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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, November 6, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

INCOME TAX ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy), as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

• (1005)

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There are three motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-9.

[*Translation*]

The Chair will not select Motions Nos. 2 and 3, since they require royal recommendation.

[*English*]

The remaining motion has been examined and the Chair is satisfied that it meets the guidelines expressed in the note to the Standing Order 76.1(5), regarding the selection of motions in amendment at report stage.

Motion 1 will be debated and voted upon.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motion No. 1 to the House.

MOTION IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ) moved:

That Bill C-9, in Clause 2, be amended

(a) by adding after line 34 on page 3 the following:

“(5.1) The definition eligible entity in subsection 125.7(1) of the Act is amended by striking out “(entité déterminée)” at the end of paragraph (f) and by adding the following after that paragraph:

It does not include a political party within the meaning of subsection 2(1) of the Canada Elections Act or of any Act of the legislature of a province relating to provincial, municipal or school board elections. (entité déterminée)”

(b) by replacing line 20 on page 14 with the following:

“(23) Subsections (1) to (10), except subsection (5.1), and subsections (14) to (17) are”

(c) by replacing line 35 on page 14 with the following:

“(24) Subsections (5.1), (11) to (13) and (18) to (22) are”

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House that the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-9 and is in favour of passing it quickly.

We had several opportunities this week to share our reasons for this. The bill extends the Canada emergency wage subsidy in order to give businesses more security, which is something that we have been calling for for a long time. We have also been calling for the creation of a program that provides businesses with real assistance with their fixed costs, and the Canada emergency rent subsidy meets that need.

However, there is still a problem with this bill that dates back to the initial bill to create the wage subsidy that was introduced in the spring, and that is the fact that the political parties can apply for the program.

The wage subsidy is an emergency program designed to respond to an emergency. We are in the midst of a pandemic and some businesses were or still are being forced to scale back their operations or even close. In order to stabilize the economy, we are asking taxpayers, through their taxes and future debt load, to collectively support these businesses and help them survive the pandemic.

If we have learned one thing from the field of economics over the past century, it is that it is better to go into debt and pay more to support the economic fabric in times of crisis, since that is the lesser of the evils.

Why are millionaire political parties availing themselves of the wage subsidy when, even in 2020, they are still able to raise millions and millions of dollars through their funding mechanisms?

An article by Catherine Lévesque in The Canadian Press reports that the Liberal Party has received more than \$1.25 million through the wage subsidy program. However, in 2020 alone, the Liberal Party has managed to raise nearly \$9 million in political contributions. The year is not even over yet, and we know that November and December are generally important months for filling the coffers.

Was the program intended for political parties? In my opinion, no. Is this a serious ethical breach? In my opinion, yes. Why? Because if we look at the legislation that created the wage subsidy, political parties are not listed and even seem to be excluded.

Government Orders

Even so, the Liberal Party opted to apply, and the Canada Revenue Agency chose to say yes and give it the funding. That is unacceptable. It is deeply unethical.

I therefore call on the Liberal Party and all parties in the House to vote in favour of the amendment to close that loophole, clarify the scope of the bill and send a message that those actions were contrary to the spirit of the act. I am also asking the Liberal Party and all parties that received money from the wage subsidy to pay it all back. It is a matter of principle. It is not up to taxpayers in Quebec and Canada to fund political parties through the wage subsidy.

According to the act that created the wage subsidy, an “eligible entity” can be a corporation or trust. Is the Liberal Party a business whose activities are intended to enrich it? Maybe that is how it qualified for the wage subsidy.

Item (b) of the definition of “eligible entity” indicates “an individual”. Clearly, the Liberal Party is not a person or an individual.

Is it then “a registered charity”? I say no. However, if we expand this definition to include crony judges or Liberal cronies winning contracts, like the directors of WE Charity or the former member for Pierrefonds—Dollard, who was awarded an untendered contract to produce medical ventilators at twice the price when he has never made them before, then we could say that the Liberal Party is charitable with its friends. However, serving the public does not seem to be its objective.

The definition then indicates at item (d), “a person that is exempt from tax under”. Here it is referring to unions such as farmers' unions, which the Liberal Party is not, obviously.

• (1010)

Item (e) reads as follows: “a partnership, all of the members of which are described in this paragraph”. This is known as a limited partnership.

Is the Liberal Party a limited partnership? Their experience is in sponsorship, not partnership. In any case, once again, it does not apply. That is what the amendment specifies. It clarifies that political parties, within the meaning of the Canada Elections Act or similar provincial legislation, are not eligible entities. That closes the loophole.

To access the wage subsidy, there must be a 30% drop in the average revenue for January, February and March. A political party can easily meet that requirement by delaying fundraising by one month in order to qualify. Just because we are in a pandemic does not mean that the cupboard is bare. There is approximately \$9 million in the Liberal Party's coffers. They have the money. It is a millionaire party that is continuing to raise funds.

The other criterion for the wage subsidy is to compare a given month in 2020 with the same month in 2019. The year 2019 was an election year. All political scientists know very well that during an election year, every party tries to raise more money. Therefore, it was only natural that revenues in 2020 would be lower than in 2019, and not because of the pandemic.

Why should taxpayers, people who are struggling right now, working-class people who pay their taxes, who are in debt and who

are having a hard time making ends meet, be asked to make an extra effort to support millionaire parties? This should not even be a question. This is another dirty trick to warp the spirit of the bill in order to make a buck at the expense of taxpayers. That is not why we were elected to the House. We must vote in favour of this amendment.

I believe that the state should provide public financing to political parties, as it did before. When Jean Chrétien was looking for a way out of the sponsorship scandal, he decided that each political party would receive a small amount of money for each vote received. This was intended to cut down on shenanigans and shell games. It was an attempt to put less emphasis on money and to avoid putting parties that defend the interests of the wealthy at an advantage. The point was to improve democracy.

This worthy measure was unfortunately eliminated, and the Bloc Québécois has since been calling for it to be reinstated. That is how it is done in Quebec and in the majority of western democracies. It is obviously less common among Anglo-Saxons, and that culture surely had an influence on this Parliament's decision. The idea of public financing is to level the playing field and support each party based on the number of votes it received.

Letting political parties receive the wage subsidy does not level the playing field. It actually increases disparities because the parties that get the most money will hire the most people and will therefore receive more wage subsidies. This creates an imbalance that is unacceptable.

The Bloc Québécois is not against the principle of public financing, but we are absolutely against the notion of warping the spirit of the wage subsidy bill by claiming that they gave it a shot and got it. This is unacceptable and needs to be fixed. That is the purpose of this amendment. I urge all political parties in the House that accessed the wage subsidy to pledge to immediately pay back the money they received. It is a matter of honour.

• (1015)

[*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. Speaker, I agree with the member that there is a principle here. The principle is that there are thousands of businesses across our country that have issues related to the pandemic. The government developed a wage subsidy program and, through that program, hundreds of thousands of jobs have been saved in all regions of our country.

The Bloc wants to try to create a scandal of sorts. In the election, members of the Bloc party beefed up their expenses in order to get larger rebates. That is something that I would suggest is scandalous. With hindsight, I wonder if the member would agree that it was wrong of the Bloc party to do that.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I am outraged by what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said.

Quite frankly, we are not the ones who tried to create a scandal with the wage subsidy. It is the Liberal Party that is not playing by the rules and not acting in an ethical manner above all suspicion. It put its hands in the cookie jar, betraying the spirit of the law. Why is the member accusing the Bloc Québécois of beefing up election expenses to get a larger rebate?

During the last election, the Bloc Québécois was not sure whether it would be entitled to have its election expenses reimbursed, unlike the Liberal Party. If members look at the expenses per riding, they can see that the Bloc's expenses are actually far below those of the Liberal Party and Conservative Party candidates. The Bloc Québécois follows the election rules and the ethics rules. That is why, from the start, we said that we would not apply for the wage subsidy, even if the other parties were doing so. In our opinion, that is unacceptable. We did not want to play that little game.

Quite frankly, I am outraged by what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, speaking of election campaigns, I would like to know what my colleague thinks of duplication, which means being paid twice for the same thing. The money they got from the wage subsidy goes in the kitty for the campaign. Then they spend it on the campaign and get reimbursed.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that? Is that not scandalous?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for his comment.

It is a big problem, actually. According to the Bloc Québécois's House leader, the member for La Prairie, what is happening now is double dipping. They collected \$1.25 million from the wage subsidy. That helps the party because they can use the money to fund their next election campaign. Once the money is spent, Elections Canada reimburses half of it. In this case, that adds up to about \$2 million.

I am calling on the government, the Liberal Party, to pledge to pay back the wage subsidy. It was not entitled to that money and it needs to do the right thing.

• (1020)

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his work.

Yesterday in the House I had the chance to ask the President of the Treasury Board questions about Bill C-9. He admitted that the wage subsidy was meant for people with urgent, pressing needs, as my colleague said earlier. He also admitted that recipients cannot double dip. For example, a restaurant cannot receive the same subsidy twice for the same location.

Then I mentioned that the Liberal Party was not in that situation, but it received the same amount twice, as my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue just said.

Is this a double standard that applies to the Liberal government? In this case, the government is both judge and jury.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Manicouagan for her intervention.

To begin with, I commend my colleague because successfully getting an answer from the President of the Treasury Board in the House is no small feat. He is good at congratulating the member on his or her question, but he never answers with anything concrete. I congratulate and pay tribute to the hon. member.

Now I will get to the subject at hand.

Under this program, the public will pay taxes and go into debt. The public knows that a crisis is gripping the economy and that we must all pull together to get through it. However, what are we seeing here? We see the government acting in its own interest. The governing party drafts the legislation then puts its hands in the cookie jar behind closed doors. As my colleagues have noted, it will then get paid a second time through election rebates. It is unethical. The government has lost the public trust. According to a poll from June, the government has even lost the confidence of Liberal voters.

Ms. Emmanuela Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the government's plan to support businesses and the economic recovery in response to COVID-19.

Since the beginning of this pandemic, the government has had two main goals: to protect the lives of Canadians, and to protect and preserve Canada's businesses, jobs and economy. In the face of an uncertain economic situation, our government took decisive action to support businesses affected by COVID-19 and to help protect the jobs that Canadians depend on.

While some sectors of the economy are recovering, others are still struggling with declining revenues, increased costs and uncertainty because of the pandemic. Many entrepreneurs and businesses in Canada still need help with cash flow and operating costs. That is why our government introduced an act to amend the Income Tax Act with respect to the Canada emergency rent subsidy and Canada emergency wage subsidy.

[*English*]

Bill C-9 would implement new targeted supports to help hard-hit businesses. These measures are designed to help businesses get through the second wave of the virus so that they can protect jobs, continue to serve their communities and be positioned for a strong recovery.

Government Orders

From very early on in the first wave of the pandemic, it was overwhelmingly clear that one of the most important ways to help businesses survive these trying times was through rental supports. Many Canadian businesses either had to shut down for months on end or lost a significant percentage of their revenues, yet still had to pay their landlords.

That is why our government quickly responded and developed a program: the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program, or CECRA, to help businesses with rent so that they could stay afloat during the pandemic. One of the problems with this program was that it required landlords to apply for assistance, rather than the businesses themselves.

Businesses reached out to me when this program was announced to let me know that, while they needed the rental support in order to make it through, their landlords refused to apply for the program. They were being forced to pay full rent amounts with almost no revenues. As much as I tried my absolute best to help my constituents and the businesses in my riding asking for help or trying to access programs, I had no idea what to tell these people. They were at the mercy of their landlords.

I raised the issue at caucus, as did many of my colleagues, and we were very happy to see that the government listened. Our comments were listened to, and the new and improved version is being discussed today: the Canada emergency rent subsidy. We are proposing to provide an easy to access commercial rent and mortgage program until June 2021 to organizations and businesses affected by COVID-19, with a subsidy of up to 65%.

• (1025)

[*Translation*]

The new rent subsidy follows the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program, which targets small businesses and has already helped more than 133,000 such businesses and supported 1.2 million jobs in Canada. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been working closely with small businesses. The new rent subsidy will be better targeted and easier to access. On top of that, it will be paid directly to small business tenants.

[*English*]

What would this look like in real terms for Canadian businesses? Let us consider a hair salon owner, for example, who followed public health safety precautions and closed to the public in March or April. They then opened during the summer as they were allowed to serve the public at a much lower capacity, and limited the number of customers in order to follow social distancing rules.

In Quebec, they had been given permission to remain open until further notice and were open during the months of September and October. Let us say that in October the revenues were down 25% compared with last year. On top of this, they incurred \$2,500 in eligible rent costs for the first period of their rent subsidy. For this period, thanks to the new Canada emergency rent subsidy, they would be eligible for a rent subsidy of 20%. However, we know that not all businesses have been able to remain open.

[*Translation*]

The Speech from the Throne underscored our commitment to providing direct financial support to businesses that had to temporarily close their doors by order of local public health authorities. We are following up on this commitment by also proposing lockdown support, which would provide an additional subsidy of 25% for organizations required to temporarily close their doors as a result of an order issued by an eligible public health authority.

This support would be on top of the Canada emergency rent subsidy, which could cover up to 65% of rent, resulting in a total subsidy of up to 90%.

[*English*]

Take, for example, a chain of restaurants that saw its revenues down by 70% in September, and then 80% when six of its 10 locations were shut down under a regional public health order effective October 1. If this chain of restaurants incurred rent costs of \$400,000 for the eligible period, \$120,000 of which related to the six locations closed by the public health order, then under the rent subsidy the chain would be eligible for a base subsidy rate of up to 65%, plus the new lockdown support of up to 25% with respect to the six locations closed by the public health order, for the days that they were affected. The base subsidy would apply a benefit of \$195,000 and the lockdown support would be \$16,071, for a total rent subsidy of \$211,071 for the month of October. This would go a long way in helping the chain of restaurants cover its total of \$400,000 for 10 locations, of which more than half were significantly impacted by closures due to public health orders.

[*Translation*]

In addition to this assistance for fixed costs such as rent, employers can also apply for the Canada emergency wage subsidy to keep their employees on the payroll. The subsidy will also encourage them to rehire workers they have laid off, which will put them in a better position to prepare for a strong economic recovery.

The Canada emergency wage subsidy has supported more than 3.8 million Canadian employees. More than \$45 billion has been disbursed under this program.

[*English*]

Throughout the summer, my colleagues and I heard from witnesses at the industry, science and technology committee. One of the very clear messages was that the wage subsidy had to be extended in order for businesses to keep their employees on the payroll.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

The extension of the Canada emergency wage subsidy until June 2021 proposed by the government in this bill will continue to protect jobs by helping businesses keep their employees on the payroll and by encouraging employers to rehire their workers. What is more, the wage subsidy will remain at the current rate of up to 65% of eligible wages until at least December 19, 2020.

This extension is part of the government's commitment to create more than one million jobs and restore employment to pre-pandemic levels.

• (1030)

[*English*]

Our government continues to assess the impacts of COVID—19. These programs are built to be flexible in order to help the businesses that have been hardest hit. As circumstances improve, the level of help will decrease, and as circumstances get worse, more support will be given to businesses and organizations.

As we have said since the start of this crisis, we are ready to take additional actions when needed. That is why I would encourage all members in the House to put the immediate needs of Canadians and businesses first, and support Bill C-9.

[*Translation*]

Canadian businesses need this new rent subsidy and the extension of the wage subsidy to get through the crisis. This bill will enable us to help them.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would be curious to know how my colleague defines fixed costs.

When will the federal government create a real program to respond to needs related to fixed costs?

Quebec has taken action on fixed costs, namely by including commercial rent, municipal and school taxes, interest on mortgage loans, hydro and gas fees, insurance, telecommunication costs, licences and association fees in those costs. Why is Canada not providing assistance as effective as that provided by Quebec?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for his question.

I would say this bill is a great start. Fixed costs include rent, and we are helping businesses pay their rent. We are also helping them pay their employees' salaries. I think supporting this legislation is a step in the right direction.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the number of phone calls she received at the beginning of the pandemic, when so many businesses were hurting because of the way the CECRA came out and because of some of its restrictions. She indicated that she had spoken to the government, just like I believe everybody on these opposition benches did as well, but it still took six months for it to respond. This was brought out on April 24, 2020. We are talking about the beginning of December before this unfolds, and we see businesses closing now.

What does she have to say regarding the delay by the government in bringing these changes?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Mr. Speaker, the government did act and responded accordingly. When it comes to rent, this is the jurisdiction of the provinces in most cases. There was a lot of red tape around this program in the beginning.

I am really glad to see that we have come a long way and that we will be offering assistance directly to businesses as of now.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague identified so many reasons why the commercial rent assistance program needed to be fixed.

I appreciate her advocacy within her caucus, but what I do not understand is that the Liberals rejected our amendment today to backdate the program to April 1 for those who could not get rent support because their landlord would not apply. We appreciate the Liberals making this a tenant-driven program, but why would they not backdate it for the six months to allow those who were excluded from the design-flawed program to apply to get the support?

I hope the member can actually answer the question. The Liberals talk about moving forward, but she knows very well that the debt moves forward for those small businesses that did not get the help they needed. They closed their doors for public health. They need government support.

Will the member go back to her caucus and advocate for it to backdate the program?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Mr. Speaker, of course it has been a very difficult time for all businesses across Canada or at least for the majority of them. We know we are not anywhere near the end of this pandemic. We know that businesses will continue to need our help in the months to come, and perhaps in the years to come.

I am glad we have made progress, and I will keep advocating for more supports to businesses. I am sure everybody in our caucus will do so. As time goes on, we will continue to provide the help as needed.

• (1035)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hear the opposition party members speaking to this program, but I am curious about the member's thoughts on the safe restart program of \$19 billion, including \$2 billion that was added to it for schools. This is part of the way in which the provincial governments have responded.

Government Orders

Is it surprising that the opposition members do not give credit to the federal government when the provincial governments spend our money to make these programs a reality?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Mr. Speaker, the federal government has taken huge steps to support Canadians and their businesses. Using Quebec as an example, they were very late to respond and to offer help.

Many of my constituents were saying that the only help they were receiving was from the federal government. I am honestly proud of our government's response to the pandemic and of the supports it has offered to businesses and Canadians in general. I know we will continue to be there to support Canadians.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House will be supporting Bill C-9, a bill that will be providing rent subsidies to Canada's small business community.

Quite frankly, this is a welcome bill although it has many flaws in its history. Over six months ago our party was encouraging the Liberal government to adopt many of the amendments and changes to this program. Unfortunately, at that time, our pleas for amendments and changes fell on deaf ears. Primarily, I think it is because the Liberal government does not understand the plight of small businesses.

On the Conservative side, we most certainly understand. I know, for example, many small businesses in my province of Saskatchewan are not only struggling, they are on the verge of bankruptcy primarily because of the pandemic. There is no question about that. I am not trying to sugar-coat this by saying the program the Liberals brought in was a flawed program. It was brought in during a time when the pandemic was first rearing its ugly head across Canada.

I appreciate the fact that the Liberals acted quickly. They acted quickly with the CERB. They acted quickly with the rent subsidy program, however, it was flawed. What we have been doing consistently since that time is trying to point out, not only to the Liberal government but to Canadians, where the flaws are in this program and encourage the government to make positive changes to help small businesses across Canada.

I will give credit where credit is due. Although six months too late, the government actually did make some positive changes that will help small businesses across Canada.

Initially, as many Canadians and many small business owners know, the restrictions placed upon them were too onerous. The uptake of the initial program was less than 10%, primarily because the program was designed to go through landlords rather than directly to tenants. Because of that, many landlords chose not to apply. Therefore, their tenants, the small business owners or leaseholders, were left in a very uncomfortable position, because their landlords would not apply for the rent subsidy program. That way it left the small business owners, who had to pay rent on a monthly basis, in a position where they were offered no relief whatsoever. That was almost untenable.

Now, however, there have been some positive changes and, as I said earlier in my remarks, I applaud the government for doing so.

However, let us take a look back, a short brief view of the history to see exactly how we came from the initial bill that was introduced by the government six months ago to today's debate on Bill C-9.

As I mentioned, initially the government proposed that this rent subsidy program would be designed in such a way that landlords would have to apply. If they were successful in their application, then they would be the ones who would offer rent relief to their tenants. While some people may say that sounded like a reasonable approach, in reality it was anything but, as evidenced by the fact that less than 10% of landlords actually made application.

What should have been done initially is what the government has finally done in the current Bill C-9, and that is to offer rent relief directly to tenants so that those most affected by revenue drops and revenue losses will be able to gain relief and some financial assistance.

Initially, not only did the government fail to see that, it chose a very onerous and bureaucratic way in which to deliver this program. Initially the government decided that CMHC should be the delivery mechanism to bring this program into the pocketbooks of small business owners across Canada. However, CMHC was simply not designed to administer such a program, and that was discovered very early on in the process. Then the government doubled back and decided that if CMHC was not the way to deliver this program, it would find another way, and it came up with MCAP. MCAP is a mortgage insurance and financing company that the government determined, for whatever reasons, would be appropriate to deliver this program to small business owners.

● (1040)

However, shortly thereafter it was discovered that one of the principals of MCAP was a gentleman by the name of Rob Silver. In fact, he is a vice-president of that company and very influential because he is married to the current Prime Minister's chief of staff.

Anyone with any knowledge of how governments work would recognize that this was a complete conflict of interest. Here we had an individual, Mr. Rob Silver, who had been a spokesperson for the Liberal Party on many occasions over many years, now contracted by the government to deliver a program that would assist his company. That is absolutely a blatant conflict of interest that should have been obvious to anyone, anyone except, of course, the Liberal government.

However, we should not be surprised. We have seen conflicts of interest arise so many times before with the Liberal government. Whether it be the Prime Minister accepting gratuitous gifts to the Aga Khan's island or whether it be the Prime Minister embroiled in the WE Charity scandal, we have discovered time and time again that the ethical compass of the government has long been missing. The delivery of the government contract to MCAP is one more example of that ethical wrongdoing.

Government Orders

Thankfully, however, saner voices were heard and MCAP was removed from the bidding to deliver this program. The government avoided another messy ethical conflict that would have proved to be incredibly disappointing and embarrassing for the government. It finally took our advice and gave the administration of this program to CRA, which is where it should have been delivered in the first place. CRA has proven, through its administration of CERB and many other government delivery programs, to be the most effective mechanism that the government has at its disposal. Therefore, we are to a point now where, I think, the government has finally got it close to being right, but it is still not perfect.

What this has done over the past six months is demonstrate to small business owners that the government, despite the Liberals' protestations, does not in fact have their backs. If they had the back of small business owners, the Liberals would have employed the changes that we had suggested long ago.

Let us make no mistake. The small business owners across Canada are in an untenable position. Many of them, for example in the restaurant industry, are facing a reality that once rent and wage subsidies expire, come the summer of 2021, they may be forced to close their doors. In fact, many independent analyses have been done and have shown that over 60% of restaurants could be shuttered permanently unless these temporary wage subsidies are extended. Whether that will happen, I do not know.

We need many things to combat this pandemic. I believe, in all sincerity, that the government is working as hard as it can to try to find a vaccine, and I hope a vaccine is found because the lives of Canadians are at stake. The economy of Canadians is at stake.

The small business community in our country is the backbone of the Canadian economy. Small businesses have to be protected. They have to be given an opportunity, as they would be given with Bill C-9, to be able to tap into the government largesse and, at least for the foreseeable future, see a light at the end of the tunnel.

• (1045)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of his speech, the hon. member was starting to head down a path where we could see a bit more information coming from him; that the landlord tenant acts are under provincial jurisdiction. The federal government looked initially at doing something through CMHC to get relief to landlords as well as tenants at the same time. As a member of Parliament, I work with landlords and tenants who are both facing revenue drops during this crisis. I was able to connect landlords and tenants to federal support through CMHC.

Could the hon. member comment on how Saskatchewan is structured with respect to landlord-tenant agreements being under provincial jurisdiction. In Ontario, 97% of funding has been coming from the federal government. Is the Province of Ontario doing any better providing support for businesses in his province?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I believe my colleague misspoke when he asked if I could make comment on whether the Province of Ontario was better positioned, as it was actually the Province of Saskatchewan.

I am speaking, holistically, about the fact that small business owners across Canada, regardless of region, need support. They

desperately need support. I can assure my hon. friend that small business owners in Saskatchewan are no different than small business owners in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, British Columbia and right across this great country of ours.

They are not looking for handouts. They are just looking for a level playing field that allows them to be able to put food on the table for their families, operate a business, and be able to walk home each month with pride to their families and say that their business is still alive and operating.

That is the purpose of Bill C-9, and for that we offer our unqualified support, but it has taken far too long to get to this point.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the commercial rent subsidy program was flawed when it was first introduced because only landlords could apply. As a result, many small businesses, including those in Vancouver East, were not able to access this support.

Now, with the new program, the Minister of Finance yesterday said it would only be retroactive back to September 27, not to April 1. Consequently, many small businesses would not be able to qualify under this new program. It is not as though they do not have to carry that debt forward from the first wave.

Does the member agree that the government needs to fix this program once and for all and allow for small businesses to apply for this program retroactively to April 1?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with my hon. colleague that this program was flawed from the outset. Mistakes were made by the government and not rectified for a full six months. I believe that most small business owners in Canada would love to see a retroactive aspect to this bill, so that going back to April 1 they would be able to have taken advantage of the current provisions within Bill C-9.

However, I do not believe the government is going to be listening to that or acting upon that, although I would encourage my friend from Vancouver East to keep pressuring the government. Perhaps we will see some relenting in its approach in the future.

• (1050)

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my hon. colleague could tell me if I am understanding him correctly.

We were not able to get this done properly the first time, we were told, because it was provincial. Now, suddenly, we can do it federally, and is that because the wife of the man in charge of MCAP actually wanted to make sure it went through his organization?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my earlier remarks, yes I believe this was a huge conflict of interest. Initially, the government was considering giving this contract to administer the rent subsidy program to MCAP, a company that had direct ties to the Prime Minister's Office.

Government Orders

This delivery mechanism would have benefited MCAP directly. We have a situation where Mr. Silver, on many occasions, directly lobbied the federal government and had complete access to the Prime Minister's Office because of his relationship to the Prime Minister's chief of staff, who is his wife.

This was morally repugnant, quite frankly. When I say it was an obvious breach of the conflict of interest code in Canada, that is an understatement.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a huge privilege to speak on this bill and also to be able to represent the federal NDP as a critic for small business, tourism and economic development.

Before I get started, I do want to give a huge shout-out to someone special in my life, my mom. It is her birthday. I appreciate the round of applause in the House of Commons.

Speaking about my mom is so relevant today because moms are really so important, as we know, in times of crisis. We see them bringing food to a neighbour if they have been sick, or if they see an injustice in the community, they are the first to rise up.

In times of desperation, when people are in difficult times and in crisis during this pandemic, we expect our government to really take that motherly approach, so it is so relevant that it is my mom's birthday today and we are talking about this important bill. People expect the government to take that "mother bear" approach and make sure that everybody is taken care of and looked after. That is something I appreciate about moms, not just my mom, but moms across this country. We expect our government to take that approach.

Sadly, when this crisis broke out, we saw the government step forward with an initial wage subsidy offering 10%, which was clearly not close to adequate. We saw Ireland, the U.K. and Denmark offering wage subsidies between 70% and 80%. With our pressure, working beyond the normal means of lobbying and advocacy, we worked together with organized labour, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Our party, our leader and I signed a letter calling on the government to raise that wage subsidy. We were glad to see them do that.

My colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby brought forward a proposal to bring forward a commercial rent program, similar to what they were doing in Australia. I know the government likes to say that it is difficult in the federation of Canada to be able to take on issues like rent, but other countries were able to do that. They were able to work collaboratively to bring forward programs to help people.

Today we are really glad to see the government come back with a fix when it comes to the commercial rent assistance program and extending the wage subsidy, but there are still a lot of unknowns, such as the wage subsidy and what it will look like moving into the new year. We know that for tourism and hospitality businesses, certainty is so important.

I want to give a huge shout-out to Charlotte Bell, of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, and Keith Henry, from the Indige-

nous Tourism Association of Canada, for their advocacy in calling on the government to extend that wage subsidy.

However, these businesses need certainty, not just on the wage subsidy, but also around financing programs such as the BCAP program, which only 14% of tourism businesses have actually been successful in receiving financing from and 43% have been flat out denied. We know liquidity is going to be a big issue.

These are a lot of issues that have not been addressed. I am going to get into the importance of the government working with everybody, especially during this pandemic.

My big concern is the disconnect of the government not completely understanding the challenges small businesses are facing. We heard last night from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance that the government is not willing to support our motion, which they flat out denied today, to backdate the commercial rent assistance program to April.

It baffles me that the government understands it had designed a flawed program and admits it made a mistake, which it is willing to fix it here today, moving forward, but it will not backdate it to April 1. By not doing so, there is a serious injustice going on. We heard the Deputy Prime Minister say that the government is forward-thinking, but the debt comes forward for all of those tenants who were denied access to the landlord-driven, flawed program. Basically, many people were not even able to apply because their landlords would not participate. Two-thirds of Canadian businesses were excluded from that program.

This is so unfair because many of these business owners were denied, although their neighbour got access to the program. They will also be responsible, like all Canadians, to paying back the debt that we are accumulating to help save small businesses in this country.

The fact that the Liberal are unable to backdate the program shows the disconnect. It shows they do not understand the debt that these businesses are accumulating and the challenges they are facing. While they talk about being equitable, there is nothing equitable about them not backdating their broken and flawed program.

• (1055)

The Liberals were actually threatening to go to an election without providing these emergency supports, and then there was the delay. Here we are on the final day of three weeks of sitting before a break week fast-tracking legislation to get help to people. It just shows that the government really does not understand how serious this issue is for small businesses.

Many small businesses are watching today. Many of them are steeped in debt or are in arrears with their landlords. They are looking today to see if the government is actually going to backdate the program, or if they are going to have to go file for bankruptcy, because that is what many businesses are looking at.

I remember being self-employed in the 2008 recession, and that does not even pale in comparison to today. I remember the injustice of the government of the day, the Harper government, bailing out the big banks and big corporations and leaving small businesses to hang out to dry. This is unacceptable. We need the government to move much more quickly.

I want to thank so many different groups, but I particularly want to identify one. *Savesmallbusiness.ca* identified really important opportunities, solutions and flaws in the program. It advocated for rent relief and for the government to fix the program. It identified that there were huge problems such as a slow rollout, over-complicated paperwork and banks being let off the hook. It also identified that the government failed to bring in help.

We look at other countries such as Australia, for example, which commissioned a group of business leaders quickly to come together from various sectors to provide help. The government here also did not listen to real people on the ground and put away the hammer to bring out the scalpel. It needs to listen to people on the ground when it deals with these issues.

As well, the government did not demand more from the financial industry. We saw the big banks once again get off the hook from doing the right thing of contributing and participating.

There are so many things we saw with the rollout of the commercial rent assistance program, including assigning the contract to administer the contract to MCAP, with \$84 million for a broken design program.

What breaks my heart is seeing and reading stories about places like the Golestan Bakery in Vancouver. It has been running for 23 years, and it has just been evicted by its landlord. This what we are going to continue to see. This injustice is going to be carried on by the Liberals, who are refusing to fix this program.

I have to give a huge shout-out to all the small businesses that reached out to my office, and to MPs across this country, to organize labour to come together and stand in solidarity with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the local chambers of commerce. As I said, *savesmallbusiness.ca*, Startup Canada, various business organizations, indigenous organizations that were initially excluded from the subsidy because it excluded indigenous-led organizations, and Chief Dennis from *Huu-ay-aht*, have all stood together.

Here I am rising for the 40th time since the pandemic broke out to speak on small businesses and the commercial rent assistance issue, and it is bittersweet. I am glad to see the changes, but we need to save those businesses that are steeped in debt, in arrears and need help. I am urging and begging the government to get on board, and I am asking the Conservatives to also get on board in pressuring the government to force it to create an opportunity for those who were excluded get access to the funding they so deserve.

Statements by Members

I appreciate the opportunity to raise these issues.

● (1100)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni will have five minutes for questions and comments when the House next gets back to debate on the question.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

VETERANS' WEEK

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, next week we will mark Veterans' Week across the country. Like many Canadians, I am proud to stand strong in support of veterans, those who have served and sacrificed and those who continue to serve with honour and courage, who protect human rights and democracy and ensure that Canadian values are protected.

I encourage everyone to proudly support our veterans by donating to their fund, purchasing and wearing a poppy, and paying their respects on Remembrance Day through virtual events, prayer and moments of silence. Please encourage others to reach out in gratitude to our veterans and to the men and women who continue to serve. Their contributions to global efforts of peace and a free society will always be remembered. I also acknowledge the contributions of Legions and legionnaires, our veterans and communities, and give them our gratitude as well.

May we always remember. Lest we forget.

* * *

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a year of hardship for many, I want to thank the local Royal Canadian Legion branches 43 and 637 in my riding, as well as our great military service clubs and the city of Oshawa for their coordinated efforts in organizing this year's Remembrance Day memorial on the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the Korean War.

Normally, Remembrance Day in Oshawa is a time we stand together and reflect upon the sacrifices of those who laid down their lives so we can live free. However, with the need to protect our citizens from COVID-19, our veterans groups and the City of Oshawa have come together with Rogers and will be offering an online virtual broadcast of the ceremony, starting at 10:30 a.m. I am thankful for the work of our great community leaders in organizing the ceremony and I look forward to paying my respects as well.

Lest we forget.

*Statements by Members***WEST PRINCE**

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I wish to acknowledge the resilience of the West Prince community in my Egmont riding following awful tragedies that occurred earlier this fall.

Last Friday, I was invited to attend an event hosted by the community of Northport to thank all the volunteers and recognize the families whose lives were changed forever. Whether it be the volunteers who helped in the search or those who kept the boys and their families in their thoughts and prayers, our community rallied around those impacted by these tragedies in such a way that made us all proud to call West Prince home.

I extend a special thanks to DND search and rescue, the Canadian Coast Guard, Fisheries and Oceans, Parks Canada and the RCMP that promptly answered the calls to action in response to these tragedies. When the men and women who serve put on their uniforms each day, they do so knowing that they are putting their lives at risk in order to protect us.

As 2020 has shown us, the resilience of our communities relies on us coming together when it matters most. I am proud of my community for doing just that.

[Translation]

I thank our men and women in uniform, as well as my community.

* * *

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, small businesses across Canada have been closing their doors and struggling to survive since the beginning of the pandemic in March and yet the Liberals have designed their rent relief program so that business owners only take on more debt. CECRA was a deeply flawed and broken program and the Liberals knew that when they launched it. Not only did businesses need to show a 70% revenue loss, but business owners needed their landlords' permission to apply.

To fix their own mistake, they have announced a new tenant-focused program that only offers support to and from the end of September. The Liberals designed a commercial rent subsidy program that left the majority of small businesses behind. I do not understand why they will not make the necessary changes so that commercial renters who were left out the first time can get the retroactive financial support they need to weather this storm.

New Democrats are calling on the government to save the hardest-hit businesses by backdating the rent program to April. This will help them catch up on their rent, rehire the employees they let go and save small business across the country.

• (1105)

[Translation]

ALPHONSE PELLETIER

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we are presently in the middle of Veterans' Week, which runs from November 5 to 11, I am honoured to take a moment today to mark Remembrance Day.

Remembrance Day is particularly important in my riding. Sherbrooke has two armouries that are home to four regiments, and we are very proud of the work they do. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the deployment of our reservists as part of Operation Laser to long-term care centres in Montreal. That mission reminds us of the importance of the professional and selfless work done by our troops, even in peacetime.

On Remembrance Day, I will get a chance to meet Alphonse Pelletier, a Korean War veteran from Sherbrooke. I will be awarding him with a medal recognizing his bravery, as well as his life-long commitment and involvement.

Mr. Pelletier, your sacrifice and your dedication to defending Canadian values set a remarkable example for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

[English]

KENORA

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for the riding of Kenora, it is incredibly disappointing to see that the north continues to be overlooked by the Liberal government. From economic development to infrastructure improvements to social supports, our region is clearly not on the priority list of the Liberals. From Pickle Lake to Red Lake, from Sioux Narrows to Sioux Lookout, it is clear the Liberals have no plan to enable the north to prosper.

Luckily, the Conservative Party is here for northerners. We support industries like forestry and mining that spur economic growth. We support tourism. We support small businesses, which the Prime Minister accused of being tax cheats. We recognize the need for improved infrastructure and Internet, and we continue to stand up for law-abiding firearms owners.

The Conservatives are champions for northern prosperity. We are going to continue to fight for the issues that are important to northerners.

* * *

DIWALI

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we live in a great country, a country with so much diversity, so it is with great happiness that I wish you, all members and all Canadians a happy Diwali. I believe our heritage is our greatest strength and Canada, as diverse as it is, continues to grow every day with a rich, vibrant heritage.

Historically, Diwali is celebrated by Sikhs, Hindus, Jains and others to recognize different historical events. The common thread seems to be the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, good over evil and hope over despair.

I also celebrate Diwali in my own special way because for me it is a part of Canada's heritage and something I truly believe in.

I ask all members of the House and all Canadians to recognize our heritage and join Canadians from coast to coast to coast in celebrating Diwali.

Happy Diwali.

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HOLOCAUST EDUCATION WEEK

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is Holocaust Education Week. As we remember all those who fought and sacrificed for our freedom from tyranny in World War II, we must not forget the lessons from that war.

Between 1941 and 1945, over six million Jews were systemically murdered in concentration camps in an effort to exterminate an entire people, but recent studies show that up to 22% of young Canadians do not know about the Holocaust. Those who do not remember history are doomed to repeat it. Even today, there are Holocaust deniers who continue to stoke the flames of anti-Semitism, hate and xenophobia.

We cannot take our democracy for granted. We must always be vigilant and call out hatred whenever we see it. We must teach our children about the Holocaust so such evil and darkness never again rises in our midst. We must remember. Only then can we say, “never again”.

* * *

● (1110)

MAX WARD

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada and Alberta lost an aviation pioneer this week. Max Ward passed away on Monday night at the age of 98.

Born in Edmonton in 1921, Max was a veteran of the RCAF, a bush pilot, an entrepreneur and a very savvy businessman.

In 1953, Max founded Wardair in Yellowknife with a 14-passenger, single-engine Otter that operated on wheels, skis and floats. His business grew over time, and through his commitment to his employees and the industry, Wardair eventually became Canada's third largest airline in 1989. In true Alberta tradition, he built his business on a commitment to providing good service for good prices by good people.

The recipient of numerous honorary degrees, Max also received the Alberta Order of Excellence, was inducted into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame and was made an officer of the Order of Canada.

Max Ward will be deeply missed by his friends, his family, Albertans and Canadians.

Statements by Members

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us honour the brave women and men who served, our veterans, for their sacrifice to bring peace and stability to those abroad and here at home.

In Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, crowds usually gather at cenotaphs throughout our community in honour of Canada's veterans, in support of those who serve and in memory of those we have lost.

I always attend the ceremony at Sullivan's Pond, where thousands and thousands of people would normally stand side-by-side in remembrance. Although the COVID-19 pandemic means that we cannot gather in a crowd this year, there are still so many ways that we can give thanks and remember those we have lost.

I encourage everyone who is able to buy a poppy this year from their local Legion. Whether we can make it to our local cenotaph or not, let us please hold Canada's veterans and those who made the ultimate sacrifice in our hearts and in our minds.

Lest we forget.

* * *

[Translation]

LÉO MAJOR

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, January 23, 1921, was the birthdate of Léo Major, a great man little known in Quebec but a hero in the Netherlands.

Léo Major was a courageous soldier in the Régiment de la Chaudière during the Second World War. He enlisted at 19, determined to help his country. He lost an eye in Normandy but still participated in the Battle of the Scheldt in 1944.

During the Rhineland Campaign, Corporal Major was again wounded when his vehicle hit a mine. He escaped from the hospital and stayed with a family in Nijmegen, Netherlands, while recovering from his wounds.

April 14, 1945, marked the beginning of the liberation of nearly 50,000 people in Zwolle, Netherlands. One night he attacked German patrols, fooling them into believing Canadian troops were invading, and he single-handedly freed the city. That same night, he lost his best friend, Wilfrid Arsenaault.

On April 14, 2005, 60 years to the day after the liberation of Zwolle, he was made an honorary citizen of the city.

That is what I call a real hero. Let us remember Léo and all veterans on November 11.

*Statements by Members**[English]***JOHN STRINGER**

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today, during Veterans' Week, to honour John “Jack” Stringer, who died on October 24 in Barrie just two months after celebrating his 100th birthday.

Jack joined the Canadian Forces in 1940 and was promptly shipped overseas. During World War II, Jack fought in almost every country in Europe and would later serve during the Korean conflict in 1952. Jack retired as chief warrant officer from Canadian Forces Base Borden in 1975 just after he and his wife of 72 years, Regina, would pay a greater price with more than just Jack's service for king and country. In 1974, their son Bruce was one of the “Buffalo Nine”, the nine Canadian peacekeepers killed over Damascus, Syria.

On behalf of a grateful nation, I want to thank Jack Stringer and the hundreds of thousands of Canadians and their families who have served and continue to serve our country with courage, honour, valour and sacrifice.

This Sunday, on Indigenous Veterans Day, and on November 11, I encourage all Canadians to show Canada's veterans, in whatever way they can, how grateful and thankful we are for all they have done for us.

* * *

• (1115)

2020 U.S. ELECTION

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning is a great morning in America. With the results in Pennsylvania, Georgia, Nevada and Arizona, clearly Joe Biden will become the next President of the United States. This brings an end to the nightmare presidency of Donald Trump, someone who embodies dishonesty, misogyny, racism and xenophobia, and who admires brutal authoritarian regimes.

Now is the time for healing and a chance for all humanity to work together to find solutions to challenges we face, including, above all, the existential crisis of climate change. Americans are our closest friends and neighbours. Our undefended border is a symbol of peace and hope worldwide.

Congratulations to President-elect Joe Biden and Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris. Canadians look forward to working them in the years to come.

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*[Translation]***ÉMILIE SANSAÇON**

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness, the sadness that comes with losing a dear friend, that I learned yesterday of the passing of Émilie Sansaçon after a lengthy battle with cancer.

Until the very end, until our recent contact through her brave father Louis, Émilie remained courageous and kept smiling. Émilie fought for her own health and as a result sacrificed a great deal of

her own health in the fight against the inequity, injustice and discrimination that gravely ill people are confronted with in the employment insurance program.

Today, however, is a day of mourning, but also of hope because Émilie would not want it any other way. Émilie has left us, but her fight remains because Émilie would not want it any other way.

* * *

*[English]***REMEMBRANCE DAY**

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a retired colonel in the Canadian Armed Forces and a proud Legion member, every year I wear the poppy with great pride, taking time to remember those who have served before me, those who still serve and those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

I was shocked and, even more, disappointed to read this morning that Whole Foods Market, in an affront to our veterans, has banned its employees from wearing poppies. I trust this misguided policy will be reversed immediately and Whole Foods will allow its employees to wear poppies again. Without our veterans, Canada would not be the country we are so proud to call home. Other nations, such as the Netherlands, understand this. Why does Whole Foods not?

In this vein, tomorrow at 7:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Global B.C. will premier the documentary *75 Years Later: The Sounds of Freedom* on its YouTube channel to pay tribute to Canadians who took part in World War II, and specifically those who liberated the Netherlands. I encourage all Canadians to watch this broadcast in honour of those who gave their lives for Canada and the Netherlands.

Let us wear the poppy with pride. Let us forget.

* * *

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Remembrance Day, Canadians will remember those who lost their lives serving in the Canadian Forces, and thank those who served and continue to serve.

From Passchendaele to Kandahar, Canadian soldiers have a proud history of serving in the most dangerous situations, risking their lives to defend the most vulnerable among us.

[Translation]

It is so inspiring to see our communities come up with ways to gather virtually to ensure that we continue to honour members of the armed forces and veterans.

[English]

COVID-19 may have stopped us from coming together in person, but it will never stop us from honouring those who risked everything to defend our freedom and democracy here and around the world.

Nova Scotians have witnessed incredibly tragic moments over the past year, yet the strength, resilience and love in our communities only continue to grow.

[Translation]

Today we are gathering to remember those who lost their lives in service to Canada and to thank those who have served and continue to serve.

[English]

Lest we forget.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are all wearing poppies to honour those who served, those who were wounded and those who never came home, and for the countless mothers who buried their faces in their pillows in the endless anguish of knowing they will never see their daughter or son again. That is why Canadians are so outraged that the billionaire American-owned Whole Foods grocery chain has banned its workers from honouring our soldiers.

Will the government join with Canadians in boycotting Whole Foods, saying that we will not give it our money until it lets its workers give thanks?

• (1120)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely unacceptable. The poppy is an important symbol of remembrance, and it is more important than ever that everybody supports the Royal Canadian Legion poppy campaign this year.

I know that all my colleagues in the House join me in condemning this move and reinforcing the poppy for everyone to remember and honour the service of the people who have provided our democracy and freedom.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government told us it needed to shut down Parliament, to do away with all the distracting questions about its WE scandal and other cover-ups, so that it could focus like a laser beam on a new plan to get our economy back.

The Liberals have had all this time to themselves and they came forward with a rent assistance program that does not pay rent assistance to anyone who cannot afford to prepay their rent. Today they tried to fix it, but they gummed up the procedure and were ruled out of order.

Do they realize that their spectacular incompetence is costing businesses their livelihoods and workers their jobs?

Oral Questions

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take issue with the hon. member's characterization of our plan. It is because of measures like the wage subsidy, the emergency business account and various supports, including for commercial rent, that millions of Canadians still have a job to go to that allows them to feed their families.

With respect to the Canada emergency rent subsidy, as we enter the second wave of the pandemic across Canada, we have developed a new program that will allow easier access and more targeted benefits to go directly to tenants when their businesses have suffered a loss of revenue. We will be there for Canadians going forward, as we have been through the course of this pandemic.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Finance could not tell us the amount of the deficit, the amount of the debt, or the additional cost of a 1% interest hike on our national debt.

She was unable to say when there will be an economic update or a budget. This is the longest we have gone without. She was unable to say if the Auditor General will receive the required funding.

Is it because the government does not know, or because the government does not want Canadians to know?

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again the hon. member is focused on the wrong thing.

When the Governor of the Bank of Canada attended the finance committee, when both the member and I were present, the governor informed him that the much bigger risk facing the Canadian economy was deflation, not inflation.

I would point the member to the comments of the chief economist of the IMF, who was on leave from the department of economics at Harvard University. She said, "For the many countries that find themselves at the effective lower bound of interest rates, fiscal stimulus is not just economically sound policy but also the fiscally responsible thing to do."

We will base our decisions on evidence and facts, and we will continue to be there for Canadians through this pandemic.

*Oral Questions***AVIATION INDUSTRY**

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cat is out of the bag. Finally, after eight months of waiting, we are expecting to see in the coming days a plan for the aviation sector, but I want to ensure that this plan is for the individuals for whom it is intended.

Can the minister assure me that, first, employees will be protected under this plan and that there will be no further layoffs, and second, that these funds will not go to executive compensation?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are looking at all the things that my hon. colleague brought up.

The Government of Canada has provided \$1.3 billion in assistance to the air sector through the supplementary wage program. We have also provided about \$192 million for companies serving remote areas of our country. Therefore, we have actually put some plans in place, not to mention the rent holiday for 21 airports during 2020. We are working on a long-term solution.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that sounds like the same old empty Liberal promises: lots of words but no action.

I have two more questions for the minister. Will the minister commit to restoring all regional routes across Canada?

Secondly, will he ensure consumer protection, that the tens of thousands of Canadians across Canada get their money back for the flights they purchased?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to my colleague, I will mention the Speech from the Throne, which I am sure she was enthralled listening to.

We did mention in the throne speech that we were going to ensure that regional routes would be maintained in Canada because we feel it is absolutely essential to treat people living in regions the same way as we treat people living in the large cities. They have as many rights as others, so we are working on that.

With respect to the question of consumers and vouchers, we are encouraging the airlines to refund where possible.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we are voting on assistance measures for businesses. It is absurd that there is still nothing for the industries that have been hit the hardest by the pandemic.

There is nothing in the bill we are going to adopt that will save air transportation. Planes are stuck on the tarmac, airports are empty and left to deal with their fixed costs on their own, regional services have been cut, carriers like Air Canada are on the brink of bankruptcy and workers are being laid off.

When will the government take action to save the air transportation sector?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which he asks fairly often.

In response, as I say fairly often as well, I will say that we are working on a comprehensive program to protect our airline industry, which is essential to our country. We are working on solutions.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have been waiting and waiting.

The Minister of Finance has shown that she has no desire to provide assistance to airlines. That explains why, eight months into the pandemic, the government still has no plan. There is no plan for regional service and no plan for airports. Planes need somewhere to land. There is no plan to refund passengers and no plan to protect jobs. All Ottawa does is give Air Canada money with no strings attached, which hurts its competitors.

When will there be a plan for the entire industry?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we are working on a comprehensive plan for the airline industry, which includes airports and, obviously, airlines. I am working with my colleague, the Minister of Finance, who is well aware of the situation. She has publicly acknowledged that the airline industry is facing serious challenges.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the whole world was watching the U.S. election this week.

The election highlighted the country's social divisions and tensions exacerbated by social networks. Meanwhile, the Minister of Canadian Heritage introduced his bill, and it does not include anything about content sharing platforms like YouTube. It is well documented that social networks fuel viral content, even if that content is false or promotes hate.

Will the minister introduce a bill to address this issue?

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, we tabled legislation that will modernize the Broadcasting Act. It is the first time this has been done since 1991.

The changes have been welcomed by Canadian creators and those working in the industry. In fact, Jerry Dias of Unifor, which represents many media workers, said, "The fact is, this would be a huge boost for Canadian media, and media workers and their families".

The Minister of Canadian Heritage recently spoke with his French and Australian counterparts on the measures the two countries are putting in place to support their news publishers. We know the importance of local media, and we will continue to work to support them.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the children in Neskantaga are now in their third week of a forced evacuation. Let us run through the minister's lame rolodex of excuses for not helping.

First, he said the Liberals have spent record funding on Neskantaga. Is he serious? Then he said that at least the Liberals have done more for Neskantaga than Stephen Harper. Here is the thing: Neskantaga did not have any clean water under Stephen Harper, and now they have no water under the Liberals. When the minister talks about making progress, he means the progress of going from having no water back to boiled water.

Why has the minister completely failed the people of Neskantaga and their children?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to acknowledge the unacceptable situation in Neskantaga. I would like to update the House on the current discussions we are having with the chief. The plan forward involves a staged path of opening up the new plant, which we have invested \$16.5 million in. We will not rest until we can repatriate members of Neskantaga to their community in a safe, COVID—19-free way. That is what we are proceeding with in partnership with the chief.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the defence minister has been secretive about his plans to establish a new defence strategic communications group. Concerns have been raised by the media about the mandate of this group and whether dossiers on journalists are being collected by his department.

Canadians have trust and confidence in our Canadian Armed Forces, but this minister is stoking fear with his failure to give a straight answer. The minister needs to be clear.

Has the Canadian Armed Forces stood up a new defence strat comms group, yes or no?

• (1130)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be very clear. The Canadian Armed Forces does not conduct influence operations on our citizens. No such plan has been approved, nor will it be. This training is important for international operations because influence activities are used by our adversaries. We must be prepared to respond to malicious foreign actors. This type of training is on pause, as the minister has directed, while the Canadian Armed Forces conducts a thorough review.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary did not answer the question on whether or not defence strat comms has been stood up.

Canadians are proud of our Canadian Armed Forces and support them in defending against disinformation operations by malicious foreign actors, but they also expect the defence minister to do his

Oral Questions

job and reassure them that defence strategic communications will not be politicized by the Liberal government.

I will ask this one more time. Will the defence minister guarantee he will never weaponize and use military public affairs, and specifically defence strategic communications, against Canadians?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, the minister and I have been very clear, and continue to be clear, that we do not conduct influence operations on Canadian citizens. Military communicators will always respect the privacy of Canadians and our allies, and we will always adhere to applicable laws, policies and directives. This is very clear. The minister has made it clear, as I am doing today.

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[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need to protect themselves against the approaching flu season, but we have learned that Canada only has enough vaccines for 37% of Canadians. The last time the government tried to procure vaccines for Canadians, it signed a strange agreement with the Chinese communist regime, but that fell through.

We are in the middle of a pandemic, and these vaccines are more important than ever to prevent our hospitals from becoming overwhelmed.

My question is simple. Will Canada be able to supply the provinces with enough vaccines to combat seasonal flu?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question about flu season.

We have delivered in the timely order that is expected by Canadians, and over 97% of flu vaccines have been delivered to provinces and territories. Many provinces and territories have ordered extra flu vaccines to be prepared, but, in fact, the demand has exceeded even their expectations, so we will continue to work with them on other sources to access additional doses of the flu vaccine.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is hard to believe, since the government has been slow to make almost every decision on the COVID-19 crisis.

It was slow to close the border. It is slow to deliver on a COVID-19 vaccine, since it chose to sign an agreement with the Chinese communist regime, which fell through.

Oral Questions

It is now behind on getting flu vaccines, which is normally an easy thing for a government to plan. The government does not seem to grasp the urgency of keeping Canadians healthy, even during this crisis.

When will the government learn from its mistakes and protect Canadians properly?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with provinces and territories to prepare for flu season. So far, we have seen very low flu activity, and that is good news.

I thank all the Canadians who are stepping forward to get their flu vaccinations this year. It is certainly an important year to make sure that we protect our health care systems and our families. Ninety-seven percent of the flu shots ordered by provinces and territories were released well ahead of schedule, and we will continue to work with provinces and territories to look for other sources of additional doses of the vaccine.

Again, I thank Canadians for taking this responsibility so seriously.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been living in the land of Care Bears for so long that he would go so far as to limit freedom of expression in order not to offend anyone. The members of his caucus and his cabinet ministers all blindly supported his unacceptable comments on freedom of expression.

Do all the Liberals agree with the Prime Minister, who clearly said that freedom of expression is not without limits?

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

It is rather unfortunate that some members are trying to politicize an issue like this when the Prime Minister was clear. All Canadians were appalled by the attacks. We expressed our deep, sincere and concrete solidarity with our French friends. The day after the attacks, we expressed our solidarity with them.

The world recognizes that Canada is one of the great defenders of freedom of expression. We will continue to defend free speech around the world.

• (1135)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I would like to remind the Minister of Foreign Affairs that he is not the Prime Minister.

His messages do not carry the same weight. After the conversation between French President Emmanuel Macron and Quebec Premier François Legault basically made him the laughingstock of the diplomatic community, the Liberal Prime Minister finally got a chance to talk to the French President himself.

Was he honest with him? Did he repeat what he said here, namely, that he believes that freedom of expression is not without limits? We are waiting for the tweet.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by international standards, when I speak, I do so on behalf of the Canadian government.

That is what we did in the hours that followed. We were very clear. The Prime Minister reiterated the message. Everything is clear. What worries me today is that people are trying to politicize the issue even though I truly believe that every member of the House wants to defend freedom of expression.

It is very clear on this side of the House. We expressed that on behalf of the Government of Canada. I spoke to the French authorities. We will always be there to defend freedom of expression, as will all parliamentarians.

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AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we are voting for measures to help businesses, and it blows my mind that there is still nothing for those industries hardest hit by the pandemic.

There is nothing in what we are about to adopt that will help the aerospace industry. There was nothing in the throne speech either. It is as if Ottawa is oblivious to Quebec's leading export sector. What aerospace sector?

The pandemic has completely paralyzed the industry, and 43,000 people in Quebec are worried about losing their jobs. When will Ottawa come up with a plan for the aerospace sector?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

When I talk about a comprehensive plan for the air sector, I also know that the aerospace sector has been affected, because it really is the supply line for the air sector. We are well aware that it has been affected by this pandemic, and we are taking that into account.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is nonsense.

The aerospace industry is the largest manufacturing industry in Canada, not just in Quebec. It does not take a rocket scientist to see that the pandemic has hit airplane manufacturers particularly hard. Since so many planes have been grounded, no one is buying them. It is simple.

It is also difficult for SMEs that manufacture parts for those aircraft. The entire economic fabric of Quebec's aerospace industry, the third largest in the world, is at risk of falling into the hands of foreign interests because Ottawa refuses to act. What will it take for the government to launch a comprehensive policy for the aerospace sector?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rarely get angry, but when a colleague tries to lecture me on Canada's aerospace industry, I simply cannot accept comments of that nature, because I know this sector intimately, including the Quebec sector.

As I said, we are working on a comprehensive plan. What does he want?

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Roman is 21. He has suffered his whole life with cystic fibrosis: his lungs function at 40%. Physiotherapy and hospital visits fill up his days. Trikafta can save Roman's life, but it is not here in Canada. When I asked the minister why, she said she was waiting for Vertex to apply, but the real reason is the government has failed to fix PM-PRB pricing regulations that keep innovative drugs like Trikafta out. It is being fast tracked in other countries, so why is Canada lagging?

When will Roman have access to Trikafta?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am with Roman and his family, and I understand how desperately patients with cystic fibrosis and their families are seeking new treatments that can ameliorate their conditions. We have worked with Vertex and encouraged it to apply to Health Canada. We have had promising conversations with Vertex and we stand by, ready to rapidly review the drug using evidence from other regulatory bodies.

I encourage Vertex to accelerate its work with Health Canada to make sure that we can ensure people like Roman and his family have access to the drug here in Canada.

● (1140)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is the problem. That all sounds nice, but those are not measurable achievements.

The minister will recall that we had a conversation in June. I even handed her a personal letter about the case of a woman in my riding.

Cystic fibrosis can affect anyone. There is a drug that exists and is being used in some countries, but we have been waiting months and months and months for the Health Canada decision.

Can the minister give us a bit of hope and do her part to give victims of this disease a bit of hope?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the member opposite's concern that we have not had an application yet from Vertex. Of course, the department has reached out to Vertex, has spoken with the company and has encouraged it to apply.

Let me be clear. Patients like Roman and the member opposite's constituent can apply to the special access program at Health Canada with their doctor's recommendation, so they can access Trikafta in Canada. The majority of those applications are approved, and I would encourage them to reach out to my office if they need any help with those applications.

Oral Questions

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, needless to say, I was surprised, but even more disappointed this morning to read that Whole Foods Market has taken the decision to ban employees from wearing poppies. As someone who has served in our military to defend rights, Whole Foods may have the right to establish its own dress code, but taking away rights from its employees, and banning poppies that Canadians wear in remembrance of those who have made the supreme sacrifice, is just plain wrong. What I do know is that it is within all Canadians' rights to no longer shop at Whole Foods.

Premier Ford has indicated he will introduce legislation to prohibit employers from banning poppies. Will the Prime Minister do the same?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course this is absolutely unacceptable and I know all of my colleagues in the House would join me in condemning this move and making sure the poppy is worn so veterans are remembered and honoured for all their great service.

Veterans' Week is a time for every Canadian to come together to show their unwavering support for veterans. Veterans provided our peace and democracy. They deserve our respect and this government will make sure they get it.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in September, 2019, one year ago, the Prime Minister promised Canadians that he would plant two billion trees in 10 years. In September, 2020, one year later, we found out that zero trees had been planted. Then, at the natural resource committee just last week, we found out that not only had trees not been planted, but there was no plan and no budget for it; zero trees planted and no plan in place.

I know the Prime Minister thinks that the budget will balance itself. Does he also believe that trees will plant themselves?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely committed to planting two billion trees. We have been developing a plan based on the areas of land to be planted, the types of trees to be planted, how best to prepare the sites and how to monitor trees for survival. All of this work has been going on in the middle of the pandemic.

We are talking about increasing forest cover by an area twice the size of P.E.I. by year 10, and we look forward to releasing our plan.

*Oral Questions***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Royal Canadian Air Force Association, 427 Wing, is an incredible resource for veterans in London. It has two museums and resides in a historical canteen from the 1940s.

This group has fought hard to keep the wing from shutting down forever because of COVID-19. When this group reached out for assistance from the people of London, they showed up. However, I wrote the Minister of Veterans Affairs and the Minister of Canadian Heritage over eight months ago and I have still heard nothing.

Will the government finally commit more than just pretty words this Remembrance Day and provide immediate financial support to the wing and veterans?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has always been my priority to ensure that we provide financial support for organizations that do so much for our veterans, and that is exactly what we included, \$20 million in Bill C-4 to do just that.

I have worked with some of these groups over the years and I can assure my colleague that we will always be there to support the groups and veterans right across the country. We owe that to our veterans and this government will continue to support them.

* * *

• (1145)

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture has been quoted several times over the past week, stating that outstanding compensation for Canada's dairy farmers will be paid before the end of the year. What is unclear is whether the minister meant the end of the calendar year or the end of the fiscal year.

Despite their repeated promises to stand up for supply management, it was the Liberals who traded away our domestic market in successive trade deals.

The entire process for compensation is shrouded in mystery. When can dairy farmers expect compensation for year two?

Mr. Neil Ellis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the crucial role supply management plays in keeping our rural communities vibrant and we will always be there to defend it. That is why, during the new NAFTA negotiations, we protected supply management from American efforts to dismantle it.

Our commitment to make available \$1.75 billion over eight years for full and fair compensation is firm. We came through with our commitment to CETA and CPTPP and we will always do the same thing now that the new NAFTA has been ratified.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recent offences involving places of worship, homes of faith leaders and the other instances serve as a stark reminder that we cannot

take for granted our hard fought freedoms. They have an impact not just on the individuals targeted, but on the communities at large.

This matter hits close to home in my riding of Brampton East, where we have a diversity of faiths and communities, all of whom have a right to worship peacefully without fear for their safety. Recently, BARIC mosque reached out to me to let me know that it intended to apply for the security infrastructure program, but expressed concerns about meeting the deadline due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety please update the House on what the government is doing to ensure that those who want to apply are able to do that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every Canadian, regardless of their race, background or religion, needs to feel safe where they live, where they work, and where they gather to pray.

Through the communities at risk: security infrastructure program, our government is supporting vulnerable communities by helping them feel safe in their local centres, their schools, and their places of worship.

This program has given the community in my riding a greater sense of safety by helping it improve its security infrastructure so that there are places where community members feel safe.

In order to leave enough time to submit an application, and given the real tensions that various organizations are experiencing because of COVID-19—

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The time has expired.

The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture said last week that year two compensation payments to dairy farmers under CETA and CPTPP would be paid by the end of the year. However, what was unclear from the minister was if she meant the end of the calendar year, December 31, 2020, or the end of the government's fiscal year, March 31, 2021, or the end of the dairy year, July 31, 2021.

Oral Questions

Will the government keep its word and tell Canadian dairy producers now that it will pay year two compensation for CETA and CPTPP no later than December 31, 2020?

Mr. Neil Ellis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on August 19, we announced a compensation package of \$1.75 billion over eight years for all dairy producers, with amounts distributed according to their respective quotas. Less than one year ago we sent a first cheque to all dairy farmers who asked for it. We have kept our promises and that is exactly what we will continue to do.

It was very important to ratify this agreement for the agriculture sector, which will help it grow, with continued access to our largest trading partner.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, dairy farmers in my riding like Jane Shier are asking why the Prime Minister holds agriculture in such contempt. The Liberals' two-year delay on negotiating the trade compensation payments demonstrates a lack of understanding of the impact these concessions and the pandemic are having on Canadian farmers and their families.

The Conservatives understand how hard our farmers work and the costs involved in feeding Canadians and protecting our food security. When will the Prime Minister make agriculture a priority?

Mr. Neil Ellis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the crucial role supply management plays in keeping our rural communities vibrant. We will always be there to defend it.

That is why, during the new NAFTA negotiations, we protected our supply management from an American effort to dismantle it. Our commitment to make available \$1.75 billion over eight years for full and fair compensation is firm. We kept to our commitment for CETA and CPTPP and we will do the same thing now that the new NAFTA has been ratified.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, supply managed-producers, including dairy producers, do everything they can to ensure that Canadians' food is safe. They expect the government to honour its own commitment to pay the compensation promised more than a year ago.

Last week, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food assured producers that they would receive a payment before the end of the year. We know that this government likes to bend the truth.

Will this payment really be made before December 31, 2020?

• (1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Neil Ellis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in August 2019, we announced a compensation package of \$1.75 billion over eight years for all dairy producers, with amounts distributed according to their respective quotas. Less than one year ago, we sent the first cheque to all dairy farmers who asked for it.

We have kept our promises and that is exactly what we will continue to do. It was very important to ratify this agreement for the agriculture sector, which will help it grow, with the continued access to our largest trading partner.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our dairy farmers produce the highest-quality milk in the world, but recent trade deals have given away more of Canada's dairy market to foreign farmers.

The Liberals promised a multi-year compensation package to our farmers for granting this access, but they refuse to provide details on the timelines of when this payment will be made for year two. The farmers in my riding do not need the parliamentary secretary to read them a story and give the same answer he has just given four times in question period.

On what date will compensation be paid to farmers across the country?

Mr. Neil Ellis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, our government recognizes the crucial role supply management plays in keeping our rural communities vibrant, and we will always be there to defend it. That is why, during the new NAFTA negotiations, we protected supply management from American efforts to dismantle it.

Our commitment to make available \$1.75 billion over eight years in full, fair compensation is firm. We came through on our commitment for CETA and CPTPP and we will do the same thing now that the new NAFTA agreement has been ratified.

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[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Davie shipyard is Canada's expert on icebreakers. However, Ottawa has been slow to award a contract of more than \$1 billion for the construction of the polar icebreaker *Dieffenbaker*.

The contract has been in limbo since 2013. Ottawa had to withdraw the order from Seaspan because it did not meet deadlines. Today, Seaspan has allied itself with Ontario and Newfoundland shipbuilders to take back the contract it failed to fulfill.

Oral Questions

Is the government delaying the file on purpose to bypass Davie and give Seaspan the edge?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Davie shipyard remains a very important partner for the Government of Canada and a major player in the Canadian shipbuilding industry.

Unlike the previous government, we continue to work with Davie to integrate it into the procurement process for different shipbuilding projects under way in Canada. We will of course continue to work with all the other shipyards across the country.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that does not pass the smell test. Davie is a global leader and a national centre of expertise when it comes to icebreakers. It is Canada's premier shipbuilder with five construction berths, unlike Seaspan, which only has one. The Davie shipyard is prepared to take the polar icebreaker contract now, while Seaspan does not have the space and is struggling with delays. There is nothing that can justify the delay in awarding the contract, unless the federal government is giving Seaspan the time to join forces with others so that it does not have to give the contract to Davie.

Will the government confirm today that the Davie shipyard will build the *Diefenbaker*?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since our government took office, the Davie shipyard has been awarded \$2.1 billion in contracts under the national shipbuilding strategy. It is in the process of refitting three icebreakers for the Coast Guard. Thanks to our government, Davie is on its way to becoming the third partner in the national shipbuilding strategy.

I think our track record on shipbuilding is clear. The work is moving forward nicely. Davie is and will remain a very important partner.

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[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month, two American clients of FlightSimple, a Calgary aircraft brokerage, were denied entry into Canada to inspect and finalize a purchase. These clients were refused entry, sent back to the wrong city in the U.S. and had to pay out of pocket to fly home. The government has a smooth process for billionaire elites coming into Canada but can only offer confusion and frustration for small business owners.

The Liberal government has already chased away hundreds of thousands of energy jobs. What is the government prepared to do to fix this unacceptable situation, or is Alberta aerospace to be phased out next?

• (1155)

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Our border services officers work very hard to enforce the rules and to assess every situation on a case-by-case basis, in the best interests of Canada and its citizens.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, four years ago, an immigrant woman came to my riding with her children and spouse. She had to renew her work permit. Unfortunately, the officials noted that this woman was missing documentation on the job she held previously and the job she plans to take on. She called the office, but there was no response. She will have to wait another 180 days. That is absurd.

Can we count on the Minister of Immigration and his common sense to address this matter immediately?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic has affected nearly every aspect of our lives. Temporary visitors who are unable to travel can request to extend their status in Canada. Someone with a work permit who is requesting an extension before the permit expires may continue to work in Canada with implied status.

I would be happy to discuss this case with my colleague.

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[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since being elected as the member of Parliament for Langley—Aldergrove a year ago, I have been advocating for an extension of the SkyTrain from Canada's fastest-growing city, Surrey, into the heart of the Fraser Valley, to Langley.

This project is long overdue. It is supported by all the mayors and councillors, the provincial government and TransLink. It is shovel-ready. The only thing that is missing is a commitment of funding from the federal government.

Will the Minister of Infrastructure finally hop on board?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to making historic investments in public transit, including in British Columbia, and that is exactly what we are doing. When we receive projects from the province that are prioritized, we look at the business case and are happy to move forward.

I am happy to talk to the member opposite in more detail about this project.

*Oral Questions***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from November 5 to November 11, Canadians will be marking Veterans' Week across the country. The pandemic has changed things, but through virtual ceremonies, social media and more, Canadians will still have the opportunity to pay their respects to our veterans.

Can the Minister of Veterans Affairs please speak more on the importance of Veterans' Week?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Veterans' Week is a vitally important week, as it provides us with the opportunity to remember and honour all those who have sacrificed so much for us. This year, I know that Canadians across the country will join us, wear the poppy and take part in the many virtual Remembrance Day ceremonies.

We will always remember what our veterans have sacrificed for us. Lest we forget.

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HEALTH

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, loopholes in the Liberal government's approach to cannabis legislation has communities across Canada reeling. Illegal cannabis production operations are popping up everywhere through the abuse of personal medical exemptions. The result is that prime agriculture land is being taken over. Odour and light pollution is overwhelming residents, and crime is on the rise, with law enforcement hamstrung and unable to intervene.

When will the Liberals stop compromising communities and close the gaping loopholes in their cannabis laws?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, producers of medical cannabis have to go through a strict screening protocol with Health Canada. In fact, they have to demonstrate that they are abiding by provincial and municipal regulations.

We will continue to examine the cases, and I am happy to work with the member's office if he would like to forward to me the situation he is referring to.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many recent graduates applying for student loan repayment are having difficulty receiving answers to their inquiries. When the phone lines are not dead or busy, they are placed on hold for an inordinate amount of time. The government had months of payment suspension to prepare, but apparently it did nothing. This once again proves that the government's commitments for helping our youth and Canadians in general are mere empty platitudes and lip service.

What specifically is being done to help our recent graduates, and will the government commit to rectifying their situations immediately?

• (1200)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member and everyone in the House that we are working very hard to get every student's questions answered. Yes, Canada student loan payments resumed this past week, but we are really emphasizing to students that they have access to the repayment assistance plan, if they are still struggling. We are working hard to get this information out to students. Of course, this was part of our broader \$8-billion package to help students and our ongoing commitment in the Speech from the Throne to invest in student jobs and student support.

Yesterday I met with student associations in Canada. I am listening. We are there for them and we have their backs.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year, 82 emergency weather alerts were issued in my constituency, the highest in our country. Many of these alerts were issued due to catastrophic flooding and devastating tornadoes. Thanks to the Liberal government's inaction on rural connectivity, many of my constituents did not receive these warnings, which put their lives in danger. This is unacceptable.

Why does the government continue to turn a blind eye to rural Canadians?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. Connectivity is about health and safety, jobs and productivity. It is unfair that millions of households across this big, beautiful country do not have access to this essential service.

We have heard Canadians. We have worked with them to develop a plan that they have asked for, and we will have more to say soon.

* * *

[Translation]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are now in the second wave of the pandemic and, especially in my beautiful province of Quebec, a very large number of businesses have had to close because they are located in red zones. For months, these businesses have been struggling financially because of the new reality we are in, and we know that the pandemic will be with us for many more months to come.

Oral Questions

Our government has supported Canadian businesses since the start of the pandemic, but they still need us. Can the minister responsible tell the House about the new measures that will be implemented to help our businesses and better address their needs?

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saint-Laurent for her ongoing advocacy on behalf of businesses in her riding, as well as the workers who live there.

As Montrealers and Canadians across Canada fight the second wave of this pandemic, we know that businesses and workers are counting on us to get through this. With Bill C-9, our government is proposing a new Canada emergency rent subsidy, covering up to 65% of rent for businesses, and additional lockdown support that could cover up to 90% for those who are impacted hardest by public health orders.

We said we would be there for businesses and workers every step of the way through this pandemic, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the new wage subsidy that was passed this week will not help new businesses in my riding like restaurants, which have to compare sales with those from last January and February to qualify. That was when St. John's experienced what we call "Snowmageddon", with over 30 inches of snow and lockdowns comparable with those in the pandemic.

Will the government offer flexibility in the application of this wage subsidy program so that businesses, like those in my riding and across the country, can qualify?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the course of this pandemic, I have had the opportunity to personally speak with businesses across Canada, including in Newfoundland and Labrador. I heard specifically about issues like the one he mentioned.

From the beginning we have been flexible in our approach and have made serious changes to programs to reflect the needs of Canadians. We have adapted certain measures to allow new businesses to get under the radar for emergency programs.

With respect to the specific issue facing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, I would be pleased to chat with the hon. member to better understand the issue to see if we can extend help to those businesses that have been hardest hit and may need support so that they are still here on the back end of this pandemic.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, Canada has failed to meet our commitments to foreign aid. We have failed to meet our commitments to climate action. We are the fifteenth-largest arms exporting nation. We are considering purchas-

ing offensive F-35 stealth fighter jets. We have engaged in NATO wars of aggression and regime change. We have not signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We recently failed to gain a seat on the UN Security Council.

Will the government conduct a full review of Canadian foreign policy and the role that this country plays in world affairs? On foreign affairs, we are getting an F.

• (1205)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with that, but I would like to thank the member for giving me the opportunity to talk about Canada's leadership around the world.

Canada has been at the forefront when it comes to, for example, the issues around Belarus. I was just in Europe about three weeks ago to bring Canada's support to the leading democratic candidate.

As for Uighurs, something a lot of members in the House have been concerned about, Canada has been at the forefront of this issue to make sure that we have international action.

When it comes to Hong Kong, Canada was the very first country in the world to suspend the extradition treaty between Canada and Hong Kong.

We are leading around the world, and we will continue to do just that.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: This concludes question period for today.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the House offer its condolences to the family and friends of Émilie Sans-façon, emphasize its commitment to helping people who are sick deal with the Employment Insurance program, remind the government of the following motion, adopted on February 19, 2020, "That the House call on the government to increase the special Employment Insurance sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 50 weeks in the upcoming budget in order to support people with serious illnesses, such as cancer", and urge the government to comply with this motion as soon as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will ask only those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

There being no opposition, the House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

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

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for North Island—Powell River on a point of order.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today, and I must say, I am absolutely disheartened and angry that I must do so. I am sure, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That the House condemn Whole Foods and its owner Jeff Bezos for banning its employees from wearing poppies on their uniform and demand that the policy be reversed immediately.

Lest we forget.

The Deputy Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, I will ask only for those who are opposed to the hon. member proposing this unanimous consent motion. Accordingly, all those opposed to her proposing this motion, please say nay. I hear none.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion being adopted, please say nay. There being no dissenting voices, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

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 would like to ask for unanimous consent of the House to adopt the following motion.

I move:

That the House of Commons call on all Canadian employers to allow their employees to wear poppies during Veterans Week, showing support for the service and sacrifice of all Canadian veterans and veterans organizations such as the Royal Canadian Legion, which do vital work supporting Canadian veterans from coast to coast.

• (1210)

The Deputy Speaker: Again, are there any members opposed to the hon. parliamentary secretary proposing this motion? Is there any opposition? I hear none.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. Are there any members opposed to the motion being adopted?

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

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations, and if you seek it, I am confident you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs that it invite John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods Market Inc., to appear before it, Friday, November 20, 2020, to explain his company's policy, which inexplicably prohibits its employees from wearing the poppy to honour Canada's veterans.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members opposed to the hon. member proposing this motion? I hear none.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. Are there any members opposed to the motion being adopted?

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I am just very keen to participate in debate with my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni. I will lower my hand for now, but hope you will see it go back up when debate resumes on the motion before the House today.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition today. It is number 10625384.

Petitioners note that leaky buildings, inefficiently insulated and out of date in their energy efficiency measures, contribute as much as one-third of Canada's greenhouse gases. Petitioners note that the national building code is updated and revised only every five years or so, but major gains in meeting our climate targets could be made by updating the building code.

Petitioners call on the government to work with the provinces and territories to develop a new national building code and shoot for an overall energy demand of 15%.

PUBLIC HEALTH

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

Points of Order

We have seen the devastating toll the COVID-19 pandemic has had on seniors in long-term care homes, and petitioners highlight that there were problems in these homes long before the pandemic.

Petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to include long-term care in the public health system by creating national standards for care and staffing levels under the Canada Health Act to ensure accountability; to eliminate profit-making by government-funded long-term care facilities, ensuring funds are spent as allocated and banning subcontracting; to standardize equitable living wages and benefits, and implement single-site employment for all staff; to strengthen government oversight, and initiate strong penalties and clawbacks for facilities not complying with the regulations; and to require independent family counsels with protected rights.

• (1215)

FIREARMS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to be presenting three petitions in the House today.

The first is my first-ever e-petition. It deals with the issue of firearms. It was started by a resident of my riding who, like many other people across the country, is concerned the government is failing to properly understand and discuss the issues around firearms. It has moved forward with a ban on firearms that are virtually always used legally and properly by individuals instead of focusing on illegal firearms.

This petitioner, as well as many others in my riding, would like the government to act democratically to engage in debate to ensure these things happen in Parliament as opposed to by order in council, and also that they focus on illegal guns, which are really the source of the problem when it comes to gun crime.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with respect to the human rights situations of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China. Petitioners are highlighting some horrific revelations related to that situation: arbitrary detention, separation of children from families, invasive surveillance, destruction of cultural sites, forced labour, forced organ harvesting, mass detentions and so forth.

Petitioners are calling for the use of Magnitsky sanctions in response to these events, targeting officials who are involved.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is in support of Bill S-204, a bill currently before the Senate that would make it a criminal offence for someone to go abroad and receive an organ that had been harvested from somebody against their will. It seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking, which is a concern in China but also in other countries around the world.

I commend these petitions to the consideration of the House.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand in the

House to present a petition from signatories all across Canada: people who are concerned about reports that are continuing to come out of communist China regarding the Uighurs and the forced sterilization and other atrocities that are happening to these people.

The signatories want the Canadian Parliament and the Canadian government to be more vocal on this issue. They are calling on the House of Commons to do a couple of things. The first is to formally recognize that Uighurs in China have been, and are being, subjected to genocide. Second, they call on use of the Magnitsky act for sanctions against those who are responsible for these heinous crimes.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition regarding the ongoing human rights abuses in China toward the Uighur Muslim population. The petitioners are calling on the government to formally recognize that Uighurs in China have been, and are being, subjected to genocide, and to use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials act, the Magnitsky act, and sanction those who are responsible for these heinous crimes.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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 would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any opposed?

Seeing and hearing none, it is so ordered.

Before we go to government orders, I will go to the hon. member for Calgary Centre, on a matter that is currently before the House.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-214—WAYS AND MEANS MOTION

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in response to a point of order raised by the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons on November 3, regarding his concerns respecting Bill C-214, a private member's bill that I have sponsored, entitled "An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (qualifying environmental trust)".

My colleague on the government side of the House believes that this bill would need to be preceded by the adoption of a ways and means motion. As he notes and as is clear in both Bill C-214 and in the Income Tax Act, a qualifying environmental trust is a special kind of trust that is recognized under the Income Tax Act for setting aside reclamation costs for mining sites, waste disposal and quarry sites, as well as pipelines.

The purpose of Bill C-214 is to amend the Income Tax Act to include in the definition “qualifying environmental trust” trusts that are maintained for the sole purpose of funding the reclamation of an oil or gas well operated for the purpose of producing petroleum or natural gas.

Bill C-214 proposes to repeal paragraph (a) of the definition “excluded trust” in subsection 211.6(1) of the Income Tax Act, which currently provides that oil and gas wells are excluded from the definition of a “qualifying environmental trust”, an unjustified inequity that the bill is meant to address, and proposes to add paragraph (e) to the definition of “qualifying site” in the same provision. The proposed paragraph (e) would read as follows: “the operation of an oil or gas well drilled for the purpose of producing petroleum or natural gas.”

The consequence of these proposed amendments would be that the reference to a qualifying site in paragraph (b) of the definition of a “qualifying environmental trust” would include the operation of an oil or gas well drilled for the purpose of producing petroleum or natural gas. Subsection 211.6(2) of the Income Tax Act is the charging provision that imposes tax on qualifying environmental trusts.

My colleague on the government side of the House states that adding a new paragraph (e) to the definition of a “qualifying site” in subsection 211.6(1) of the Income Tax Act would have the effect of expanding the definition of a “qualifying environmental trust” to include trusts that are maintained for the sole purpose of funding the reclamation of an oil or gas well operated for producing petroleum or natural gas. Perhaps that is so, or perhaps not. It depends on the trustee's approach. However, excluding language currently in the act that prejudices one sector of our nation's economy vis-à-vis others is a necessary step in addressing a historical economic inequity.

My colleague goes further to state, “Therefore, the effect of Bill C-214 would be to cause a tax to be payable by a new class of taxpayers, that is, qualifying environmental trusts in respect of the operation of an oil or gas well.” This reach of a conclusion ignores the very nature of how qualifying environmental trusts are taxed, but also by segregating qualifying environmental trusts established for the designed purpose as being a new class of taxpayer somehow distinct from the qualifying environmental trust already extant and effectively providing funding for reclamation and remediation services in Canada's other extractive industries.

In trying to justify the necessity of a ways and means motion, my colleague on the government side of the House erroneously states that Bill C-214 would represent an increase in the incidence of tax for these trusts. Maybe, but only as a result of the increased economic activity associated with the efficiency of using a trust structure to deal with environmental remediation activities. Incidental

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economic activity and the taxation revenue associated thereby is not subject to the necessity of a ways and means motion.

Finally, my colleague insists that Bill C-214 would represent an extension of a tax to a new class of taxpayer, which seems to indicate a prejudice that oil and gas remediation activities represent a different class in the structure of environmental trust, a mode of thinking that is, thankfully, archaic in most of society. Canadians do not segregate themselves by class according to industry sectors, neither does our tax system and neither should the House acquiesce to this regressive rationale.

In support of his argument, my colleague reached for a precedent Speaker's ruling from 2011. I would ask the Speaker to examine how weakly that precedent represents the characteristics of the amendments sought in Bill C-214. I submit a more appropriate comparative would arise from a Speaker's ruling on February 1, 2008, on then Bill C-219, where it was deemed the amendments presented did not result in an increased tax burden on taxpayers.

• (1220)

I have addressed these matters at length through the private member's bill process. I have previously addressed your clerks, Mr. Speaker, on this matter. I have addressed the concerns raised by the legislation-drafting branch at the Library of Parliament. I have worked on the financial modelling with the Parliamentary Budget Officer to show the financial benefit of constructive legislation. In addition, the resultant environmental benefit is a key outcome.

At a time when the current government has intervened with a one-time expenditure of \$1.7 billion to address the historical problem created by excluding oil and gas remediation from being classed as a qualifying environmental trust, why is the government attempting to stretch definitions in order to disallow a measure that would bring some overdue equity to the treatment of Canada's oil and gas industry?

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Calgary Centre for his additional comments on the matter. We will take them under advisement and get back to the House, as necessary.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

INCOME TAX ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy), as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motion.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech given by my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni.

There are some things we agree on but others we do not.

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The Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-9. We think that the criteria for the Canada emergency wage subsidy should have been changed well before this in order to ensure greater stability.

With regard to the commercial rent assistance program, we already knew in May that it would not work. At the time, I called upon the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry to make changes to that program, but it was easier for the government to shut down Parliament and prorogue than to change a program that we knew was ineffective from the start. Access to commercial rent assistance was on a voluntary basis.

My colleague from Courtenay—Alberni and I do not agree when it comes to political parties being able to receive the wage subsidy. We are trying to understand how on earth it is fair that political party employees are protected from being laid off when employees of other businesses that are suffering greatly are not. These businesses are on the verge of collapse too, and it is very difficult for them.

It is outrageous that the Conservative Party, which raised \$13 million from its supporters in three quarters, collected close to \$1 million from the emergency wage subsidy. The Liberals also took in \$1.2 million in public funds from the emergency wage subsidy, and they raised \$8.6 million from their supporters.

The NDP cashed in on the emergency wage subsidy starting in May. In June, we learned that the NDP would be getting about \$60,000 per month. Yesterday, November 5, reporters asked the NDP how much money it would be getting. They did not get an answer.

My question is simple. Does my colleague support the Bloc Québécois's amendment to make the emergency wage subsidy off-limits for political parties?

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are all in this together, and I agree with my colleague that the delay in the rollout was absolutely horrible. So many people were let go from their jobs, whether they were working at a non-profit or charitable organization, a small business or even a political organization.

What we all set out to do was to make sure that we did not discriminate against anyone, wherever they worked. It was for all workers and their families. Including in projects that the NDP has raised concerns about, we decided that we were supporting all workers and their families to make sure that they had job security and also that they were not disconnected from their benefits. People were absolutely scared and they have been scared throughout this whole pandemic.

We would be absolute hypocrites to abandon staff, regardless of whether they work for the NDP or for a local charity or whatever. We cannot pick and choose. We have to support workers. Those are the values of our political party. We will support all workers to ensure that they get the support they need throughout this pandemic.

That is why we have been consistent in not being vocal and speaking out against anyone getting support. Everybody should get treated equally throughout this pandemic and very difficult time.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, we are talking about how to support Canadians through the pandemic. As Remembrance Day approaches it is important to be thinking of our veterans.

I was shocked and outraged this morning to read that Whole Foods, a grocery chain owned by Amazon, was telling its employees they could not wear a poppy. I was particularly outraged by the lame excuse it offered that it was not in keeping with its uniform policy and seen to be supporting a cause. I think today in the House we saw all parties agree unanimously to motions calling Whole Foods onto the carpet for this ridiculous policy, because showing respect for the fallen and remembering the horrors of war is not a particular cause. That all-party support was good to see today on the floor of the House of Commons. I am wondering if my colleague would like to comment on that.

• (1230)

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that important question, which is relevant to today's debate.

The whole reason we have democratic institutions, this opportunity to talk about helping Canadians and the freedoms we enjoy is because of the sacrifices made by Canada's military and RCMP veterans and their families. For Jeff Bezos, the owner of Amazon and Whole Foods, to direct his employees and prohibit them from honouring our veterans, which is sacred to Canadians and important to our value system, is absolutely appalling and shameful.

I hope the Minister of Veterans Affairs or the Minister of Industry calls Jeff Bezos and asks him to apologize to his employees, all Canadians and especially to all military and RCMP veterans and their families, because that is what he needs to do immediately. No one should be prohibited from standing up and honouring the very people who have put their lives on the line and made sacrifices for our democracy and freedoms.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am joining members virtually from the traditional unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

It is an honour and privilege to speak here today on behalf of the constituents of Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

As we watched the COVID-19 pandemic unfold across this planet, this Parliament came to the realization that we needed to take drastic action in Canada to avoid a severe outbreak here. Our first priority was to protect the lives of Canadians, particularly those among us who are most vulnerable to succumbing to this virus: seniors, people with disabilities and people who are marginalized.

From the start of the pandemic, the Green Party suggested that we look at the measures other countries were taking to limit the spread of the virus. In particular, I highlighted the situation in Taiwan and how it closed its borders and used masks and hand sanitizer to stop the spread of the virus. At the beginning of the outbreak, Taiwan was in the top 10 of countries affected by COVID-19. Those simple technologies, masks and hand sanitizers, were very effective, and now Taiwan is ranked at 178th of the countries affected by COVID.

Unfortunately, we did not have the supplies of personal protective equipment we needed across the country for our health workers, never mind a supply of masks for Canadians. We were told by public health officials that masks were not an effective solution to slowing the pandemic. Thankfully, that advice has since changed.

Instead, the drastic action we took included a complete lockdown of our communities and our economy. We took the precautionary approach as we learned about the COVID-19 virus, and we put human lives ahead of money and our economy. We knew that we needed to limit the spread of the virus through social contacts.

As our economy shut down across Canada, we also knew that we needed to do everything we could to protect the workers who had to stay at home and the businesses that needed to lock their doors. As a Green Party MP, I pledged to my constituents that I would work across party lines to do what is best for my constituents and for Canadians, and as the pandemic unfolded in Canada, the Green Party caucus did exactly that. We stood proudly as members of team Canada and did everything we could to put the interests of Canadians first during the pandemic.

We put forward good ideas, such as the guaranteed livable income, to ensure that no citizen would be left in dire economic circumstances in which they could not pay their rent or mortgage, or could not put food on the table for themselves or their families. This is a program we have championed for over a decade, and we are happy to see other parties and MPs picking up on the idea. Unfortunately, the government has not adopted a guaranteed livable income. Instead, it has created a flawed, patchwork system to help individual Canadians.

My riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith is like many ridings across Canada. Small and medium-sized enterprises are the engine of our local economy. They employ almost 90% of the private-sector workers. These small and medium-sized businesses needed help to get through the economic crisis that was created by the lockdown. They needed help retaining their workers, paying their rent and covering the hard costs associated with running a business.

The Green Party caucus looked at what other countries were doing to deal with the economic fallout of the pandemic and how they protected their workers and businesses, and we put forward those ideas to the federal government. When the federal government first proposed a 10% wage subsidy, we, along with other MPs, said that was not good enough. We proposed the same 80% wage subsidy that Denmark had established. The government listened and increased the wage subsidy to 75%.

We heard from local businesses, chambers of commerce, business associations and the non-profit sector that businesses were go-

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ing to need help paying their rent and covering the hard costs associated with running a business. We passed those concerns on to the government, and the government responded with programs such as the Canada emergency business account and the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program. I commend the government for taking these actions, but just like the initial wage subsidy, there were serious flaws with these programs.

Green Party MPs, along with MPs from all the parties, heard from small and medium-sized businesses, including indigenous-owned businesses, that they were not eligible for the programs for one reason or another. The parameters were too tight and the gaps in the programs too large. There were many businesses in my riding that were not able to take advantage of these programs because they did not fit the criteria. Again, the government listened, and some much-needed changes were made, but there were still problems.

● (1235)

Many small businesses in my riding had serious problems trying to apply for the emergency business account. The big banks kept rejecting their applications based on weird technicalities. They then passed the buck to the CRA, which passed the buck back to the banks, leaving small businesses in a lurch with stressful uncertainties and feeling like ping-pong balls.

The rent subsidy program to help small businesses also had serious flaws because landlords had to apply for their business tenants. This ended up being onerous on landlords, who had to be responsible for the declarations of their tenants. Many small businesses were unable to take advantage of the program because their landlords were not willing to take part.

As a result, many small businesses have not been able to pay their rent, or have incurred serious debt in order to do so. The new rent relief program needs to be retroactive to April 1 to help those businesses that are surviving on a razor's edge.

There are business sectors that have been hit much harder than other sectors, in particular the tourism, hospitality and entertainment sectors. They have very little hope of recovering in the near term. These businesses need sector-specific support.

If we do not support these small businesses, the goods and services they provide will be swallowed up by multinational giants, and we will see the wealth and prosperity sucked out of our communities.

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In my constituency of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, many businesses have not been able to make it through the pandemic. They have already closed their doors for good. At the same time, companies like Amazon are making money hand over fist as more Canadians shop online. It is clear that companies like Amazon need to pay their fair share of taxes in Canada and contribute to our government coffers to assist Canadians through this pandemic.

We have also seen how the extremely wealthy in this country have been making huge profits during this pandemic. The richest 20 billionaires in Canada increased their wealth by—

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, point of order. I am having trouble hearing my hon. colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith, and I do not want to miss a syllable, as he is so darn good.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joël Godin): I thank the hon. member for her remarks.

I would like to remind all members participating remotely to turn off their microphones so we do not hear all their conversations.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Manly: Mr. Speaker, the richest 20 billionaires in Canada increased their wealth by \$37 billion in the first six months of the pandemic alone.

These billionaires clearly need to be paying their fair share of taxes. Their companies utilize the public infrastructure paid for with tax dollars, including the roads, bridges, law enforcement services, and sewage and water infrastructure. They benefit from the free education and health care their employees receive, and from the public transit their employees use to get to work.

We keep hearing that we are all in this together, but if we compare COVID-19 to a storm at sea, while it is true that we are all facing rough seas, some people are clinging to pallets without life jackets while others are in luxury liners. We have a growing wealth disparity in this country, and nowhere is it more apparent than in Nanaimo.

One can walk past a homeless camp on the way to the harbour to see Jim Pattison's 150-foot, \$25-million yacht when it is docked for a visit. This yacht is almost as large as the coastal defence vessel, the HMCS *Nanaimo*, which also visits our port. This is obscene and ostentatious wealth.

It is time that Canada's ultrawealthy do their fair share to help Canadians during this pandemic. It is time for a wealth tax in Canada, and for taxes on extreme profits gleaned during the pandemic.

Interest rates are at a record low and Canada's big banks continue to make massive profits, but we have still not seen any relief in credit card interest rates, credit card charges or banking fees for Canadian small businesses or consumers. The big banks continue to fleece Canadians during this pandemic.

During the financial crisis in 2008, these same big banks received taxpayer-funded bailouts reported to be as high as \$114 billion. It is time that Canada's big banks returned the favour and do their fair share to help Canadians during this pandemic. They need

to reduce credit card interest and banking fees now. Throughout this pandemic, these have caused economic hardship.

The Green Party caucus has listened to constituents, local businesses, labour unions, chambers of commerce, organizations and associations. We are now in the second wave of this pandemic. We need to do all we can to ensure that our small businesses are protected as further measures are taken to ensure the most vulnerable members of our community are kept safe from this virus.

The Green Party supports this legislation, which introduces the new Canada emergency rent subsidy—

• (1240)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joël Godin): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

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 think it is really important to emphasize that it appears all political entities in the House will be supporting the legislation. It is nice and encouraging to see that in terms of how important the two programs of the rent assistance and the wage subsidy, in particular, have been for our small businesses.

At the same time, we need to recognize that there is a suite of programs that have been introduced in the last eight months to support small businesses. When we take a look at this bill, it is a substantive piece of legislation that looks at modifications to programs that will ultimately continue to support entrepreneurs and small businesses in all regions of the country.

Could my colleague provide his thoughts of how important it is, when we take a look at the suite of programs, that we be flexible about making the changes that will continue to help our small businesses through the second wave and beyond?

Mr. Paul Manly: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the suite of programs we have available for small businesses across the country, but we need more flexibility built into them. That is what we have been asking for all along.

As these programs have been introduced, we have seen problems with them. We have seen hard lines and parameters that make it difficult for many small businesses to be eligible, so we have asked for the flexibility. Granted, the government has provided some flexibility in these programs and improved them. It is taking an awful long time, though.

The problem we are seeing with many small businesses in my community and in other communities is that this aid is coming too late for many of them. We need to figure out that issue, because people are losing their livelihoods and life savings. It is crucial that we provide support to people who have really poured their lives in to their small businesses.

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Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for his words in support of small businesses and in support of making the wealthiest pay their fair share.

Like the member, I have heard from countless small businesses that are struggling, for which the wage subsidy was a lifeline. Many are now facing having their doors shut forever. They cannot afford their rent, because they did not qualify for the flawed program put forward by the government.

This is a step in the right direction, but I am curious if the member agrees that these changes should be retroactive. Businesses that did not qualify for the rental subsidy, because their landlords did not participate, should get the same fair treatment as those businesses whose landlords participated before.

● (1245)

Mr. Paul Manly: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with the hon. member for Victoria. Yes, these programs should be retroactive. There are small businesses that did not get this rent subsidy because their landlords refused to apply. As I said, some small businesses have already shut down. It is too late for them, but others have racked up huge amounts of debt. Some of that is credit card debt that the banks have padded their wallets with. Again, we are seeing huge profits by big banks. If we do not protect these small businesses, we will have more multinationals taking care of the goods and services in our communities and sucking all of that wealth out of them and putting it offshore.

We absolutely need to protect our small businesses. These programs should be retroactive.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for standing up for small businesses as well.

Jon Shell of SaveSmallBusiness.ca gave quotes from people during this crisis. One person said, “I have so much fear. How will I feed my family?” Another person said, “I’ve stopped working to save lives, but am about to lose everything I’ve built.” Another stated, “This is scary as ... I have employees to pay. Kids to feed.” These businesses are still in the same situation. They need the rent program backdated to April.

Could the member talk about constituents in his riding who were prohibited from accessing the rent program because their landlords would not apply?

Mr. Paul Manly: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Courtenay—Alberni because both of us are fighting for our local first nations businesses, owned and operated by first nations, to get their companies eligible for these programs as well: the wage subsidy and the business loans programs. I could provide a list of companies that were unable to get the help with the rent subsidy. I am sure the member has a list from his riding as well.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joël Godin): The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup on a point of order.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to know exactly how much time is left in this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joël Godin): The debate ends at 1:30 p.m.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

[*English*]

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand today and speak to Bill C-9, an act to amend the Income Tax Act.

The legislation has three main components to it. The first is to create the Canada emergency rent subsidy, which would provide rent relief for qualifying businesses until June 2021. The second is to provide some lockdown supports, providing a top-up from the Canada emergency rent subsidy. The third is to extend the Canada wage subsidy until June 2021. All these pieces have been called for by the business community, as a whole, due to the conditions they are facing during this pandemic.

I will talk about some of the concerns the opposition had with the legislation. These things could have been dealt with had Parliament been sitting, as the opposition was calling for. Members may recall that the Conservatives were the only party consistently calling for the return of the House to deal with the hundreds of billions of dollars that were literally going out the door with little to no debate. Of course this caused some problems.

In the last rent program, in order for businesses to qualify, they to prove that had a 30% drop in revenue. That caused a number of problems. Obviously, a great number of businesses, mostly small business, had that hurt.

In part, this was due to provincial restrictions as they were told to lockdown. I will not even go into the side of the debate where the big box stores were allowed to stay open, many of which provided the same service small businesses provided. However, the mom and pop shops and stores on main street were told to lockdown and their employees were told to stay home. However, the big box stores continued to operate, most likely stealing some market share on top of what they already had and increasing their profits as a result, while almost breaking the backs of small business.

In order to qualify, businesses had to show that they had a 30% revenue drop during this pandemic. Obviously, some sectors are doing very well during this pandemic. Some sectors are hurting. What it did is it caused some businesses to watch that 30% line that had been drawn by the government. If a business earned \$1 more, it would not qualify for that subsidy.

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The other problems we had were that the initial rent subsidy only covered about 10% of businesses across the country, which left 90% of businesses without that coverage. If anyone needed more proof that this was a complete disaster, the Prime Minister initially gave control of this program to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which does residential mortgage insurance and not commercial rent. Incapable of running that program, the Crown corporation subcontracted that to a company whose vice-president was married to the Prime Minister's chief of staff.

We have businesses that are hurting, trying to get by and figuring out a way through. They are being hampered because of problems with government legislation. As I have mentioned before, the House was not back in a meaningful fashion to debate these pieces of legislation.

Early on, we saw problems with the CERB. We had problems with the wage subsidy. When it first was announced, the government said someone would only get 10% of the initial wage subsidy. Thankfully, through opposition parties, business communities and stakeholders alike, they were able to raise that level. Other countries such as Germany already had upward of 70%.

These key pieces in the legislation should have been debated. However, Parliament was then prorogued. The Liberals said that they were so focused on looking at the programs and developing them. This was done basically in a silo because Parliament was not sitting and legislators were not allowed to debate in this place.

• (1250)

As we move forward, we need to talk about recovery and how we do that. Rapid testing is a key part. Rapid testing has been approved in numerous countries around the world. There are products available in the European Union and the United States, but not approved here in Canada. If we want to return our economy and give it the firepower it needs, without a cure, vaccine or treatment, tools like rapid testing are our path forward.

We can imagine tourism, which has been massively impacted. We can talk about local marathons or running events. Any event and any kind of travel has been severely impacted. Hotels are feeling it. Restaurants are feeling it. However, if people can get on an airplane knowing they can take a test and in a few minutes have their result, it is our path forward. They can know the results with confidence because a number of these tests have a higher accuracy rate than the swabs that are being done now. Anyone who has had a swab knows it is not the most pleasant feeling in the world. This is our path forward. If people want to go on a cruise ship, they could go with confidence, knowing that everyone was tested and everyone had a clean result, yet the government continues to drag its feet on this.

Yes, we are in a pandemic and yes, Canadians were told to stay at home, lock down and stay safe and we continue to do that. However, we also need to talk about those businesses that are able to reopen in a safe manner because, at the end of the day, outside of all the printing the government is doing of hundreds of billions of dollars out of thin air, we still need the tax revenue coming in to continue to spend into the future. If the businesses shut down, where is the government getting the money from? If people who are working

in these businesses are unemployed, where does this money come from?

The simple truth through all of this is that if we want to ensure economic expansion as we move forward, and we talk about it all the time, we need to ensure that we are prepared for this.

A number of anchors within our economy, such as the oil and gas industry and the mining industry, have taken a hit because of the current government's policies. I can name a few: Bill C-69 and the tanker ban. I could go on and on. We have, coming up, the clean fuel standard, which would significantly increase the price of food that is produced in our country. Of course, I am sure the government will come up with yet another program to solve the problem it caused in the first place, and around and around we go.

When the economy is firing on all cylinders, more people are able to keep more of their money, and that means more spending outside their necessities of housing, clothing and food. They have more discretionary spending. With discretionary spending, people are able to make purchases beyond those needs that I just listed. There are some people who believe it is just frivolous. Why would anybody want anything extra? It is because we like it. It gives us joy in our lives.

If our factories are shut down, people are not able to go back to work because we have seen uncompetitive advantages that the government has brought in through the tax code, that are forcing jobs elsewhere. I can give an example. Here in the province of Ontario, where there are some of the highest electricity prices of anywhere in North America, manufacturing is running out the door. During the Ontario Liberal rule, we lost 300,000 jobs in manufacturing.

As we go on, we need to ensure that businesses remain strong, that these programs are debated in legislatures such as this, and that the provinces work with the federal government within their own jurisdictions to manage this pandemic. Also, we need to work to ensure that we are able to safely reopen the economy. Rapid testing is one way, but so is ensuring that the programs, as in Bill C-9, are implemented in the best fashion possible. We do that through debate back and forth in chambers like this.

I appreciate the time and I look forward to the questions.

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• (1255)

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today Stats Canada updated job numbers show that Canada's labour market gained another 84,000 jobs and 2.3 million Canadians have returned back to work after losing their jobs. That means the supports for our businesses, such as the CEBA, the Canada emergency wage subsidy and our rent assistance programs, are working. The hon. member opposite presented a very dim picture and I would like to hear what he has to say about today's job numbers and the positive way the trend is moving.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, we have been talking all along about the need for Canada's economy to get on track and the government to fine-tune the programs it implemented with basically no oversight, because in large part it hampered the role of Parliament. With respect to these jobs, we in the opposition had come back with a number of solutions to the programs that were not working in the past. My friend from Carleton wrote to the government a number of times as the finance critic with possible solutions and I see many of those are in Bill C-9. We could have dealt with this months ago. We could have fine-tuned these programs months ago so we could get on a better trajectory to get back to normal or get to the new normal, yet we were not given the opportunity because the Prime Minister was trying to hide his WE Charity scandal problems.

• (1300)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock. I appreciate him talking about the tourism and hospitality sectors and how deeply they have been impacted by the pandemic.

He also talked about spending. What I am concerned about when I hear the Conservatives say we are spending too much is what programs they want to get rid of. They keep voting for the programs we are passing through Parliament and have not voted against any of the spending.

Most importantly, with respect to the commercial rent assistance program, we the NDP have been calling for the government to backdate it to April 1 for those who were not able to apply for the funding because their landlords would not apply on their behalf. I am disappointed that the Conservatives have not joined us in calling on the government to backdate it. Can the member explain why the Conservatives are not calling on the government to backdate that program so that those who were not able to apply for the design-flawed program could get access to that funding? Many of them are steeped in debt or facing bankruptcy.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my friend from the NDP. He has been very busy today. It is always good to see his face and hear his contributions to this debate and other debates going on today.

To the surprise of the NDP, when my friend asks what programs we would cut, we are talking about what programs would have done better. A lot of the solutions the Liberals put in Bill C-9 are things we have been talking about for months. I am sure my friend from the NDP is hearing these very concerns that have finally been addressed in Bill C-9 from his own community, his own chamber of commerce. I know I have.

The rent subsidy was a horrible disaster as 90% of businesses did not bother applying. That was a complete travesty, but something that could have been fixed had the House of Commons been in session. Therefore, I would ask my friend this. Why did the NDP support the Liberals in shutting down this place?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, based on the member opposite's feedback, I assume he and the Conservative Party will be supporting Bill C-9. As he mentioned in his speech, when the pandemic hit we were building the plane and at the same time we were flying it. Was it perfect? No. Through collaboration, through debate and through this process we can make things better.

Will the member opposite be supporting this legislation?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I believe I mentioned a number of the issues and concerns we had with the original pieces of legislation for the rent subsidy and others that are, for the most part, being addressed in here. We appreciate that there was collaboration finally on this subject, especially now that we are able to get back to Parliament. I know we are doing it in cohorts, but this is some of the work that we can do together. The fact is that we can have a point-counterpoint discussion and fine-tune some of these programs.

At the end of the day, we may disagree on some options and some programs, but I think we all want the same thing. That is a strong Canada and the fact that our main streets are not decimated and people are able to go work and earn a living, so I think we are on—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Surrey Centre.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here today. I am joining members virtually from my home in Surrey Centre, B.C., to speak to Bill C-9, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, Canada emergency rent subsidy and Canada emergency wage subsidy. This bill has been very anticipated.

The topic of these subsidies came up earlier this week when I had the pleasure of welcoming the Prime Minister to my round-table meeting with the Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association. The new rent subsidy is especially on the minds of the members of the downtown BIA. My office has been responding to many questions over the last few weeks from Surrey business owners who were wondering when these subsidies would be available.

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These subsidies in their previous forms have been vital to the survival of many businesses. Small businesses are the heart of Surrey Centre, and we know that they are the backbone of the Canadian economy. It is why I am so pleased to support Bill C-9 today.

Bill C-9 would address some of the key areas where businesses are still feeling a real pinch from the pandemic. It would create access to the new Canada emergency rent subsidy, which would give businesses, charities and non-profits rent and mortgage support until 2021. It would create the new lockdown support, which is an extension of the rent subsidy, in the event of a closure ordered by public health. Lastly, it would extend the Canada emergency wage subsidy until next summer.

For small businesses in Surrey and across Canada, this support will be essential. For employers and employees, certainty and surety are vital. To know one has a job, that the rent will be paid and that business will survive and be carried until next summer allows SMEs to plan, pivot and retool for the new post-COVID economy without laying off employees or being kicked out of their leases.

More than \$2 billion has already been distributed to 138,000 small businesses, through the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program, to support their rent payments. This has, in turn, supported 1.2 million jobs in our country.

The new rent subsidy would address some of the challenges that business owners continue to face and would close the gaps in the previous rent subsidy program. We know that some landlords were not keen to sign on to the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program, and that left some renters without access to this important support. In contrast, the new Canada emergency rent subsidy would go directly to small business owners and tenants. That way, if they qualify for the subsidy, they will receive it. There is no middleman to approve or block the much-needed support for small businesses.

The new rent subsidy would work much like the wage subsidy in that it would go directly to the tenant through the CRA, making it easier and simpler to access. This new subsidy would help businesses that were left out of the program previously or that had difficulty accessing the support because their landlords would not sign on to the program. The new rent subsidy would work on a sliding scale of up to a maximum of 65% of eligible expenses until December 19, 2020. Organizations would also be able to make claims retroactively for the period that began on September 27 and ends on October 24, 2020.

The next important aspect of this bill is the newly created lockdown support. An additional 25% allocated through the Canada emergency rent subsidy would go to eligible organizations in the event of a closure issued by public health. It would support businesses as public health officials work to keep communities safe from the spread of the virus. The lockdown support would have an important role to play as our businesses and non-profits manage getting through the second wave and any future waves of this virus.

We have already seen the impact of the second wave on businesses. Targeted restrictions on certain industries that operate in areas with high case numbers have meant that many businesses, such as restaurants, gyms, banquet halls and event centres, have needed

to reduce their capacities again or close altogether. It has been a very challenging time for businesses, like the banquet halls in Surrey, which have been particularly hard hit because of public health closures. When businesses are not able to generate any income to pay rent, the mortgage or hard-working employees, support from our government will be their only way through the pandemic.

In May 2020, and then again in September, local businesses that were severely affected by the public health restrictions met with elected officials and asked for assistance. They appreciated, in particular, the federal government's assistance for rent and wage subsidy but were worried that it was coming to an end. Their ask was that we support them if things continued the way they were, and be there for their employees if health restrictions during the pandemic continued.

I am proud to say that, as a government, we have and will be there for them. This new bill would extend and simplify the support we have given to Canadian small and medium-sized businesses, and would continue to keep our main streets alive.

● (1305)

Businesses like Bozzini's Restaurant and Nahm Thai Bistro, which were hit hard with provincial health restrictions, would be able to continue to stay open and pay their hard-working employees. They would continue to serve the best pasta and Thai cuisine Surrey has to offer. It would help banquet halls and conventions centres like Aria, Crown Palace, Mirage, Grand Taj and Taj Park pay their rent or mortgages and keep their chefs and server staff, despite having to close down because of provincial health restrictions.

As it is Veterans' Week, I want to offer my appreciation for the courage, bravery and sacrifice of our veterans, who have put their lives in harm's way so that we can live free and safe. We are forever indebted to them.

The bill would help Tony Moore and Jim Holland of the Whalley Legion. They have had to temporarily rent a building for their Legion hall while their new state-of-the-art Legion village is built. This would help with their rent and wages for staff to keep their facility open and help it thrive once again when the pandemic is over.

The bill would help Nazia Bajwa from Beautyland Salon pay the rent and keep her employees. It would help Andy Dhaliwal from Top Quality Lumber and Surinder from Mill & Timber Products continue to pay their employees so they can put food on the table and pay their rent and mortgages.

This support helps. It helps people continue to have meaningful work and helps SMEs keep their businesses open, pay their rent and mortgages, and avoid bankruptcy. It helps real Canadians, the Canadians who have built this country and now count on the government to support them in their time of need.

The sliding scale of up to 65% support in the Canadian emergency rent support, combined with lockdown support, would mean that hard-hit businesses subject to a lockdown could receive rent support for up to 90%.

Finally, the bill would extend the Canada emergency wage subsidy to June 2021. So far the wage subsidy has protected the jobs of more than 3.8 million Canadians by helping employers keep employees on the payroll and rehire their workers. Continuing to support employers in this way will mean that Canadians can keep their jobs despite decreases in business or in the event of future closures ordered by public health.

In my riding of Surrey Centre, this has helped local restaurants, trucking companies, hair salons and retail stores stay open; has given a sense of certainty; has alleviated the anxiety of employees by letting them know they will get through the pandemic; and has protected business owners from collapsing.

We had to move quickly at the beginning of the pandemic to get support to individuals and businesses as quickly as possible, and we knew there was a chance that gaps would need to be filled as a result of that speed. I know my constituents have been reassured to see the evolution of these programs over the course of the pandemic, as they have addressed the gaps. This bill would do just that. It would ensure that our small businesses have the support they need to keep their businesses up and running and keep their employees on the payroll.

I am grateful to the Minister of Small Business, the Deputy Prime Minister and their teams, who have taken the time to listen to the needs of Canadians to make the necessary changes to the rent subsidy, create the new lockdown support and extend programs like the Canada emergency wage subsidy. As we continue to navigate new waves of the pandemic, these business subsidies will help businesses stay afloat and help Canadians keep their jobs while we continue to recover.

I hope we can work together to quickly pass this legislation and get help to our struggling small businesses, charities and non-profits as soon as possible.

• (1310)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Surrey Centre for articulating the benefits of the changes before us. As I have heard in the communities I represent, they are much needed.

What we have not heard in the debate yet is a clear explanation from the government as to why it refuses to make the changes to the commercial rent assistance program retroactive to April 1.

Could the member explain to the House why there has been so much reluctance to make those changes retroactive and to correct what was really an unfair disparity between tenants whose land-

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lords were up for participating in the program and those whose landlords were not?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. It was a question we asked as well in the beginning. We wanted to know why this was the way it was. We have to remind ourselves that the previous incarnation of this bill was done by 10 provincial premiers and three territories, so 13 bodies plus the federal government. It had to be supported by all of them. I think the question goes back to some of the premiers who were reluctant at the time to endorse a program that was more liberal and more accommodating to others.

However, this is a program that goes above and beyond. We know that rent and housing are in the purview of the province, but in times like this the provinces need support. The federal government is there for them.

This program is the federal government's program in its entirety. Federal taxpayers are paying for it. The other one was a joint program that had to have consensus from and support of all 10 premiers and three territories. That is why this program was different. We are hoping the new one is going to alleviate some of the gaps that were caused by the previous—

• (1315)

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Guelph.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I feel as though we are on one of those nightly conference calls we had every night of the week, seven days a week, in the first two and a half months of the pandemic, given what was happening in our communities.

The member mentioned by name the businesses he has been advocating for. We all had a list in our communities. I was also working with the downtown business association in Guelph to try to get direct support.

Going through the province was difficult. As the member said, the coordination with the province would be eliminated by this new program, and it would introduce a scaled approach. That was another thing we were advocating for internally: How can we do this for businesses that do not quite meet the thresholds?

Could the member comment on how this is going to improve as business volumes go down or up during the pandemic? Will this will be able to match the needs of businesses?

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Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, absolutely. I sincerely appreciated the federal cabinet ministers, who listened not only to the governing side, but also to members of the opposition when they gave suggestions and provided the input of their BIAs and small businesses.

The bill would help those with the most need, such as a business that is in complete lockdown. In Surrey, it is the banquet halls that have been completely shut down. They have a large square footage, huge rents and huge tax bills. They did not get much support from the provincial government and were left out, in fact, but now all will be supported. They will get up to 90% until they are able to get back to business. Changes will also help restaurants that have had to shut down a large capacity of their seating. They have still been able to do some business, so they might not need 100% of their full rent. They might need 50% or 40%.

The scaling will help them, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all program, which was for businesses that had a reduction of, say, 30%. They would get 75% or 50% from the federal and provincial governments. The new program will actually incentivize them to do better in their businesses, get back to 100% and, in fact, increase business. It is a very good model that incentivizes business growth and helps businesses in this most difficult time.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise here this afternoon as one of the final speakers on Bill C-9. It is a key piece of economic legislation with much-needed support programs for businesses, not only in eastern Ontario where I reside but in every part of the country.

I have said this before during debates, particularly ones where we are dealing with economic measures for small businesses. I am not a fan of pushing bills through at some of the pace and time that we have done during COVID-19. I was not a fan last time when we only had about four hours of debate back in September to put some of these things through. I am happier with the process this time around. Albeit not perfect, it is a step in the right direction in terms of the committee of the whole and more debate. I appreciate the chance to rise here today.

A lot of times people see us in the chamber and see their local member of Parliament put their speeches up and wonder why we go through what we do with the legislation. They think that once we see the bill, we should vote on it and get it over with, whichever way we fall. We have to keep reminding not only us here in the chamber but all Canadians that this process is so fundamental to getting the best piece of legislation we possibly can. We need proper scrutiny of legislation to make sure that we get it right and get the best bill possible, and now, more than ever.

We are spending billions and billions of dollars of new money in the new programs in a very quick period of time. This scrutiny, the back-and-forth debate and discussion that we have, is so key.

When things are rushed through too fast, mistakes sometimes happen. We learned this morning that, for the Minister of Finance and the House leader's team, one of the amendments that was proposed or suggested by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, a reasonable proposal, was actually struck down by the Speaker earlier this morning because it was not organized and pre-

pared properly. I think the term used was that it was a procedural error. The reality is that it was a mistake on the government's part because we are rushing things through at the last minute, and it was not able to be votable in that circumstance.

We were told with the prorogation of Parliament for six weeks that the government was going to be doing a reset. That was the real reason we had, apparently, for prorogation for six weeks. It was in the name of getting organized, having a cabinet retreat and getting all these bills lined up and ready to go.

As much as I talk about the concerns and sometimes about the lack of debate, my understanding is that this amendment is now going to have to be brought forward likely in a separate piece of legislation with debate and scrutiny, so we are going to have more time in this chamber and hopefully in committee to look at some of these issues and their responses in the coming weeks.

On Bill C-9, the vote was unanimous at second reading. I think the way the direction is going today we will find the same thing again, in favour of these programs and sending the message to small businesses wherever they are in this country that their Parliament and their MPs understand the seriousness and severity of the situation they are in.

We said that where things are good we will support the government and where scrutiny is needed, we will certainly give it. Because of that scrutiny and feedback, I am going to say that, in this legislation, the government has taken up some of the good ideas and good fixes.

There is one thing this pandemic has created. There never was a shortage of acronyms in the parliamentary world, and there certainly have been a few more in the last seven months. We have the CEWS, the Canada emergency wage subsidy. We have the CERS, the Canada emergency rent subsidy, which replaces the CECRA.

Before I get into some of my comments about the details, I want to first thank the businesses in my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. I am very fortunate as I am one of the few members of Parliament who can drive back to my riding in about an hour or an hour and a half.

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One of the things I enjoy every weekend, lately by Zoom, is having a lot of meetings with chambers of commerce and local business owners, and dropping by with what I call a bit of a wellness tour, asking for their feedback and if they were able to get the CE-BA emergency business loan or able to get the wage subsidy. It is from those tours that I am able to share on social media some of my visits and encourage constituents to learn about the businesses in our community. More importantly, it is a good way to get feedback that I can bring back here to Ottawa to say, "Look, this program is not running effectively. There are gaps and there are holes in there".

• (1320)

The wage subsidy was a perfect example. In the opening days of the pandemic, the government proposed a 10% wage subsidy. That was not helpful in the minds of many businesses. Many did not find it would be enough to keep their employees on the payroll. Many transitioned to CERB.

We advocated for a much higher number, and at 75% it was certainly an improvement. We appreciated the government taking up the calls we heard from businesses and the calls we made. In created a bit of chaos in terms of businesses laying some people off onto CERB and then coming back, but nevertheless, we will take that step in the right direction.

One of the other things I know our shadow finance minister, the member for Carleton, raised several times as well was that the cut-offs are an issue in a lot of these programs. It was actually pitting businesses when it came to the rent subsidy and the wage subsidy and their drop in revenues, where if they were able to recover 70% of their pre-COVID revenues, they were totally cut off the program. By finally taking the idea of indexing these programs, it was not an "all or nothing" situation.

We actually had businesses saying they did not want to bring on more staff or that they wanted to be careful about the number of hours of their stores because they did not want to lose the benefits keeping them afloat. It is really more of a cliff's edge. I feel this legislation had some challenges, and I am glad to see our idea of indexing it and having a sliding scale being used, as it is certainly going to help businesses in the country.

CERB was the same way. If someone made more than \$1,000 they were cut off. There were people who wanted to go back to work but could not get full-time hours. They had to decide whether to take the \$2,000 in CERB or go back. There was no hybrid model on that. We are seeing that advocacy from our side of the aisle, which will be continuing as these programs continue and we go through the second wave and back to more normal times.

On the rent program, the original program was rushed, and frankly, I do not think it was very effective. My understanding is that 10% of businesses were eligible for that program. It was a messy situation with landlords and tenants, and there was sometimes the sharing of financial information by tenants with their landlords, who had to apply. It was just not the best program. Thankfully, months later, the government has now listened to opposition members and made some changes to it.

The big thing I want to mention on the rent subsidy program is why opposition parties matter when it comes to this kind of matter,

and why parliamentary scrutiny and asking the tough questions and digging a little are so important. When I saw the rent subsidy program being announced, I thought, yes, we do need this support program, and I thought CRA, the Canada Revenue Agency, would be the natural body to administer it. We then received information that it would be the CMHC, another acronym for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I thought that was kind of weird because it handles residential mortgages, not commercial ones. I thought it was kind of a strange organization to run the program.

We were told by the government that there was nothing to see, that we should stop complaining, stop delaying, stop attacking, and that we were team Canada and all in this together. That is the case, but we also need to make sure we are scrutinizing each other in the decisions we are making, so we started to dig and ask questions. All of a sudden, we found out that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation was in fact not administering it. It was the organization that had it from the top but it was now subcontracting it to MCAP.

Who is at MCAP? It would be the Prime Minister's chief of staff's husband. We were told there was nothing to see, that we should stop suggesting a conflict of interest and that it was a ridiculous line of questioning. Now we realize there were inappropriate meetings at the Prime Minister's Office, and the lobbying commissioner is now investigating this potential scandal. Actually it is not "potential"; it is a scandal now. I am just waiting for the report to come out from the lobbying commissioner.

The bill would correct a lot of the things that were rushed through earlier, and now have the CRA involved in the process. I will wrap up my comments by making two key points on dealing with this economic legislation. The reasons for rushing things through, and the lack of ability to scrutinize and hear committee testimony from stakeholders like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, are a challenge. With proper scrutiny, we get better bills. We get better legislation that does not need corrections to be brought in, and we are able to expose corruption, conflict of interest and wasteful spending when it happens.

Second, to my colleagues on the government side, the take-it-or-leave-it approach we saw earlier needs to end. We see that when we have reasonable ideas, work better in collaboration and do not bring these bills up at the last minute and say to take it or leave it in a rushed manner, we can actually get better scrutiny, better bills and better confidence from Canadians on the things we are presenting.

Government Orders

I appreciate the opportunity to speak here today and I look forward to hearing questions and comments from my colleagues, as always.

● (1325)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great fascination to my hon. colleague's discussion. The issue before us is a very serious issue. There are small businesses across this country that have been hammered by the first wave of the pandemic, and now the second wave, with winter coming.

I feel that in the first stages, with the rent subsidy plan and the government moving fast, there was a need for urgency. We had to get stuff out the door because we knew businesses could go under, but we learned very quickly that there were problems with the program. That was the issue, and I think we were all shocked at the attitude of many landlords who would let their businesses go under, rather than respond.

When we knew there was a problem, that was when we needed to start fixing it. We have been, for a number of months, waiting and waiting, and businesses are hanging by a thread. To my hon. colleague who talked about moving too quickly, there was a need to move fast, but given the crisis of the pandemic, there is a need now to be able to fix things as we are moving so that we are not leaving businesses hanging and waiting for a good piece of legislation that might come too late for them.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I agree. We needed to have a quick response to get assurances to businesses as quickly as possible. Having said that, the one thing I have always said is to spend the extra hours here debating, scrutinizing and going back and forth and to spend some time at committee hearing from stakeholders. As an example for this piece of legislation, I am a big supporter of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the advocacy it does.

If it had the opportunity to bring these things forward at committee, when we have all these things going back and forth, for example the rent subsidy program, we would have had a better bill months ago. We would not be having tenants having to wait months and months on end for a fix that has finally come. We could have had a better bill and a better solution, by taking a bit more time when it originally happened. The lesson is learned. Let us not do that again.

● (1330)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 1:30 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, November 4, 2020, it is my duty to interrupt proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage of the bill now before the House.

[*Translation*]

The question is on Motion No. 1.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wants to request a recorded vote or request that the motion be passed on division, I invite them to rise and so indicate to the Chair.

For the sake of clarity, I am now inviting a member present in the House to rise to indicate whether the motion is agreed to on division or whether a recorded vote is requested.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote.

And one or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, call in the members.

● (1440)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 21*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultiaf	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benzen
Bergen	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joneas	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boudrias
Bragdon	Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Carrie	Chabot
Champoux	Charbonneau
Chiu	Chong
Cooper	Cumming
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desbiens	Desilets
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fortin
Gallant	Gaudreau
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Godin
Gray	Hallan
Harder	Hoback
Jansen	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Lloyd
Lobb	Lukiwski
Maguire	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLean
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Nater
Normandin	O'Toole
Patzner	Paul-Hus
Paupé	Perron
Plamondon	Poilievre
Redekopp	Reid

Rempel Garner
Rood
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
Shipley
Sloan
Steinley
Strahl
Sweet
Therrien
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Vignola
Warkentin
Webber
Wilson-Raybould

Richards
Ruff
Saroya
Scheer
Seeback
Shin
Simard
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Stubbs
Thériault
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Viersen
Vis
Waugh
Williamson
Wong— 144

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Bains
Battiste
Bendayan
Bessette
Bittle
Blair
Blois
Bratina
Cannings
Chagger
Chen
Cormier
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fry
Garrison
Gould
Hajdu
Harris
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Johns
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Long

Amos
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bagnell
Baker
Beech
Bennett
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice
Brière
Casey
Champagne
Collins
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Garneau
Gazan
Guilbeault
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Jaczek
Joly
Jowhari
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lightbound
Longfield

Government Orders

Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacGregor
Maloney
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès
Miller
Morrissey
O'Connell
O'Regan
Powlowski
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota (Brampton North)
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh
Spengemann
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MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Manly
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Monsef
Ng
Oliphant
Petipas Taylor
Qualtrough
Regan
Rodriguez
Romanado
Saini
Samson
Sari
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simms
Sorbara
Tabbara
Trudeau
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vaughan
Weiler
Young
Zann

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 lost.

Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, November 4, 2020, Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy), is deemed concurred in at report stage without amendment, on division.

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, November 4, Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy) is deemed read a third time and passed on division.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 2:43 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

• (1445)

[English]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC) moved that Bill C-220, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (compassionate care leave), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise here today to discuss my private member's bill, Bill C-220, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (compassionate care leave). It builds on my work in the Alberta Legislature and I am thrilled to be able to share this bill with my colleagues here.

The bill proposes to extend compassionate care leave by up to three weeks after the death of a loved one. Given everything that has happened over the last several months, I think we can all agree that compassionate care leave is as important as ever for Canadian families.

I would like to pause for a minute and thank the Minister of Labour, her staff and the member for Mount Royal for their advice and guidance during this process. The bill continues from their work established during the expansion of bereavement leave.

Compassionate care leave is a job-protected leave that allows an employee to take time off to care for a family member with a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death within 26 weeks from the date a medical certificate is issued or when leave is granted. The leave is available to full-time employees of federally regulated workplaces. Currently, employees who have at least 600 insurable hours during a 52-week qualifying period can seek leave for a maximum of 28 weeks during the year.

Benefits are provided for a maximum of 28 weeks, with one to two weeks of unpaid leave serving as a qualifying period. The employee receives EI benefits of up to \$573 a week, or 55% of their weekly earnings. This time is vital for many families. When a loved one receives a potentially terminal diagnosis, it is stressful to figure out the logistics of who will provide their care.

Often many people do not think that they can take time off to care for their spouses or parents because they simply cannot afford it. Having compassionate care leave allows families to focus on caregiving while still receiving a portion of their salary. Getting to be with a family member in their final days is incredibly important and meaningful. Compassionate care leave has been the saving grace for thousands of families around the country.

What happens after a compassionate caregiver's loved one passes away? Right now the leave ends immediately and the employee is expected to be back at work within days of their loved one's death. This leaves little time to plan a funeral, get affairs in order and, most importantly, grieve.

Returning to work within days of a loved one's death is the least compassionate part of the compassionate care leave program. All of us in the chamber can agree that it takes more than just one day to process a death and get back into the headspace of work.

Bill C-220 proposes to extend job-protected compassionate care leave beyond the death of a loved one. The extension can be up to three weeks depending on how much compassionate care leave the employee has taken. Employees who have taken close to the maximum leave time would get one additional week beyond the death of their loved one. Employees who have taken between four and 20 weeks of leave would get an additional two weeks of leave past the death of their loved one, and employees who have taken fewer than four weeks of leave would receive an additional three weeks of leave beyond the death of their loved one.

I decided to structure the bill in this way because someone who has already taken most of their time allowed under the compassionate care leave program will likely already have made end-of-life arrangements compared with someone who has been on leave for less than a month.

While I worked on the bill, I wanted to be as fair as possible to employees while also being fair to employers. If the bill is passed, more than 18,000 federally regulated employers will be impacted by the changes. These employers are in a variety of sectors including air transportation, banks, Crown corporations like Canada Post, radio and television broadcasting, railways, telecommunications and businesses that are vital or essential to the operation of a federally regulated workplace.

We understand that employees are vital to the success of these corporations and businesses, and I think we can all agree that having employees return to work in a clearer state of mind after taking additional compassionate care leave is better than returning to work before they are ready.

About 11,000 Canadians used the compassionate care leave program in 2018. This was an uptick in usage after the amount of time allowed was extended two years prior. The average duration of compassionate care leave is between 4.8 and 12 weeks. The number of people using the program is expected to rise in coming years as our population ages and more Canadians find themselves in a caregiving role.

• (1450)

There is support for extending the length of leave. The Quality End-of-Life Coalition of Canada recently submitted its pre-budget consultation brief to the government, and among its list of recommendations was that the compassionate care benefit should be extended to include a two-week period for grief and bereavement. This coalition is made up of 34 national stakeholder organizations dedicated to improving end-of-life care for Canadians.

In its submission it wrote:

Family members, potential recipients of the Compassionate Care Benefit, may need support as they grieve the loss of a loved one and try to manage numerous strains and stresses....

By adjusting the Compassionate Care Benefit, more Canadians will have access to the time necessary to heal, minimize economic hardships and take care of some of the more practical business following a loved one's death.

At the beginning of this speech I mentioned how the past few months, as our country and the entire world has dealt with COVID—19, have demonstrated how important a compassionate care leave program is. The virus has given us perspective on the value of spending more time with family and friends. We have all heard the news reports about family members who could not see their love ones in hospitals or nursing homes before they died. This is heartbreaking and I am sorry that any family members have found themselves in that situation. There is a huge importance to being with a loved one in their final days and compassionate care leave facilitates that. It allows families to be together and even for the terminally-ill person to die at home in some cases. This program has vital importance to our society.

If members do not mind, I would like to share a personal story about why compassionate care leave is important.

When I was starting out in my career, my grandma became very ill. At that point, I was young and in my twenties, competing with several others for a full-time job. I wanted to spend as much time as I could with my grandma, but I also worried about what would happen to my job if I did. Would I be fired? Would I be passed over for an opportunity? I decided to stay at work. That is a decision I regret to this day. My grandmother, Jeanne Babcock, passed away a few weeks later. At that time, there was no compassionate care leave program in Alberta. Employees in the same situation as me had no choice but to keep working or take unpaid time off, which could also impact their jobs.

After I was elected to Alberta's Legislative Assembly in 2012, I began to work on introducing a compassionate care leave program in the province. All other Canadian provinces had such a program at that point in time. For two years I worked on my private member's bill. I talked with researchers and families who all spoke about the importance of having such leave, as people are in their greatest time of need in their last few weeks of life. Being able to be with a loved one during that time to help them in any way they need and to say the proper goodbyes is a treasured gift for many families. I am pleased to say my bill passed and Alberta became the final province to introduce job-protected compassionate care leave in early 2014.

Six years later, I stood in this chamber to introduce Bill C-220 and build on this vitally important program. I did this because I saw a gap in the leave program. Many stakeholders and families told me how they were grateful to spend the final days with their loved one, but that the days following the death of their loved one felt rushed and stressful. Many had to return back to work before their affairs were in order, before they had time to fully process the death and start the grieving process. From these stories I saw an opportunity to make the compassionate care leave program even better and to help more families going through such difficult situations. Allowing additional time off following a loved one's death was something I felt could strengthen the program and greatly help caregivers who are grieving.

I hope my colleagues can agree with me that such an extension is important. This program has the support of all parties. In fact, the

Private Members' Business

Conservative government pledged to extend the compassionate care leave program from six weeks to 26 weeks. The current government followed through on that commitment to extend the compassionate care leave program in early 2016. At the time, the government said it was also working on plans to extend the program so that more Canadians could take advantage of it. I hope my colleagues can see that Bill C-220 presents just that opportunity.

Some of my colleagues may ask why such an extension is necessary. After all, we have bereavement leave and 10 days of unpaid personal time off work. An employee currently taking compassionate care leave could use those options if they wanted extra time off. However, these options may not be realistic for some families. An employee is only allowed three days of paid bereavement leave after a family member dies. The remaining two days are unpaid. The 10-day personal time off is also unpaid. Not only is it unpaid, but it leaves no flexibility for employees if a different personal emergency comes up later in the year.

• (1455)

As I mentioned before, the average length of compassionate care leave is between 4.8 weeks and 12 weeks, so the majority of people who take the leave would be able to receive the extension proposed in my bill without exceeding the 26-week threshold. This would allow them to continue to receive EI benefits of compassionate care beyond the death of their loved one.

Using unpaid bereavement or unpaid sick leave after a loved one's death is not feasible for many people. They just cannot afford such a loss in income. Most people cannot go two weeks without a paycheck, and that is why extending the compassionate care leave benefit is superior to using personal time and bereavement time.

With my bill, more Canadians would be able to have that extended time off. I am willing to continue to work with the minister and my colleagues to get this right for Canadians.

I have no doubt that all of us in the House have experienced the loss of a family member. It is devastating, and it takes time to recover from such a loss. We are fortunate to have a great program like compassionate care leave in Canada to help employees spend time with their loved ones in the final days. It is a great gift for many family members, who would not otherwise have the financial means to take time off work to become a full-time caregivers.

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My bill aims to fix a gap that has become apparent, and that is the need of some additional time off following a loved one's death. This would allow employees who are taking compassionate care leave to make funeral arrangements, get affairs in order and start the grieving process before returning back to work. To have employees returning to work with a clearer state of mind is beneficial to employers in the long run, rather than rushing them back to work before they are ready.

As our population ages, we will have more family members stepping into caregiving roles and taking job-protected compassionate care leave. We need to ensure that the leave provides sufficient time for these caregiving employees and their families.

We all know the importance of family, and the last few months of chaos and uncertainty have cemented this importance. Upholding compassionate care leave and ensuring that the program has enough supports for employees who use the program is vital. One way to provide more support is by extending compassionate care leave by up to an additional three weeks to allow caregiving employees more time to grieve and settle affairs.

I hope that I have the support of my colleagues in the House. I look forward to working together so that we can make smart changes to this program to better help more families.

I am thankful for being allowed the time to speak on Bill C-220, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, compassionate care leave. It is truly such an honour to introduce this bill.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish I could be there in person to give a standing ovation to my friend for Edmonton Riverbend. I want to congratulate him on his bill and let him know that I appreciate his mentioning me and the Minister of Labour. We share his aspirations of making caregiving more accessible to everyone.

The story the member told about his grandmother and his personal experience of not being able to afford to take leave was deeply moving. We have all seen recently how, because of the pandemic, people were unable to visit loved ones in long-term care facilities and how they wished could during these times.

Would the member be willing to work with the other parties in terms of amendments proposed at committee, should the House be willing to send the bill to committee?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Speaker, the member for Mount Royal, and those in the minister's office, have been extremely helpful in terms of getting this bill right, and I thank him.

I think all members of the House can agree that compassionate care leave is an important program here in Canada. It is not a partisan issue, as my colleague and friend from Mount Royal and I have discussed many times. It is important that we get this right.

Certainly, up to this point, I have been working well with the government and other parties to ensure that those potential changes down the road are things we want to work with the minister on. Again, this is an important issue for many Canadians, and not just those of us sitting in the House.

• (1500)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Edmonton Riverbend for his work on this file. I think he has zeroed in on something that could do a lot of good for Canadians who are in a very difficult situation.

However, I would note, as the member spoke about the compassionate care benefit under employment insurance during his speech, that the bill before us would not amend the Employment Insurance Act, which currently states that the benefit terminates when the family member dies. I am wondering why that is not included in the bill, and if he could speak to how we might get that included in the bill.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Speaker, the member has essentially zeroed in on what we would love to do with the bill. We obviously want to impact EI. However, as the member knows well, a private member's bill cannot impact money from the government, so we cannot make changes to the bill to have EI follow along with the compassionate care leave program. With some of the work at committee, hopefully we can address that in future legislation with the government.

Again, the member's point zeroed in on exactly where we would go if this were not simply a private member's bill.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this will just be a comment.

Many of the constituents in Elgin—Middlesex—London, whom I worked with as a constituency assistant, saw these types of things happen. I thank the member for bringing something so important to so many Canadians and their families. I thank him on behalf of the members of Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the comment. I appreciate it.

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 recognize that over the years, we have seen many changes to the EI program. They have all been fairly encouraging, as it has become a bit more liberal in its ability to support people.

What the member is proposing would go a long way in providing better-quality care for a lot of people, and I see that as a very strong positive. Maybe he wants to add some additional thoughts on other aspects of the impact on the recipients of the support.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has certainly addressed the key aspect of this bill. I spoke about my grandma. It is one of millions of stories in this country that we have heard over and over again.

Private Members' Business

I will highlighting what we have seen in this pandemic. In a number of instances, people have had to say goodbye to their loved ones at a window, as opposed to embracing them in a hospital bed. Some have not been able to see their loved ones for months and months, only to suddenly find out they have just hours left to live. These stories are essentially what we want to address with the bill. I hope it is a step in the right direction.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House today to take part in the debate on Bill C-220.

However, before I begin, as we are in Veterans' Week and today is red Friday, I would like to take a moment to thank those who have served, those who are still serving, and the parents and family members of military across the country for their service. I also want to say how, as a military mother, I was disappointed this morning to read about Whole Foods. I hope it will do the right thing.

It is essential for us to talk about compassionate care, so I am happy that my colleague across the way brought this private member's bill forward. It is an important issue for Canadians, especially in these times when we can all use a little extra compassion.

Chances are that many of us will find ourselves in the position of caring for someone close to us at one point in our lives. It is a difficult and sometimes lonely journey. Caregivers deserve our greatest respect and gratitude. In 2018, approximately one in four Canadians aged 15 and older provided care to a family member or close friend with a long-term health condition, a physical or mental disability, or problems related to aging.

Unpaid caregiving provided by family and friends has become increasingly recognized as an important role in society. Reports by Statistics Canada have demonstrated that caregiving reduces the social costs associated with health services and institutionalization. In addition, those who are cared for have a much greater quality of life when they are able to remain at home.

My home province of Quebec has been devastated by COVID-19. I question whether we should be caring more for our family members, rather than institutions, so this is a very timely piece of legislation.

We understand the essential role of caregivers. We also understand the need to ensure that they have the support that they need. That said, let me begin by providing a brief overview of Bill C-220, first introduced by my hon. colleague on February 25, 2020.

The goal of Bill C-220 is to amend Part III of the Canada Labour Code to allow an employee using compassionate care leave to have more time off following the death of a loved one for whom they were caring.

The bill breaks down that extra time as follows: Employees would receive an additional three weeks of leave past the death if the employee has taken fewer than five weeks of leave, an additional two weeks of leave past the death if the employee has taken between five weeks and 19 weeks of paid leave, and an additional week of leave past the death if the employee has taken between 20 and 26 weeks of leave. An employee who has been away from

work for a period of 27 weeks or more would not be provided with any additional weeks of leave.

The one question I have for the member for Edmonton Riverbend is why he did not include additional leave to employees who experience a sudden death of a family member. However, I am hopeful that when this piece of legislation gets to committee, that can be discussed as well.

I know I am talking a lot about numbers, but when taking care of a loved one, people are immersed in the day to day. When they lose that loved one, they do not have the time to grieve because they are in the business of death. They are filling out the papers. They are doing what they have to do. They are going through the motions. Having that extra time to grieve and not worry about going back to work when they are not ready is crucial.

It is our responsibility to address the difficult but real societal issues such as end-of-life care. Those things make us think of our loved ones and our own futures. While our government has taken many steps to set up a system that is just, compassionate and fair, I do believe we can do more.

We have made great progress in recent years to modernize the Canada Labour Code to ensure that it reflects the realities of today's workplaces and meets the needs of both employers and employees, now and into the future.

Last year, we implemented a comprehensive suite of significant amendments to the Canada Labour Code, including a new right for employees to request flexible work arrangements, additional leaves and other protections for employees following the death of a family member. We introduced amendments that give federally regulated workers the right to request flexible work arrangements such as flexible start and finish times and the ability to work from home.

● (1505)

Studies show that flexible start and finish times, the ability to take time off from work to deal with family obligations, and other types of flexible work arrangements can help employees find better work-life balance. By giving employees the flexibility to reduce the amount of time they spend at work, we are helping to ensure that those with intensive caregiving responsibilities have more time with their loved ones.

Recent amendments to the Canada Labour Code also include improvements to bereavement leave and additional leaves that could also be used by caregivers. Bereavement leave has been increased from three days to five days, but that is not enough. We have also provided for greater flexibility, so that the leave may be taken during the period that begins on the day on which the death occurs and ends six weeks after the latest of the days on which any funeral, burial or memorial service of that immediate family member occurs.

Private Members' Business

Employees are now entitled to five days of personal leave per year, including three paid days if they have worked for three consecutive months. Employees may take this leave for a number of reasons, including to carry out responsibilities related to the health or care of any of their family members or to address an urgent situation, such as the death of a family member.

In addition, the eligibility for the medical leave was improved so that every employee who was unable to work due to health reasons, including psychological trauma or stress resulting from the death of a family member, could now take up to 17 weeks of unpaid leave. We also eliminated the length of service requirements to be eligible for the leave related to critical illness, which provides employees with up to 37 weeks of job-protected leave to provide care or support to a critically ill child and up to 17 weeks of leave to provide care or support to a critically ill adult.

While these new and improved leave provisions and flexible work arrangements came into force on September 1, 2019, COVID has also taught us more.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Canada has put Canadians first, providing the support they need to continue to make ends meet, while staying safe and healthy. Earlier this month we passed Bill C-4, the COVID-19 Response Measures Act, to create new benefits. Together with temporary measures to help Canadians access employment insurance benefits more easily, these recovery benefits will help workers affected by COVID-19 and requiring income support.

To ensure federally regulated employees have access to job-protected leave, the Government of Canada amended the Canada Labour Code so these employees can access the Canada recovery sickness benefit and the Canada recovery caregiver benefit.

These are temporary measures to help Canadians overcome the many challenges they are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, we have changed. We are not where we were a year ago. The member opposite talked about not being able to see his grandma, and having to make that choice. Yes, while there may be a few days of leave available, if someone does not have the financial means to take that leave, then she or he is making that decision, and those are decisions we all regret.

This month, it will be two years since my mom died suddenly, and most of the House knows that I did not get to say good bye. I wish I did, but after, we have a chance to help people get through it. I had the luxury of being able to take some time off to plan my mother's funeral, but not everybody does. Therefore, I want the member to know that I hope his bill passes and goes to committee, because this is the right thing to do.

• (1510)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to say that my party and I will support the principle of the bill.

Overall, it is a rather modest bill in the sense that it makes a big difference for workers. It is also modest in the sense that it amends

the Canada Labour Code rather than the Employment Insurance Act for employees who are subject to it. I will talk a little more about that later.

Right now, workers who take a leave of absence to care for a loved one have to return to work as soon as that person passes away. What this bill does is give workers, under certain conditions, time between the death of the person they were caring for and the date on which they have to return to work. That is no small thing because it enables caregivers to keep their jobs.

Maintaining that employer-employee relationship can be important for some reasons and in some industries. As my colleagues said, people should not have to decide whether to take caregiver leave while wondering whether they will have to choose between continuing to care for their loved one and losing their job.

Depending on the situation, this period can be longer. As we have heard, there is the mourning period and all of the arrangements. After going through all of this, it is important for people to take care of themselves.

Naturally, the majority of this 28-week leave, which is in the Canada Labour Code, is paid, because workers can access the compassionate care special benefit through the employment insurance system. As we all know, a worker needs to have accumulated 600 hours to be eligible.

There are people who need to take this kind of leave and who will not be paid. The period set out in the Canada Labour Code will therefore help people retain the employment relationship. We think this is a major amendment, which is why we will support this bill.

I also want to point out that we are debating this bill, introduced by the Conservative member, during national caregiver week, which is celebrated across the country, or at least it is in Quebec. I think that the caregiver's experience is well documented.

I will not overwhelm my colleagues with numbers this Friday afternoon. However, we must recognize that caregivers represent more than one-quarter of the workforce. Caregivers are mostly women. In addition to the loss of income arising from their absence from work, these people must also pay for additional expenses out of pocket. This has even been fairly well documented. In some cases, it can be up to \$7,000 a year. In other cases, it is more than \$400 a week, which is challenging.

I think that the value of what we have before us is that it lets us see the changes made under the Canada Labour Code and the changes we can eventually make to the Employment Insurance Act, and determine how we can support these family members who make a big difference.

Private Members' Business

• (1515)

I think society is better off for being able to rely on people who can help, even though that is a bit harder at this particular time. Our labour legislation should also help support workers and, furthermore, support them financially by means of leave provisions in other acts.

To conclude, we will support this bill. I look forward to this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, which I am a member of, so that we can improve it if need be.

• (1520)

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in favour of Bill C-220, which has the potential to do a lot of good for Canadians who have just lost a loved one and who had been making use of the compassionate care leave that is already available to them under the Canada Labour Code.

Unfortunately, the leave provision has a pretty rough edge, as people are expected to return to work immediately following the death of a loved one, or the next week. This means that in cases where a loved one passes away on a Thursday or Friday, they have to report back to work immediately on the Monday. Of course, we know it is important—

The Deputy Speaker: I will ask hon. members to mute their microphones to allow the member for Elmwood—Transcona to continue.

The hon. member can take up his speech from wherever he thinks is appropriate.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak in favour of Bill C-220. The bill would extend compassionate care leave provisions beyond the death of a loved for a family member who had taken a leave to care for a loved one. It would provide a bit of time to grieve, to begin funeral preparations and to wrap up an estate, all of which we know are important and take time to do and are particularly difficult to do in the context of losing somebody very important.

I thank the member for Edmonton Riverbend for his work on this issue. I was heartened in our exchange earlier in the House to hear that, even though this bill does not directly propose amendments to the Employment Insurance Act to also extend the compassionate care benefit under employment insurance, the member is aware of this issue and is open to working with others in the House, and may have even begun some work with the government, to ensure this leave is not just available to those who can afford to take it unpaid. Perhaps the employment insurance system can be modified for those who qualify to ensure that people who really need some income support to take that extra time would be able to receive it.

That is really important, because it does not matter how much money we make, whether it is a lot of money or a bit of money; family is important to us all. It is really important to be able to care for our loved ones. It is important to be able to grieve for our loved ones. If we are going to be extending the time people can take away

from work for that purpose and ensuring their jobs are protected, it is also important we extend the means that would support their income.

Often a very high amount of the caregiving work in families is disproportionately done by women in the family. We know women typically make less income than men. They are therefore more likely to avail themselves of the leave and are less likely to be able to afford it. That is why it is very important to make these changes to employment insurance along with the changes to the leave provisions.

I want to speak briefly to an issue. There is a procedural obstacle to changing employment insurance benefits in this bill: It is a private member's bill. As members of the House will know, which Canadians at home may not realize, a member needs what is called a royal recommendation to make legal changes that would cause more spending on the part of the government.

As I understand from the member for Edmonton Riverbend, this is the reason those changes were not presented in the bill, and this speaks to the importance of the government. It should be willing to show leadership on employment insurance reform.

I would be remiss if I did not take the opportunity to mention that beyond compassionate care leave and the compassionate care benefit, other important changes to employment insurance have been proposed by the House.

On February 19, a motion was passed in the House of Commons that called for changes to the sick leave provisions, which currently only offer 15 weeks of benefits for people who have to leave work because of illness. The House of Commons has said that it believes benefits should be extended from 15 weeks to 50 weeks. I have a private member's bill, Bill C-212, that would do exactly that.

Today a motion passed unanimously in the House reaffirming this decision of the House of Commons. The government voted against it when it was presented as a normal motion on February 19, but today it passed unanimously. It reaffirmed the decision of the House to call on the government to move the sick benefit from 15 weeks to 50 weeks.

• (1525)

Why do I say this? Because it goes to show that there are serious deficiencies in how our employment insurance system treats people who have to take time off work, whether it is because they are ill or they are caring for a loved one who has become ill. While I commend the member for Edmonton Riverbend for taking this on in a private member's bill, as I have done on the question of sick leave, there really is no substitute for the government showing leadership on this.

Private Members' Business

We have seen sweeping changes to the employment insurance system as a result of the pandemic. The government has known there is a lot of support in the House for these other changes to the employment insurance system. It is very reasonable for the government to believe, and to have believed when those changes were being contemplated, that if it wanted to change the compassionate care benefit, certainly in the case of the sickness benefit where the House has pronounced on the issue, it could have made those changes at the same time.

That is why we really need the government to step up to the plate to make sure our employment system has the backs of Canadians who, as I say, are either sick or are caring for a loved one. The NDP will certainly support initiatives to do that, like the one that is before the House today, but I would be remiss if I did not mention that it would be better for these proposals to be put together in a bill and presented by the government so that the issue of whether doing the right thing is going to cost a certain amount of money does not prevent those changes from being made.

If we saw the package come forward from the government, we would be able to do it the right way the first time and ensure that Canadians had access to all of the things they genuinely needed, including income support to avail themselves of these things. It should not become one set of benefits for people who are in a certain income category and can afford things without the income support of employment insurance, and another for everybody else who has to go back work to deal with the very things that the House is saying it believes Canadians should not have to deal with without support or extra time.

I wanted to put those remarks on the record because it is important to note that, while this is a great initiative that New Democrats are happy to support, along with efforts to make the necessary changes to the employment insurance system, there really is no substitute for a government that is committed to these things and is willing to move forward with a careful plan in a fulsome way.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking all of my parliamentary colleagues for their remarks today, and a special thanks to the member for Edmonton Riverbend for bringing forward this important piece of legislation, which I was honoured to jointly second.

It is clear this matter is close to the member's heart, and I truly appreciated hearing the personal story behind the bill's creation and the accomplishment of implementing a compassionate care leave program in Alberta.

I implore my colleagues, and I think what I am hearing today in the House is that we will be able, to pass Bill C-220 and bring it before committee for a fulsome examination to get this law right.

As the sponsoring member has indicated, this proposed legislation would extend compassionate care leave by up to three weeks after the passing of a loved one. Presently, the compassionate care leave program allows an employee in a federally regulated industry to take leave if a family member has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death within 26 weeks from the day the medical certificate is issued or when the leave is granted.

It provides benefits for a maximum of 28 weeks during a 52-week qualifying period. The benefit period is broken down into 26 weeks of receiving benefits with an additional one to two weeks of unpaid leave. An employee with 600 or more insurable hours is able to seek compassionate care leave. The basic rate used to calculate these EI benefits is 55% of one's average insurable weekly earnings, up to a maximum amount of \$573 per week.

This is a good program. It is one that the Conservatives promised to expand in 2015 from the original six weeks. The present government implemented that extension, with an additional 20 weeks, for a total of 26 weeks.

The issue this bill seeks to address is that the benefit ends once the family member passes away. The sad reality is that the now-grieving former caregiver still has many responsibilities to manage, funeral arrangements to make and emotions to process.

The bill from the member for Edmonton Riverbend will extend the leave period for up to three weeks if the employee has not yet reached the maximum threshold of 28 weeks.

COVID-19 has reminded all of us of the mortality of our loved ones and ourselves. When a death occurs, it is necessary to take the time to grieve and to attend to the practical tasks that accompany it. This legislative change will provide the breathing room needed without accompanying financial concerns.

The way this time period has been structured is well thought out, and takes into consideration the various circumstances people may find themselves in. Those who have taken close to the majority of their available compassionate care leave would receive another week following the passing of a loved one. Those who have taken between four and 20 weeks would receive two weeks beyond the death of their loved one. Lastly, those who took fewer than four weeks of compassionate care leave prior to their loved one's death would be eligible to receive an additional three weeks afterwards.

This bill accomplishes what is often difficult for government programs, in that it works to balance the real needs of employers with the very real, very personal needs of people suffering through what may be one of the most difficult periods in their lives.

The average duration of the compassionate care leave program presently used by an individual is between five and 12 weeks. Most would be able to take up to the additional three weeks off work without exceeding the benefit's threshold. Since this proposal operates within the existing 28-week period of the compassionate care leave program, it is not likely to pose an additional financial burden to the system.

That said, in 2018, 11,000 Canadians used this program. Sadly, that number is expected to continue rising in the coming years, further highlighting its necessity.

This bill has the support of many national organizations, including the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, the ALS Society of Canada, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada and Parkinson Canada.

The Canadian Cancer Society shared:

Caregivers supporting a loved one with cancer often must grapple with the physical, emotional and financial strain of their caregiving responsibilities. With so many emotional and practical issues to manage in the wake of a loved one's passing, returning to work should not have to be one of them. We support [the member's] proposed extension to the Compassionate Care Leave so that caregivers can be afforded the time off work to navigate such an incredibly difficult time in their life, and hope to see support for this legislative change from all political parties.

● (1530)

Dr. Pamela Valentine, the CEO of Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, states:

The MS Society of Canada applauds [the member's] introduction of a Private Members' Bill that focuses on expanding Compassionate Care Leave for all Canadians. The MS Society has long advocated for greater flexibility within EI sickness benefit policy, as many programs in Canada are designed like a binary switch: either you can work or you cannot work, which does not sufficiently address the realities of caregivers during the bereavement period. Expanding the compassionate care program will certainly benefit MS caregivers, and we encourage Parliamentarians to work together across party lines to ensure long-term support for caregivers and their families can become a reality.

I have a personal story that happened to me in 2008. It is what got me interested in the bill the first time. I was a graduate student at Carleton University. I was working full-time. My sister was living in Washington State and her husband suddenly passed away of swine flu during an earlier pandemic. I had to leave my work right away. My sister in Vancouver had to leave right away. Our parents both had to leave their jobs for an extended period of time to provide support to my sister and her four children.

At the time, it never even crossed my mind that there would be employment insurance or any funds available through the Labour Code that would assist me. Therefore, when the member for Edmonton Riverbend put forward this legislation, I thought it was a great addition to the types of programs we wanted to see governments provide to give Canadians flexibility when they really need support and might not have that support otherwise.

In addition, in Canada right now, our labour market is changing at a very fast rate. Self-employed Canadians, for example, are able to get employment insurance now. I can imagine that legislation like this would be a real benefit to self-employed business owners who have to leave their operations for a number of weeks to take care of a sick loved one and to deal with the bereavement process. I encourage all members of Parliament to take a close look at this legislation, to look at the flexibility it would provide Canadians in a time of need and support it.

I would also like to point out that the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine talked about the need for the legislation to address sudden death. In my situation, this is exactly what this legislation would have helped with back in 2018. Therefore, I encourage all members of Parliament and the members on HUMA, if the bill makes it that far, to look closely at that suggested amendment as well.

At the end of the day, though, it is about providing better quality and better flexibility for Canadians when they are in need. I com-

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mend my colleague for bringing forward the legislation to give Canadians options that will make their life better.

● (1535)

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, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to the private member's bill before us.

It is always encouraging when we see members from across the country, who solicit and receive ideas on issues that are important to them, afforded the opportunity, through Private Members' Business, to bring those thoughts and ideas to the House. Sadly, to a certain extent, it is a very small percentage of ideas that ultimately make it to the floor of the House of Commons, let alone pass. Some members have many resolutions, bills or motions. Some, such as parliamentary secretaries and others, are not afforded the same opportunity to bring forward initiatives such as this.

When I looked at the member's bill, the first thing that came across my mind was the issue I raised in the form of a question to the member, which was that, over many years, we have seen name changes, such as from unemployment insurance to employment insurance, but more importantly, we have seen an evolution of society that recognizes that government needs to be able to provide the necessary supports to our workers, to the people who make our economy and help our society continue to move forward in terms of employment and adding value to our GDP. I look at the bill before us as yet another example of how the employment insurance program is able to better facilitate our social responsibilities.

With the pandemic, I genuinely respect the fact that Canadians have really come together in terms of doing the very best we can to provide the type of care that is necessary. I think all of us are very much concerned with, for example, what is taking place in our long-term care homes. There is a great deal of sympathy for those individuals who are ending up having to be hospitalized. We think of our health care professionals, and there is an endless number of stories of people who are passing away and not able to have that last hug or to be in the presence of a mom or dad, or in many cases, a brother or sister, other family members or even dear friends. I believe this has heightened the level of interest in this particular issue.

I often hear comments in debates of this nature about how members of Parliament are in a position of having to provide care or are looking in the future at having to provide care. However, we are actually fairly well off in terms of our ability to meet that need, because of the position we hold and the flexibility that we have, but we are the minority and a very small minority. The public as a whole, particularly our workforce, does not have the same luxury. This is where it is important that we provide, through program development, opportunities for family and friends to be able to be around their loved ones at that very difficult time in their lives.

Private Members' Business

• (1540)

I would add to these comments by saying that, like many of us, at 58, I am in relatively good health but one never knows. I would like to think that if there was ever a time for me to need the type of support I would like to see, as much as I love our health care professionals and acknowledge the fantastic work they do, I would like to think that my family and friends, in particular my family, would be there for me. I think that all members of the House would want the same thing, and that very same principle applies to all of us.

Therefore, whether someone is at the receiving end of having to face these very difficult health issues, or having to provide the care, I think we need to look at ways in which we can continue to move forward, so that as a society we have the right emphasis on family and end-of-life situations, critical care situations and so forth.

I see I am going to have to continue on when the debate comes up next.

The Deputy Speaker: Indeed, the hon. member for Winnipeg North will have four minutes remaining in his time when the House gets back to debate on the question at the next hour.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business is now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

It being 3:43 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday, November 16 at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 3:43 p.m.)

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