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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, August 12, 2020

The House met at 12 p.m.

Prayer

• (1205)

[*English*]

The Speaker: Colleagues, before we begin our proceedings, I would like to say a few words regarding the special measures in place today.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 26, 2020, the application of Standing Order 17 will be suspended for the current sitting to allow members to practise physical distancing. Members desiring to speak and address the Chair may do so from any seat in the House.

[*English*]

Additionally, as members know, this will be a hybrid sitting of the House. Some members will be participating via video conference and some will be participating in person.

[*Translation*]

I remind all members that in order to avoid issues with sound, members participating in person should not also be connected to the video conference. I would like to remind those joining via video conference that when speaking, you should be on the same channel as the language you are speaking.

[*English*]

I ask that all members who are tabling a document or moving a motion to sign the document and bring it to the Table themselves.

Finally, I want to remind members that construction on the Hill is increasing and that while you are in the West Block, you may feel and/or hear rock blasting. This is essential work for the Centre Block rehabilitation program and will continue for quite some time, three to five times during the work day. While a warning siren is sounded prior to the blast on the work site, it is not heard well inside West Block or the surrounding buildings.

[*Translation*]

I mention it so that no one is startled when it happens.

EXPLOSION IN BEIRUT

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move, seconded by the member for Edmonton Manning:

That the House: (a) mourn the loss of life following the tragic explosion in Beirut on August 4, 2020; (b) stand in solidarity with the Lebanese people, particularly the families of the more than 150 people who have died, the more than 6,000 hospitalized, and the estimated 300,000 who been rendered homeless by the explosion; and (c) commit to helping and accompanying the Lebanese people in their desire for reform and to sustainably rebuild and continue to stand with the Lebanese community both in Lebanon and here in Canada at this most difficult time.

The Speaker: Usually when there is a request for unanimous consent, the Chair asks members to respond in the affirmative to determine whether there is agreement.

[*English*]

This being a hybrid sitting of the House, were the Chair to proceed in this fashion, if there were any dissenting voices, particularly for members participating via teleconference or video conference, they may not be audible. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask for those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement. In this way, the Chair will hear clearly if there are any dissenting voices and I will accordingly be able to declare whether or not there is unanimous consent to proceed.

[*Translation*]

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

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

There being no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.
(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*English*]

ROMANI PEOPLE

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.) moved:

Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

That the House:

(a) officially recognize that the Nazis and their collaborators systematically murdered over 500,000 Romani during the Holocaust and that this atrocity constitutes a genocide against the Romani people;

Routine Proceedings

(b) pay tribute to those Romani who were murdered as well as the Romani survivors of persecution by the Nazis; and

c) recognize August 2 as the official date to commemorate the Romani Genocide, also known as Porajmos and Samudaripen, to never forget the atrocities committed against the Romani people, the harrowing stories of victims, and the incredible strength of survivors.

• (1210)

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

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

There being no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, today, Statements by Ministers, pursuant to Standing Order 33, shall be taken up immediately following the adoption of this order; members may participate in this rubric either in person or by videoconference; a member of the Green Party be permitted to comment briefly on the statement; and, following Statements by Ministers, the House shall resolve itself in a committee of the whole, pursuant to the order adopted on Tuesday, May 26, 2020.

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

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

There being no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

Pursuant to order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to statements by ministers.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

LEBANON

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, a devastating explosion rocked Beirut's port and city centre, killing at least 158 people, injuring 6,000 others and leaving over 300,000 people homeless. According to estimates, 90,000 homes and buildings, including hospitals and other health care facilities were damaged or destroyed.

Lebanon was already dealing with multiple crises before this incident occurred. The country is facing an unprecedented economic and financial crisis that has already left nearly half of the popula-

tion in poverty, all in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Canadians across the country are deeply saddened by the devastating effects of this tragedy and the situation that Lebanon is facing.

[English]

I know many Lebanese Canadians are deeply touched by this tragedy. I think I can speak for all parliamentarians in extending our sincere condolences to all those who have lost loved ones.

The Lebanese-Canadian community is vibrant and dynamic right across the country, and it is a community that is bearing a heavy weight and feeling a huge loss. It is also a community that has rolled up its sleeves and sprung into action to help and to mobilize support, and its efforts have been exceptional.

The Government of Canada has also been seized with the disaster. Within 24 hours, Canada announced an immediate initial contribution of \$5 million in humanitarian assistance, including \$1.5 million for the Lebanese Red Cross, in the first 24 hours following the explosion. On Saturday we launched the Lebanese matching fund for donations collected directly from Canadians. Every dollar donated by individual Canadians between August 4 and August 24 will be matched by the Government of Canada, doubling the impact of each contribution. In recognition of Canadians' incredible generosity to date, we have increased the match from \$2 million to \$5 million.

The fund will be implemented through the Humanitarian Coalition, a group of experienced Canadian organizations present on the ground in Lebanon and delivering critical assistance. I want to assure Canadians that all Canadian assistance is provided through trusted NGO and multilateral partners.

On Monday, the Prime Minister announced that Canada would increase its support by an additional \$25 million to support our trusted partners in responding to immediate needs and supporting early recovery efforts in the aftermath of the crisis, bringing our total response to \$30 million, which is in addition to the existing humanitarian and development support we already provide to the people of Lebanon.

I thank all Canadians who have opened their hearts to the Lebanese people and so generously contributed to the relief effort. I encourage Canadians to donate to the Lebanon matching fund to help save lives and meet the urgent needs of the affected population.

Canada has a long and deep partnership with the Lebanese people. We have a strong Lebanese-Canadian community, and Canada will be there every step of the way, from immediate response to long-term recovery. Canada stands together with Lebanon.

• (1215)

[Translation]

Canada stands with the people of Lebanon.

[English]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the world was shaken by the devastating news of a massive explosion at the Port of Beirut in Lebanon.

Routine Proceedings

On the morning of August 4, the people of Beirut were going about their normal daily routines without any inkling of what was to come. They were shaken from those routines by horrific explosions that devastated the city, claimed at least 171 lives and left over 6,000 wounded. People lost their homes, their businesses and their livelihoods. Entire neighbourhoods were destroyed. We understand that Lebanese officials continue to investigate the cause of the explosions, and we look forward to the outcome of those efforts.

Of course, many Canadians of Lebanese descent have family, friends and loved ones in Beirut and throughout Lebanon. Canada is proud to stand with our Lebanese community during this difficult time as they process the tragedy and remember and honour the victims. We have heard heartwarming stories of Lebanese Canadians joining forces to organize aid deliveries and to offer any support they can, which speaks to the spirit of the community.

We also extend our sympathies and condolences to the family and colleagues of Nazar Najarian, a Montreal businessman who was tragically killed, and to all those injured, including a member of the Canadian Armed Forces. We are praying for their speedy recovery.

As we know, much of the city is devastated and in dire need of help. I know that Canadians will answer the call. We will support the people of Lebanon as they work to clear the debris and search for people affected by this tragedy. Throughout their history, Lebanese people have endured great hardships and yet, through their incredible strength and resilience, they have always overcome them. I know that this time the outcome will be no different. Over the coming days, weeks and months, their strength will see them through this latest hardship.

On behalf of my family and the entire Conservative caucus, I would like to offer my deepest condolences to all those affected by the tragic incident in Lebanon. We will continue to closely monitor the situation and we are here to provide any assistance we can to those recovering from this tragedy.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it has been one week since the explosion of roughly 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate that was stored for God knows why in the Port of Beirut for several years, a disaster that cost the lives of some 170 people and injured more than 6,000. We are talking about one of the largest explosions in history. It was one disaster too many for a country that has been going through an economic, financial and social crisis for several years, not to mention the current health crisis that, unsurprisingly, has thrown every country and their population into a state of uncertainty.

The Bloc Québécois wants to express its condolences to the families of the unfortunate victims of this explosion, its best wishes for a rapid recovery to the injured, and its solidarity with all the Lebanese people. The courage and resilience they have shown in overcoming this new ordeal, as well as the many challenges they have met throughout their history, is something to behold.

I commend the government's decision, in response to the call by the Bloc Québécois, to commit to matching Canadians' and Que-

beckers' donations and to launch the Lebanon Matching Fund. Quebec was deeply moved by this disaster, which is reminiscent of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy that the Leader of the Bloc Québécois and I witnessed first-hand, since at the time we were Quebec's ministers of the environment and public safety respectively. Quebec has a large Lebanese community, so it is only natural that we ask the Canadian government to show a bit of the same generosity as Quebecers and Canadians.

Initially we identified the Red Cross, whose expertise and effectiveness in this type of situation are world-renowned. The government instead chose to transfer a portion of its aid through a coalition of humanitarian organizations with contacts on the ground. No matter, the important thing is that the aid gets to the people who need it.

That said, why did the government cap the amount that could be paid out by that group at \$2 million, and why did it restrict the time for accepting donations to between the 4th and 24th of August? Why did it take the government over 24 hours to announce any assistance, which was initially rather modest? Why limit access to just 12 Canadian-based international aid agencies and not include local NGOs, which, facing the inertia of public authorities, are already on the ground and mobilized as we speak, ready to provide the medical assistance and the food needed by the people? Why was the Canadian Red Cross not included on that list?

The solidarity shown by everyone, people of all political stripes, over the past week has been remarkable. However, solidarity is not enough. Adequate, responsible, direct assistance is needed to help the Lebanese people, who will certainly figure out how to overcome this new hardship, as they have always done, supported by the steadfast friendship and support of Quebec, Canada and all caring nations.

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like many people, we were devastated by the images we saw out of Beirut and Lebanon a few days ago. On behalf of all New Democrats and all Canadians, we send our love to the Lebanese people and to those affected around the world and here at home by this terrible explosion.

As has already been said, sending our love is simply not enough. We need to send support, we need to send relief and we need concrete commitments to supporting the rebuilding efforts. The initial amount proposed by the government was insufficient. When we talk about Canada being back, this is an opportunity to show that Canada is back by actually building and delivering the support that the people of Lebanon need at this moment.

The Lebanese community has been a vibrant part of Canada. It has helped build up this country. We need to be allies in this moment and truly contribute.

*Points of Order**[Translation]*

Like many people in Canada and around the world, we were devastated by the tragedy that struck Beirut, Lebanon, a few days ago.

Our thoughts go out to the Lebanese people and everyone affected by this terrible explosion. Our thoughts, however, are not enough. We need to help the victims and assist with reconstruction efforts.

• (1225)

[English]

People across the country and around the world have been reaching out to help the people of Lebanon, who were already struggling under political instability, the threat of economic collapse and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Going forward, the people of Lebanon will require significant international support, and Canada must be there to help. By assisting with immediate food, medical and other needs, the federal government must take concrete action to assist the international community's long-term humanitarian efforts. We have to be true partners and offer support in a way that is proportional to the rest of the international community's response.

I am happy to see the Government of Canada heeded our calls for increased humanitarian support, but the government must now commit to a robust long-term plan to provide support to Lebanon and to help rebuild Beirut and the country. This plan must include support for democratic reform, food security and poverty alleviation. Together, in this difficult time, we can support the people who need our help the most. They are counting on us, and on Canadians, to be there for them.

On behalf of all New Democrats, we express our deepest condolences. We want to send the message to the people of Lebanon and to all Lebanese Canadians that we will be there for them and will fight for them, as they deserve nothing less.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister and my colleagues for their important words today. It is critical that we show solidarity and compassion in these dark times.

We have a thriving Lebanese community in Fredericton with roots that run deep. As I have been learning over the past few days, these roots indeed run across the country.

I would like to highlight our wonderful Atlantic Honorary Consulate to Lebanon, Consul Fares, who cares deeply about the connection to the homeland and Lebanese Canadians. My heart goes out to Consul Fares for his work in the months to come and to all of Lebanon as it confronts this unimaginable reality. We are with them as Canadians and as citizens of the globe. We send our deepest condolences. I call for justice for the families of victims, and for a peaceful and swift national recovery with adequate support from Canada.

* * *

CHILD CARE

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That the House recognize that reopening businesses and the economy entails taking far more action to support parents, especially women, who are worried about going back to work without knowing their kids will be safely cared for in child care and school, and therefore call on the government to increase its transfer to provinces and territories for affordable child care by \$2 billion, transfer funding to provinces and territories to support a safe return to school, and work with all provinces and territories to ensure all federal funds are dedicated to the health and safety of children across the country, while ensuring the transfers to Quebec are unconditional.

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

[Translation]

The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

• (1230)

*[English]***BEIRUT EXPLOSION**

The Speaker: If I can step back before proceeding, following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence.

The people of Beirut and all Canadians with family and friends in Lebanon have suffered a devastating tragedy. I hope that in the difficult days ahead they may derive some comfort from the friendship and support of the global community.

[Translation]

I invite hon. members to stand and observe a moment of silence in memory of those who perished and in solidarity with the people of Lebanon.

[A moment of silence observed]

* * *

*[English]***POINTS OF ORDER**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order that was raised on July 21 by the MP for Barrie—Innisfil concerning the fifth and seventh reports of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The member quoted the NDP's supplementary report, at page 95 of the seventh report, where it said:

...the NDP believes that the scope of this report wavered beyond its boundaries. The committee was tasked with finding solutions for remote participation of members specifically related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some recommendations were outside of those lines, and while the NDP doesn't disagree with the idea of exploring other options and preparing for the future, it does not consider those to be part of the work the committee was asked to do by the House of Commons.

We would like to clarify the intent of this specific quotation. The House of Commons tasks the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs with finding solutions for the remote participation of members. The seventh report included recommendations related to in-person voting options, which the committee did not oppose, although this was outside of the committee's mandate. It was the inclusion of these in-person options that we were referencing in the supplementary report and that we consider outside of the mandate assigned to the committee by the House.

We believe that all members of Parliament need to be included in the work of the House, including those who are immunocompromised or have loved ones at risk for COVID-19. In-person options do not take the travel that would be required for MPs who live farther from Ottawa into account when considering the risks associated with COVID-19. All members, regardless of where they live, have the right to have their voices, and through them those of their constituents, heard in Parliament. That is why the NDP supports the development of virtual tools so that we can all continue our important work of getting Canadians the help they need.

The Speaker: I will take that under advisement and report back to the House.

[Translation]

Pursuant to an order made Tuesday, May 26, the House shall now resolve itself into a committee of the whole to consider matters related to the COVID-19 pandemic and other matters.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND OTHER MATTERS

(House in committee of the whole to consider matters related to the COVID-19 pandemic and other matters, Mr. Anthony Rota in the chair)

The Speaker: The committee will begin its proceedings with the questioning of ministers on matters related to the COVID-19 pandemic and other matters for a period not exceeding 95 minutes.

[Translation]

The Chair will call members from all recognized parties and one member who does not belong to a recognized party in a fashion consistent with the proportions observed during the special committee on the COVID-19 pandemic.

[English]

Each member will be recognized for not more than five minutes, which may be used for posing questions to a minister of the Crown, and members are permitted to split their time with one or more members by so indicating to the Chair.

Government Orders

Please note that we will suspend this part of the sitting halfway through for a short period to allow employees who provide support for the sitting to replace each other safely.

We will now begin, with the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has had enough. He is tired of accountability and facing tough questions. He does not want to explain why he paid off his friends at WE with taxpayers' money. He will not tell us about the contract that he gave to the company that employs his top staffer's husband, and he certainly does not want to tell us how big of a cheque he cut to the former Liberal MP from Montreal.

When the Prime Minister cancelled Parliament in April, May and June, he replaced it with four sitting days this summer. The Liberals could have picked any day they wanted. Can the person auditioning for the role of Prime Minister today please tell us why the Prime Minister picked today if he was not going to show up?

• (1235)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the work a government does is very serious work, especially during a pandemic. We know Canadians are hurting from coast to coast and coast, and right now more than ever, Canadians need to come together.

The member of the Conservative Party talks about the Prime Minister not showing up. The Prime Minister was at committee to ensure that answers were given to committee members directly—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I will interrupt for a moment. I am having a hard time hearing the answer. If members could keep it down, I would appreciate that.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, the member asked for the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister showed up at committee. At the first opportunity I had to go to the finance committee, I was there. Yesterday, I was at the ethics committee to ensure that these questions were answered.

We work closely with the public service to ensure that programs and resources are available to committees, especially during this—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, it looks like my last question period as leader of the Conservative Party is just like my first: warm, sunny and the Prime Minister is nowhere to be found.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister is showing contempt for francophones by awarding a \$900-million contract to a unilingual organization with no presence in Quebec.

Why did the Prime Minister disrespect francophones in yet another attempt to help his close friends?

Government Orders

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, both of our country's official languages are very important to our government.

That is precisely why we worked with the public service to ensure that the contribution agreement is in both official languages; and to ensure that the 13 provinces and territories are included, as are rural, urban and indigenous communities, so that all students can be part of this program. Despite this program—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, the government still cannot provide simple, direct answers to very clear and simple questions.

The Prime Minister invented this phony story about pushing back on officials on May 8. Can the minister explain how on May 5 WE was told that it could already start spending money and charging taxpayers?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speakers, all members, especially those in the House, are occupied with the concerns of their communities. Perhaps the member has not had the opportunity to look at the testimony that has been provided, not only by ministers and the Prime Minister but also by public servants, to answer these questions.

We have been available because it is important that these questions be answered. We take this very seriously.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister likes to talk about space and time, but in the real world May 5 comes before May 8.

During this time of crisis, Canadians deserve and demand a steady hand leading our country. However, instead of stability we have a government in chaos: cabinet ministers are being summoned to testify; the Prime Minister's Office is focused on damage control instead of fixing its flawed programs; and now, senior sources close to the Prime Minister have told *The Globe and Mail* that the Prime Minister is inventing a phony policy dispute as an excuse to dump his finance minister, even bringing in a backup quarterback just in case.

When will the Prime Minister finally put the finance minister out of his misery?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to have our focus, as we have over the course of this pandemic, on Canadians and on the work that needs to be done. What we have done over the course of the last number of months, by putting out the CERB, which has supported millions of Canadians, and by not only putting in place the wage subsidy but extending it, has given the support necessary for Canadians to face this challenging time.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, it is not the first time the Prime Minister has told Canadians that a story in *The Globe and Mail* was false.

Speaking of another scandal, on March 31, 2019, the Prime Minister's lawyer sent me a letter threatening to sue me for telling Canadians about the Prime Minister's corruption. On April 10, 2019, I stood outside the chamber and repeated every single thing I

said: the sordid facts about the SNC-Lavalin scandal. The Prime Minister did not like that I was telling Canadians about how he politically interfered in a criminal court proceeding. I was looking forward to being sued because then the Prime Minister would have to testify under oath and go through discovery.

After next week, my calendar is wide open. Could the Prime Minister please tell me when I can expect to see him in court?

● (1240)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak on behalf of the Prime Minister to say that he continues to view his role, and our role as a government, as one to support Canadians.

We continue to be in an emergency time. The work that we're doing, not only on the extension of the wage subsidy but in thinking about how we can get our employment insurance system back up and running, is our area of focus because we know this is what Canadians are concerned with as they think about how they can continue to support their families.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House and the government that I completely agree with a number of points made by the Leader of the Opposition. When the Conservatives and the Bloc are in agreement, members on the other side should take a long, hard look at things. Of course, then there are the ones in the back.

Just yesterday, I was on vacation and I had chosen my return date to be sure that I could be here, today, for the planned sitting. I took the helm of a lobster boat on the Magdalen Islands. The second captain told me I was good at staying on course and told me to keep captaining the ship. That is what we are going to do.

We have reason to be skeptical. As the Leader of the Opposition said, when someone picks the dates, they should be able to organize one day over a period of five weeks. When someone picks the dates, they should be able to organize four sittings over the entire summer. Meanwhile, the government says it wants to be accountable, sincere and open.

There is the matter of the WE Charity scandal. Again, I agree with the opposition leader, who said that the word "UNIS" was tacked on at the end to hide the fact that there were no francophones involved. Now there is a new \$84-million scandal apparently involving the Prime Minister's chief of staff, and, of course, there is the wage subsidy. I understand that one of the two main Conservative leadership candidates said that the Conservatives would return the money. However, the Liberals are coming up on \$2 million in wage subsidies to fund the next campaign, which could indeed be coming soon. I would have expected to see certain faces. I know I am not allowed to talk about people being absent, but I am troubled that certain individuals are "non-present".

Government Orders

All I will say is, I was asked this morning whether we are really going to topple the government. In response, I asked whether this government still deserves our confidence. The Liberals have just given us the answer to that question.

The Speaker: Before I recognize the minister, I would like to remind members that they cannot do indirectly what they are not allowed to do directly.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the Bloc Québécois for his question.

I believe he pointed out an important fact, and that is that our government, the Prime Minister and the members of our cabinet have always been available to answer questions, whether it be in the House, in committee of the whole like today, or before the House committees. At the same time, as the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth pointed out, our government is focused on the economic issues that are of concern to Canadians and public health issues.

We will be very pleased to work with our opposition colleagues as we have done since the beginning of the pandemic in order to adapt programs to support Canadians, Canadian businesses and, above all, our provincial partners in order to deal with the health situation, which is still a major concern.

We are working hard. The ministers are working, and members are in their ridings across the country to support their constituents and develop policies that will meet the needs of Canadians. That is exactly what we will continue to do.

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have two scandals the government is embroiled in: one is the WE scandal and the second is about a mortgage company in which one of the executives is the husband of the chief of staff. In both of these scandals we are seeing Liberals helping themselves instead of helping people. While people are worried about what is going to happen when the CERB ends in August, the Liberal government seems to be too busy helping itself.

When will Canadians know what is going to happen at the end of August to those who are relying on the CERB?

• (1245)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure every member of the House and every Canadian that we have a very robust plan to include everyone and not leave anybody behind.

The Prime Minister laid out a comprehensive framework of what is to come next for transitioning people to EI. We are creating a parallel benefit for people who are still not within the EI system, and creating a caregiver benefit and a sickness benefit. On Monday we announced a uniform unemployment rate across the country as a precursor to what comes next. We have—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby South.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the Liberal government is too busy helping themselves to help people.

Right now, people do not know what the plan is, and they are worried. EI only covers about 40% of Canadians. When will the government make it really clear? When will the Liberal government make sure Canadians know that every Canadian worker will be supported and that no one will be left behind? When will we know the details?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, I can assure everyone now, as we have been assuring Canadians for months, that nobody will be left behind.

Absolutely, we have a plan in place that will make sure workers are supported. We want to make sure we are encouraging people to work when it is available to them and it reasonable to do so. We know that will not be so for people in many sectors, and we have a plan for them. I would say that in the coming days, and definitely in the coming week or so, we will be—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby South.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, the unanimous motion passed today shows that the will of the House is that we need to help parents get back to work by ensuring there is affordable and quality child care and that schools have the funding they need. When can we expect that?

When will the Prime Minister make sure that kids are safe to go back to school and that parents can count on reliable, affordable child care? When will the government make these commitments by supporting provinces to deliver the child care and the education that will keep kids safe?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asked a really important question.

In addition to our long-term commitments on early learning and child care, this year alone we are delivering \$400 million to provinces and territories as part of bilateral agreements on early learning and child care. I want to point out to the hon. member the fact that, in addition to that, as part of the Safe Restart Agreement, we are transferring an additional \$625 million for early learning and child care to help a sector that has been hard hit by COVID-19.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, we know the figures required, and what the government is proposing right now is wholly inadequate. It is simply not enough to provide the child care and the educational funding supports that provinces need.

When will this Liberal government commit to the adequate funding, the sufficient funding, to make sure parents will know that their kids will be safe in school?

Government Orders

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, I find it really hard when the leader of the NDP claims that \$625 million plus \$400 million in just the next eight months is inadequate. That is completely the opposite of what we are doing.

We are providing federal leadership and the resources to back the safe restart of the early learning and child care sector. We have been there for parents in the long term, and we are there for parents as this sector recovers from the impacts of COVID-19.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, the minister should know that all the experts have made it really clear that, if we are talking about child care for everyone who needs it, and if we are talking about supports for education in all the provinces and territories, it is simply not enough money. It is not enough, and it shows that the government is not committed.

Will the Liberal government commit to the appropriate level of funding to make sure parents have child care and adequate supports in education so that their kids are safe and people can go back to work?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, our government has created over 40,000 affordable child care spaces and is committed to creating another quarter of a million child care spaces that are affordable. A federal secretariat will be investing over \$1.2 billion over the next eight months.

This is questioning the sincerity and the commitment of a government that is not only demonstrating leadership, but also backing that leadership with resources for the sector. It boggles my mind what the leader of the NDP is talking about.

• (1250)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the National Post the Prime Minister's Office refused to answer some questions. I would like to give the government the opportunity to provide some clarity.

Did the Prime Minister or anyone in his office meet or speak with Rob Silver, who is the husband of the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford, about commercial rent, yes or no?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is an independent government body that works on delivering the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program, which is a program that is doing a lot to help small businesses and employees across the country.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, it is a very simple yes-or-no question.

Did the Prime Minister or anyone in his office meet with Rob Silver, either in person, via telephone, via Zoom conference or text, about the issue of commercial rent, yes or no?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, I am really happy to discuss the details of the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program. It is a program that has delivered help to over 72,000 small businesses across the country and over 670,000 employees.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I will take that as a “yes”.

When did the Prime Minister or someone in his office meet with Mr. Silver? What are the dates and who met with Mr. Silver?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program is doing exactly what it is supposed to be doing, which is delivering help to small—

The Speaker: The hon. opposition House leader.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, has the finance minister or anyone in his office met with Mr. Silver about commercial rent?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, I want to address what the hon. member has asked. The Office of the Ethics Commissioner was consulted. A screen was put in place, and all steps were followed regarding this matter.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, they should then be able to answer the question, and I take that as a “yes”.

Who in the finance minister's office met with Mr. Silver and when did they meet with Mr. Silver?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that the Office of the Ethics Commissioner was consulted, a screen was put in place and all the appropriate steps were taken.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, those are evasive non-answers.

Six months into this pandemic, and six years into this government, and the Prime Minister will be remembered for a \$343-billion deficit and for setting the lowest bar ever for a prime minister's conduct in the history of this country.

The Prime Minister inappropriately groped a woman. He wore black face. He, his friends and his family took a prepaid, lavish vacation to billionaire island. He interfered in an SNC Lavalin criminal trial, and he then fired his attorney general because she would not go along with his cronyism.

He tried to give almost \$1 billion to his friends at WE, who, we now know, have not only been campaigning for him, but have also been meeting with tens of thousands of young people and trying to get them to vote Liberal. We have also found out that WE has given the Prime Minister's family and friends, his family especially, hundreds of thousands of dollars, and we have now found out that the husband of the Prime Minister's chief of staff got a nice \$83-million contract from the Prime Minister.

With the Liberals, it really is about who one knows, not what one knows. This makes the Liberal sponsorship scandal look like child's play, actually.

Can the Prime Minister tell us—oh, sorry, he is not here. Can somebody on that side tell us why the Prime Minister thinks the rules do not apply to him?

The Speaker: I do not think I have to remind hon. members that we cannot refer to someone's absence or presence in the House, or in committee, for that matter. I want to remind everyone that it is not something we can do.

The hon. minister.

• (1255)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been a while since I have had the opportunity to answer the opposition House leader. I will remind her that we do have officers of Parliament and we take the work they do very seriously. They work independently of this place, and we have always assured them that we will work and comply with their offices.

I have somewhat dated numbers, but I think it is important, because we are in the midst of a pandemic, that Canadians be reminded of these numbers. As of June 28, 8.16 million individuals had been helped by the Canada emergency response benefit. CEWS, the Canada emergency wage subsidy, has supported over three million employees. Approximately 3.7 million families benefited from the top-up of \$300 to CCB, which is the tax-free Canada child benefit the Conservatives voted against. There were also 12 million individuals and families who received a special one-time payment through the GST credit. Over \$1.4 billion went to over 600,000 students through the CESB. As well, 6.7 million seniors received the one-time tax-free payment of \$300, and 2.2 million of those 6.7 million also received an additional \$200.

The list is long because right now our focus is on Canadians and ensuring that they have money in their pockets and the supports they need. The Conservatives are continuing to play their partisan politics. We will stay focused on Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, did the Prime Minister, any minister in the Liberal government or any of their staffers know that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, a Crown corporation mandated to manage the emergency commercial rent assistance program, ultimately decided to outsource the file to MCAP, a mortgage lender, yes or no? Was anyone in this government aware of that?

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the Harper Conservatives have difficulties with independent government agencies, but it was the Canada Mortgage and Housing Agency, CMHC, that was chosen as the appropriate partner for the federal government to implement CECRA. It was CMHC that made the independent decision to have MCAP as the administrator for CECRA.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I am holding in my hand a press release from the Prime Minister's Office dated April 24. It states, and I quote, "The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation [the CMHC] will administer and deliver the CECRA".

Government Orders

How is it that the CMHC, which was mandated by the government to manage a program worth several billion dollars, decided to outsource it at a cost of \$84 million to MCAP, the vice-president of which just happens to be married to the PMO's chief of staff, the most powerful person in that office?

Did anyone in this Liberal government know that the file was going to be outsourced to that organization with close ties to the Prime Minister's chief of staff?

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, the result of the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program is that over 670,000 employees and over 72,000 small businesses have been assisted through this program, with over \$712 million of relief given to small businesses. That is what CECRA has done, and that is the record of this government.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question. Did the Minister of Official Languages know that WE Charity gave a contract to National to implement the scholarship program for the entire francophone sector in Quebec and across the country, yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said, there was a contribution agreement that the public service negotiated with the organization to work with the others. Our goal was to ensure opportunities for students and not-for-profits. That is exactly why we have a program—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, in this cabinet there are 11 Quebec ministers as well as other francophones: the Minister of Official Languages, the President of the Treasury Board, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and political lieutenant for Quebec, the Minister of Transport, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Minister of Indigenous Services, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of National Revenue, not to mention the Prime Minister, who is a Quebecker.

Why did not one of these people rise and state that it is unacceptable to award a contract without a bidding process to an organization that only works in English? It is unacceptable to all Quebeckers and francophones across the country. Did even one of these ministers rise to say that awarding a contract to the Prime Minister's friends was ill-advised?

• (1300)

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, we knew that the Conservatives never liked science or evidence. We can see that this is still true.

Government Orders

The public service assured us that the organization that it recommended and that we accepted was capable of ensuring that all provinces and territories would be included, and that the program would be available in both official languages. The Canada student service grant was designed to support as many students as possible and help as many non-profit organizations as possible during these difficult times. We were assured that the organization could do so in both official languages.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, we are starting to see the pattern. The government awards a contract to an organization, which then subcontracts to friends of the government. I think all of the links are clear.

Here is a very simple question for the Prime Minister. Could he tell us whether WE Charity has repaid the \$30 million? Is there anyone in this government, whether it is the clerk of the Treasury Board, one of the ministers responsible or the Prime Minister, who can tell us whether this \$30 million, which belongs to the people of Canada, will be returned to the government's coffers? Yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, as the organization has said, it will give all the money back to the government. As I said in my testimony in committee yesterday, the public service has been working with the organization to ensure that this happens.

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Barrie—Innisfil.

When the request to provide security scanners for Canada's embassies came up, KPrime Technologies responded. However, instead of working with this Calgary-based company to provide sensitive security equipment, the Liberals went with a company that is mired in a major international bribery scandal in Taiwan, and that has links to the Chinese government. Here is the kicker: it was done at a higher cost than what my constituent's company would have charged. Why?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague well knows, the moment I learned about that, we immediately asked the department to launch a review to make sure that security is part of our contracting practices. I want to assure all Canadians and my friends in Calgary that no purchase whatsoever has been made by Global Affairs Canada from that provider. This was only a frame agreement.

I have asked the minister responsible at PSPC to look again at the procurement process for that, and we have launched a review.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, the minister is asking us to believe his party, which had no compunction going to the walls for SNC-Lavalin, a company that bribed Moammar Gadhafi's son with prostitutes. He is asking us to believe they knew nothing about a Calgary-based company's legitimate bid to provide sensitive security equipment for embassies, and instead went with a company that, by all intents and purposes, ignores the rules around international bribery scandals.

This is not just about forgetting something. This is ridiculous. When is that review going to be done? It should have been done

ahead of time. I want to see it right away, and will it be made public?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to answer that question. As a former minister of the Crown, the member would know well that the moment I was made aware of that frame agreement, I asked for the review. The review is under way.

I want to reassure people in Calgary, Edmonton and everywhere across Canada that no purchase has been made whatsoever. There is nothing more important than the security and safety of our people in our embassies around the world, and security will come first every time we make a purchase that could be sensitive for the security of our embassies around the world.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe Warren Kinsella said it best in his latest blog post that “There's a name for what we've now got. There's a name for a government like...[the Prime Minister's]—a government run by those who seek status and personal gain at the expense of the rest of us.” It is called a kleptocracy.

I looked up that word in the dictionary, and it comes originally from the Greek word for “theft”, “I steal” and “power, rule”. It means a government whose corrupt leaders, or kleptocrats, use political power to appropriate the wealth of their nation, typically by embezzling or misappropriating government funds at the expense of a wider population.

In a kleptocracy, corrupt politicians enrich themselves secretly, outside the rule of law, through kickbacks, bribes and special favours, or they simply direct state funds to themselves, directly or indirectly, and their associates.

We have had \$343 billion in deficits and \$1.2 trillion in debt, which gives a government a lot of room to misappropriate wealth, or in the case of debt of our nation, to direct those state funds to themselves or their associates.

There is a reason these scandals are profoundly scandalous, especially during a pandemic. It is because the allegations are that the Prime Minister, his family, his connected insiders and his friends sought to enrich themselves during a pandemic that is impoverishing millions of Canadians and killing thousands. While those governed are losing their homes, businesses, jobs and futures, the Prime Minister's family and friends are doing just fine. That is how a kleptocracy works.

There is the WE scandal, with the Prime Minister's family enriching themselves, and the CMHC scandal with Rob Silver, the husband of the Prime Minister's chief of staff. We have now found out that Frank Baylis, a former Liberal MP, has received an undisclosed value contract for \$100,000 in non-health approved ventilators. The sponsorship scandal will look like a speck of sand in a desert when this is all over. When this is all over, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance will be just fine.

Government Orders

I have a question to ask on behalf of every Canadian before more stories surface, because they will. How many more Liberal-connected friends, families and insiders have had their palms greased and have personally financially gained from this pandemic at the expense of Canadians who have suffered so much during this crisis? Will the Liberals be honest for once or do we have to wait for the Auditor General to tell us?

• (1305)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take us back to where we were in mid-March and talk about the things that we have focused on for Canadians over the course of the last number of months.

In mid-March, we obviously found ourselves in an unprecedented situation, where Canadians were asked to stay home to protect themselves, their families and other Canadians. Obviously, that was the right decision from a health standpoint, but it had real implications from an economic standpoint too.

As a government, we took the reins at that time and said that we needed to think about how we could ensure that we supported Canadians through this extraordinarily challenging time. The first thing we set out was the reality that we had so many Canadians who would not be receiving a paycheque. That is how we came up with the Canada emergency response benefit. We know that over the course of the last months, this benefit has helped literally millions of Canadians to be able to have enough money for groceries and rent in order to keep their families surviving during a time of immense challenge. That was first and foremost our initiative.

We moved forward with a wage subsidy because we recognized that we needed businesses to have a connection with their employees. They needed to have an incentive to keep their employees, even though in many cases they would not actually have the kind of work that they might normally have because they had been asked to stay home. The wage subsidy has helped millions of Canadians to keep their attachment to their jobs, to keep their ability to make money for themselves and their families through this challenging time.

We did not stop there. We knew that we needed to deal with all of those people who were going through enormous stress. We recognized, for example, that seniors were facing higher costs than they had historically experienced because they might have needed to use delivery services. They might have needed to get their medications or food delivered in a way that they didn't previously have to deal with, so we found a way to support seniors during this time.

We recognized that students would not necessarily have been able to get the jobs they needed during the course of the summer-time, so we put in place a benefit that would help students because we knew that we wanted to get them back to—

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

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

I would like to quickly acknowledge the work of the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle as the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition. This place has been better for his service as leader.

I have a question for the Liberals, who have used this pandemic to provide taxpayers dollars to their friends. I guess we should not be surprised: This is exactly what they did during the national unity crisis of the 1990s. They saw an opportunity and Canadians got the sponsorship scandal. The Liberals tried to feed money to their political allies at the WE organization. Thankfully the opposition stopped them, but now we are learning that the former Liberal MP Frank Baylis got his cut of the pandemic pie as well.

Will the Liberals tell us what the exact dollar figure was for the contract they gave to their friend? How much did Frank Baylis make in this deal?

• (1310)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to assure the House and all Canadians that there are measures in place to ensure that all information is made readily available.

First of all, I want to echo the comments of the member in regard to the leader of the official opposition and thank him for his service. I had not realized it was his last time in the House. I do know that he works hard and I appreciate it, though I do not agree with most of his policies or ideology.

When we talk about friends, let us talk about Canadians. Some 8.16 million Canadians have received the Canada emergency response benefit, and 3.7 million families have benefited from the one-time top-up of the Canada child benefit, a tax-free benefit that we brought into place to help families with children who need it the most by asking the wealthiest 1% of families not to take that benefit.

Prior to our government being in office, the Harper Conservatives gave \$100 for every child across the board, regardless of income, and then taxed it. They would give it with one hand and then in April they would claw it back. That is not our—

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

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, how much—

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is publicly disclosed information. The number is \$237 million for—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my dad had a few phrases he always loved to use, like “A leopard cannot change its spots” or “The early bird gets the worm”.

Now that I am a father, it is my turn to add to these lifelong phrases. My addition is going to be “A Liberal is going to liberal.”

Government Orders

My son and daughter may ask me what this means, so here is a really short answer: A Liberal will always believe that there are enough taxpayer dollars to make his or her friends and family richer.

My question is for the Prime Minister. When will his family and his Laurentian elite friends have enough taxpayers' dollars?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to start my answer with the way the member started his question, in regard to “A leopard cannot change its spots”. I ran for office because the Conservatives pitted one group of Canadians against another. They helped their friends. They actually helped out the wealthiest, and they project and say that is not the case.

What did we do when we came into office? We lowered taxes on middle-class Canadians by bringing in a new tax bracket and increasing taxes on the wealthiest 1% of Canadians.

What did the Conservatives do? Their spots cannot change, and that is why they voted against it.

When we brought in the tax-free Canada child benefit, the Conservatives voted against it, because they do not believe in giving a handout to the people—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, that answer is ridiculous. Our country has never been more broken, because of the Liberal party's divisive policies toward all Canadians.

When kids ask, “Dad, what is a Liberal?”, I will give them a quick answer. It is someone who seems incapable of passing up a crisis to help advance the prosperity of their friends and family. The national unity crisis gave us the sponsorship scandal, the global pandemic gave us more money for their rich friends and families and, because I like to have evidence, I will tell my kids to look at the last few weeks. They will see a contract given to Liberal-friendly WE for \$900 million, a contract to a former Quebec MP for ventilators that have not been certified in any jurisdiction to date and, for the three-peat, a Liberal insider was given an \$84-million contract, by coincidence, a company whose VP is the husband of the Prime Minister's chief of staff.

A Liberal is going to liberal.

I ask the interim Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, what is it about Liberals that makes them so corrupt?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I am going to have to correct that member. I am actually the first Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, and the first minister of that portfolio because it is one that our government takes seriously. In Canada, we know that our diversity is our strength, but it is important that people actually be included, and over the past few weeks we have seen that this country has to do better and to do more.

To the member's seven-year-old daughter, I want to say that today we have gender parity at the cabinet table. Just like men can succeed, so can women. When we talk about youth, there is a \$9-billion suite of programs we brought in for students, including the Canada emergency student benefit.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, they yell because they do not want to talk about the facts. They do not want to talk about the supports that we have put in place for Canadians. We know that Canadians are hurting and struggling. We will stay focused on Canadians while the Conservatives stay focused on Conservatives.

The Speaker: If I can interrupt, I will call order.

There is something that came to mind as I was sitting here, and I started doubting myself and asking myself questions. When there is a committee of the whole, according to the third edition of the *House of Commons Practice and Procedure*, at page 932 in chapter 19, “in these exchanges, Members should nevertheless always refer to one another by the names of their ridings as is done in the House.”

I just want to remind everyone what the rules are, and I am sure this is a learning experience for all of us.

Now, we will proceed with the hon. member for Lakeland.

• (1315)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is sort of amazing to hear that member talk about gender parity when the women over there, the most competent ones, all seem to get demoted, booted or have to do the king's dirty work. I do not know, but I guess it is all talk.

I will split my time with the member for Foothills today.

The Liberals are, no doubt, devastating families in Lakeland. There is no federal help for this year's agricultural emergency in my riding, with families facing a third year of damaged crops and a minister who hikes costs on them and dismisses farmers as being emotional. It has been 140 days since the finance minister promised help in hours for oil and gas, but not one application has been made or granted for large employers, not one mid-sized loan has been granted by the BDC, because the conditions are prohibitive, and the methane fund has yet to be launched.

Drillers and oil services are left out, fixed loans will not bridge the year and tens of thousands of Albertans are losing everything in real time, but in two weeks the Liberals were able to approve almost a billion dollars for the Prime Minister's friends at WE, who paid the Prime Minister's family members and campaigned for the Liberals. Moreover, a former Liberal MP recently scored a lucrative contract for ventilators before they were approved by Health Canada.

This is all bad, but what is worse is this: the Liberals' failures and corruption harm Canadian unity. Pierre Trudeau's strategist once said "Screw the west, we'll take the rest". It is clear that the second wave just might be worse.

Why are the Liberals intent on sabotaging Alberta?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been there for the oil and gas sector of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador from the get-go.

Last month, EDC opened applications for companies with revenues between \$100 million and \$500 million that were financially viable before the pandemic. Loan amounts now will fall between \$12.5 million and \$60 million.

Our government has been supporting smaller companies in that field for months with the BCAP program. Those companies make up 85% of the jobs in the oil and gas sector, and we have their backs.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the agriculture minister's own department's stats have shown that 10,000 AgriInvest accounts have an account balance of zero and that 73,000 AgriInvest accounts have less than \$10,000, yet during this pandemic she is telling Canadian farmers to empty accounts of money that they do not have before she is willing to lift a finger.

When is the agriculture minister going to start doing her job and develop a program specifically for Canadian farm families to help them through this pandemic and protect a vital pillar of our food supply chain?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague of everything we have done for the agricultural sector since the beginning.

We have changed the eligibility for the Canada emergency business account to allow a greater number of farmers to apply, which could mean up to \$670 million for the forgivable portion only. Very recently, \$58.3 million has been announced to boost the temporary foreign workers program, as well as \$125 million through AgriRecovery and the launch of the emergency processing fund of \$77.5 million. I could go on.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the minister brought up the Canadian emergency business account. Actually, the Liberals have managed to give more money to their friends at WE in two weeks than they have to an entire industry of agriculture.

The minister knows that she keeps telling farmers to use the CEBA and that is all they are going to need. She knows most farmers do not qualify for that program because they use personal business accounts and most of their expenses do not qualify for the CEBA program.

When is the minister going to stop making excuses, stop finding every way possible not to help Canadian farmers, and expand the eligibility criteria for CEBA so that these farmers can access this program?

Government Orders

• (1320)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Mr. Speaker, we have made significant changes to different programs. We have changed the eligibility criteria to include a greater number of farmers. We are working very hard with the provinces right now to see how we can improve different business risk management programs. Let me remind him that these business risk management programs allow the farmers to get at least an average of \$1.6 billion a year, and it might be closer to \$2 billion this year, in addition to all the other investments we have made.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the student grant program was originally supposed to cost \$19 million to administer. However, now it is going to cost \$43 million, which will be paid to WE Charity. Why?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members of the Standing Committee on Finance asked me to testify, and I was there to answer their questions. They asked me—

The Speaker: Can I ask the minister to begin her answer again? We will restart the clock.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, the details of the contribution agreement were shared with the Standing Committee on Finance as requested. We shared with them all of the information they need to have.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, the program was originally supposed to cost \$300 million. Then the government talked about \$900 million. The bottom line is that the contract is for \$500 million. Why all the red herrings?

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, it is important that this information be out there. The way the contribution agreement is written is that there is cohort 1, a supplemental cohort, and a cohort 2.

The way contribution agreements work is that performance measures are in place to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, we were told that the government was dealing with WE Charity. However, the contract was to be signed by the WE Charity Foundation. Why this charade?

Government Orders

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, once again, the Standing Committee on Finance asked me to testify, and I did. Yesterday, I also appeared before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics to answer these questions.

In addition, to ensure that all the information was available, we shared the agreement.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, the government told us that WE Charity was the only organization capable of administering the student service grant, because it had a Canada-wide network.

Now we have learned that it did not have a network in Quebec or in francophone communities and had to subcontract that part of the program.

Why this betrayal of trust?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, we said that the public service told us it was the only organization that could administer this program within the deadline. We asked for all provinces and territories to be included, for both official languages—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, at the same time it was creating the program to help WE Charity and the Trudeau and Morneau families, this government also created a so-called wage subsidy program, this time to support the Liberal family, which has scooped up \$800,000 so far. This program has now been extended to next December.

Why?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know this is very important. The wage subsidy and the extension of this program will be offered to every company in the country that is seeing a drop in revenue.

This way, we will have more work and more workers right across the country. This is an important approach during a pandemic.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, not content with sticking its hand in the cookie jar, this government also seized the opportunity to award an \$83-million contract to a company whose vice-president is the husband of the Prime Minister's chief of staff.

Why? I ask again, why?

[*English*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is an arm's-length Crown corporation that is responsible for its own operations. It made the independent decision to have MCAP as the administrator for CECRA.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, after the scandals and apologies for his vacation to the Aga Khan's island, the SNC-Lavalin scandal, the WE scandal and the new scandal over wage subsidy money being diverted to the Liberal family, the assistance for the Trudeau and Morneau families is now being extended to the family of the Prime Minister's chief of staff.

Why?

• (1325)

[*English*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, CMHC is an arm's-length crown corporation that is responsible for its own operations. It made the independent decision to have MCAP administer the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, as we try to unravel and get to the bottom of these scandals and figure out what happened—after all, we are talking about hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars, not Monopoly money—why is the Prime Minister not here in Parliament this week? Why the contempt?

Quebeckers and taxpayers are being taken for fools.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I would remind members that it is inappropriate to refer to any member's absence in the House.

The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague should take his cue from his leader, who earlier mentioned staying the course. Bloc Québécois members would do well to stay the course and talk about the issues concerning Quebeckers.

What are people talking about? The member mentioned the Bloc leader, who was on vacation in the Gaspé region yesterday.

I will tell you what the people of Mauricie talk to me about. They talk to me about job creation, the economic recovery, health and safety as we look toward—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Don Valley North.

Canadians were shocked and deeply saddened by the recent explosion in Beirut, Lebanon. I wish to express my solidarity with the Lebanese people in the wake of this tragic event that resulted in many victims and thousands of injured. I want to extend my sincere condolences to everyone who was affected by this terrible tragedy. My thoughts are also with the many people who continue to search for their loved ones. Friends and family of Canadian citizens in Lebanon can contact the Emergency Watch and Response Centre of Global Affairs Canada 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In order to help the Lebanese people, our government is providing up to \$30 million in humanitarian aid. Would it be possible for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to provide more details?

Government Orders

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the member for his question and for his steadfast commitment to the entire Lebanese community. I would also like to thank many of my colleagues on both sides of the House, particularly the member for Laval—Les Îles, who has very close ties with Lebanon. Obviously, there is also the entire Lebanese community here in Canada. I can say that all members of the House played an important role in determining our response to this tragedy.

Like my colleague, I want to express my solidarity with the people of Lebanon following last week's tragedy, which left all Canadians reeling. On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to extend my sincere condolences to the families of the victims and, obviously, I wish a prompt recovery to those who were injured.

In order to respond to this tragedy, we have now set up an emergency matching fund and announced over \$25 million in additional funding to deal with this crisis. That is a total of \$30 million, which the Minister of International Development announced recently with the Prime Minister. These funds will help trusted partners meet the immediate needs of the people of Lebanon and assist with rebuilding efforts.

Canada has always stood with the people of Lebanon and we will continue to do so in the future, as they deal with this terrible crisis.

[English]

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a team Canada response to COVID-19 has been essential in protecting the health and safety of Canadians these past few months and will continue to be important as we move forward in our continued response to COVID-19 and to recovery, but this pandemic has also had a significant economic and social impact on communities across Canada.

I have heard from many residents in Don Valley North who are asking for help in getting back to work in a safe and responsible manner. That is why I was so pleased to see the Prime Minister announce the Safe Restart Agreement that was reached with provinces and territories. I was especially happy to see the relief for the City of Toronto, which employs many front-line workers who are keeping our loved ones healthy and safe during this pandemic. In addition to providing services that residents of Don Valley North rely on, this includes support for the TTC, an essential service that so many of us rely on every day to keep us moving across the city.

Could the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities tell this House what the government is doing to help the safe restart of our economy?

• (1330)

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Don Valley North for his important question.

Now is the time to help communities like the City of Toronto to build back up from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. That is a key part of the \$19-billion Safe Restart Agreement between our federal government and the provinces and territories. This agreement includes \$2 billion in federal funding, matched by provinces and territories, for cities and towns across Canada. It is funding that

will support front-line workers and critical municipal services as we keep people safe during the economic restart.

The Government of Canada has also agreed to match more than \$1.8 billion to help cities keep their transit systems running so that Canadians can get to work and home to their families safely. For Ontario, the federal government has committed \$1 billion for public transit, which the province is matching.

We are supporting the front-line workers who are making an economic recovery possible because people depend on these critical front-line services, including public transit, to get safely back to work and to build back up our economy. If our cities are not running, our economy is not running. The Safe Restart Agreement will help Canada get back on track.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, we will go to the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, please know that I will be splitting my time with the member for Winnipeg Centre.

Right now, there are millions of Canadian families sitting down at their kitchen tables who have been depending on CERB while they are out of work due to the pandemic. They are concerned about their finances for September. At the same time, they are concerned about what going back to school will look like for their kids. They are concerned about getting child care for their family. They are concerned about how to return to work safely, and for many of them there is still no job to return to.

Earlier, in response to the NDP leader's question, the minister said that the government has a plan, but the problem is that Canadians do not know what it is, so they cannot make their own financial plans for September. When exactly is the government going to announce its plan for the end of the month, since it has said already that it is going to be wrapping up CERB?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, since the beginning of the pandemic our efforts have been on ensuring Canadians get the support they need, particularly Canadian workers who have not been able to work because we asked them to stay home.

I can assure the member that the details will be coming soon. As the Prime Minister said, we will leave nobody behind. We will have many people transition into EI without disruption of benefits. We will have a parallel benefit. We will have a caregiving aspect, a sickness benefit aspect. Everybody will be taken care of.

Government Orders

• (1335)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, how can Canadians expect to plan for that when they are getting less than two weeks' notice? The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has estimated that people transitioning from CERB to EI, on average, will be receiving about \$750 less per month. Maybe that is not the case, maybe the government has a plan, but how can Canadians be expected to plan for September? We are talking two weeks away and they do not know what the government will provide with respect to income support come September.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, as I have said, and as the Prime Minister announced the week before last, we have a robust plan. We will be giving Canadians the details of that next week. We have already explained to Canadians that they can rest assured that the EI system is ready to ingest the number of people it will have to.

On Monday, we announced a uniform unemployment rate across the country, which sets a minimal eligibility threshold for EI recipients. That should give comfort to many Canadians who are worried about their levels and hours they have to get into EI. We are putting a caregiver aspect to it, a sickness benefit aspect to it, as per our promise.

Canadians can be assured with what we have said, and we will give further details very soon.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Chair, the lack of affordable and accessible child care is keeping women with young children out of the workforce. Thousands of families, many that are single-parent households led by women, are struggling to make ends meet during COVID-19. We need a universal child care now more than ever.

Why is the government refusing to help Canadian families and invest in a universal child care for all?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for raising this important issue. This year alone we are investing \$400 million in bilateral agreements with provinces and territories to reinforce the sector. In addition to that, in recognition of the challenges this sector has experienced with COVID-19, we are transferring \$625 million to enable this sector to not only survive but actually emerge stronger out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Chair, first nations have gone above and beyond to keep their communities safe during the pandemic. With school starting soon, the government must ensure children are safe. Instead, the government is playing jurisdictional games and telling on-reserve first nations schools to talk to provincial governments about their health guidelines.

Could the Minister of Indigenous Services explain why first nations are not getting the support they need from the government?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I too am very concerned about the reopening of schools, particularly as it pertains to first nations, and more so for children who are asked to go study off reserve, which is also a lived reality.

The reality of the situation is that there are provincial guidelines, but those are not necessarily maximums or minimums. We are

working directly with communities for their specific needs and we will be there every step of the way.

The member will also well note today that we announced another \$305 million in direct community support for first nations, Inuit and Métis, on a distinctions basis.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Chair, two days ago I attended a vigil of a young man in my riding, the latest murder in Winnipeg Centre. As the pandemic goes on, individuals are becoming increasingly financially strained and mental health is rapidly declining.

When will the government stop financing its corporate friends and increase its investments into accessible, affordable social housing and front-line organizations?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we have demonstrated federal leadership by introducing the national housing strategy. We have ambitious targets, on which we have delivered and we continue to deliver. We will partner with provinces, territories and NGOs in the private sector to build a safe, affordable and accessible home for each and every Canadian.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Chair, for months the Conservatives have been asking about new and expectant parents who will not have enough hours to qualify for EI parental leave due to COVID-19 and still the government refuses to address the problem. It has said over and over again it will be solved, but parents are having children now and are being told by Service Canada that they are not eligible. One person I heard from was eight hours short. A solution sometime in the future does not help them.

Why is the minister refusing to get parents the certainty they need?

• (1340)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we understand how concerned a number of individuals are with the number of hours they have with respect to EI eligibility. It is definitely one of the issues that has been top of mind for me as we have rebuilt the system to ensure it is ready to ingest the millions of people it will need to. We will definitely address this issue in our broader conversation around this next week.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, being top of mind does not help these parents one iota and this is not a problem that can simply wait. We have been asking for months.

Government Orders

Another issue is that those who were on the CERB, but did not want to go to work under an EI work-sharing agreement are being told that they cannot and will have to wait for the minister to sign an order allowing them to work. Why has the minister failed to sign that order?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, I can assure you that I am working on that. I understand that Service Canada and my officials are working hand in hand to ensure that problem is addressed. Honestly, I want to ensure that everything we do is done well and done properly. I will not do a situation halfway. This is going to be solved. Retroactive payments will be made. This will be solved.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, people are sitting at home and not working when they want to work, and there are jobs for them. The only delay is the government is refusing to solve the problem. It could be new parents or people wanting to go back to work and over and over the government refuses to lift a finger to help.

Why does the government not just make the changes and get it done today?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, in some ways the CERB was a very blunt instrument that we had to implement during a time of crisis, and it has benefited over eight million Canadians. I make no apologies for doing that.

Transitioning people back to EI allows us to use our more sophisticated system, which will have in place elements of work sharing, working while on claim, access to training. All the things that people need in order to return to work and transition back to work will be in place for them. We are weeks away from making that transition. I thank the officials at ESDC—

The Chair: Back to the hon. member.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, on the transition, I got a briefing last spring from ESDC staff. The officials told me the best-case scenario of updating EI would take 10 years. Now the minister says they can fix it all in time for the end of the CERB, which is fast approaching.

Will the government commit to having zero Canadians lose their benefits they are entitled to as part of this rushed process?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, one of the reasons we put in place the CERB was that the EI system could not ingest the millions of people we knew would need help. We have been working since March 15 to address that and I am confident that, come the beginning of September, people will transition into EI seamlessly and without benefit disruption.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, a massive EI change is fast approaching, with very little details, and the government also refuses to tell us what the status of the EI operating account is. I have asked before and the answer I got was that later this year we would learn how much money was in the account as of this March. We will not get an accurate COVID-19 status in the public accounts until 2021. This is ridiculous. That money belongs to Canadians, not the government.

What is the current financial status of the EI fund?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, as I have explained for the member directly on a number of occasions, and I am happy to explain again, the EI account is tabulated based on premiums at the

end of each fiscal year. That number is published in mid-fall, I believe. Again, I am happy to give him the same details I have given him on a number of occasions.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, the minister said that she would get us at least a ballpark. Is it in deficit? Is it a major deficit? We get zero answers from the government. It is expecting to do a major transition to a new EI system and it is giving the Canadian public zero details as to the status of the fund. What is going on over on that side of the House?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Chair, my focus has been on transitioning people to the existing EI system. It is robust. It is ready to ingest the millions of Canadians it needs to. We are going to ensure that no one is left behind. We have started our process by creating a national, uniform unemployment rate so everybody has the same criteria for eligibility no matter where one lives in the country. That is huge, as EI regions do not necessarily match the phasing in of economic recovery throughout our country. We are confident that we will be there for Canadians.

• (1345)

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Thanks to the New York Times we know at least 17 manufacturers in China use Uighur forced labour to produce PPE. Despite having a budget that far surpasses the times, PSPC officials could not tell us if the government had purchased PPE manufactured by slave labour. Could the minister?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we in our contracting are ensuring the highest ethical standards for government procurement. When awarding contracts, we at PSPC require suppliers to agree to terms and conditions prohibiting these labour practices and we conduct an integrity check into the background of each of the suppliers.

I, like the member opposite, am very concerned about supply labour issues and am committed to ensuring we are on top of this issue.

Government Orders

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Chair, those same officials have also informed us that in order to bid on procurement contracts these manufacturers must simply self-certify they respect human rights. A self-certification in this regard is as trustworthy as a pinky promise. When will the government get serious and ensure taxpayer money is not being used to support the enslavement of Uighurs?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for our mutual interest in this important topic. I want to emphasize that Canada remains deeply disturbed by the troubling reports she mentioned and we have voiced our concerns. We have taken action by publicly and consistently calling on the Chinese government to end the repression in Xinjiang, for example.

With regard to procurement, it is top of mind for me as minister and I will ensure our department is on top of this in our procurements.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Chair, in the previous Parliament, the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood introduced the modern slavery act to combat slave labour. It has now been introduced in the other place as Bill S-211. Will the government commit to supporting this bill?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Chair, forced labour in any form anywhere in the world is completely unacceptable. We are committed to being an international leader for fair and balanced labour rights. As the member is aware, when Canada enters into trade agreements with any other country, specific provisions obliging the parties to refrain from any abuse of child labour is included. We will continue to work on this very important issue.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Chair, what is the Minister of Transport's plan to resolve the escalating labour strike at the port of Montreal?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Chair, we continue to support and have faith in the collective bargaining process. We know that the best deals are made at the table. The Minister of Transport and I have been in regular communication—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Chair, under the watch of the Minister of Transport, the accident rate on Canada's railway system has surged by 42% over the previous decade's average. Why?

• (1350)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the Minister of Transport is looking at all these issues and will be happy to provide a more fulsome response to the hon. member.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Chair, is Transport Canada currently conducting 737 MAX test flights, or are we once again relying on Boeing?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Chair, the Minister of Transport will be able to provide additional details to the member in due course. The safety of Canadians in aviation is paramount in all our decisions as a Canadian government.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Chair, VIA Rail received a 50% budget increase of \$277 million from the Minister of Transport, and then laid off 1,000 employees less than a month later.

Why was that?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Chair, all Canadians would appreciate that rail transport in Canada is paramount in a country as large as ours. We value the work of VIA Rail. We value the work of its employees. We will be happy to provide a more fulsome response to the member in due course.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Chair, why did it take 197 days to implement temperature screening at Canadian airports?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Chair, the safety of all Canadians is very important. It is paramount in all our decisions. I can assure the member that the Minister of Transport has been doing outstanding work with colleagues around the world to ensure the safety and security of all travelling passengers which are—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Chair, has the Minister of Transport read the air passenger bill of rights, yes or no?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Chair, the Minister of Transport reads all the briefings. I have no doubt that he would have been made aware of that and would have read that in detail.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Chair, does the minister have a plan to compensate Canadians who are on the hook for cancelled air travel, yes or no?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Chair, the issue of compensation is one which is top of mind for Canadians. I do know that the Minister of Transport has been spending a lot of time talking to airlines. I understand the concern of Canadians, and we will always strive to provide an equitable solution, both to travellers and to the airline industry.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Chair, over the last two and a half minutes, I have raised core issues on the transport file, but instead of the absentee Minister of Transport answering the questions, somebody else had to. Canadians deserve better. This minister has to do better.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will split my time with the member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

In January, we began asking questions about the government's handling of the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile. As we all know in the House, the government was slow. It was slow to develop any plan, including one to ensure that Canadians have immediate access to treatments and a vaccine when one is developed. In fact, Health Canada is currently struggling to lock down a supply of the only Health Canada-approved treatment.

Government Orders

Why is that? It is because, like the government's approach to borders, like its approach to PPE and like its approach to getting support to Canadians, the Liberals simply had no plan.

I will ask the minister today: What is the government's plan to ensure that Canadians will have access to the first scientifically proven treatment or vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to talk about our response to ensuring that Canadians have access to therapeutics, vaccines and treatments as they arise. I am very proud of the hard-working civil service that is working closely with members of the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, the COVID-19 Immunity Task Force and the many other experts who are advising us as a country on how best to position ourselves to ensure that we have access to these therapeutics.

As you will know, Mr. Chair, this is a space that is rapidly evolving and Canada is engaged with international partners to ensure that we are at the cutting edge of understanding new treatments and vaccines as they become available.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Chair, Conservatives called on the government to shut down our borders to travellers as early as January. It took the government well into March to actually listen and put the health and safety of Canadians first. While we continue to support keeping our borders closed to travellers, Canadians have been separated from family members for months, with no end in sight.

Is the government working on a compassionate plan to expand the current definition of family, prioritize the health and safety of Canadians and ensure our borders remain closed to travellers?

• (1355)

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I remind the member opposite that the Government of Canada actually implemented its first border restrictions on January 22 in response to the ongoing COVID crisis that was emerging around the world. Since that time, we have imposed extraordinary, unprecedented measures in placing restrictions on non-essential travel of people coming into the country.

We understand the impact that this has had on Canadians and Canadian families and we have been working continuously with those families. I want to acknowledge all of my colleagues in the House who have shared—

The Chair: We will now go to the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Chair, in June I asked the Minister of Health for details on the supplies to replenish the mismanaged National Emergency Strategic Stockpile, or NESS. The answer provided was that 20% of items that are not being distributed to the provinces are stored in the warehouses of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Given that there could potentially be a second wave, can the minister confirm that all NESS warehouses across the country have been fully restocked?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will go one better.

We have actually, through our Safe Restart Agreement, committed to provinces and territories that we will procure and support access to personal protective equipment to the tune of well over \$4 billion.

We have been there for provinces and territories, making sure that Canada has the personal protective equipment it needs, no matter what part of the country we are talking about. As we do that, we have been rebuilding the supplies in our national emergency stockpile.

I will remind the member that the—

The Chair: We will go back to the hon. member.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Chair, my question was: Has the NESS had been fully restocked, yes or no?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I would be happy to sit down with the member at his convenience to talk about what the role of the national emergency stockpile is. In fact, the national emergency stockpile—

The Chair: We will go back to the hon. member.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Chair, I take that answer as a “no”. If the warehouses have not been fully restocked, on what date will this occur?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, the questions of the member opposite indicate to me that he would benefit from a briefing on the role of the national emergency stockpile and its particular role, not just in terms of acquiring equipment for surge capacity but—

The Chair: We will go back to the hon. member.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Chair, through you, I would ask what the exact breakdown of supplies is used to replenish the NESS warehouses. How many gowns, gloves, masks, ventilators, etc.?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am glad to be able to stand up in the House and explain to the member opposite that every single week we make this information available on our website. We update it regularly. In terms of face shields, over 40.5 million have been received; gloves, 233 million pairs received; gowns, 66 million; hand sanitizer, 12 million litres; N95 masks, 54.4 million; non-medical masks, 2.58 million, and the list goes on—

The Chair: That will conclude that round.

We will now go to resuming debate.

The hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

Government Orders

The new NAFTA agreement is not worth the paper it is printed on. The Prime Minister claimed victory when it was signed. Here we are, mere weeks after the agreement has come into force, and workers in the aluminum industry are suffering as a result of the Liberal government's failed approach.

Why did the Prime Minister mislead these workers into a false sense of security?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, let me be very clear that the Government of Canada strongly supports Canadian aluminum workers. We will continue to do so, as we always have. The United States needs Canadian aluminum and it cannot meet its own domestic needs for manufacturing.

I also want to acknowledge that the deputy prime minister has had conversations with the leader of the Bloc and members of the Conservative Party. We are very grateful for the Team Canada approach that has been taken to this. We are going to stand up to these unacceptable and unlawful—

The Chair: Back to the hon. member.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, the government negotiated away Canada's ability to hit back with retaliatory tariffs on a broad range of strategic products from across the United States. The new NAFTA is an abject failure when it comes to protecting Canada's economy.

Has the government conducted an assessment of how many jobs the aluminum industry will lose as a result of these punishing tariffs?

Hon. Bill Blair: Mr. Chair, we have also made it very clear that we will not back down. We find these tariffs unacceptable and we are taking action.

We have said that we will impose reciprocal dollar-for-dollar retributive tariffs against the United States in order to stand up for those workers. We are now consulting with Canadians across the country on how to do that most effectively, and we will always stand up and support aluminum workers in Canada.

• (1400)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Chair, at yesterday's China committee it was stated that the People's Republic of China is actively threatening Canadians on Canadian soil who seek to expose China's authoritarian agenda. These individuals have been subjected to everything from physical threats to commercial blacklisting and state-backed cyber-hacking with no protection from Canada.

When will the government introduce legislation to combat foreign influence and protect basic human rights in Canada from aggressive actions of the Chinese Communist Party?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, let me be very clear. The safety and protection of Canadians is paramount to this government. We will never allow any form of foreign interference in Canada by state or non-state actors. Every time there have been allegations, we have taken action with the Minister of Public Safety.

We invite any Canadian who might be subject to any form of such actions as have been described to contact law enforcement au-

thorities. We will always defend the freedom and liberty of Canadians in Canada from foreign interference.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Chair, we know that the United States imposed a 10% tariff on Canadian aluminum. We knew it. We all saw this coming. We called it, but the government did nothing.

Sure, we can retaliate with tariffs of our own, but we faced this same problem in 2018. The aluminum industry is still wondering what happened to the money that was supposed to be given to them.

Why should we trust this government when it says that the money will be redistributed so as to benefit the aluminum industry?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, as we have said very clearly, we strongly disagree with the tariffs that have been imposed by United States. They are unacceptable, we believe them unlawful and we are prepared to take strong reciprocal action.

We will not back down in the face of such intimidation, and it is our intent to always stand up for aluminum workers. As we do that, we are working closely with industries that are impacted by these unacceptable decisions made by the United States. We will be there to support those workers and to support those industries as we have always been.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Mr. Chair, this business of tariffs, retaliatory tariffs and programs to help the industry feels a bit like Groundhog Day. Meanwhile, there is no accountability.

I sat down with the government to propose concrete, long-term solutions to protect the industry. These solutions did not come out of thin air; they came out of consultations I had with industry stakeholders. Everyone was in favour of creating a low-carbon procurement policy. Everyone agreed to put more money into research and development, to promote a circular economy with recycled aluminum and to foster a competitive tax and regulatory environment.

Why does the government not want to sit down with us to find long-term solutions that would protect the aluminum industry?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to thank my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord. As he will no doubt recall, he and I met with aluminum workers in his riding in Lac-Saint-Jean. We also met several times with unions and management to discuss the future of the aluminum sector.

We even invested in green aluminum. He must remember launching Elysis together.

Yes, we are examining this matter. Yes, we are working with unions and management to develop export markets for aluminum in order to make it ever more competitive. I want to thank my colleague for contributing to those efforts.

This is not about politics. It is about working for Canada's aluminum workers.

[English]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Chair, my first question to the Minister of Health is very simple.

Is it the responsibility of the minister's department to uphold the Canada Health Act in all jurisdictions in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Chair, yes it is.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Chair, will the government intervene then to save Clinic 554 and, by this, ensure access to reproductive health and essential services to the LGBTQ2S+ community in New Brunswick?

• (1405)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, as the member likely knows, our department has been working with both the province and the clinic for some time now to ensure that the full range of reproductive services, including abortion and supports for the LGBTQ2S+ community, remain available in that province.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Chair, the Minister of Public Safety said that he heard calls from families, survivors and advocates when he made the important announcement that the federal government was launching a full public inquiry into the Nova Scotia mass shooting. Families will get answers, communities will be able to heal and recommendations will be made, ensuring that such a tragedy will never happen again.

Can the minister also hear the voices of the families of Rodney Levi, Chantel Moore and Brady Francis? Can he hear the calls from the New Brunswick and British Columbia chiefs, the indigenous leaders and advocates, and launch a comprehensive, open and fully transparent inquiry into how the legal and law-enforcement systems have failed indigenous people in New Brunswick?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we have heard them and are listening very carefully. There are ongoing discussions between us, indigenous leadership and the Government of New Brunswick. On this critical issue, we understand the concerns and the need for answers that people have expressed. We are working with indigenous leadership and with the Government of New Brunswick. We are committed to getting people the answers they need and are responding appropriately.

Everyone deserves to live in peace and safety and with a sense of security in every community in this country. We are absolutely committed to that, and we will always listen to the people who are impacted by these tragedies to ensure that we respond in the appropriate way.

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Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Chair, the pandemic has shaken to the core the very way that we, not too long ago, thought how to do business: walking into a store, trying and touching various items and shaking hands once a transaction is finalized. Businesses had to adapt to new ways of doing things, and fast.

The Fredericton economic development agencies group, in its effort to respond and advocate on behalf of all businesses, highlighted the need for businesses to obtain support and information on transitioning to or expanding e-commerce options. Does the government have a plan to support businesses to make this transition?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we have been talking to businesses all around the country. I was just on an Atlantic tour last week, and it is absolutely our priority to support them to ensure that they are getting more digital options. They can count on the government to have their backs.

[Translation]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Chair, the last time the Official Languages Act went through a complete overhaul was 1988. I am practically the same age as this legislation. Linguistic minority communities across the country, organizational representatives and specialists have worked hard to contribute to the study, and the report and its recommendations were submitted to the government over a year ago now. I know the minister cares deeply about the vitality of official languages, but the longer the government drags its feet, the more hope fades with each passing day that anything will come of this file.

Can the minister confirm that the legislation will indeed be modernized during her present term of office?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to assure my colleague that this issue is extremely important to our government and to the Minister of Official Languages. All of us, including the minister, are working very hard on this matter. We will ensure that this is acted on as soon as possible.

[English]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Chair, I read the report following the review of systemic racism and oppression at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. It is telling of the problems present in our society and how pervasive systemic racism and homophobia are when an institution that was created to promote respect for others and encourage reflection and dialogue fails its own mission. The report provides avenues for reparation. Every action toward inclusivity has the potential to lead to significant improvements in the lives of Canadians. There are some recommendations specifically with respect to the language used in communications.

My question is for the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth. Would the government be ready to adopt a gender-inclusive language, remove gender binaries and adopt an epicene style of writing in all of its internal and external communications, in English and in French?

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Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to commend the member for her style in questioning and bringing up issues that are in the backyards of Canadians. These are matters that come to my desk often.

I am entirely committed, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, to ensuring that we build back better and be even more inclusive, so yes, these are recommendations we are considering. I understand that the Canadian Armed Forces, under the leadership of the Minister of National Defence, have brought in gender-neutral pronouns, and I want to remind all Canadians that in 2017, royal assent was granted to the amendments we brought forward as a government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, to include gender identity and gender expression.

We have a lot more work to do, but the member has provided me with the confidence that together we can get this done.

• (1410)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

The minister said earlier today that he is proud of the emergency commercial rent assistance program, but it is only helping one in 10 of Canada's small businesses. Is that what the Liberals consider a success? Was the goal to make the Prime Minister's chief of staff's husband's company millions of dollars, but not actually help small businesses?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program has so far assisted over 670,000 Canadians and over 72,000 small businesses, and it has delivered relief in the amount of \$712 million. That is substantial progress since the beginning of this program. We will continue to monitor this program to make sure that it delivers the help small businesses need at this difficult time.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, it is a mess that does not reflect the facts on the ground. The CECRA was advertised as a program intended to help small business owners pay their rent, but it was designed to target and provide full control to the landlords. In the beginning, only landlords carrying a mortgage were eligible to apply.

Why did the Liberals privatize a program that should have been tenant-driven in the first place and hand it to a mortgage company instead of actually helping Canadians?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, delivering much-needed help to 670,000 Canadians is something to be proud of. Delivering help to 72,000 Canadian small businesses and delivering relief in the amount of \$712 million are things that should be applauded. Unfortunately, the member opposite sees something negative in that, but we are proud to stand behind the record of delivering for small businesses.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, one out of 10 is not a success. The Prime Minister's chief of staff's husband's company had a service fee of \$84 million. That is 14% of the money that has gone out the door, with a 90% failure rate.

Why did the Liberals not just simply get the qualified, non-partisan public service to do this work?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, delivering help to over 670,000 Canadian employees is something to be proud of. We will continue to monitor the CECRA program to make sure that we help as many small businesses as possible.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Chair, in another one of his rash moves, President Trump has decided to impose tariffs on aluminum, putting 30,000 good jobs in Quebec in jeopardy. The government will impose retaliatory tariffs, but that is not a long-term solution.

Will the Liberals listen to the United Steelworkers and ensure that the revenues from these retaliatory measures go to support jobs in this industry?

Will they work on a climate adjustment system so that Quebec's aluminum, the most environmentally friendly aluminum there is, can finally have a competitive edge?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, as I have already indicated, our government is prepared to stand up to these unacceptable tariffs and take strong action in our disagreement with the United States on this matter. We are also prepared, as we have always been, to directly support the aluminum industry and aluminum workers as they go through the impact of these unacceptable tariffs. We will always stand up for those workers, and we will not back down from this type of economic intimidation.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, that is interesting, but the aluminum produced in Quebec is the greenest and cleanest. It should have an advantage when it is imported.

Regarding another sector, yesterday, in a devastating surprise announcement, the Minister of Canadian Heritage told thousands of artists and artisans that there would be no recovery plan for the cultural sector until 2021. What are all these creators supposed to do in the meantime? Will they have to light a candle and hope they qualify for employment insurance?

Is that the Liberal government's only answer for the cultural sector?

• (1415)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his question.

As my colleague knows very well, the sector will not reopen before the new year because it is not possible. This is the worst pandemic in modern human history. Many venues have decided to postpone all events until 2021.

Had he bothered to read the article in question, the member would have seen that we have provided the sector with \$3 billion to date—

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: I did read the article, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Chair, we will continue to help these people until it is possible to reopen. Due to the public health crisis, it is currently not possible for arts and culture events to resume, as our colleague from the other side of the House knows very well.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with my loyal colleague, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

In negotiating CUSMA, the government unfortunately forgot to protect aluminum, the aluminum produced in my region, the greenest aluminum in the world. The Bloc Québécois had to lobby hard for a solution that would shut out China's black aluminum.

Today, we are in a new crisis, which is partly the government's fault. It announced that there would be countermeasures, but oddly, they will only apply to aluminum products. In 2018, the countermeasures applied to any U.S. export, whether it was a Harley-Davidson, bourbon or a boat. The countermeasures could be slapped on any exported good.

Why can that not be done now?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. He knows full well that we have always been there for aluminum workers. I love to hear him talk about green aluminum, because I was there for the Elysis announcement. I was there when we said that the Government of Canada would stand up to find new, green aluminum products. That is precisely what he just said.

Yes, we are going to continue to invest in innovation, as we always have. Yes, we will always be there for the aluminum industry, and yes, we will always work for aluminum workers. It is an important industry in Quebec. We will always stand up for the interests of Quebec workers.

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Chair, unfortunately, I did not get an answer.

Why are there no retaliatory tariffs on products other than aluminum? It is because, in 2019, they negotiated an agreement on the cheap. They went from a bazooka, with tariffs on all American exports, to a slingshot. They are defending Quebec's second-largest export sector with a slingshot.

I will repeat my question: Why is it impossible to impose retaliatory tariffs on products other than aluminum right now?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, let me be very clear. At the time in 2019 when the previous section 232 tariffs were lifted, an agreement was reached between Canada and the United States. We worked together to resolve all future irritants in the bilateral aluminum trade. We continue to urge the Americans to come back, but we have been very clear that we will impose reciprocal retaliatory

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tariffs on the things that get their attention the most, because, quite frankly, these tariffs that have been imposed on the aluminum industry are unacceptable and unlawful.

We are going to stand up to them and are not going to back down. We are going to stand up for the aluminum industry and will impose appropriate tariffs. We are consulting with Canadians to make sure we get this right, and within 30 days—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, in 2018, when we imposed retaliatory counter-tariffs on the United States, did all of the revenue from these counter-tariffs that was supposed to go to the aluminum industry actually reach the industry?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his question.

He knows that we have been standing up for the aluminum sector since day one. We have been proud to invest in this sector. As I mentioned earlier, we invested in Elysis. That is the future. Just ask the unions and the workers. Green aluminum is the future of Quebec, the future of the industry. That is exactly what we have invested in to innovate and ensure long-term jobs—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member has the floor.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Chair, that is not what I asked. The answer was not forthcoming either, from what I could hear.

Did all of the money that was supposed to go to aluminum in 2018, the money from the counter-tariffs, actually get to the aluminum industry, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, in the previous round of the unlawful section 232 tariffs, we demonstrated an unwavering commitment and no hesitation in providing direct support to the aluminum industry. We remain committed to that support.

We will be there for aluminum workers and for the aluminum industry. We recognize its importance to Canada, and those workers are important to us as well.

● (1420)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Chair, I will answer for them: The Parliamentary Budget Officer told us that over \$200 million was not used.

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Is the Deputy Prime Minister aware of that \$200 million?

What does she intend to do with it?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his question.

As he said, the Deputy Prime Minister has all the facts. She masterfully negotiated this file from the beginning to stand up to the threats of U.S. tariffs. We will continue to do just that and we will continue to invest because we know that aluminum is an important industry for Quebec. We did so in the past, we are doing so now, and we will continue to do so in the future.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Chair, when we listen to the Bloc Québécois's proposals, we see that they work. We saw that with aluminum.

We are going to make a suggestion. That money absolutely needs to go to the aluminum industry for secondary and tertiary processing. We are taking care of the \$200 million that is left, but we want to see the promised \$360 million and so do the unions.

Will that money immediately be sent directly to the aluminum industry?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Blair: Mr. Chair, I want to acknowledge that the Deputy Prime Minister has had conversations with the leader of the Bloc and with some of her Conservative colleagues as well, and we think a team Canada approach, which worked so well with us in standing up to the section 232 tariffs, is exactly the right approach.

We encourage the Bloc to continue to engage in dialogue and to support our efforts to ensure that together we stand up for the Quebec aluminum industry.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Saskatoon—University.

One of the reasons Canada lost its AAA credit rating from Fitch Ratings, as it stated, was because Canada did not have an economic recovery plan. That was two months ago.

When will the government be announcing its economic recovery plan?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to make clear that we recognize how important it is we address this pandemic, and that is exactly what we have been doing. We have been supporting individuals and businesses. That is the right thing to do during this time period. Certainly, as we move forward we will be considering how best to have a recovery, making sure we have—

The Chair: We will go back to the hon. member.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, one of the other reasons Fitch Ratings stated that Canada lost its AAA credit rating was because of interprovincial trade barriers. In May I questioned the Deputy Prime Minister about the government's announcement to put a hold on all work being done with interprovincial trade, and we were told at the time that it was due to COVID-19. That was three months ago.

What is the government doing now to jump-start interprovincial trade, and when did this work resume?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we continue to believe that working together with the provinces to bring down interprovincial trade barriers is critically important. We made enormous progress on this issue over the last number of years, but of course we do need to continue these efforts. It will require the provinces to step forward in this regard.

Our government is committed to working to ensure we have freer trade in our country, which will help us economically today and in the future.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, when the government announced the internal Canada free trade agreement in 2017, it was stated that this would bring \$25 billion in economic activity to Canada. That was three years ago.

Can the government please disclose what this \$25 billion in economic activity has brought into Canada's engine of economy during the last three years since this was implemented?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, the challenge around getting rid of interprovincial trade barriers is a long-term challenge. It has been the challenge of this government and governments before us.

We made enormous strides with that agreement, and of course it has had a positive impact on our economy, but we do know there is more work to be done in this regard. We look forward to working together with provinces in order to ensure our economy is buttressed because of the effective ability to bring down barriers within our country.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Chair, in late-breaking news today we have learned that the Liberals are now asking for proposals for a company to design their firearms gun grab program, a program designed to steal our freedoms under the cover of darkness with an order in council, a law that has not even been debated in the House of Commons. It is a shame, but the Liberals have no problem targeting law-abiding firearms owners. They should be spending their time and money targeting illegal guns being brought over the border for use in the drug-dealing gangster world.

Why do the Liberals not leave legal firearm owners alone and target the real criminals?

• (1425)

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to be very clear. First of all, the prohibitions we have put in place are intended entirely to remove weapons from Canadian society that have no place in society. These weapons are designed to and intended to be used to kill people.

I want to acknowledge the member's advocacy on behalf of the gun industry, and certainly he has garnered the support of the National Rifle Association. At the same time, our focus is always on the safety of Canadians. We have heard from police leaders, community leaders, mayors and victim advocacy groups across Canada who strongly support stronger gun control.

I understand how difficult it is for a Conservative to talk about gun control, but it is not difficult for Canadians. Canadians know that it is—

The Chair: We will go back to the hon. member.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Mr. Chair, I have a follow-up question about this proposed gun grab through a registry through a third-party program. Does the minister think that it will be less costly than the long-gun registry, or will it be more affordable?

Hon. Bill Blair: Mr. Chair, our intent is to ensure that no more of these weapons proliferate in our country, and at the same time we are demonstrating a very responsible approach to strong gun control measures, which are necessary and are supported by the overwhelming majority of Canadians. As we go forward on this, we are consulting broadly with Canadians to ensure that it is done—

The Chair: We have time for one short question, 15 seconds, and we will have time for a response.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Mr. Chair, the Conservative estimate for this program is over \$10 billion. If you seriously want to reduce crime in Canada, you would not be spending \$10 billion to buy back guns from law-abiding citizens. It makes no sense, Liberals. Wake up. This is an insane program that needs to be scrapped.

Hon. Bill Blair: Mr. Chair, I am grateful to hear the perspective of the National Rifle Association from the member opposite, but let us listen to the people who actually are responsible for keeping our Canadian citizens and cities safe.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police said that military-style assault rifles were produced for the sole purpose of killing people and called upon the government to ban them. The incoming president of the CACP said that he believes our program finds a balance and ensures the safety of our members when they respond to calls for service.

We are doing what is necessary.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 10

The Chair: Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 26, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings. The committee will now study Government Business No. 10.

[English]

Before we begin the debate, I would like to remind hon. members of how this next part of the debate will unfold.

Our proceedings for the next two hours and 20 minutes will be conducted pursuant to the terms of Standing Order 53.1, which is for take-note debates. Each member speaking will be allotted 10 minutes for debate, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments.

[Translation]

Members participating via video conference who wish to ask a question or make a comment at the end of the speech may so indicate to the Chair by using the “raise hand” feature on the video conference platform.

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However, members participating in the chamber may rise as they normally would.

[English]

The debate will end, as I mentioned earlier, after two hours and 20 minutes or when no member rises to speak.

We will now begin the take-note debate.

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has moved that the House take note of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and measures taken by the government to respond to it.

On a point of order, the hon. opposition House leader.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Chair, the government House leader is not in the House of Commons, and so I think the government may want to repropose the motion with the minister who is actually here.

• (1430)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. opposition House leader for bringing that to my attention. It occurred to me as I read his name, actually. I will indicate then that the motion will be proposed by the hon. Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth on behalf of the hon. government House leader. I think that should take care of it.

We will proceed with the debate with the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.) (for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved:

That the House take note of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and measures taken by the government to respond to it.

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the COVID-19 pandemic is the worst public health crisis we have seen in generations.

It is a major threat to the well-being and prosperity of Canadians and people around the world. As a nation, we have done an amazing job of banding together from coast to coast to coast over the past few months to collectively address this unprecedented challenge.

Canada's intrinsic spirit can be seen in our essential and front-line workers and their staunch dedication to their communities. We owe them our deepest gratitude and, in some cases, our lives. We must also do our best to honour the many unsung heroes of these times.

Today, I am proud to shine a light on the innovative, tireless efforts of Canadian health care scientists and the important role that research plays in our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Canada is lucky enough to have produced some brilliant minds, valuable assets that are sometimes underestimated.

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In Quebec, in Montreal, I am thinking of all the researchers and scientists at the University of Montreal, McGill University, the Montreal Heart Institute, CHUM, Sainte-Justine Hospital and many others, who are working every day to develop innovative solutions for keeping everyone healthy.

[English]

Before this crisis, it is possible that we may have taken for granted our medical researchers who so often toil behind the scenes, but no longer. When the threat of COVID-19 first bore upon us, Canada's health research community stepped up without hesitation when we needed it most, and Canadians are forever grateful.

Even before the first cases were diagnosed in Canada, our government engaged with academic, industry, provincial and international partners to swiftly implement a research response to the pandemic. In February, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research was the first agency globally to launch an open call for COVID-19 research. Working closely with federal and provincial partners, the institutes sought to accelerate the development, testing and implementation of medical and social countermeasures to mitigate the rapid spread of COVID-19. Within a few short weeks of the initial launch, our Canadian Institutes of Health Research awarded peer-reviewed grants to 100 meritorious Canadian projects, a process that normally takes over a year.

Since then, bolstered by the \$1.1-billion national medical research strategy that our government announced through our Prime Minister in April, the CIHR has already committed approximately \$170 million and leveraged \$25 million in partner funds for research on COVID-19. This very impressive outcome is a testament to the calibre of our health scientists and their commitment to protecting and improving the health of Canadians.

I am pleased to report that coordinated investment and mobilization through our Canadian Institutes of Health Research and other federal partners is advancing a broad and balanced portfolio of COVID-19 research.

[Translation]

We are advancing knowledge in fundamental research, new clinical guidelines and the assessment of the expected and unexpected effects of public health measures. We are advancing research aligned with Canadian and international priorities in the fields of therapeutics, transmission dynamics, diagnostics, public health measures and more. We are supporting clinical trials across Canada, as they are the best mechanism for offering Canadians experimental treatments while ensuring effectiveness. We are fast-tracking collaborative efforts to develop a made-in-Canada vaccine.

• (1435)

[English]

Federal investment through our Canadian Institutes of Health Research is enabling leading vaccine centres in Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia to join forces and pool their expertise and resources. To date, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's COVID-19 rapid research competitions have awarded funding to 14 promising vaccine development studies. These investments complement the significant federal investment in vaccine research through Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's strategic innovation

fund. We are also fostering critical partnerships between academia and the medical industry for vaccine development.

[Translation]

The work that is being done on the ground is absolutely incredible. A Quebec company called Medicago is using its technology platform to develop antibodies against the virus in co-operation with Laval University. Of course, the goal of this research is to protect the health of Canadians. We need to ensure that we are putting enough focus on the Canadian context and the specific needs of various populations. That means investing in strategic, targeted research to help our most vulnerable groups.

[English]

In addition to increasing anxiety about our health and safety, this pandemic has disrupted many aspects of our personal lives. Job insecurity, isolation and the loss of a loved one all have significant impacts on our mental health. To address this, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research is leading an initiative to provide urgent data to support decision-making on mental health responses to this pandemic. Guided by an external expert advisory panel, the initiative will inform the rapid deployment of psychological supports for mental health and substance use.

I am very happy to report that in the month of June a preliminary body of rapid knowledge syntheses was shared with decision-makers and partners within just 30 days of the funding allocation. These reports synthesize current evidence on mental health and substance use services, delivery guidelines and practices, and related issues placed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another very critical area of study pertains to the sex differences in the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and associated immune responses. A government-funded team has already published results highlighting how different sex responses and the mechanisms behind them may help inform novel therapeutic approaches to COVID-19.

[Translation]

Research efforts are also focused on Canadian seniors. As we saw in many provinces, Canada's aging population is particularly vulnerable to the pandemic, as are residents of long-term care facilities, such as Quebec's CHSLDs.

A team funded by the Dalhousie University research institute recently published a paper on the impact of the virus on these care facilities, which proposed that biomarkers could help predict disease severity and explain why some residents are more severely affected than others.

Research on indigenous health also remains a priority for our government. We know that Canada's indigenous people were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The COVID-19 response lacked culturally appropriate, distinctions-based interventions grounded in sound evidence and indigenous knowledge. Consequently, we created a funding opportunity to address these deficiencies through bold and innovative strengths-based, solution-focused research led by the community.

• (1440)

[English]

While our foremost priority is the health of Canadians, we must recognize that a virus knows no borders. This is a global threat that requires a collaborative global response. This is why we are working in close concert with international partners, such as the World Health Organization, the Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness and others. Through our international engagement in scientific research, we can leverage every opportunity to bring innovations home to Canadians while promoting homegrown expertise and leadership.

It is also extremely important to have evidence-based policy. As we work diligently to protect Canadians, we continue to base our decisions on the evolving body of evidence that exists in the research community, and we continue to learn more about the virus every day. We are connecting policy-making with science, for instance, through knowledge mobilization activities, and with supports for COVID-19 vaccine and therapeutic task forces.

Investments in health research and in our researchers ultimately pays dividends in saved lives. We are heartened by the remarkable dedication and talent of our scientists, and our government has acknowledged its obligation to sustain Canada's research excellence. This means supporting our researchers now and into the post-pandemic recovery. I invite the members of this House to join me in recognizing the invaluable efforts of Canada's research community.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Chair, we have not had the opportunity to hear from the Prime Minister on a few issues, and I would like to invite the member to comment on them. The most pressing of these today are the ongoing scandals that have engulfed the government. We have a tremendous number of unanswered questions.

We have issued an invitation, which has not yet been responded to, for the Prime Minister to appear at the ethics committee. We have issued an invitation to the finance minister to attend that committee as well. Parliamentarians have questions for the government. Canadians have questions for the government. We do not have all of the answers with respect to this WE scandal. We have new news breaking every day.

Can the member tell us if we can expect to see the Prime Minister and the finance minister appear at committee, as they have been requested to do so?

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Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, I believe that both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have appeared before a committee. They have appeared before a committee in order to answer questions from opposition members such as the member opposite. That opportunity was provided in order to be as transparent as possible.

I believe that the government, throughout this crisis, has shown itself to be available to answer questions, even more questions than government members would normally answer if the House were sitting. I would also note that it is unprecedented in Canadian parliamentary history for a prime minister to appear before a committee, and our Prime Minister did.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Chair, I listened closely to my colleague. As the research and innovation critic, I was also interested in the Medicago file. Let me reiterate what happened.

The government launched several calls for proposals, three or four. A firm called AbCellera received its funding in short order. Medicago received a letter from the government in mid-April, I believe, stating that the firm would soon receive a letter outlining the terms and conditions. There was a lot of back and forth, and Medicago did not receive the letter until early July, if memory serves. AbCellera managed to get its letter very quickly, while Medicago had to wait three or four months. Investors were nervous.

I still wonder what could explain the government's unacceptable delay in responding to Medicago.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for the question, and I would be happy to get more details on this case to provide him with an answer.

It is very important for the government to do things right, as everyone in the House knows. In this specific case, it may have taken a few extra weeks to properly draft and understand this contract, and I think it is very important and perfectly normal to take the time to do that.

• (1445)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Chair, what really needs to be pointed out is the incredible social solidarity Canadians from coast to coast to coast have shown in response to the unprecedented economic and medical catastrophe that has befallen us. It is really important to also state that we are not out of the first phase yet. We could be plunged back into a crisis. If we are plunged back in, it will be a catastrophe for families who have already suffered enormous economic losses, for small businesses and for students who have had their lives upended.

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We are just over two weeks away from CERB's ending. Many people in my riding have no jobs to go back to, or they are only going back to partial or insecure work. We need to be there for them to get them through this crisis. If we leave people behind at this time, it will take years for our nation to recover economically and socially.

I would like to ask the member about the efforts that need to be taken between now and the beginning of September to make sure that we have a plan to get us through what may be a very difficult fall and a very difficult winter, particularly if COVID hits us again the way people expect it may.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, I would like to echo the comments of my hon. colleague with respect to the solidarity with which Canadians have come together during this pandemic. I would also to express my wish for the continued solidarity of all parties in this chamber in order for us to continue working for the benefit of Canadians as we continue to fight COVID-19. We need to continue to come together to get to the other side of this crisis.

With respect to the specific question regarding the CERB program, I must admit that it is a program I hear of so much in my community, as I am sure I would in the communities of everybody in this House. I believe that there are over 8 million Canadians who have been helped by this extremely valuable program. It has allowed families to put food on the table, and pay for rent and housing.

As the Minister of Employment has indicated several times now, we are in the process of transitioning from CERB to employment insurance. However, this is not the previous employment insurance. It is a modernized, changed employment insurance, which will ensure that all Canadians receive the support and help that they need.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am going to ask a question of the parliamentary secretary in her capacity as the member of Parliament for her area.

Obviously, we all have constituents. I have heard from my constituents, as well as from other members of Parliament, who have an issue with the government giving no certainty to parents in regard to employment insurance parental benefits. Even today, the minister gave it zero attention, other than to say that they are working on something.

What does the member tell her own constituents? Is she comfortable with the government delivering zero certainty to those families?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, the question of child care is extremely important. As a mother of a young toddler, I know how important it is for mothers and fathers to have child care in order to go back to work and in order to resume activities.

We have committed, as a federal government, to substantial transfers for child care to our provinces. As the member opposite knows, we need to work in conjunction with the provinces on this issue, and we are working hand in hand with the provinces to ensure that all families have the child care that they need and deserve.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr.

Chair, the way Canada has responded to the coronavirus has really been inspiring.

The different levels of government, the non-profit organizations, and Canadians in general, all responded. There is so much more to talk about with each those sectors. We could talk about the federal programs, whether it is the wage subsidy, the CERB program, or the billions of dollars being spent. We could also talk about the literally millions of Canadians who have been assisted and the tens of thousands of businesses that have been saved. So much has been done in a relatively short period of time as a result of a lot of hard work by Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

We are now in a better position to be able to deal with a second wave coming. We are in fact in a much better position. I am wondering if my colleague and friend could provide her thoughts on why it was so important that governments, non-profits and Canadians as a whole come together in order to minimize the negative impacts of the coronavirus.

• (1450)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, I have been working in close collaboration with colleagues on numerous programs throughout the crisis. I must say that small businesses in my community and in communities across the country have been extremely grateful for the programs and supports that we have put in place.

I am thinking in particular of the emergency business account. Over 715,000 small businesses are benefiting from this interest-free loan, which includes a grant. I am also thinking of the wage subsidy, which provided 75% subsidies on businesses' wages. This has allowed employees to continue to be paid while they, in order to stay safe, stayed home.

There are numerous other programs that are allowing our economy to bounce back. As I am sure the members of this House know, we have had several consecutive months of job growth in this country, far more than other countries around the world, and we are on track for an economic recovery.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Chair, throughout this crisis, the official opposition has been asking questions and proposing policies to the government, policy ideas that would support Canadians dealing with the pandemic and eventual recovery.

Unfortunately, the government has refused to listen to the good ideas or even listen to the pleas of Canadians. From the very beginning of this crisis, we have been hearing from new and expectant parents who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 and who will not have the qualifying hours to access parental benefits through employment insurance. I heard from one parent this week who will be eight hours short.

Over the last number of months I have repeatedly asked the minister why she has not yet fixed this problem. She stated that it would be fixed, maybe, at some point in the future.

This is not a “tomorrow” problem. People are having children today, right now, with zero certainty on where they stand. Service Canada is telling them that they simply do not qualify unless policy changes. In at least one case, a new parent was callously told by government staff to go back to work.

[*Translation*]

Just imagine a young parent, perhaps a single parent, who is already scared to be having a baby during a pandemic, and who is just 25 hours short of qualifying for benefits.

People are being told to go back to work, but now their job is gone. Not only do new parents need time with their newborn, but they are being asked to go back to work. Many sectors quite simply do not exist right now, and there is no work to go back to.

Having a baby should be the happiest time of a person's life, but because of the government's refusal to address this problem, it has become a time of anxiety and fear.

If the government does not intend to fix this problem, it needs to stop saying it will and stop raising false hopes. The government is letting down an entire generation of Canadian families, and we will never stop fighting on their behalf.

[*English*]

Another major issue is that people who are on the CERB, but now have jobs to go back to, are unable to do so if their employers are using a work-sharing agreement. Work share allows employers and the government to split the wages of workers in an effort to get people back to work, and has been a part of the EI system for some time. Unfortunately, people who were on the CERB are being told they are not able to access work share until the minister makes a policy change allowing that transfer.

Again, Service Canada staff are telling employers and members of Parliament's offices that the only delay is coming from the minister's office.

Why will the government not make this change? It is baffling. These people have job opportunities. They want to work, but a technicality is preventing them from working, a technicality the minister can fix today.

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

When we asked the minister's staff when this would be fixed, they told us that the real problem was that the worker had made a mistake and incorrectly applied for the CERB rather than the work-sharing program. They blame the victims and refuse to fix the problem.

Fixing parental leave and adjusting the work-sharing program are simple changes that would help people immediately. The minister could go back to her office and fix these problems today. I hope she does.

[*English*]

A major policy suggestion the opposition has made was for a back-to-work bonus. The CERB is punitive in that it cuts off someone's entire benefit the moment they make over \$1,000 a month. No

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government program should dis-incentivize work, but that is exactly what the CERB does when it does not have to.

We have provided a perfect policy option that would make the CERB more generous, more flexible, and make work more attractive. The government, of course, has ignored it completely. Canadians need support to transition into the work force and ensure that local businesses can still fill their shifts and get back on their feet.

At the same time, we know that the CERB is still essential for a great many Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Our economic recovery will be driven by Canadians' hard work, innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. We tried our best to make sure Canadians would get the support they needed. However, the government rejected our fixes over and over, without explaining why.

What was its response to new parents? Crickets. The response to people interested in work-sharing? Crickets.

[*English*]

What was the response to a proposal to make sure that people can work more and keep their benefits? Crickets.

The government is bending over backward to reward their friends with hundreds of millions of dollars in government contracts while ignoring average Canadians who need the help getting back on their feet. For new parents begging for help, they are told to go back to work. For Liberal friends, it is buckets of cash heading out the door.

[*Translation*]

Now we come to the subject of the future of EI. The government announced that the CERB would be coming to an end and that people could go on EI. The millions of Canadians who do not qualify for EI will probably get something else, but who knows what that will be?

All that Canadians have gotten from this government is uncertainty and not enough information. Making sure people will be able to pay their rent and provide for their families is certainly one political issue that the government is responding to as ambiguously as possible.

[*English*]

When I first got the honour of filling this shadow cabinet position, I had a series of briefings with the ESDC staff. One of the topics was the future of the EI system. The expert in charge told me that if everything went well, it might still take a decade to transition to a new and modern EI system. They also said that implementing any change to EI would take 16 months to implement, yet the Prime Minister seems to be saying that such a transfer will happen next month, but that the government can't give us any details, but just to hang tight.

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CERB is ending, but there are still millions of active claims and the minister herself said earlier this year they had to put in CERB because the EI system could not handle that many claims. However, now the Liberals want people to just trust them, saying that it will all go well, without providing any proof that anything has been improved.

[Translation]

This week, the minister announced that he would set the unemployment rate at less than 13% across the country since young people need to work fewer hours to be eligible for regular EI benefits in regions where the unemployment rate is not as high. This seems like a makeshift technical solution to get the outmoded system to allow applicants to work fewer hours. This is not a new system. This is the same system that failed in March, requiring the implementation of the CERB, for which there was no oversight whatsoever. Just like parental leave, this is not a future problem, it is a current problem, and young people are scared.

[English]

Dr. Tammy Schirle from Wilfrid Laurier has posed this hypothetical question that I believe will illustrate a major concern well. It is as follows, “Joe got laid off in mid March and put in an EI claim right away, got CERB. Will that count as part of the 26 weeks of benefits? Or is the transition into EI a new claim?” People who applied for the CERB through EI would presumably have EI files. Will those be transferred to EI? How does the system know that the CERB time does not subtract from future EI time if it is the same claim? Is it the government's assertion that every single CERB claim will seamlessly transfer to an EI claim with zero issues?

What proof can the government give Canadians that it will work, that people should have faith that they will get a payment right away? The government has given none. It took a few days for CERB to get paid and EI took almost a month. Will people have to wait a month from the first transfer to get a payment? That would mean many people would go multiple months with zero support.

I am not asking these questions to scare people or to act like the sky is falling. I am asking these questions because we have zero evidence that the government is going to address them, and people need certainty.

● (1500)

I have not touched on many major aspects of this. For the people who are not EI eligible, the government says there will be something there for them. Will they go to EI? Will CRA manage a CERB-like program or will ESDC? Will this program pay a flat rate like CERB or a percentage of wages like EI? These are important questions that we deserve answers to.

[Translation]

Canadians deserve answers.

[English]

The government's response is to just wait and that everything will be fine.

As the official opposition, we are going to make sure that we hold the government to account and to seek real answers. Canadians deserve nothing less than that.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Chair, thank you for the opportunity to ask a question of my colleague. Before I do so, I would like to thank him for his French. He continues to improve his French language, and that is impressive.

[Translation]

I sincerely thank him and I hope he will keep up the good work.

[English]

This summer, I have been spending time in my riding, meeting and speaking with many people. Business owners, for example, have been talking to me about how important the wage subsidy has been for their businesses. Others have spoken to me about the rent subsidy and how that has helped their businesses, as well as the Canada emergency business account. These have all been key discussions with the business community.

I have also heard from veterans, families, seniors, youth, and middle-class Canadians how the supports that we have put in place to support these different groups of Canadians have been so effective.

My colleague speaks of delays. Can he answer why his party refused for over six weeks to financially support people with disabilities?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the member's observations on my French. I will try to improve even more.

It is important for us to look back at what exactly happened. The opposition leader said at that time that we would meet right then to discuss the government's bill. When I have spoken to people in disability groups, I heard that people who are receiving the Canada pension plan disability payments were not included. Neither were veterans, people whom this particular member of Parliament, as a parliamentary secretary, should be very concerned about.

We wanted to have a full discussion; the government did not. The government was in charge and decided not to have a debate, and stalled it further. What did we see? We passed a new benefit, and it includes veterans.

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This member of Parliament needs to start looking in the mirror to his own government and ask, “Are we part of the problem here?”

• (1505)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Chair, my friend from British Columbia very clearly brought forward the concerns that many of us have heard, particularly the uncertainty that many Canadians are facing going forward. The member's riding, Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, is a very beautiful part of our province. In a previous life, I was a tree planter and spent many years around the Merritt area and Princeton.

When we are thinking about the uncertainty, I think of the uncertainty that many applicants have had with the Canada summer jobs program. Unfortunately, many worthwhile organizations were cut off because the funding ran out. We juxtapose that with the student grants program that has now imploded because of the Liberals' mismanagement, which they tried to blame on the opposition, but the blame is entirely at their feet. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on how that program, which was already in existence and already amended to suit the times we are in, could have been used to help many worthwhile organizations hire students, who could be working right now as we speak.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member for even saying publicly again that he is my friend. He does not seem to learn.

The NDP members have raised a number of criticisms on the student service grant, one of them being that people would get less than minimum wage. They have asked a lot of good questions around this, so I applaud his party for doing that.

However, the focus should have been always on how we get resources to those who have the least and are in the biggest need. That is something we should be asking ourselves constantly when we are in a crisis. How do we help those the most?

We have an existing program that has large support in the chamber, and that is the Canada summer jobs. I have had entrepreneurs and not for profits coming to me saying that they could have given great jobs to people and helped them to support them so did not have to get big loans later. That would have been a much better situation. It would not have caused a controversy. It would not have distracted the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance to such an extent that they are basically unable or unwilling to do their jobs in the middle of a pandemic.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Chair, we heard before an accusation by the member from Nova Scotia that somehow it was Conservatives who stalled the disability part of the bill. In fact, it was the government that stalled it. We proposed, as the hon. member said, that we deal with that issue that day and it ended up being stalled.

The opposition has brought other issues to our attention in this team Canada approach, including the student payments and the emergency wage subsidy, which were significantly lacking in the beginning of the announcements of those programs.

Could the member highlight for Canadians the efforts and effects that the role of the opposition has played throughout this crisis?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I would just go back to our original discussions around Bill C-13. The Liberal government made an unparalleled power grab and the opposition leader pushed back, along with many members of the opposition parties, to say that we were not going to give unfettered, unheralded power to amend our laws without going through Parliament.

What we did give the government was a lot of power to introduce programs. This is where it is really important for us, as members of Parliament, to be relating the experiences on the front lines of the pandemic in our ridings. Ottawa is very far away from British Columbia.

When we bring up suggestions, for example, about the Canadian emergency business account, stating those loggers, realtors and barbers using a personal chequing account are now at a disadvantage to their competition across the street who have been using a business chequing account, it is really unfair. In May, the Prime Minister said that the government would fix this, but it still has not done that.

We have done a lot of good things on this side, such as the Canadian emergency wage subsidy among others, and a lot of other parties have contributed to that. However, the government needs to continue to understand that we are on the front lines and that members of Parliament do understand the problems in their ridings. The Liberals need to respect that and start listening. Again, if we are to see the country get through this pandemic, it will be because Canadians bring the problems to Ottawa and they are heard and responded to ably.

• (1510)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Chair, in response to the member for Barrie—Innisfil and the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, when the issue of the disability bill came forward and the Conservatives wanted to debate it, there were two other opportunities on that day to do so, but they voted against it. Let us celebrate the fact that there is meaningful legislation right now that is taking care of those people who really need this.

When the member talks about businesses, giving supports to them and the government not listening to what is being said by members of Parliament, we had a number of programs that were literally built, developed and implemented in a matter of days, programs that probably would have taken a year to 18 months to develop and deliver by any other standard.

In fact, the government did listen to stakeholders and members of Parliament who raised concerns about various programs and reacted very quickly to making changes on those, whether it be the CERB or the wage subsidy program.

Government Orders

Would the member not agree that there was at least some back and forth among the government, members of Parliament and stakeholders to ensure those programs were as robust and meaningful as possible?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I come from British Columbia, so I am not really aware of the rules in Ontario. However, under stage 3, political back massage parlours are still not open. The MP just gave himself the biggest amount of pats on the back I have every seen.

Perhaps we need to focus on what is true. What is true is that we are in a minority Parliament. The government put forward a proposal, an expanded one that included veterans and people with Canada pension plan disabilities. That was a good thing and it had support for it. However, the member is giving himself a pat on the back for something that has still not been made available. The Liberals will not tell people with disabilities when this will happen. It will probably be in autumn, months after.

The government seems to think that all it has to do is say the right words in this place, that everything is fine and it should be congratulated. The Liberals have a job to do. They were elected to do that job. We were elected to make sure they do it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Chair, again, I am in the interesting position of supporting my Conservative colleague's comments that the Liberals tend to embellish and boast about things that happened a long time ago.

It is true that at the beginning of the pandemic, the government sought unprecedented special powers to deal with an unprecedented crisis and that, for a while, the government was open to a number of suggestions from the opposition parties. During this time, no one was questioning the urgency of the situation. The Liberal Party later slipped back into old habits and became the party we knew in the early 2000s. Members will recall the scandal that happened back then. The Liberals, showing a naïveté that would make Voltaire rethink *Candide*, thought no one would notice anything, as they took advantage of the special powers Parliament granted them, even though they are a minority government. One morning, a case popped up, and then another one. More cases could emerge. This is concerning.

I wanted to be here today. That is not the case for everyone, but I will definitely respect the rules of the House. I would not want to disturb the very large number of Liberals in the House, who I can count on both hands. I have far too much respect for elected officials and institutions to not show up one day out of five weeks in Canada's House of Commons. I was just wondering why, as a sovereignist, I sometimes have more respect for federal institutions than the members of the federal government do. There is something odd in this situation. It led me to consider something I shared with the media this morning, which was a fundamental question: Does the Canadian government deserve the confidence of Quebecers and Canadians? That is not a trifling matter. It is the foundation of our democracy. There is no surefire way to confirm it. Quebecers and Canadians are not connected to a "confidence meter".

Canadians entrusted 338 members, who are the voice of the people, to manage the nation's affairs, and it is up to those 338 members to grant or withdraw their confidence in the government. The

Liberal's performance, answers and attitude here today truly seem to suggest that the members on that side are somewhat lacking when it comes to inspiring confidence. It is our duty to raise the question because, as I was saying earlier, this Parliament granted the government exceptional powers in good faith. A few months later, we discovered, of course, the now infamous WE Charity, which will go down in history. I once again want to emphasize that the organization was later named UNIS, as though it somehow catered to francophones, when francophones in Quebec and Canada were not even on WE Charity's radar.

We are talking about astronomical amounts of money, mind-boggling amounts, and the participation of the contract recipient in the implementation of a program that was obviously tailor-made to ensure the government could claim that public servants were not capable of managing it. How insulting. Then, the managers of WE Charity, who had other governance problems, said that they were withdrawing, and the government gave the program back to those same public servants who it had claimed, not too long before, did not have the necessary expertise to manage the program. Eventually, there will be another scandal, and it will be the same old story all over again.

● (1515)

A Crown corporation agency is going to outsource it to a private company because it cannot manage it itself, even though it is bigger than the private company. That is appalling, because it amounts to the government failing to recognize the skills and qualifications of Canada's public servants. It makes no sense. On top of that, the government has a nasty habit of having friends who magically appear at just the right time to take on contracts for tens of millions of dollars. It is quite something. That is where we are at.

I have been taking notes this whole time. No one is talking about an energy transition, even though that should be a priority, since public investment in the economic recovery will also be historic. No one is talking about creating industrial innovation clusters. No one is talking about electrifying heavy-duty vehicles. I saw a report on that topic this morning. No one is talking about a number of things that could offer a way to get out of this crisis by creating economic activity.

No one is talking about fixes to certain programs that still fall short. Our colleague mentioned that earlier. Initially, we completely understood that there could be some gaps, since the program was created hastily and urgently, but after a while, enough is enough, and those gaps need to be filled. No one is talking about that. They are talking about the scandals.

Seniors who got a cheque that was supposed to cover a three-month period are not getting a second cheque. The three months ended a long time ago, and when they got their cheque, another one was supposed to be in the works. Seniors received \$300 to get through the crisis, while the Liberal Party paid itself \$850,000 through the wage subsidy program. Soon the Liberal Party will have \$1.8 million in its pocket that it can use for the next election campaign. Seniors are being offered \$300. If they get the guaranteed income supplement, they receive an extra \$200. Seniors feel like this government is laughing in their faces.

Meanwhile, they have not written the second cheque to farmers for supply management. They could very well have done it, as they do not need to table a budget to pay out the second year of the compensation that the government promised. Meanwhile, the fundamental problem with the scholarship program that was to have been managed by WE Charity has not been resolved, even though it falls under Quebec's jurisdiction.

It is easy to manage the WE Charity. The government has to calculate Quebec's share, write a cheque and send it to the Legault government. He will manage it because it is within his authority. No, the temptation is too strong. The Liberals want to centralize everything, interfere in Quebec's and the provinces' jurisdiction and hand out contracts to their friends. Then they wonder why some people, like us, have serious reservations.

Is it better to trigger an election if this government refuses to change some key players? Is it better to let the government continue like this than to trigger an election? This is not a disease. This morning, the government said that calling an election would be risky because of the pandemic. That is true. This all started with the pandemic. That may be true, but the government still needs to address the real issues. If we were to agree that we cannot call an election while a second and third wave are looming, this government would continue to act as though it were a majority government, a government that ignores its own scandals and acts as though we are living under a temporary dictatorship. That is obviously a preposterous notion.

That is why the Bloc Québécois is saying that some people need to go. The Prime Minister needs to go. The Minister of Finance needs to go. They may be prepared to agree on this, but throwing one person under the bus will not save the other. The Prime Minister's chief of staff needs to go, so that people who are ostensibly qualified can take over for at least six months and manage this crisis effectively. After six months, I can make no promises.

It is only natural that Parliament ask questions about the fact that the management of the crisis was used to the advantage of the Liberals to help them get re-elected or to help out their friends after they or members of their families received sums of money much larger than what would have been needed to save many businesses in Quebec and Canada. For that reason, we need to ask ourselves some important questions.

• (1520)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr.

Government Orders

Chair, I completely disagree with the leader of the Bloc party. We have a Prime Minister and a Minister of Finance who have done an exceptional job in the last number of months given everything that we have had to overcome in bringing forward a wide spectrum of programs, which have assisted millions of Canadians by providing them with money in their pockets and saved hundreds of thousands of jobs. This has put Canada in a good position to be able to recover from the pandemic. The leader of the Bloc is more concerned about his political future and that of the Bloc party itself.

The Bloc wants to outdo the Conservatives with character assassination, it seems. I would suggest that whether someone is a resident of the Province of Quebec, Manitoba or any other province, they want us to remain focused on Canada and to do what is in the best interests of Canada as a nation. That includes the people of Manitoba, Quebec and other jurisdictions.

Does the member not see that there is a strong, important role that Canada needs to play in co-operation with all of the different levels of government to make sure that we can get through this pandemic in a positive way?

• (1525)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Chair, I have two things to say.

First, and I will not translate all that for Quebecers, if the hon. member said that I want to serve my party, it is because he recognizes that my party is currently doing very well. I thank the Liberals for that because it is partly due to their own incompetence.

Second, are the Liberals sometimes capable of doing good things without lining their friends' pockets?

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague.

Earlier, I called this government a kleptocracy. In a kleptocracy, corrupt politicians enrich themselves secretly outside the rule of law through kickbacks, bribes and special favours, or they simply direct state funds to themselves or their associates.

Given all the scandals, would my colleague agree that the Liberals put the interests of their families, friends and connections first?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Chair, I would not go so far as to call it a kleptocracy. We will wait a few weeks before going there.

However, I understand that some people are very worried: people who pay consumption and income taxes, people who work, people who want to work but cannot, and people who should return to work but are deterred by the programs. There is a problem and we have to find solutions for the common good.

Government Orders

It is a real problem when we continue to hear that public money that could save dozens of companies ends up in the pockets of people who, oddly enough, are close to the system or, even worse, in the pockets of people who channelled tens of thousands of dollars to the families of the two main leaders of this government.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Chair, the leader of the Bloc mentioned supply management. As my party's agriculture critic, that is a very important thing. I would agree that this self-imposed crisis that the Liberals have brought on themselves has sucked the political oxygen out of the room, and as a result we are spending so much time on this when we could be spending time on other things.

We have heard radio silence from the Minister of Agriculture, particularly on compensation for our chicken, egg and turkey farmers for the CPTPP and now the upcoming agreement with the United States. When those trade deals come into force, we are going to see massive amounts of poultry and eggs flooding our market, and still we have no word on what the compensation is going to be. We have no word from the Minister of Agriculture on who is going to be on the advisory council to help implement the national food policy.

I would like to hear from the leader of the Bloc on this because I know that supply management is very important in the province of Quebec. Perhaps he could tell the House what the farmers in Quebec are saying, because I am pretty sure that is being echoed right across the country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Chair, as I said earlier, there are things that Parliament and the government are not doing because they are busy dealing with some not-so-good things. It is true that, not too long ago, the government seemed to be on a roll, perhaps leading it to believe that it might stick around.

However, once again, the government has shot itself in the foot. It is spending all of its time shooting itself in the foot, and we are now faced with a series of scandals that have Quebecers and Canadians saying, "same old story, same old gang".

Those are definitely a concern, but as a result, we have failed to adequately address issues such as supply management and the payment of compensation. We have not spent enough time talking about some other supply managed sectors, namely, the egg and poultry sectors.

Again today, there are several issues that we did not spend much time on.

We in the Bloc Québécois will address these issues; we will talk about aluminum shortly. It is important. It is major. It is vital for Quebec, but today, we are addressing Liberal turpitude rather than dealing with serious issues. Aluminum was not properly protected and the protections against what the American government had basically already announced were not discussed, considered or implemented. We presented a series of proposals to the government and we are asking that it find someone who has time to look at them in order to protect Quebec aluminum.

• (1530)

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Chair, the Liberal Party really suffered as a result of the sponsorship scandal in the early 2000s. Canadians put the Liberals in the penalty box for over 10 years. Now, with the WE Charity and the wage subsidy program, they have been caught with both hands in the cookie jar. It seems this sort of behaviour is in their DNA and they are unable to change. They see a cookie jar and they just cannot help themselves from digging in.

I have a simple question for my colleague, who I commend for his speech. Let us consider the sponsorship scandal. Is there not a resemblance to today's WE Charity scandal? Are we not seeing the same old Liberal patterns playing out?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Chair, it would be so easy to agree, but I do not want to say yes, because we have other work to do.

Of course, for the media and for many parliamentarians, the big question is this: Will the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives manage to convince the NDP to stop supporting the Liberals? That, however, is not the real question.

The real question is whether the government can survive for six months by replacing the bad guys with good guys. That is all we are asking for. If we could have that, the government could avoid all the comparisons with other scandals that were awful for Quebec, for Canada and for the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party certainly has no desire to return to the back benches. Can we simply put the right people in the right place to get good results? That way, no one would have to be brought down.

The Deputy Speaker: We have just enough time for one short question.

The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank you for recognizing me. I could not resist the temptation of asking the leader of the Bloc Québécois a question.

He was telling us that he went on vacation in the Gaspé. He told us to stay the course. Staying the course is exactly what this government is doing. I would ask the Bloc leader to talk to us about creating jobs, the economic recovery, and health and safety because the school year is about to begin. We want constructive ideas.

We are aware that in a democracy like ours, the people across the way in the opposition parties have a role to play. Today, I am giving the leader of the Bloc the opportunity to give us constructive measures that we might use to create jobs, help the economy recover, and ensure the health and safety of the young people who will be going back to school very soon.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Chair, that is all well and good, but our situations are rather different.

I am doing my job of looking after my riding and, when I am not there, I am visiting the rest of Quebec. By the way, the Magdalen Islands are not part of the Gaspé region. The hon. minister's job is to travel around the world. Of course, when he returns, he must do a little tour of the Mauricie, which is a wonderful region.

Just a few minutes ago, I proposed some economic measures, but I will make one specific proposal to the minister.

Would it be possible to establish funds and empower the regions to determine their own economic future based on their specific characteristics, expertise, vision and desire to have greener technologies and create wealth?

These decisions must be made by the regions. To that end, the pandemic recovery strategy must be driven by Quebec's regions and not by a foreign multinational in 2021.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Chair, it is good to be here in person in the chamber representing my constituents, the wonderful people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Looking back, I do not think any of us, when we were making our New Year's resolutions back in January, could have predicted how this year would turn out. It has certainly been a year of great upheaval, a year of great uncertainty and a year of great anxiety. We are here to reflect accurately the struggles that many small businesses and individuals have had to endure during a very tumultuous time. The same goes for the people in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, who are still dealing with the economic and social consequences of COVID-19.

This pandemic has very much laid bare the inadequacies of our social safety net, and it has also made us realize the dependence we have on essential workers who are doing that front-line work, putting themselves and their loved ones at risk, often for low wages. There are several tiers of workers in this country, and those who make the least and struggle with multiple hours a week are often the ones putting themselves in danger. We also have been forced to confront the systemic inequality, poverty and, indeed, racism, that has very much come to the fore in 2020.

The NDP's goal throughout this pandemic has been to get more help to more people, more quickly. When the government rolled out its programs, they were, in many cases, inadequate at first blush. Based on the feedback that the opposition gave, we were able to make them better. Yes, there are still gaps that exist, but I believe that if we look at what was on offer in late March and early April, we have made measurable successes and improvements, and that is a testament to the hard work of members of the opposition. It is also a testament to the constituents who informed us, as their members of Parliament, of what was working and what was not, and a testament to the fact that we were able to bring those voices to this place and get the changes that were sorely needed.

Unfortunately, in these last few weeks, we have had this scandal erupt with the WE Charity. It is a scandal that has taken all of the political oxygen out of the room. This is a time when Canadians expect us to be focusing on them and focusing on the recovery efforts,

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and unfortunately we have a Minister of Finance and a Prime Minister who are suffering, yet again, from self-inflicted wounds.

The most important document any cabinet minister should be reading when he or she takes office is the Conflict of Interest Act. It very clearly states that one should recuse oneself when dealing with a situation that could involve benefit to oneself, family members or friends, and that ministers should not accept free travel when carrying out their duties, especially with an organization that has the potential to benefit from government contracts and services. Unfortunately, because of the Liberals' ability to step on every ethical rake on the lawn, we are dealing with that situation when we could very well be dealing with the important matters that face our constituents.

Specifically, many small businesses in my riding, and across Canada, are suffering very much. If we look at the statistics from the B.C. Chamber of Commerce, most businesses that were surveyed were reporting a decline in income that resulted in the loss of employees. Each one of those employees was another person who was unable to provide for his or her family, and who had to find a way to make home finances work. It was a very significant and disconcerting event for many people.

There are two particular examples in my riding. I will highlight V2V Black Hops Brewing, which is in Langford. It is sort of a social enterprise brewery that donates some of its profits to helping veterans, particularly homeless veterans. It is a very noble cause, because even though the government has been given the money by Parliament to try to address veterans' issues, unfortunately, we still have a big problem with providing adequate veteran services and benefits.

● (1535)

This great program, run by V2V Black Hops Brewing, exists in Langford. Unfortunately, the company was unable to qualify for the Canadian emergency wage subsidy and also had problems with the commercial rental assistance subsidy because of problems with the CRA. My office has repeatedly tried to get assistance from the Minister of National Revenue on this, but so far there has been radio silence.

I also think of the retailer Sports Traders Duncan, which has been owned and operated by Richard and Maureen Ellis since 1995. Of course, they saw a precipitous drop in their business because there have not been any team sports happening. No one is coming in to buy sports equipment, so they saw a huge drop in their revenues. It was a calamitous drop for a business that has existed in my community for about 25 years. They were in a situation where their landlord did not want to participate in the commercial rental assistance program. Unfortunately, the Liberals designed the program so that it required buy-in by the landlord.

What does a business do when it has an unco-operative landlord? There was no other route to take, even though I brought this to the attention of several ministers. Unfortunately, this business, which has been a pillar of our community for so many years, is now facing bankruptcy. We are probably going to lose it, although it is owned by two outstanding members of the community, and it will probably never be seen again.

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I want to highlight the efforts that have been made by two individuals in our caucus: the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, who is our finance critic, and the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, our critic for small business and tourism. Both of whom have repeatedly called on the government to make improvements to this program. Unfortunately, they were met with inaction.

Those are the things that we need to address. I know that small businesses continue to look to their elected leaders here in the House to find ways to make sure they are going to recover as we move into later stages of dealing with this pandemic.

Coming from British Columbia, I would be remiss if I did not talk about the ongoing opioid crisis. The opioid crisis continues to ravage my communities. In British Columbia in the last couple of months, we saw a record number of deaths. Unfortunately, because of a toxic street supply of drugs, we are continuing to see these overdose death rates.

I will commend both the federal government and the B.C. government for starting pilot projects under the substance use and addictions program to try to deal with this, and get a safe supply of drugs to users so that they will not be exposed to that toxic supply. However, it is time for the next bold step from the federal government. I need the federal government to step up to the plate and join the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, several medical health officers from across the country and the premier of British Columbia to finally institute the decriminalization measures that we need to see. The biggest roadblock that we still have is the stigma of ongoing criminality for possession of a small amount of drugs. We need to find a way to make people come forward with the problems they have, so that they are not afraid that the criminal justice system is going to pounce on them if they try to get the help they need.

I'm not talking about legalizing drugs. I still believe that we need to have penalties in place for people who traffic and deal drugs, but for those who are suffering under the curse of addiction, we need to get the criminal justice system out of the way. We need a social and health approach to this very deep and ongoing problem.

Just in the last minute I have, we are at a moment in time when it seems like a giant pause button has been pressed on our society. I think we have collectively been given the time and space to think about where we have been, where we are now and where we want to go in the future. It is quite obvious that we cannot return to the way things were, not only because of the inadequacies of the social safety net, the fault lines that exist and the deep inequalities. This is a time for us to really think about the kinds of measures that we can put in place, not just shovel-ready projects but shovel-worthy projects, really making sure we are looking after people, giving them an adequate income to live on, and making sure that we are investing in energy and infrastructure projects that truly meet the needs of a 21st-century Canada.

● (1540)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we know the CERB program came into existence because it was generally felt that we needed to get money into the pockets of

Canadians who found themselves out of work as a result of the coronavirus. The program was a huge success. Over eight million Canadians ultimately went on the CERB program. My question is related to that.

We had the employment insurance program, which would not have been able to achieve what the CERB program could. To try to make those modifications would not have worked, so we have the CERB. Now we are looking at transitioning the CERB program.

I am wondering if my colleague could provide his thoughts as to what he, or the NDP, would like to see in that transition from the CERB to employment insurance. Moving in that direction seems to be more of a long-term solution for not only many of his or my constituents, but in fact for all Canadians.

Would he agree?

● (1545)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Chair, I would like to remind the parliamentary secretary that what the government first put on offer at the end of March was not the CERB. It was a result of the NDP pushing the Liberals that we finally got the CERB. If the hon. member remembers, right from the get-go the NDP was calling for \$2,000 per month for every person in Canada, a sort of universal basic income to make sure no one was falling through the cracks. It was a simple program that would ensure that everyone had enough income to adequately deal with the acute phase of the crisis.

While the CERB was a partial answer to that, unfortunately a lot of the other programs became overly bureaucratic and had a lot of hoops to jump through. We were forced to make little band-aid patches along the way.

Going forward, I think it is incumbent upon the government to adequately explain what its plans are as we transition from CERB to EI. How much are people going to earn? What kinds of qualifications are going to be needed in order to transfer to EI?

We know that with the employment insurance program, as it existed pre-pandemic, there were still a lot of workers who were not covered, and EI required a certain number of hours, which was also a disqualifier. Yes, I understand this transition is coming, but we have to remember that there are still so many people suffering through this crisis who work in industries that have not seen the jobs return. We need to have a plan in place to make sure those people are looked after.

Just in ending, I am happy to report that one of our members, the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre, has brought forward a motion in the House. I believe it is Motion No. 46. I would encourage the government to look at that and the ideas the NDP is bringing forward and make sure we are looking after everyone equally.

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Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Chair, I certainly appreciate this member's contribution to today's debate. One of the things he mentioned was the commercial rental subsidy assistance program the government put in place. I will note that I have read that the finance minister of British Columbia, Carole James, said that every week her office phones the finance minister's office to ask if any changes have been made to the program because it is not well designed. I think she even said her own constituents are finding it difficult to reach that program.

I am also concerned the Liberals patted themselves on the back too early. They have established a 60-day period in which people could go to their doctors and go through a process to be certified eligible for the disability tax credit.

Is the member concerned, as I am, that the process is going to face complications due to COVID-19? Certain provinces are going to have different processes for it, and may have different timelines.

Second, I know that at the best of times 60 days is not a lot of time to make sure people get that help and support. Is the member concerned the program period for eligibility is too tight and may create complications for his constituents?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, going back in time, it was unfortunate that we did see a delay by the government in bringing forward these disability supports. I know it likes to place the blame on the opposition, but I find in this Parliament that the Liberals are still having a tough time coming to terms with the fact that they do not have a majority government anymore and that they are going to require the co-operation of the opposition to get things done. Our views are valid. We are bringing forward the concerns of our constituents, including those who live with disabilities.

It is great to see that the criteria for the disability tax credit have been expanded to include those who are on CPP disability and veterans, but we are concerned about how long it took to get to this and, yes, I do share the member's concerns. Any time a person with a disability, who is already very marginalized in society, has to jump through more hoops, which could include a trip to the doctor and more dealings with the bureaucracy, I am concerned that it will present more impediments to a segment of our society that cannot afford to deal with any more delays to their financial well-being.

• (1550)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are two pandemics in the country right now. We have COVID and an opioid pandemic. The opioid pandemic is very similar to COVID, in cutting across all sectors of society: rural, urban, rich and poor. I want to ask my hon. colleague about what he has seen in his community.

We know that in our Far North, the communities in Treaty 9 are so desperate to stop the opioids that they have people at the airports trying to stop the drugs from coming in because they have no other supports. In the city of Timmins, the police are working with mental health workers on the streets, trying to deal with this because they recognize that this is beyond criminal. This is a massive mental health crisis and we are seeing deaths, suffering and families being broken apart from the devastation from these drugs. We really want to be able to stop the pushers who are making these drugs, particularly fentanyl and its destructive nature, but we need to have

measures of support to get people out of the nightmare of opioid addictions.

What has my hon. colleague seen on the west coast and what steps can we take in this Parliament in the midst of this COVID pandemic to deal with the other pandemic, the opioid crisis?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, that is a really important question. What I like to say is that every single one of those deaths from an overdose was preventable. Those people were sons, daughters, sisters and brothers. They were members of families and are now gone forever because of an epidemic that is ravaging small communities right across the country, particularly in British Columbia and communities like Duncan in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

I am really pleased to announce to the House that the NDP leader, the hon. member for Burnaby South, is coming to my riding this Saturday. I am going to be taking him for a tour through some of the hardest-hit parts of my community, where he is going to have an opportunity to speak with local business owners who have been impacted by the epidemic, and also a chance to speak to front-line workers who have been going through PTSD because of the sheer number of people who are dying from this crisis.

To get to the member's question, it is great to see that we have programs like the substance abuse and addictions program by Health Canada, but that program needs to be expanded much more. It is the toxic street supply of drugs that really needs to be tackled, but the biggest thing we need to do and where we need the most leadership from the federal government is to address the ongoing criminalization of the possession of small amounts. Once we get past that step and get people past the ongoing stigma of criminality, I think they will be encouraged to come forward out of the shadows and get the help they truly need so that we can start taking very affirmative and worthwhile steps to tackle this crisis that is ravaging so many communities.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the member had talked about various programs, including the Canada emergency wage subsidy. In my area, there are many very important charities and not-for-profits that cannot access the Canada emergency wage subsidy because they use a contractor for the majority of their activities. For example, the Summerland Youth Centre hires someone to do all of the cleaning and because it is not open in the regular fashion because of COVID-19, it cannot afford to pay him.

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Does the member have any examples of that in his riding or other areas where the government may need to make some changes to the program? I know it is also happening with the BC Hockey Hall of Fame, so it is a growing issue in the Okanagan.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, like every member of Parliament, I have had examples come through my constituency office of people who do not follow what we call a “traditional” employment model. They sometimes contract out services, and if they have seen their business revenues decline and no longer need those contract services, the person under contract is simply out of luck. We have brought those examples to the government's attention repeatedly and we still need action on them, so I would like to thank my colleague for bringing forward that example.

• (1555)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by offering my sincere condolences to the people of Lebanon following last week's devastating explosion in Beirut. My heart goes out to everyone affected by this tragedy and the hundreds of thousands of Lebanese Canadians who are worried about their friends and family. Canada is working with the international community to identify how we can support urgent needs and continue to offer emergency supports such as medical aid, food and shelter.

Here at home, the Government of Canada is working with all levels of government to respond to the ongoing threat of COVID-19 and to reduce the impact it is having on families, communities and our economy. We have seen a decrease in the number of positive COVID-19 cases and associated deaths over the past few months, which shows that we have really flattened the curve. This downward trend is largely the result of two factors: one, governments working together in a coordinated pan-Canadian fashion, and two, the ongoing efforts of individual Canadians who are diligently following our public health advice.

As we safely and gradually reopen our economy, we need to remain vigilant. We need to learn from the experiences of other countries that are seeing a significant resurgence of cases, and prevent that from happening here at home.

For today's debate, I would like to highlight some of the actions that have been taken by the Public Health Agency of Canada since the onset of this pandemic. As members know, collaboration is the cornerstone of good public health. That is why the Government of Canada has taken a whole-of-government approach to managing this crisis and is committed to working with the provinces and territories and our international partners.

Public Health Agency of Canada officials have been working closely with international organizations such as the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization, as well as with public health agencies such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to protect the health and safety of Canadians and the global community.

We have been engaging with our G7 counterparts on a regular basis to share information on public health measures, to learn from their experiences, and to share best practices and identify possible joint actions to tackle this outbreak together. Of course, we have been working very closely with the provinces and territories throughout this time on vital issues such as developing guidance on

infection prevention, conducting laboratory testing and ensuring that facilities are equipped with the personal protective equipment and ventilators they need.

It is important to recognize that the science around COVID-19 is rapidly evolving, which means that our public health guidance continues to evolve along with it. Researchers at PHAC are working with scientific experts in various fields across the country and around the world to continually review and evaluate the latest scientific evidence. When they determine that the body of evidence has gained sufficient credibility and acceptability with the scientific community, our advice and guidance is updated as quickly as possible to reflect the best current scientific knowledge and public health practices.

Since the beginning of the outbreak, PHAC officials have worked with provincial, territorial and international partners to detect signals and investigate transmission patterns of COVID-19 in communities across Canada. Multiple data streams are used to monitor and illustrate the current situation in Canada, including daily case information by province and territory in developing outbreak scenarios. PHAC analyzes this data on a daily basis to monitor trends for early detection of new patterns of transmission. PHAC also monitors early warning signs and systems to collect and exchange timely information on public health events with its members.

The Government of Canada, in collaboration with other orders of government and across sectors, has developed a new nationwide mobile app to let users know if they may have been exposed to COVID-19. The app, called COVID Alert, is free and available to all Canadians to download. COVID Alert uses strong measures to protect the privacy and confidentiality of any data it collects. The app does not track a user's location or collect personally identifiable information. It is another tool that Canadians can use to help slow the spread of infection, prevent future outbreaks and protect our communities as we ease restrictions and restart the economy. I urge all Canadians to download and use this app. Certainly, the more people who use it the more effective it will be.

• (1600)

The government has also taken strong measures at the border to limit the introduction and spread of COVID-19 and to protect the health of Canadians.

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For example, emergency orders have been enacted under the Quarantine Act to restrict discretionary entry into Canada from abroad and to strengthen measures to reduce the importation risk from other countries. This means that people entering Canada, no matter their country of origin or their mode of entry, are required to quarantine for 14 days. Some exemptions to the mandatory quarantine are allowed so critical infrastructure, essential services and economic supply chains can continue between Canada and the United States.

All travellers entering Canada are required to provide certain information upon entry, including contact information and an appropriate quarantine plan. The government has developed a mobile app called “ArriveCAN” to allow travellers to input their information quickly, easily and securely before, during and after their arrival at the border.

I am pleased to see that thousands of travellers to Canada are using the “ArriveCAN” app. This means they are spending less time with border services officers, public health officers and other travellers and in lineups.

PHAC is increasing its public health presence to 36 points of entry across the country, which cover 90% of all traffic coming into Canada during normal operating circumstances. This positions us well to deal with increasing non-essential travel now that international travel is starting to resume.

I also want to mention vulnerable populations. The government recognizes that while public health measures are essential for stopping the spread of COVID-19, they have taken a toll on Canadians. COVID-19 is creating stress and anxiety for people, particularly for those who do not have ready access to their regular support networks. This has had an impact on mental wellness and has increased the risks associated with family violence and substance use. This is why our government created the wellness together Canada portal to connect Canadians with mental health and substance use supports.

PHAC has also announced new initiatives that can help reduce the risk and impacts of family violence, including funding for the Kids Help Phone, shelters and sexual assault services, income support initiatives and support for non-profit and charitable organizations. In addition, PHAC continues to work closely with Correctional Service Canada to strengthen measures to prevent the introduction and transmission of COVID-19 in federal correctional institutions across Canada.

This is just a snapshot of some of the actions that the Public Health Agency of Canada has taken to protect the health and safety of Canadians from COVID-19. As all members in the House can appreciate, an incalculable amount of work is going on behind the scenes across all orders of government and with our many partners in the public health, academic and research communities.

By continuing to work together, we will further our understanding of this novel coronavirus and gain the scientific evidence and data we need to inform our public health planning and response at local, national and international levels. We need to continue to be vigilant; operate based on scientific evidence, which is accumulating; and adapt our public health measures accordingly. This is part

of being a responsive government. I am very proud to say I am part of a team that is being really responsive at a time when Canadians need us most.

Last, I would like to commend all our public health agency staff right across the country. We have professionals who are top-notch and they have done an incredible job of helping all our communities.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for the member.

He talked about the COVID-19 app that the Government of Canada has put forward. First, would he have any idea when provinces like British Columbia will have access to this?

Second, it has been brought to my attention that those who have iPhone 6 or older phones, as well as people who do not have the money for a smart phone, are unable to download the app and utilize it.

Has the Government of Canada considered these factors? We want as many Canadians as possible to have access at the same level of service that others do, but there are a number of questions of whether this will receive pickup, of having them apply across the country, as well as the issues with the different operating systems, age of phones and access to it. Is it a concern to the member?

• (1605)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his deep concern in making sure this app is accessible to all Canadians.

The government has done a great job of developing an application that will be adopted by many users across the country. Many of our measures are not perfect. We roll them out and obtain feedback, and then continue work on them. With every one of our measures during COVID-19, I am proud that we have remained responsive to the feedback we have received.

I appreciate the feedback the member has given. There may be some portions of the population that will not be able to access the app, but I hope we can address those concerns.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the member talked about the health response to the COVID-19 pandemic and vulnerable populations, but he did not mention the other national health crisis we are facing in Canada. Last week in Victoria, I went to a Moms Stop The Harm event that called for decriminalization and an end to the opiate crisis. I spoke with health care workers, community members and families who have lost loved ones.

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The member highlighted the science-based and evidence-based approach that the government has taken to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is time for the government to do the right thing, to act with logic, compassion and courage, and take an evidence-based approach to decriminalizing drug use and medically regulating a safe supply.

As we deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, we cannot ignore the staggering death toll from the opiate crisis. When will the government listen to the experts, respect the evidence and treat addiction as a health issue, not a criminal one? These deaths are preventable. A safe supply saves lives.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I understand the deep concerns the member has about substance use and the rise in the number of cases in her area.

From my perspective, our government has tried to implement numerous measures to address the many different segments of the population that are vulnerable during the pandemic. The Wellness Together Canada portal offers tech support, info and videos on mental health issues, modules people can use for coaching, community support and individual counselling. I know this does not adequately address the issue that the member has raised, but it is certainly a start. This is not to mention the fact that we have given \$157.5 million to shelters and another \$40 million to women's shelters and sexual assault services. We have also put out \$350 million through the emergency community support fund, which non-profit agencies, many of which are doing the work on the front lines, can use for people who suffer from substance use or substance abuse issues.

In general, I am very proud of our government for adopting a harm-reduction approach. That gives me a lot of confidence.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. I must say that I have absolutely no reason to doubt his motives, which seem to be quite noble. I had the opportunity to meet him soon after the election, during the orientation sessions for new members. At the time, I thought he had run for office with the goal of serving his constituents and the Canadian public. I think his motivation was truly sincere.

How does he feel about the fact that the government took advantage of the support of the opposition parties, which was given in good faith to address the pandemic, to literally stop answering to Parliament and prevent it from working?

The government is acting as if it were a majority government, which it is not. It must be accountable to Parliament. If I were a Liberal member of Parliament today, I would be very distressed to see that democracy is being hijacked in Parliament. This cannot be allowed to go on.

• (1610)

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member expressing the sincere intentions I had in running in the election and supporting the Liberal Party. It was a very conscious decision on my part. I certainly believe that our government has stepped up and

shown leadership during this pandemic and remained responsive every step of the way.

I don't share the concerns that are being raised in the House. I am an ethics professional and I see no basis for many of the things that are being claimed in the House. I feel there is a distortion of the truth and I really do think that our government is doing its best to show leadership at a time when Canadians need us most.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to hit on something that the member mentioned toward the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Should I wait until they are done, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Order, order. I want to remind everyone that if they are going to have conversations, they should not shout.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I want to hit on something that the member brought up toward the end of his speech, when he paid credit to the incredible public service we have in this country, which has been able to create, implement and deliver various programs that were brought forward and voted on by all members of the House, in most cases unanimously. It was able to deliver those programs to Canadians. For example, in a month and five days, we went from the World Health Organization declaring a pandemic to money getting into the bank accounts of 5.4 million Canadians. That would have never happened without the incredible public service that we have in this country.

I wonder if the member would like to expand on the final comment he made in that regard.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague providing me the opportunity to give more praise to our public service.

I have never in my life seen a government respond more quickly at a time when people needed it most. Oftentimes what we see and hear in the public realm is that people feel that our institutions do not move quickly enough. What I have seen is that our government has launched programs in a record amount of time and all of this work has been done by the public service.

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There are certainly roles that we all play. Just as I value the role of opposition members in these debates, I value the leadership that our caucus has shown in relaying all of the feedback we have been hearing in our communities to ensure that the Canada emergency response benefit will reflect the needs of people on the ground. It was restructured. It is the same with the wage subsidy. It was restructured multiple times, and I really feel that all of the changes that have been made have included the feedback we have heard.

It is incredible work. I am really proud to be Canadian and part of this government. I really think we are doing exceptional work. I thank my colleague for the opportunity to further praise our public service.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has become clear that the Liberals are using the pandemic to shut down accountability and transparency, potentially to usher in big government dependency, while targeted support is not actually getting to Canadians who desperately need it.

In over five years, no province has borne the brunt of the Liberals' divisive, anti-business, anti-energy, anti-resource policies more than Alberta. The Liberals outright campaigned against Albertans and the oil and gas in 2019. Now the government is using COVID-19 to finish what it started, the destruction of Canadian oil and gas. What is crazy is that the finance minister and the natural resources minister keep acknowledging how bad it is for Canadian oil and gas now that the OPEC cartel has dropped prices, disproportionately harming Canadian energy. While demand has declined due to the pandemic, with no plan to go forward for Canadian energy, and the programs they have promised to help are complete failures, Albertans can be forgiven for concluding that the lack of support is by design or intentional.

Eighty-five days after the finance minister promised help in "hours or days", the specific help for small and medium-sized oil and gas companies has never actually happened, but just got merged into a generic mid-sized loan program. However, a medium-sized company needs \$100 million in annual revenue to qualify for the program. I guess the Liberals have a different definition of a medium-sized business than the rest of us do, or are completely oblivious to the damage in the sector so far. Even if a company does qualify, the interest rate is higher than that of the banks.

The large employer program has interest rates that rise to 15% by year five, which are payday loan rates, not emergency assistance. Furthermore, the small business loan amounts are too small for oil and gas suppliers, and when drillers face one or two years of zero revenue, short-term and fixed loans are really of no use.

The \$1.7 billion for orphaned wells is a drop in the bucket meant to create 5,000 jobs for a sector that has lost more than 200,000 jobs since 2015 and 20,000 since the pandemic started, with no end in sight. Orphaned wells have increased by 300% since 2015, precisely because of Liberal policies that have bankrupted operators.

The Liberals put the big banks in charge of applying for most of the BDC and EDC COVID programs, but banks are refusing because of the risk-sharing provisions, or to avoid doing work with a program from which they will not profit.

The reality is that Liberal ministers have been told all of this directly, repeatedly, privately and publicly, so their lack of action seems intentional and malicious. These Liberals are either oblivious or do not care about the damage they are doing to the fabric of our country, giving billions of Canadian tax dollars to their elite cronies and entitled, connected buddies, or benefiting Liberal friends or families, while everyday Canadians are struggling.

On a personal note, let me say that it is incredibly sad that as their federal representative, often the first thing I hear my constituents say to me these days is that it is time for Alberta to leave Canada. It is not just that of a vocal minority, but a growing view in Lakeland, and I believe it is my duty to express the scale and scope of that frustration and anger. People are not just talking about the concept, but about the mechanics, which should be particularly troubling given the unprecedented health, fiscal and economic crisis Alberta faces now. I guess it does not make the news because we are from a rural area or the Prairies, which is easy to ignore in Ottawa, but these Liberals have destroyed the faith of many Albertans in the federal government to the extent they have given up on the idea of Canada. That should shake every person in this chamber and everyone listening. It did not happen overnight, but it accumulated after five years of targeted attacks on Lakeland and Alberta, on federal jobs in my riding, on the oil and gas sector, on rural communities, on farmers and farm families. Cutting so many Albertans out of COVID-19 emergency supports is only the latest example.

From day one, the Liberals have gone out of their way to destroy livelihoods in Lakeland and Alberta, ignoring hundreds of thousands of job losses, spikes in bankruptcies, suicides and family breakdowns. They are sacrificing families and the future of their children for ideology and partisan gain.

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There is a serious agricultural emergency in Lakeland after an early snow trapped crops in the field last fall. This year's spring harvest was followed by excessive rains that flooded fields, prevented seeding or drowned crops, wiping out farm incomes for a third straight year. Liberal-caused uncertainty in export markets and the pandemic made things even more complicated for all producers. To make matters worse, the Liberals hiked their carbon tax by 50% on April 1, right in the middle of the pandemic, increasing costs for farmers who did manage to get their crops off the field and making literally everything more expensive in every sector of agriculture.

• (1615)

Of course, no industry has endured the single-minded sabotage and vilification of the Liberal government like oil and gas. The Prime Minister tells the world he wants to phase out Canada's most valuable export and largest private sector investor in the economy. The Liberals blocked, delayed and cancelled infrastructure for Canadian oil and gas, not for the benefit of the planet, because Canadian oil and gas is the most socially and environmentally responsible in the world, but in order to burnish the Prime Minister's celebrity status in the global jet-setting United Nations crowd. It makes no sense.

Developing all of Canada's resources and exporting Canadian natural gas will do far more to address global environmental challenges than anything the Liberals have imposed on Canada, and in particular on the prairies.

After the 2019 election, Liberal campaigners admitted they vilified the oil and gas sector. They put their electoral gain ahead of the country. Clearly, the Prime Minister has learned from his father's campaign tactics. As Pierre Trudeau's strategist said when justifying the pillaging of Alberta's earnings, "Screw the West, we'll take the rest."

Liberal cabinet ministers and Liberal MPs actively campaign against opportunities for Albertans that would benefit all of Canada, such as the Teck Frontier project, and have supported funding pipeline protesters and petitioned against oil and gas projects that would benefit Alberta and all of Canada. It has created an inherent animosity that goes even beyond changing this Prime Minister and this government.

The Liberals and the establishment's ambivalence to the thousands of mom-and-pop oil and gas suppliers shutting down in western Canada in real time, the lack of long-term assistance measures, the domino effect for financial support for producers to get drilling started again have been heard loud and clear in Lakeland, make no mistake.

For the first time since 1965, Alberta will receive more money from the federal government in 2020 than it sends. For 55 continuous years, wealth generated by Alberta strengthened the rest of Canada. The NEP in the 1980s under Pierre Trudeau took the most, at over \$30 billion a year, which has since declined, but since 2005, Alberta contributed more than \$20 billion a year than it received, which is more than any other province. Structural changes are needed to make Canada work for Alberta and to level the playing field. It would be good for all of Canada to value all of the regions in our country.

The Liberals are using COVID-19 as a so-called opportunity to re-engineer Canada's economy in ways that will further alienate and impoverish the west, and they are supported by their allies on the left.

Alberta punches above its weight in Canada. It is not an accident of geography or natural resources or demographics. It is not a coincidence. It is because generations of Albertans and Albertans by choice created an advantage by combining hard work, innovation, personal responsibility and free-market principles and policies to create private sector opportunities and a growing economy that attracted the best, the brightest and the youngest from all across Canada and the world to work and raise their families. It is free markets and free enterprise policies that propelled Alberta's economy to create nine out of every 10 new full-time jobs in Canada as recently as 2014 and to be a net contributor to Canada continuously for more than half a century.

The worst damage has always been done by federal intrusions into Alberta's natural resources policy, such as the NEP and now the dismantling of oil and gas through bills like Bill C-69 and Bill C-48, the blocking of pipelines, other regulations and roadblocks, barriers to exploration and to drilling, the carbon tax and now the failure of COVID support programs. Other provinces and regions have similar natural resource assets and opportunities, but they have not taken the same approach. It was the private sector and Alberta's entrepreneurial risk-taking innovation, combined with positive federal and provincial fiscal policies, that unlocked remarkable opportunities in Alberta for all of Canada.

After the 2015 election, in my first words in the House of Commons, I said, "A strong Alberta means a strong Canada." It is really a tragedy for my riding and for our country that the Liberals have done everything they can to undermine that reality. On election night, the Prime Minister said he heard Alberta and that he would do better. He has not. My constituents are watching everything they built for generations collapse in front of them, and the federal government keeps asking them to sacrifice more by accepting one more review, one more regulation and one more tax. It is suffocating Lakeland, and because of Alberta's outside contribution to Canada, it will suffocate Canada's economic recovery.

The perspective that Canada does not work for Alberta is unfortunately pervasive in Lakeland. As elected representatives, we owe a duty of more than platitudes about our positions on industries, laws and taxes, more than politics for personal and partisan gain. This is obvious to freedom-loving Albertans and Albertans by choice. In Lakeland, it is a self-evident truth that the status quo is neither acceptable nor sustainable.

• (1620)

If anything I have said in the chamber today makes colleagues angry or uncomfortable, I hope it weighs on them. I hope it keeps them up at night, like it does me. I hope they stop enabling and helping the most corrupt, entitled and out-of-touch Prime Minister, who is doing all this damage to our country.

• (1625)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even though I respect that the member, as a member of Parliament, can express whatever she wants inside the House and attribute it to her constituents, her comments are somewhat upsetting to me, as I am someone who grew up on the Prairies. I have been in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta. I spent my military days in Alberta. There are very strong nationalists who truly value and appreciate the contributions that come from being in a country with 10 provinces and three territories.

This member, probably more than most, will stand up with a story of a wolf in sheep's clothing to try to give an impression, a false impression, that the Government of Canada does not care about the Province of Alberta. This is absolutely false. It is a bunch of garbage. That is the reality of it. This government has given more money and more resources than Harper ever gave the Province of Alberta and indeed the Prairies.

She can speak the untruths all she wants, but they do not change the facts. At the end of the day, I see myself as a nationalist who is very proud to come from the Prairies. I stand up for the Prairies all the time, and I take exception to a member who tries to give the impression that Alberta is not being taken care of by the government in Ottawa.

When I was in the military, posted in Edmonton, I was very critical of the provincial government for not divesting Alberta's economy. There are all sorts of reasons that Alberta is being challenged to the degree it is being challenged today.

Would the member agree that not just Ottawa, but Alberta, municipalities and the different stakeholders, all of us, have an important role to play? That includes the fine work that I believe the federal government has done in investing in Alberta, just as it has in the Prairies.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, I guess that captures the irreconcilable difference we may reach. I would invite the member to come to Lakeland and try that baloney on any one of my constituents. The point I am trying to make is that the sentiment I outlined in my remarks crosses demographics, crosses ages and crosses partisan lines.

This concept that the country is not working and needs to either get a better deal for Alberta or explore other options is being talked about in my very rural and very Conservative riding of Lakeland by people who voted NDP in the last two provincial elections and by people who voted Liberal in the 2015 election. They have come up to me and told me that. I would suggest that the response from the senior member, a person who has been here for a long time, to

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stand up to yell at me and berate me, suggesting that what I have said is invalid and not true, is exactly the problem.

I am a first-generation Albertan, actually. My mother was from Newfoundland and my father was from Nova Scotia, just so the member understands the personal context. His comment that the government has given more money to Albertans than other governments before, or whatever it is, which is just like when the Liberals promised they were going to be the most transparent and accountable government in the history of the universe, is a fundamental misunderstanding of what people in my riding want out of the country and a fundamental misunderstanding of the way they hope government operates.

I only speak on behalf of Albertans in Lakeland, although I suspect some of my colleagues from the province would say the same thing. Albertans in Lakeland just want to be able to do their work, live their lives and contribute to Canada, but it is the current federal government, through successive policies, laws, tax hikes, global messages and domestic messages, that has blocked oil and gas development in Alberta and caused alienation and frustration. No amount of peacocking, yelling, screaming, shouting me down and berating me will change that fact. People better get that message and get it quickly, because it is these Liberals, and their anti-energy, anti-Alberta, anti-west leftist allies, who are putting the country at risk. They need to look at themselves in the mirror for the sentiment I am speaking about on behalf of the people who sent me here to do this job.

• (1630)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her passion for her constituents and for her province.

I was talking to the CEO of the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada yesterday, which we all know does great work, and he does great work, on behalf of indigenous businesses in this country. He was recently informed that the association would be getting a contract for \$16 million to deliver to over 600 indigenous businesses, which is much needed as we know, but he was also told that he would not be allowed to use any of the funds for administration or to help deliver the program. In fact, he was told that the association was going to be audited, but we also learned that the WE organization was going to get a \$43-million fund for administering its program, and the company of the husband of the Prime Minister's chief of staff was getting \$84 million as a commission to administer a program.

Does the member agree that there are two ways that the Liberal government does business? There is one for its friends and then another for those who are not well connected.

Also, does she agree that there is systemic racism that exists in this country that we can see right now at a time when organizations need support to deliver much-needed support to the people in our country, like indigenous tourism business operators who need help right now?

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Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree. I think the Prime Minister, the cabinet and every Liberal member who enable mix-ups; scandal after scandal; ethics investigation after ethics investigation, which have literally never happened in the history of our country; and who cover for them; read off their notes; and do the dirty work for the kings demonstrate, like the member said, over and over again that there is one standard or rule for the Liberals and some benefits only for them, though only certain things the Liberals can take advantage of, and then there is the reality for everyone else.

I also want to thank the member and acknowledge his for raising of this issue of indigenous businesses. In Lakeland, some of the businesses and communities that are hurt disproportionately because of the destructive anti-energy policies and programs of the last five years and the failure of the current COVID-19 programs are first nations and Métis communities. Among the barrage of reports of businesses collapsing at an exponentially increasing rate over the last several months, one situation was that a first nations-owned energy-producing company and community stopped producing for the first time in its history in my riding of Lakeland.

When I am talking about the COVID-19 programs' failure to support oil and gas businesses, I am also talking about COVID-19 programs' failure to support indigenous businesses and workers. For the first time, this community now has to figure out a way to cover its costs when it used to cover all of its programs and community services by its own source of revenue from its energy company. Now, it faces a completely uncertain future and an utter fiscal crisis.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the debate of who is and is not federalist and who is and is not nationalist is over. The sentiment in Alberta, and all members of the House from Alberta know, is strongly against the government. What adds fuel to the fire is the scandals that the government is going through.

Can the member for Lakeland tell us how much that is contributing to the position of Albertans when it comes to the government?

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, it is huge. It is exactly part of the problem. Albertans cannot understand why the government roadblocks or harms them, yet has billions of Albertans' very own tax dollars that they generated to hand out to the Liberals' buddies, cronies, spouses, family members, husbands or dogs. I do not know what will be next.

One of the saddest things, getting back to what my Liberal colleague said to me earlier, is that it absolutely is a direct result of the Liberal government, this collapsing faith within Alberta, in the structures of the country. When I go to Atlantic Canada, for example, the people are deeply concerned by what is happening in Alberta, because it impacts them.

I remember the United We Roll convoy that came to Ottawa. While the Liberals were suggesting that they were racists and bigots, what was actually happening was that people from Ontario towns were coming out and giving out pie and Tim Hortons and waving flags. There were people from right across the country.

British Columbians want the pipeline, even though their governments pretend—

• (1635)

The Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Fredericton.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, as a first-time MP, this has been quite the introduction into federal politics. I have received a quick schooling on what is truly important to the people in my riding, how things work in this government environment and the ways that I can contribute.

After the initial post-election excitement, the reality of setting up an office in Ottawa and the constituency set in. We got to work putting together a team to serve the people of Fredericton and represent Canadians.

We spent the five months following the election in a typical rhythm of Parliament before the pandemic took hold in our nation. We have now spent just as much time involved in the emergency public health, social and economic relief efforts associated with COVID-19.

As many members know, I am a teacher by trade. Teaching is not the traditional path to politics, but there is nothing traditional about this Parliament for me. I spent a decade teaching youth to have a critical lens, to stand up for what they believe in and to not accept injustice. I applied those lessons to my work here as an MP, and I am honoured to be able to share them with my colleagues in this venue.

Despite the change in career, I have kept my priorities and passions. I came here to create a better world for children and youth, and to create better communities for them to grow up in. In today's take-note debate, I want to talk about families, students, some of the realities of this pandemic experience and the ways we can keep moving forward to get through this together.

My family means everything to me, and they have been along for this intense journey. For us, the pandemic has meant months in intermittent isolation and a family bubble, days in the car to get here and back to New Brunswick, and only about eight hours, since March, that I have been without my two children, except for the hours I have spent sitting in this House. This is perhaps why I have one of the best attendance records.

If my colleagues did not catch the humour in that, they can rest assured that I love my children and they love me, but we are looking forward to our routines returning to normal. The point is, as a working mom, having no school or day care these past months has been like maternity leave without the leave. Full-time work while providing child supervision and care is simply not possible, especially with the added responsibilities of home schooling.

I have heard from many parents of the struggles and concerns of parenting in a pandemic. Parents in Canada need a break, especially parents of children with disabilities, autism or behavioural challenges who need educational assistance, resource teachers and guidance counsellors.

Children also need a break from their parents, especially the children who are perhaps experiencing neglect or abuse. Those children have been on my mind these past few months. Children need to hear from other adults, coaches and role models. Let us take this time to sincerely appreciate our early childhood education and public school systems and the people we rely on to make them work.

[*Translation*]

As a government, we must ensure that all parents, children, teachers and staff feel safe as they return to the classroom.

[*English*]

Families are stressed and apprehensive with a variety of tough choices ahead. I know there are innovative solutions and ideas out there, and I trust the government to assist provinces as they reopen schools with clear and cautious health advice.

I think also about the families separated by our border closure. Foreign national long-term partners and adult children remain unable to enter Canada to see their loved ones. These families have spent five months separated already. While enforcing two-week quarantines, we could lighten travel restrictions for students and immediate family, enabling them to return to their Canadian families and communities. These changes, coupled with the reminder that Canada is home to people from all over the world, would go a long way to combat the isolationism that has been known to breed contempt, which may already be being directed at the international students trickling into our country.

[*Translation*]

Fredericton is home to two university campuses and several colleges.

[*English*]

The international students who arrive in Fredericton each year are a critical component of our local communities. Having so few of them returning to us in person this year is a major loss. The universities in my home province have been announcing pandemic protocols for the coming semester. There are a lot of pressures on these institutions, but I cannot help but think of the impact on students.

On top of the anxieties the last five months have brought for all of us, they are facing the choice of continuing to take on personal student debt at a time when it is not clear what sort of economy they will graduate into. We will need the government, and likely the next government to come, to stand beside these students as they work to pay off the student debt incurred at this juncture in their lives.

Speaking of student debt, we are coming up on the end of the government's initiative to pause student loan repayment obligations for recent graduates. This will mean hundreds of dollars a month that these debt holders will need to begin paying again. This pro-

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gram should be extended for at least another six months, and we should start talking meaningfully about student debt forgiveness.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

We need to support families, especially children, adolescents and young adults, during these uncertain times.

[*English*]

The public health emergency over the last months has been coupled with civil unrest and action. We have seen deaths in our streets, ongoing oppression and injustice. I think of the world that my children are inheriting, all children, the world that youth and students are inheriting across Canada. I look around, I watch the news and I read the comments on social media, which maybe I should not, because they lead me to shake my head. Our kids will have questions of all of this, and we had better have decent answers for them.

We must seize this opportunity and wield the responsibility we have as parliamentarians to address the prejudices that blind us: rampant systemic racism; hiding the many microaggressions and overt acts of racism present in our everyday lives; toxic masculinity that seeds silent acceptance of a rape culture, violence against women and girls and members of the LGBTQ2IA+ community; privilege that shrinks our world view, making invisible those living in poverty with insecure housing, with disabilities, fighting addictions and surviving trauma. We need to start seeing one another again and finding compassion for our neighbours.

Since being elected as a member of Parliament, I have been actively involved in calls for equality and systemic change. Recently, and in light of international and local tragedies, I have supported a call for a national Senate inquiry into wellness checks as a police response to mental health issues in Canada; I attended a healing walk for Chantel Moore and Rodney Levi; I made a public pledge to call out racism when I see it online or otherwise; I signed a petition calling for a review of systemic racism in police forces; I submitted a letter to you, Mr. Speaker, to address systemic racism in this institution; I have questioned the Minister of Health about actions on her mandate to address racism in the health care system; and I asked the Public Safety minister to declare his outrage and commit to protecting all black, indigenous and people of colour from racial injustice.

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These are the promises I made to my youth, the ones that I worked with, my students. I taught them to be activists. If we see something is wrong, we do something about it. If someone's voice cannot be heard, we find ways to amplify it.

As I prepare to send my kids back to school, I have been reflecting on the immense responsibility our teachers will shoulder in this school year. They will balance public health protocols with school curricula and changing class composition. They too will face the questions of curious young minds about the world we live in. Their answers will be instrumental in shaping the minds of a coming generation of leaders.

[*Translation*]

Teachers need our support, our patience and our encouragement.

[*English*]

Just as our health care professionals have stepped up to respond to this pandemic, our teachers are being called to step up now to do the important work of helping to raise children, to educate them and to help them build resilience in the face of uncertainty. I thank them for their service, and I stand with Canadian families.

To the young thinkers and learners across this country, I am listening. Your leadership is essential as we face down our challenges, and we will get through this together. Please reach out at any time.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member across the way for her speech. Also, I find it interesting that she gave a little list of all the things that she has been up to. It is always wonderful to hear different approaches.

I have a specific question.

The member mentioned the importance of family and the importance of certainty, particularly during a pandemic. Earlier today, I did ask the Minister of Employment multiple times, as I have over the past few months, about the issue of accessing parental benefits. I just want to find out from the member if she is hearing from her own constituents, from mothers and fathers who are unable to know where they stand. I talked to one woman who was eight hours short of meeting the requirements for eligibility to receive parental benefits from employment insurance. The minister has been given the powers under Bill C-13, with a stroke of a pen, to deal with it. Is the member facing the same circumstances in her riding? Does she support dealing with this as quickly as possible and treating this with the urgency that is necessary?

Having a baby during a pandemic is bad enough, but trying to figure out where one stands with employment insurance with that uncertainty is, I think, unconscionable.

• (1645)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague so much for that very important question.

Absolutely, I have been hearing from my constituents on this same issue of parental and maternity benefits as a result of COVID.

There is a group that has gathered. There are parents across this country who are grappling with this question. When we had our daily or almost daily briefing calls with various government depart-

ments, I consistently asked that question day in and day out, and I was given that same response: "We're working on it. We're looking for the solution."

For me, this delay is quite disappointing. These people have been waiting. Some have already had their children and need to receive this benefit, so I was pleased this morning to hear the minister talk about retroactive pay, but that does not get people what they need in the interim. I am very concerned with how long this has taken, but I am also encouraged that finally we might see some action on this.

Here we are five months into the pandemic, and these parents have been waiting. Let us get money into the hands of parents now. Certainly, the retroactive payment is good to hear, but it is an issue that went on for far too long.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her extraordinary speech. I have listened to speeches that are good, speeches that are great. I have seen a lot of hand sock puppets, speaking whatever their leaders tell them to. For all the sham and drudgery in this place, the only thing that makes it extraordinary is when members come here who want to make changes. That is why we should be here, to be change-makers.

From her perspective as a parent, mother and teacher, I want to ask my colleague this. When I have talked to young people during this pandemic, a seismic shift is happening. It is a difference between millennials who are being economically crushed at this time, down to generation Z. The world will be changed by generation Z. This generation is not having it. These young people get that we have a pandemic that has upended everything, but for them the crisis is environmental. They see a world that is in a serious crisis, and we need voices.

Therefore, I want to ask my hon. colleague, as a parent and teacher, how she thinks we can use this Parliament to start engaging young people and making them believe we can actually make a better world, rather than just accept the same old, same old.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, certainly as a Green Party member, the environment is top of mind. It is the lens I use with all policy and questions, including social justice. It is all connected. For me it is a critical component of our recovery plan moving forward. However, the youth are already fired up. They are already active and engaged. This is something that fuels me and gives me the energy I need to do my work in the House.

My advice for him is to keep this up, not to lose optimism and hope. The solutions are out there. We are the leaders of today, not the leaders of tomorrow. Those voices are so critical to the work we do to inspire us and guide us.

As parliamentarians, it is our responsibility to be role models and to bring truth to the House, to not be divisive, to not get too bogged down in the weeds of what perhaps our personal ideologies may be, but be here to do the work we were sent here to do by our electorate.

I am going to talk about environmental issues, and it is not just because I am a Green. It is because I am a Canadian. It is because I am a mother and a teacher and those things are so important to me.

On the east coast, we have seen some different weather patterns. We have seen some changes. We have seen some of the hottest days on the record in our communities. People are very aware of these impacts. It is just a matter of empowering them to continue to do that work, to continue to be active and to continue to demonstrate or to do whatever they may feel is important. Social media is a great venue for that as well.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's comments on teaching and on kids getting back to school. We often talk about essential workers, and the light is really starting to shine on our teachers.

There is a huge issue before all of us in our communities, as children look at going back to school. We sometimes take that for granted. Throughout this whole process there have been some outstanding Canadians in all different sectors. I can think of the long-haul truck driver, the health care worker or the person who works in a grocery store. Those people are really stepping up and assisting us in getting through the pandemic. Now we are going into a different phase where we are reopening the economy and schools are looking to reopen. Teachers are going to play a very important role in this.

Could the member provide her thoughts on the role of the teacher for the student? Imagine students walking into a classroom where the environment has really changed from the last time they were there. Could she provide her thoughts on that issue and maybe, as I have done, recognize the important work that all Canadians are doing to get us through this?

• (1650)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, as a former teacher, I feel that this is an incredibly important time. It is something we have never seen before, and I think initially teachers were looking for ways to engage. They wanted to be able to help more, but because of the restrictions and all of the measures to keep us safe they were not necessarily able to do that.

With the time that has passed, I think our teachers are really ready to get back into the classroom. We enjoy our summer breaks as best we can, but we always have that feeling in September when we cannot wait to get back to our students who mean so much to us. Teachers have been ready for months and months now, so I really feel they are going to take the bull by the horns on this. They will really take the initiative and do what needs to be done to keep our children safe, keep themselves safe, keep staff safe and also keep everyone's level of well-being in check.

What is really important to me about kids returning to school right now, outside of curriculum and the necessary things to move them through their grades, is that well-being: that social aspect of being with other people besides their family bubbles they have been stuck in for the last five months.

I believe teachers are well suited to do this and, as I have said, they have just been waiting to get involved and have their turn to

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serve citizens in this pandemic. I am so excited to see what they will do with this. When thrown a curveball, our education systems respond very well. I am so proud of the education system in New Brunswick in particular.

I note that we fared quite well in New Brunswick during the pandemic, and we do not face as much uncertainty as some of the other jurisdictions in Canada. I wish them well. I hope we go slow. I hope we are as cautious and as safe as we need to be, but I am so thankful for kids to go back to school. I hope I can support teachers within my riding to do that as safely and enjoyably as possible.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also am a teacher by training and also have children I have spent an awful lot of time with over the last several months.

One of the questions I had is about going forward and looking at how we support provinces and the education system.

Would the member feel it would be appropriate to ensure that we have minimum standards put in place to make sure Canadian children are protected in child care and school settings across the country equally, and that we are making sure people in all parts of the country are getting the exact same support?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, I did not know my colleague had a teacher training background, but I should have guessed because we align on many things.

It is going to be different across jurisdictions, as I mentioned. I am a big fan of national standards. No matter where someone is in Canada, one should be able to receive the best practices we are seeing in other provinces or territories.

I have faith in our provincial systems and feel our job is to protect and support them, so I hope they are able to monitor and ensure they are reaching the same standards as other jurisdictions. We do not necessarily have those standards yet, so I would certainly be supportive of seeing those happen here in Canada.

The Speaker: It being 4:54 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 26, 2020, it is my duty to inform the House that proceedings on the motion have expired and the motion is deemed withdrawn.

(Motion withdrawn)

[*Translation*]

The hon. minister on a point of order.

Routine Proceedings

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1655)

[Translation]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling the government's responses to Order Paper Questions Nos. 472 to 474.

[Text]

Question No. 472—**Mr. Scott Reid:**

With regard to preparation and response to COVID-19: (a) what are the reasons for the decision of the National Research Council (NRC) to grant a non-exclusive licence to the biotechnology company CanSino to utilize a modified cell line invented by the NRC; (b) under the licence referred to in (a), what compensation, consideration, or other reciprocal arrangements did the NRC receive or agree to from CanSino; (c) under the licence referred to in (a), did the NRC obtain from CanSino or others an agreement that the Government of Canada could receive or make use of any resulting COVID-19 vaccine, and, if so, what are the details of those agreements, including the cost and other compensation or consideration; (d) if the answer to (c) is negative, what are the reasons for the lack of such an agreement; (e) if there are costs to the NRC, or any other Government of Canada entity, payable to CanSino or any other entity, resulting from the provision or licence of a COVID-19 vaccine to the Government of Canada further to the licence referred to in (a), what are the details of those costs, and what are the reasons for agreeing to those costs; (f) under the licence referred to in (a), did the NRC obtain from CanSino or others an agreement that CanSino would furnish any resulting COVID-19 vaccine to developing countries on a not-for-profit basis, and, if not, what are the reasons; (g) what is the total amount of direct or indirect funding that has been provided by the Government of Canada to Gilead Sciences, Inc. for the research, development, manufacture, or clinical trials of remdesivir; (h) what is the total value of any funding, tax incentives or credits, or other arrangements made with Gilead Sciences, Inc. with regard to its Canadian manufacturing or research and development facilities, including to retrofit or build new Gilead facilities to scale-up production capacity, including the (i) amounts, (ii) dates, (iii) specific uses of those funds; (i) what are the details of each grant from the Government of Canada, or a related agency, made to any academic institution to conduct research on remdesivir, including the (i) value, (ii) recipients, (iii) dates, (iv) terms of each grant; (j) was any research and development on remdesivir conducted directly by the Government of Canada or any public servants or federal agencies, and, if so, (i) what is the budget of each research project, (ii) who conducted it, (iii) on what date; (k) does the Government of Canada own any patents on remdesivir or has the government licensed any patents on remdesivir and, if so, which patents and patent applications, including their numbers, and what are the details of any licensing agreements, including (i) to whom or from whom the licences were issued, (ii) on what dates, (iii) the terms of the licences; (l) has the Government of Canada secured or negotiated access to remdesivir, should it receive regulatory approval from Health Canada, and, if so, what price has been negotiated per treatment; (m) further to the Prime Minister's announcement on April 7, 2020, that Canada would purchase up to 30,000 ventilators, how many ventilators has the Government of Canada ordered, on what date, from which supplier, at what price per ventilator, which models and manufacturers, and how many have been received by the federal government and each province; (n) for each type of ventilator ordered by the federal government, are they capable of providing mechanical ventilation as described by the ARDSnet protocol by, for example, controlling and limiting respiratory rate, tidal volume, peak pressures, positive end expiratory pressure (PEEP), and fraction of inhaled oxygen (FiO₂); (o) which sources or officials, broken down by name or, if names will not be disclosed, by job title or position, provided technical advice related to the selection of ventilator models, modes, and capabilities in the context of COVID-19; (p) since 2016, what funds, broken down by year, were allocated to the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile (NESS) of personal protective equipment, how much of those funds allocated were not spent, if any, and, if applicable, for what reasons were those funds not spent; (q) as of January 1, 2020, February 1, 2020, March 1, 2020, and March 15, 2020, what quantities of personal protective equipment were in the NESS inventory, broken down by (i) masks, (ii) N95 respirators, (iii) gloves, (iv) other personal protective equipment; and (r) who at the Public Health Agency of Canada is presently responsible for stock rotation of the NESS inventory, and on what date was that individual tasked with that function?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 473—**Mr. Scott Reid:**

With regard to preparation and response to COVID-19: (a) why did the Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO) state that the risk of COVID-19 to Canadians was "low", following cabinet's approval on February 17, 2020, of the statement that "the introduction or spread of [COVID-19] would pose an imminent and severe risk to public health in Canada"; (b) which officials, broken down by name or, if names will not be disclosed, by job title or position, drafted or approved the talking points for the CPHO that reads "the level of risk within Canada [...] remains low", and which is contained in the Annotated Agenda for the federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) health ministers' special call on novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) of February 3, 2020; (c) which officials, broken down by name or, if names will not be disclosed, by job title or position, participated in formulating the conclusion of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) risk assessment in (b), and what professional credentials or higher education, and in which subjects, do each of these officials possess; (d) which officials, broken down by name or, if names will not be disclosed, by job title or position, drafted or approved the "Responsive, if asked [...]" talking points for the CPHO that are contained in the Annotated Agenda for the FPT health ministers' special call on 2019-nCoV of February 10, 2020; (e) on which dates has the Minister of Health or her officials furnished advice or direction on the talking points of the CPHO, and what was the guidance or direction, in summary, in each case; (f) with respect to the role of the CPHO as an official advisor to the World Health Organization's (WHO) emergency committee regarding the outbreak of the 2019-nCoV, did the CPHO expressly recommend during the Emergency Committee meetings of January 22 and 23, 2020, that the WHO should immediately declare a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and, if not, why not; (g) with respect to the role of the CPHO as an official advisor to the WHO as noted in (f), did the WHO request the CPHO to agree to any form of confidentiality or non-disclosure, and, if so, did she agree in writing or otherwise; (h) on which dates did the government give notification to the WHO of COVID-19 and communicate information about the outbreak, as required under Articles 6 and 7 of the International Health Regulations, and what are the details of each such communication; (i) why did the PHAC refuse to support or collaborate in a research grant application to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research in which Professor Amir Attaran was to be a co-investigator, and only agree to participate once informed that Professor Attaran voluntarily removed his name from the application; (j) if the research grant application referred to in (i) is successful, does the government object to Professor Amir Attaran participating as a co-investigator and, if so, what are the reasons for the objection; (k) which officials, broken down by name or, if names will not be disclosed, by job title or position, ghost wrote, co-wrote, edited, or otherwise contributed to article by the Prime Minister entitled "Canada's vision for global health and gender equality" that appeared in The Lancet on April 28, 2018; (l) which of the contributors to the article referred to in (k) filed an author statement or International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) form with The Lancet, and what contributions or conflicts of interest did each disclose therein; (m) further to the article referred to in (k), did the Prime Minister file an author statement or ICMJE form with The Lancet and, if so, what contribution did he disclose, and what contributions or conflicts of interest did he disclose therein; (n) how much money was spent by the government in the researching, writing, and promotion of the article referred to in (k); and (o) further to the article referred to in (k), for what reasons was pandemic preparedness, or an analogous topic, not included?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 474—**Mr. Michael Barrett:**

With regard to the investigation into the leak of the Statistics Canada data relating to the April jobs numbers: (a) have ministerial staff been ordered to fully cooperate with the investigation, and, if not, why not; (b) who is conducting the investigation; (c) has the leak been referred to the RCMP, and, if not, why not; and (d) what is the full list of individuals outside of Statistics Canada who had access to the data prior to it being publicly released?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

(The House adjourned at 4:56 p.m.)

The Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 26, 2020, the House stands adjourned until Wednesday, August 26, 2020, at noon.

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