing.

We do need to be compassionate, but our actions must be based on facts. There is no justification for jailing people in need. Would we send a chronic alcoholic to prison? Yes, perhaps. If a minor crime were involved, the individual would definitely be sent to prison.

We do need to show compassion, but we need to do more than that.

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his very impassioned speech.

There are a number of different schools of thought about how justice should be conducted and how we should conduct our society. I wonder if the member can share some of his thoughts around how mandatory minimum sentences impact those who are suffering, those who are going through the opioid crisis and are in need of support.

Perhaps the member can share his thoughts about mandatory minimum sentences and the role of the justice system, as opposed to the health care system, when we talk about matters like these.

Business of Supply

• (2240)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Chair, our health care systems in Quebec and in the rest of Canada are unfortunately overloaded for multiple reasons. The opioid crisis is very clearly one factor. If we could have reasonable, sufficient health transfers, in keeping with what Canadians across the country deserve, and bearing in mind that Canadians have asked for a 35% threshold, we would obviously be better equipped to meet peoples' needs and perhaps be more empathetic towards those with these kinds of addiction problems.

Once again, they are not criminals at heart.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Chair, I want to follow up to clarify my earlier question, because maybe my French is not as good as I thought it was.

The issue that I want to raise and get the member's perspective on is that we know that the opioid crisis was on some accounts started, and was certainly fuelled, by certain companies, such as Purdue Pharma and others that presented misinformation about the risks of addiction and really aggressively over-promoted opioids as being the solution, in many cases, when in fact there was not evidence to suggest it, and there was a lack of acknowledgement of the risks that they should have been, and in many cases were, aware of.

Many of those companies have been required to pay compensation in the United States, and that compensation is being used to fund treatment. Purdue, the Sackler family directly, and McKinsey, which advised Purdue, have had to pay, and that has provided some increased resources for treatment.

The Canadian government has been far behind in pursuing that kind of compensation and accountability. Does the member's party agree that the government should be doing more to pursue accountability for bad corporate actors, and that maybe this could provide some additional resources that we can use for treatment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Chair, this time it is much clearer. I am sorry, the problem may have been my understanding.

There is abuse every time there is money in the picture. Pharmaceutical companies have an astonishing ability to target people's weaknesses and needs.

To answer my colleague's question, there are certainly justifications to be made. Maybe there will be some with the current COVID-19 crisis. Maybe some companies took advantage of the price for a dose of one vaccine or another. I believe a responsible government has to respond regularly to all these types of questions, so that we get a clear picture and individuals, parliamentarians or average citizens can make up their own minds.

The Chair: It being 10:44 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 53(1), the committee will rise.

(Government Business No. 6 reported)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1)

(The House adjourned at 10:44 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, February 8, 2022

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Petitions	
Foreign Affairs		Hidden Disabilities	
Mr. Sidhu (Brampton East).....	1809	Mr. Arya.....	1811
Old Age Security Act		Fashion Industry	
Ms. Khera.....	1809	Mr. Arya.....	1812
Bill C-12. Introduction and first reading.....	1809	Medical Assistance in Dying	
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	1809	Mrs. Block.....	1812
Committees of the House		Bradford Bypass	
Public Accounts		Ms. Taylor Roy.....	1812
Mr. Kmiec.....	1809	Firearms	
Income Tax Act		Mr. Viersen.....	1812
Mr. Lewis (Essex).....	1810	The Environment	
Bill C-241. Introduction and first reading.....	1810	Mr. Casey.....	1812
(Motion deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	1810	Housing	
Reuniting Families Act		Mr. Johns.....	1812
Mr. Seebach.....	1810	Middle East	
Bill C-242. Introduction and first reading.....	1810	Mr. Erskine-Smith.....	1813
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	1810	Religious Freedom	
Ending the Use of Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act		Mr. Erskine-Smith.....	1813
Mr. Powlowski.....	1810	Questions on the Order Paper	
Bill C-243. Introduction and first reading.....	1810	Mr. Lamoureux.....	1813
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	1810	Privilege	
Copyright Act		Alleged Premature Disclosure of Bill C-10—Speaker's Ruling	
Mr. Miao.....	1810	The Speaker.....	1813
Bill C-244. Introduction and first reading.....	1810		
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	1810		
Canada Infrastructure Bank Act			
Ms. Ashton.....	1810		
Bill C-245. Introduction and first reading.....	1810		
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	1811		
Constitution Act, 2022			
Mr. Champoux.....	1811		
Bill C-246. Introduction and first reading.....	1811		
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	1811		
Prohibition of Fur Farming Act			
Mr. Erskine-Smith.....	1811		
Bill C-247. Introduction and first reading.....	1811		
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	1811		

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Business of Supply	
Opposition Motion—Amendment to the Constitution of Canada (The Saskatchewan Act)	
Mr. Steinley.....	1814
Motion.....	1814
Mr. Lamoureux.....	1815
Mr. Simard.....	1816
Mr. Bachrach.....	1816
Mrs. Block.....	1816
Mr. Lamoureux.....	1817
Mr. Desilets.....	1817
Mr. Johns.....	1818
Mr. Anandasangaree.....	1818
Mr. Steinley.....	1820
Mrs. Vignola.....	1820
Mr. Garrison.....	1821
Mr. van Koevorden.....	1821
Mr. Lamoureux.....	1821
Mr. Simard.....	1821
Mr. Aboultaif.....	1823

Mr. Lamoureux	1823
Mr. Julian	1823
Mr. Garon	1823
Mr. Lamoureux	1824
Mr. Steinley	1825
Mr. Johns	1825
Mr. Bachrach	1825
Mr. Steinley	1827
Mr. Lamoureux	1827
Mr. Desilets	1827
Mr. Viersen	1827
Mr. Blaikie	1828
Mr. Steinley	1829
Mr. Lamoureux	1829
Mr. Johns	1829
Mr. Kram	1830
Mr. Lamoureux	1831
Mr. Simard	1831
Mr. Garrison	1831
Mr. Aboultaif	1831
Mrs. Wagantall	1831
Mr. Lamoureux	1833
Mrs. Vignola	1833
Mr. Julian	1833
Mr. Lamoureux	1833
Mrs. Wagantall	1835
Mr. Simard	1836
Mr. Johns	1836
Mrs. Block	1836
Mr. Anandasangaree	1836
Mr. Waugh	1837
Mr. Anandasangaree	1838
Mrs. Vignola	1838
Mr. Steinley	1838
Mr. Kitchen	1839
Mr. Lamoureux	1840
Mr. Champoux	1841
Ms. Zarrillo	1841
Mr. Sorbara	1841

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Leonard Braithwaite	
Mr. Coteau	1842
Gold Medal Congratulations	
Mr. Shipley	1842
Joan King	
Mr. Dong	1842
Denis Villeneuve and Jean-Marc Vallée	
Mr. Champoux	1843
Teacher Appreciation Week	
Mr. Iacono	1843
Freedom of Speech	
Mr. Soroka	1843

Global Vaccine Equity	
Mr. Erskine-Smith	1843
Foreign Orphanages	
Mr. Hanley	1843
Heart Month	
Mr. Kitchen	1844
Child Care	
Ms. Dzerowicz	1844
COVID-19 Response Measures	
Mr. Seeback	1844
COVID-19 Response Measures	
Mr. Hallan	1844
Small Business	
Ms. Sidhu (Brampton South)	1845
Seniors	
Ms. Barron	1845
Agreement between the Cree Nation and Quebec	
Ms. Gill	1845
COVID-19 Response Measures	
Mr. Steinley	1845
Eleanor Collins	
Ms. Dhillon	1845

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health	
Ms. Bergen	1846
Mr. Trudeau	1846
Ms. Bergen	1846
Mr. Trudeau	1846
Ms. Bergen	1846
Mr. Trudeau	1846
Mr. Berthold	1847
Mr. Trudeau	1847
Mr. Berthold	1847
Mr. Trudeau	1847
COVID-19 Protests	
Mr. Blanchet	1847
Mr. Trudeau	1847
Health	
Mr. Blanchet	1847
Mr. Trudeau	1847
COVID-19 Protests	
Mr. Singh	1848
Mr. Trudeau	1848
Mr. Singh	1848
Mr. Trudeau	1848
Mr. Barlow	1848
Mr. Mendicino	1848
Mr. Barlow	1848
Mr. Duclos	1848

Mr. Redekopp	1863	Mr. Hanley	1885
Mr. Blois	1865	Mr. Morrice	1886
Mr. Barsalou-Duval	1865	Mr. Bachrach	1887
Ms. Zarrillo	1865	Mr. Lake	1887
Mr. Steinley	1866	Ms. Barron	1888
Message from the Senate		Mr. Vuong	1888
The Deputy Speaker	1866	Mr. Albas	1888
Business of Supply		Ms. Collins (Victoria)	1889
Opposition Motion—Amendment to the Constitution of Canada (The Saskatchewan Act)		Ms. Gaudreau	1890
Motion	1866	Ms. Gaudreau	1890
Mr. Samson	1866	Mr. Boulerville	1891
Mr. Steinley	1867	Mr. Vuong	1891
Mr. Villemure	1867	Ms. Collins (Victoria)	1892
Ms. Collins (Victoria)	1867	Mr. Johns	1892
Mr. Patzer	1868	Mr. Powlowski	1893
Ms. O'Connell	1868	Ms. Kwan	1893
Mr. Kurek	1869	Mr. Desjarlais	1894
Mr. Beaulieu	1869	Mr. Powlowski	1895
Mr. Boulerville	1870	Mr. Morrice	1895
Mr. Patzer	1870	Ms. Idlout	1895
Ms. Taylor Roy	1871	Ms. Hajdu	1895
Mr. Perron	1872	Mr. Ruff	1896
Ms. Kwan	1872	Mr. Davies	1897
Mr. Lewis (Essex)	1872	Ms. Gaudreau	1897
Mr. Tolmie	1872	Mr. Powlowski	1897
Mr. Lamoureux	1873	Mr. Ruff	1898
Ms. Zarrillo	1873	Mr. Desjarlais	1898
Mr. Barsalou-Duval	1874	Ms. Gaudreau	1899
Mr. Barsalou-Duval	1874	Mr. Barlow	1899
Mr. Lamoureux	1875	Mr. Erskine-Smith	1899
Mr. Boulerville	1876	Ms. Barron	1900
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	1876	Ms. Gaudreau	1900
Mr. Steinley	1877	Mrs. Gray	1900
Mr. Lamoureux	1878	Mrs. Brière	1901
Ms. Zarrillo	1878	Mr. Trudel	1901
Mr. Hoback	1878	Mr. Davies	1902
Mr. Lamoureux	1879	Mr. Erskine-Smith	1902
Ms. Collins (Victoria)	1879	Mr. Bachrach	1903
Mr. Steinley	1880	Mr. Barlow	1903
Mr. Barsalou-Duval	1880	Mrs. Vignola	1903
Mr. Lamoureux	1880	Ms. Fry	1904
Mr. Duguid	1880	Ms. Collins (Victoria)	1904
Mr. Steinley	1881	Mr. Lake	1905
Mr. Barsalou-Duval	1882	Mr. Vis	1905
Ms. Zarrillo	1882	Mrs. Brière	1906
Mr. Lamoureux	1882	Mrs. Vignola	1906
Mr. Scheer	1883	Ms. Kwan	1906
Division on motion deferred	1883	Ms. Ferreri	1906
Opioid Crisis in Canada		Mr. Lamoureux	1907
(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 6, Mr. Anthony Rota in the chair)	1884	Ms. Gaudreau	1907
Ms. Bennett	1884	Ms. Idlout	1908
Motion	1884	Mr. Weiler	1908
Mr. Johns	1884	Mr. Genuis	1909
Mr. Albas	1885	Mr. Perron	1909
		Mr. Johns	1910
		Mr. Virani	1910
		Ms. Ferreri	1911

Mr. Trudel	1911
Ms. Kwan	1911
Mr. Lawrence	1911
Mr. Lamoureux	1912
Mr. Johns	1912
Mr. Perron	1913
Mr. Dalton	1913
Mrs. Brière	1914
Mr. Trudel	1914
Ms. Zarrillo	1914
Mr. Noormohamed	1914
Mr. Genuis	1915
Mr. Cannings	1916
Mrs. Vignola	1916

Mr. Morrice	1916
Mrs. Brière	1917
Mr. Genuis	1917
Mr. Trudel	1917
Mr. Cannings	1917
Mr. Desilets	1917
Mrs. Brière	1919
Mr. Genuis	1919
Mr. Perron	1919
Ms. Zarrillo	1919
Ms. Khalid	1919
Mr. Genuis	1920
(Government Business No. 6 reported)	1920

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>