



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 150 No. 039
Monday, November 30, 2020

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 30, 2020

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

AERONAUTICS ACT

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ) moved that Bill C-225, An Act to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Fishing and Recreational Harbours Act and other Acts (application of provincial law), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity this morning to talk to all my colleagues about Bill C-225, especially since this bill was introduced back in 2018 as Bill C-392 by my party's passionate environmental advocate, the charming member for Repentigny. This Bill C-225 is virtually the same as that one.

I will get into more of the details a little later, but first I would like to point out what the bill might represent. It fits perfectly with my political goals, since it implies more political autonomy for Quebec. Everyone seems to be aware of the path towards self-government that Quebec has taken.

We can go back as far as Jean Lesage's famous slogan "Maîtres chez nous", when environmental matters were perhaps not as urgent as they are today. As for Lesage, he went even further than that slogan.

I remember the early days of what was known as the Quiet Revolution, when Lesage came up with the wonderful phrase, "the Quebec state as the primary instrument for the collective emancipation of Quebecers". That phrase, which is also quite famous, means that what we want, perhaps above all else, is to give political substance to the Quebec nation, and I think this can only be achieved through self-government.

We know that when the federal government takes action in areas of federal legislative jurisdiction, Quebec and the provinces cannot force it to respect their laws. In our Constitution, there is a type of hierarchy and we know that federal legislation subordinates provincial legislation.

In the meantime, federal Parliament can impose strict parameters on governments in the application of the legislation it passes. If federal legislation required compliance with Quebec law and provincial law, the federal government could no longer authorize plans that violate those laws. This circumvention strategy may be the purpose of Bill C-225, which would amend seven federal statutes.

Bill C-225 would amend the Aeronautics Act, which governs airports, and the Fishing and Recreational Harbours Act, which governs wharves and harbours for small watercraft. The bill also amends the National Capital Act, which governs the activities of the National Capital Commission in Ottawa and the Outaouais, and the Broadcasting Act, which governs telecommunications infrastructure, including cellular antennas.

The other laws that this bill amends include the Federal Real Property and Federal Immovables Act, which governs all federal properties; the Canada Marine Act, which, as we all know, governs ports; and the Canada Infrastructure Bank Act, which governs projects carried out through the bank. Such projects currently benefit from a form of federal immunity from provincial laws and municipal bylaws.

By passing Bill C-225, Parliament would force the federal government to ensure that it is respecting provincial laws and municipal bylaws before authorizing an activity or infrastructure project, so I believe that this bill is in keeping with Quebec's pursuit of self-government.

What would the impact of this bill be? If this bill passes, Quebec laws governing environmental protection and land management would apply to the entire province of Quebec. At the beginning of my speech, I mentioned Jean Lesage. In my opinion, this bill would be a way for Quebec to be the master of its own house when it comes to the environment.

The privileges of an airport developer would therefore cease to take precedence over the provisions of the Quebec Act Respecting the Preservation of Agricultural Land and Agricultural Activities or the municipal bylaws. Telecommunications companies would have to come to an agreement with the municipalities and respect the wishes of local residents when putting up their towers and antennas. Major federal infrastructure projects and any other similar projects would be subject to the assessment process of the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement du Québec. As a result, these projects would have to be given a certificate of authorization from the Government of Quebec before they could go forward.

Private Members' Business

Along the same lines, federal government property, including large tracts of the Gatineau urban area that belong to the National Capital Commission, will have to comply with development plans and municipal regulations adopted by local authorities.

In addition to providing better environmental protection and more cohesive land development, the bill will establish legal certainty in areas marked by numerous judicial disputes related to shared jurisdictions. By approving a project that contravenes a provincial law, the federal minister would be contravening a federal law. This would resolve the issue of conflicting jurisdictions once and for all.

We all know the Canadian constitutional context. Constitutionally, Quebec land belongs to Quebecers. Its occupation, use, development and protection fall primarily under the laws and regulations of Quebec and its municipalities. The British North America Act of 1867, however, distributed legislative powers between the provinces and the federal government, which gives to Ottawa many powers that cover the environment and land.

The British North America Act was signed in 1867, at a time when telecommunications, for example, did not exist. As a result, anything that was not named directly in this legislation now falls under federal jurisdiction. Telecommunications are part of that. Other examples are navigation, wharves and ports. I could also mention public property, such as land and buildings that belong to Ottawa, as well as interprovincial transportation, including transportation infrastructure, such as pipelines.

This topic came up quite often during the last election campaign. Our Conservative colleagues had the unfortunate idea of developing an energy corridor that would have seen a pipeline built across Quebec. Judging by my colleagues' quick reaction and raised eyebrows, I can see that they are not happy about that comment, but this bill could provide a framework for similar excesses at the federal level. This is something that can be discussed later.

The Constitution does not classify environmental protection as a jurisdiction in itself. Either provincial or federal laws will apply, depending on the project. If a project is under the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government, the provincial laws will only be enforced if they do not prevent Ottawa from exercising its own powers. There are all kinds of examples in our past that demonstrate why this bill is necessary.

For instance, Quebec or a municipality could probably adopt regulations or bylaws allowing cell towers to be painted green. That would be entirely possible, and the courts would accept it. Conversely, any laws or regulations made regarding the location of towers would be struck down, which has happened on several occasions.

What does this actually mean? It means that a provincial government's power to act is significantly reduced by the federal government's power. Just between us, I do not think the colour of a telecommunications tower really matters, but where it is located is critical, and Quebec does not have the power to decide that.

As folks will see, I am a good sport. During the 2015 election campaign, which brought the Liberal Party to power, their party platform promised to ensure that projects have social licence. The

term "social licence" is on everyone's lips these days. In 2015, the Liberal Party said that social licence should be a priority for projects to be accepted and authorized.

I take no pleasure in this, but I will quote from the 2015 Liberal Party platform: "While governments grant permits for resource development, only communities can grant permission." Being a charitable man, I thought to myself, why not support my Liberal colleagues so they can fulfill one of the election promises they made in 2015?

● (1110)

I do so purely out of the goodness of my heart. We in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean are good people. Out of the goodness of my heart, I am willing to do this for my Liberal colleagues.

We live in a democracy. Our laws and regulations are passed by the representatives of the people and reflect a certain social licence. Bill C-225 will help deliver on a Liberal election promise, in a sense.

I gave some examples earlier illustrating how the federal government's prerogative over Quebec's environmental laws can sometimes lead to unfortunate circumstances. We can come back to that.

Over the years, we have adopted several laws, regulations and institutions that have helped us protect our land and ensure its harmonious use. Examples include Quebec's environmental protection legislation, the Act Respecting the Preservation of Agricultural Land and Agricultural Activities, and the Act Respecting Land Use Planning and Development, which governs development plans and zoning regulations, as well as the Government of Quebec's mechanism for ensuring social licence, the BAPE, our bureau of environmental public hearings. However, certain activities and infrastructure are only partly covered by our laws, because they fall under federal jurisdiction. Wharves, harbours, airports and telecommunications infrastructure, as I was saying earlier, are all federal property.

In these cases, even though Quebec laws and municipal bylaws are not completely squeezed out, they can apply only if they do not have a substantive effect on the activity that is the federal government's responsibility. Earlier I was talking about certain cases. In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled that the Act Respecting the Preservation of Agricultural Land and Agricultural Activities could not protect a parcel of agricultural land from a developer who wanted to turn it into an airport.

There was a similar case in 2016, when Rogers appealed to the Supreme Court to strike down Châteauguay's bylaw regulating the proliferation of cell towers. Also in 2016, the Quebec Superior Court ruled that a private business, IMTT-Québec Inc., which was blanketing the Limoilou neighbourhood of Quebec City with red dust, was exempt from Quebec's Environment Quality Act because the business was located on Port of Quebec land, which is under federal jurisdiction. That makes absolutely no sense.

The Alberta company behind the whole energy east saga did not feel that its ridiculous plan to build a pipeline across Quebec had to comply with Quebec laws. This piecemeal enforcement of Quebec's laws and regulations is an affront to democracy. These laws were passed by the Quebec National Assembly, which represents all Quebecers, and these regulations were duly adopted by the representatives of the people. Furthermore, this arrangement deprives residents of the ability to make decisions about their own land. Earlier I mentioned the famous slogan "Maîtres chez nous".

Some have pointed out that the bill does not mention municipalities, but they are included indirectly. Constitutionally, there are two levels of government: federal and provincial. Municipalities, which are not part of the constitution, are included by virtue of Government of Quebec legislation.

I am going to pick up the pace here and just say that Bill C-225 has a lot of support. Let me go back to my colleague's Bill C-392, which is essentially a copy of what is before us today. At the time, my colleague from Repentigny had the support of twenty or so municipalities whose bylaws applied to federal projects within their city limits, including airports, ports and telecommunications infrastructure. The City of Gatineau also supported the bill because it wanted the National Capital Commission to stop acting like a separate enclave outside the City's purview. The Union des producteurs agricoles wrote to all Quebec MPs, asking them to support the bill and ensure that the Act Respecting the Preservation of Agricultural Land and Agricultural Activities applies at all times.

Quebec's three major unions also supported the bill, as did the Quebec Environmental Law Centre. The Government of Quebec is constantly lobbying for Quebec's land use and environmental laws to apply to federal projects. When Bill C-69 was before the House, the intergovernmental affairs minister, Jean-Marc Fournier—a confirmed sovereigntist, no point in denying it—published an open letter in *La Presse* seeking an amendment to ensure respect for Quebec's laws and assessment processes. Bill C-225 ensures that.

• (1115)

Lastly, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted 11 resolutions to that effect for various federal projects.

If both my Liberal and Conservative colleagues are serious when they say that they want greater recognition for Quebec, their only option is to accept this bill and vote in favour of it.

• (1120)

[*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 will give the Bloc credit for being consistent. Its members often look at ways to try to weaken the national framework or the national government.

From my perspective, I see the benefits of a strong, healthy union, and I think the member might want to reflect on the great many benefits a national government could have in providing consistency across the country. It can be important in certain situations.

Private Members' Business

Would the member apply the same principles of decentralization of power toward municipalities? For example, let us say Montreal would like financial assistance from Ottawa. Would the member support the federal government's providing financial support to communities in the province of Quebec?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

My Liberal colleagues seem to have a hard time understanding that Quebec is a nation. It is important to distinguish between the demands of certain ethnocultural minorities, which generally want to be recognized, and the demands of a nation. A nation is seeking greater political autonomy, but the federal government has been saying no for 40 years.

It goes without saying that this bill may offend the sensibilities of the government members. However, if we do not get this done, the Canadian federation will remain a centralist federation that does not respect the choices of nations. The Quebec nation is not the only nation; there are also the indigenous nations. In that sense, I find this to be a significant affront to democracy.

This was actually in the 2015 Liberal platform. If they are serious about their objective of developing greater social licence, I do not see how they can reject this bill.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his speech, and I congratulate him on his bill. I would like to ask him a question.

If there is a jurisdictional conflict between a province and the federal government, this bill would give the province precedence. Does that mean that the federal government's power would actually be eliminated?

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted if the federal government's power were actually eliminated. I do not think that is going to happen here, but it might happen one day in the Quebec National Assembly.

The bill only covers environmental issues. There is a fairly simple principle at play, and that is land use. If we support the idea of social licence, then we must first get the public's consent on major environmental issues, such as building a pipeline. I think that can only be handled by the Quebec National Assembly.

We need to invert the current system. Right now, there is a hierarchy between federal and provincial laws. We need to change that in order to strike some sort of balance when it comes to the environment. That is what this bill does.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member is concerned about the environment and advancing this objective, but will passing the bill not create difficulties with the 13 different sets of laws and regulations across the province dealing with federal areas of responsibility?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: No, I do not believe so, Mr. Speaker.

If we allow our thinking to be guided by social licence, then I do not think that the environmental regulations will be fragmented or divided. Right now, the opposite is true. That is a red herring that sometimes allows Ottawa to reduce environmental protections. At times, the hierarchy set out in the Canadian Constitution enables Ottawa to reduce Quebec's environmental regulations.

It seems to me that that is the opposite of what my colleague is saying. We should look at it not as fragmentation, but rather as a way of guaranteeing better environmental protection.

• (1125)

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to speak to Bill C-225. The bill touches upon intergovernmental relations, federalism and the paramountcy principle: matters that have been debated in both Houses of Parliament on a wide range of subjects. In essence, this bill seeks to subordinate the exercise of federal power in certain areas of provincial law and to allow provincial governments to impose restrictions on environmental protection activities and land use for projects the federal government undertakes across the country.

These same topics came up when this bill was discussed in the House on June 19, 2018, when Bill C-392 proposed similar amendments during the last Parliament. At the time, Bill C-392 sought to strengthen environmental protection and scrutiny of land use. Since then, Bill C-69, introduced by this government, positively strengthened consultation mechanisms and consideration of the environmental impact of projects under federal jurisdiction.

I congratulate the hon. member for his initiative to heighten the consideration given to land use and development, as well as to environmental protection, when projects and activities under federal jurisdiction are being considered. The government is also invested in protecting Canada's environment, and in ensuring effective consultation that accounts for local concerns related to land use and development and the environment. Canadians should know that all levels of government work in the interests of their well-being.

Every day, millions of Canadians go about their lives in an orderly and predictable way. They routinely use safe roads, drink clean water, consume food free of contaminants, rely on safe transportation systems and know that their safety and security are guarded by police, fire departments, paramedics and military personnel. Even today, while the world is facing COVID-19, Canadians can count on federal, provincial and municipal governments to continue to collaborate until the end of this challenging time so they can maintain as many of their routines as possible.

Our society depends on laws and rules to function, and each level of government is responsible for those things that fall into its jurisdiction. Education, building codes and highways, for example, are primarily provincial responsibilities. Matters such as defence, aeronautics and radio communications, for example, extend beyond provincial borders and impact the country as a whole. In these areas, it falls to the federal government to implement a nationally consistent approach that serves Canada and its people.

Over the last several years, the Liberal government has sought to promote co-operative federalism as a way to face challenges concerning more than one level of government. As we all know, there are many issues that transcend municipal and provincial boundaries, and many others where the federal government may be unaware of a local concern. For this reason, taking a co-operative approach achieves the best possible outcome for Canadians. With a country as large and diverse as Canada, we must all act in good faith and work together to achieve the best possible results for our economy and our environment.

There have been, and will continue to be, times when differences arise despite our best efforts to work together. However, there are already numerous federal statutes, particularly those implicated in Bill C-225, and regulations that accommodate provincial laws concerning land use and development and environmental protection. Efforts are ongoing to encourage co-operative federalism in ways that do not restrict core federal operation.

In order to build on its desire for co-operative federalism, the Liberal government demonstrated its commitment to consulting Canadians when it introduced Bill C-69, which strengthens Canada's environmental assessments and regulatory reviews through legislative changes and amendments. This bill explicitly reflects the consideration of environmental, social, safety, health and socio-economic issues, including gender-based impacts and economics as well as impacts on indigenous peoples. Bill C-69 also includes several provisions that enhance public participation and transparency, which provides members of the public with an opportunity to express their views during the review process.

The changes we made in Bill C-69 exceed the amendments proposed in Bill C-225. As we know, the division of powers in Canada is defined by the Constitution Act, but we also know that the division presents some ambiguity.

Private Members' Business

There are many areas and many issues where interests cross jurisdictional lines. Two or even three levels of government have stakes in issues such as the environment, health, safety and employment. Our different levels of government need to work together to discuss problems, develop strategies, leverage resources and find solutions.

To reinforce the importance of collaboration, the Supreme Court of Canada encourages all levels of government to work co-operatively. In recent decisions, the Court has indicated that provincial and municipal legislation cannot impair core matters of federal jurisdiction over aeronautics or radio communication infrastructure.

● (1130)

In addition, where possible, it prefers to allow valid provincial laws to apply, if they are not in conflict. While these decisions quite clearly establish federal authority on matters such as aerodromes and cellphone towers, the federal government does not rely on court decisions to impose projects on Canadian communities. Instead, it chooses to use processes for consultation, and the consideration of environmental laws and land use, to ensure that local concerns are taken into consideration regarding activities and projects that fall under federal jurisdiction. A division of powers is essential to maintaining order and predictability in our society and ensures that we avoid the scenario of too many leaders in one situation, or a leadership void when no one wants to take responsibility in another. In Canada, all jurisdictions must work together on certain issues to promote and protect the interests of all Canadians. Even when we agree to work together, we must still respect jurisdictional boundaries.

I would like to provide the House with examples of three areas of federal jurisdiction in which a co-operative approach and consultations play an essential role. First, in January of 2017, following a regulatory consultation process, Transport Canada implemented a new regulation requiring proponents of certain aerodrome projects to consult with the municipalities, citizens or other concerned stakeholders before starting work, so that local concerns could be identified and mitigated. I add that many of these projects do not move forward if there are serious doubts expressed regarding the quality of the consultations carried out by their proponents, or if these projects are deemed not to be in the public interest.

Another example under the Canada Marine Act is that there currently exist provisions for the Governor in Council to make regulations situated on a port, whether a Canadian port authority or public port facility, or on use of the seaway and its property. These provisions include development, use and environmental protections that incorporate provincial legislation by reference.

My third and final example is the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which acts as a partner in delivering federal support to infrastructure projects in the public interest alongside co-investment by the private sector, institutional investors and sponsoring governments. Projects supported by the infrastructure bank must respect all applicable laws in their relevant jurisdictions, including any applicable environmental or labour laws. Project sponsors provide assurance to the bank and other investors that applicable laws in a province have been respected.

These three specific examples were chosen because these initiatives all require consultation and consideration of local issues related to land use and the environment. These would be taken away from the very acts the private member's bill seeks to amend. There are countless other examples, in the same act and elsewhere, that demonstrate the government's commitment to hearing the concerns of Canadians, and advancing the health, safety and economic well-being of our citizens and the stewardship of our natural resources, such as our forests and waters. These duties are the responsibility of all governments, whether municipal, federal or provincial. Our best successes occur when we come together, listen to one another and work together to support policy development, new programs and effective enforcement that serves all Canadians. We have every intention of continuing to listen to and work with other levels of government.

The federal government has worked effectively with provinces, territories and municipalities over many years in response to the requirements of the communities they serve and to the needs of the country as a whole. Like our provincial and municipal partners, we take that responsibility very seriously. The Liberal government will continue to prioritize co-operative federalism and consultation with its citizens. Bill C-225 would represent a major shift in federal-provincial dynamics in Canada and would undermine the co-operative federal relationship we worked so hard to establish.

It is for these reasons the government strongly opposes Bill C-225.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Bloc Québécois member. I am sure he worked hard to draft and introduce Bill C-225.

[*English*]

We should ask ourselves two very important things every time we look at a piece of legislation at this point in history. First, this is a time to come together as one nation. When we review legislation, we have to consider whether the legislation promotes the good of Canada. Second, and this is very important with the fall economic statement coming out later today, this is a time to build the economy.

Every time we review a piece of legislation in the House we should be asking if it brings Canada together and if it will further Canada's economy. This is not just because of the fall economic statement, but as we emerge from the pandemic and start to consider how we will do vaccine procurement and distribution, we have to think about these things.

I want to go over Bill C-225 briefly for those listening who may not be aware of what it proposes.

Private Members' Business

The bill would amend six federal acts. It would change legislation regarding land use and development and environmental protection. The Bloc is very motivated to put forward this legislation for two reasons. First, the Supreme Court sided with the federal government in numerous court cases where federal jurisdiction overrode provincial jurisdiction. The Bloc is looking for more provincial power. Second, several of these cases actually originated in the Province of Quebec. For these two reasons, Bloc members are very motivated to change this legislation.

In my observation, Conservatives are concerned because of potential jurisdictional disputes. We think that more cases would have to go before the courts. It is not good to tie up the courts because of discrepancies between two pieces of legislation or determining which one takes precedence in which situation.

As well, we are very concerned that some sections of the bill could be considered unconstitutional. It is surprising to me that the Bloc would put something forward that would be deemed unconstitutional, considering how hard the party fights for the principle of the two founding peoples of the nation and, in particular, the province of Quebec. However, I would say how good both my leader and my colleagues from Quebec have been regarding the modernization of the Official Languages Act. I had the pleasure of sitting on the official languages committee for a brief period of time. When it comes to the Constitution, I would expect the Bloc to consider it.

For those who are not aware, my leader was on *Tout le monde en parle* yesterday. If members did not have an opportunity to see him, I would suggest they watch it.

Going back to my main points, it is time to come together as a nation and build the economy.

There are concerns that the bill before us could have negative economic implications, as it may deter private investment and infrastructure projects because of additional red tape. Provinces could amend their legislation on land use and environmental protection to block federal projects. Also, and this is very relevant to me as a member of Parliament from Alberta, the bill could block federal economic development projects, such as the Trans Mountain pipeline or other infrastructure projects.

• (1135)

In a time when we are looking to come out of the pandemic united, we really need to think about legislation that will be nation-building. I would certainly count on my colleagues from Quebec to support infrastructure projects all across Canada, as I would, as a member of Parliament from Alberta, support any projects that are in the national interest of Canada. I think it is very important that we all take this into consideration as parliamentarians for Canada. We really have to think about the effects of legislation such as Bill C-69 and Bill C-48 and the way they so negatively impacted the natural resources sector here in Alberta.

People have to put themselves in other people's shoes. If legislation such as this bill were to come across that another province could potentially have the possibility to impact an infrastructure project that would be of benefit to Quebec, I do not think that they would like to see that any more than we do, as members of Parlia-

ment from Alberta who see the potential of this happening to us. More importantly, at this time, I think we really have to question what legislation like this would do.

This is the time to build this economy. This bill would create more insecurity around investment in Canada at this time. I will hand it to the Prime Minister and his cabinet, who have done a masterful job of driving away investment from Alberta, the Prairies and the entire energy sector to the detriment of Canada. We are all suffering as we come out of this pandemic with the trillion-dollar debt that we have in front of us; the hundreds of billions of dollars of deficit that we have. We really need to come together as a nation to think about how we are economically going to respond to this. The Prime Minister and his cabinet just do not seem to get that when one part of the nation benefits, the entire nation benefits. I would ask my Bloc colleague to consider this at this time as well.

With that, I ask Canadians to really listen to the fall economic statement today. I really hope we do not see what we saw in the Speech from the Throne, which was a complete disappointment with more poor ideas based upon ideology as opposed to real, solid ideas to build the economy going forward. That is what I am expecting more of today.

When Canadians are listening to the fall economic statement today, I want them to ask themselves three questions:

Number one, will this improve the economy? Listen to what they are saying. Will it improve the economy for Canada? Goodness knows, we need that coming out of this pandemic.

Number two, will this protect my job if I have a job? Is there anything in the fall economic statement to protect my job? I am in a place where I have seen so many people lose their jobs. There is another round of layoffs coming from a major employer, Imperial, this week here in Alberta. It is terrible to hear about. Again, I completely blame the Liberal government for this, for its investment-destroying legislation. I do believe this bill will add to that.

Number three, will this fall economic statement create more jobs?

Will this improve the economy? Will this protect my job? Will this create more jobs? Those are the three things that Canadians have to be asking themselves. At the end of the day, I believe that Canadians have to ask their parliamentarian and government if they are taking actions and passing legislation to support the country and economy or taking actions and passing legislation that is destroying the economy, which is essentially destroying Canada. That is what is happening bit by bit.

• (1140)

This is the time to come together as a nation. This is the time to build the economy. The Liberal government has not done this and Bill C-225 does not do this either.

Private Members' Business

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have this opportunity to participate in the debate on a bill that we have already seen in virtually the same form, as the member for Jonquière noted. It is almost identical to the bill introduced by the member for Repentigny in the previous Parliament. I will come back to the “almost” part because there is something important hidden here.

I would stress that the NDP was among those who supported that bill. We certainly intend to continue doing so because we recognize that Quebec is a nation, which should have a direct and practical impact on the decision-making process. Moreover, we believe that this bill will support a better decision-making process and greater respect for local communities, regional perspectives and decisions that have already been made by democratic institutions and organizations, such as the provinces and municipalities too.

As we have seen in the past, when a project does not have social licence—the Liberals talked about this in 2015 but have never done anything about it—it causes tremendous tensions within certain regions and certain communities, which end up quite angry that they did not have a say on a tower being erected, the use of an airport, or the activities of a company in a fishing harbour or a commercial harbour, for example.

We want a process that is more harmonious and respectful of all the players in the regions and that is why we in the NDP fully support the spirit of the bill introduced today. We represent people at the federal level, but these very people are also citizens of the provinces and municipalities.

Today's bill would ensure that the federal government complies with provincial legislation and, accordingly, with municipal regulations. We think this co-operative approach between the different levels of government will bring about better decisions that will better serve people instead of steamrolling over them. We call that multilateral decision-making.

I think that this bill needs to be seen from the perspective of working together, of having a dialogue and listening. The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader was also talking about listening, dialogue and collaboration. However, he then said that the Liberals are completely against this bill. That is entirely contradictory of the Liberals.

The Conservatives also opposed a similar bill in the last Parliament. I am close to falling off my chair here because it appears that the Conservatives, who claim to champion respect for the provinces and autonomy, once again oppose this bill. I do not understand. The Leader of the Opposition will have to explain to Quebecers why he refuses to take into account provincial legislation or decisions made by certain municipalities. It is too bad, because doing so would reduce a lot of the tension we have seen in the past in relation to certain decisions and projects.

There are still some things about the bill I want to explain, so I will talk quickly. Incorporating provincial laws into federal laws can be done through the technique of incorporation by reference. This has been used in the past, so it can be done. There is a real

possibility that this bill could be used and applied, but how this incorporation will be interpreted is not yet clear. What will be the actual consequences? If this bill is studied in committee, as we hope it will be, those are the kinds of questions we in the NDP would want clarification on, as there are still some grey areas.

That said, the member for Jonquière is quite right to point out that this bill is almost identical to the previous bill introduced by his colleague from Repentigny.

• (1150)

I am shocked by that because it goes completely against the Bloc Québécois's claims that they are champions of the environment, as the member for Jonquière said in his speech a few minutes ago.

The previous bill, which was introduced by the member for Repentigny, made very clear reference to the National Energy Board Act. That law was amended and is now called the Canadian Energy Regulator Act, but there is no mention of it in Bill C-225, which was introduced by the member for Jonquière. Why, all of a sudden, does the Bloc Québécois no longer seem to want provincial laws or municipal decisions to apply to oil and gas pipelines?

People in British Columbia and Quebec are very concerned about various projects. I am thinking of Trans Mountain, Energy East and GNL Québec's gas pipeline project in Saguenay.

I would like to know whether the member for Jonquière simply forgot about GNL Québec's project. I, too, will be very generous. Either the Bloc members did not copy and paste properly and dropped the ball, or they left that part out on purpose because it is in their interest to not say too much about GNL Québec's gas pipeline project. Is this a way for the Bloc Québécois to dismiss this issue and continue to quietly support a gas pipeline project like GNL Québec's while giving the company a little wink and a nod?

The NDP is extremely concerned about this. We do not think that this was an oversight. We believe that this might have been intentional for various reasons and that is worrisome because GNL Québec's gas pipeline project will produce massive amounts of greenhouse gas emissions and methane, which is 83 or 84 times more potent than CO₂ as a greenhouse gas. That is extremely problematic.

Over the past five to 10 years, we have seen that there is a consensus against shale gas production in Quebec. When development projects were proposed in Quebec, there was a public outcry against them.

Private Members' Business

In short, this bill proposes greater citizen engagement in granting projects social licence, except for anything to do with oil and gas pipelines. The NDP finds that a little troubling, because we feel that the Bloc Québécois is talking out of both sides of its mouth and is double-dealing.

Shale gas extraction in the west or northern Ontario contributes to our production of carbon and our collective carbon footprint, and this runs counter to our Paris Agreement targets.

If the bill goes to committee, I hope we will be able to make this amendment and go back to the bill introduced by the member for Repentigny, which included all regulations concerning pipelines. These regulations have now suddenly disappeared. I also hope that the Bloc Québécois will admit that the GNL Québec project is a bad project. It is smoke and mirrors. It would increase our carbon footprint and also create a tremendous amount of marine traffic in the Saguenay River Fjord, a habitat of the belugas, which is currently an endangered species. This will have very important repercussions for their ability to continue to survive in this environment.

I think we need structuring projects that create jobs, but in light of the crisis we have been facing for many years, we must ensure that everything is done through a climate accountability lens. Greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise in spite of the pandemic. This was reported in *Le Devoir* this week or recently.

The right thing to do is to make job-creating investments, but in renewable energy projects. I think there is huge potential there, in Quebec, or in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, especially with respect to forestry waste. Biomass can have many uses, and these are some very exciting projects.

• (1155)

We find this very exciting and we will support Bill C-225 at second reading. However, we have a lot of questions about the disappearance of the pipeline provision.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie should not worry. The Bloc Québécois is still against the pipelines that are being shoved down our throats. We were unable to do so in January, so we are waiting for committee stage to insert that missing part back into Bill C-225.

This bill is close to my heart, and I thank the member for Jonquière for introducing it.

The Bloc Québécois has introduced this bill, which is at the heart of our political commitments here, because we believe it is imperative that Quebecers feel at home on the land that is historically and constitutionally ours. Sovereignty certainly does factor into our objective as a nation, as a people, but it also refers to a power that trumps all others.

When federal laws contradict Quebec's legislative provisions and run counter to our collective interests, to the detriment of the population and the environment we need to protect, we have the duty to act. Quebec belongs to its citizens. Land occupancy, use, development and protection are essentially governed by Quebec and municipal laws and regulations. No one can argue that, and it applies to both Quebec and the other provinces. We, the elected members

of the Bloc Québécois, represent Quebecers' interests, and that is why we are debating Bill C-225 today.

The current legal structure gives the federal government precedence over the legal and regulatory framework of Quebec and its municipalities. This precedent is unjustified, and it undermines the legal powers and responsibilities of the Quebec government, which is working tirelessly to support land development and environmental issues. There is a great deal of infrastructure and many activities under federal jurisdiction. As my colleague said, those include wharves, ports, airports, telecommunications, federal properties and railways. The Department of Transport is anything but a model in this respect. They would be unable to deal with any of these sectors without the help of the Quebec government.

Our body of laws and regulations is being undermined in these sectors, and our people truly understand why Bill C-225 is so important. What it addresses has an impact on their quality of life, their physical environment and their perception of what it means to live together in a democratic space such as ours, and that is what is so sorely lacking. Companies under federal jurisdiction encounter few obstacles. In the last Parliament, I took a good look at the projects that people were unhappy with, and the situation is no better now. By maintaining its provisions, the federal legislator is showing its contempt for the people of Quebec and their laws, through which they want to have a say on what happens in Quebec.

Although the Quebec Act Respecting the Preservation of Agricultural Land and Agricultural Activities, the Union des producteurs agricoles and the municipalities were against the construction of aerodromes, the Supreme Court ruled in 2010 that such projects could go ahead. We could also talk about the construction of telecommunications towers in some municipalities. No one can make me believe that mayors and other elected officials did not contact several members of the House to tell them that building a telecommunications tower in such a location was ridiculous and to ask them to intervene. I am certain that almost everyone here got a call like that.

There are also projects, including the one in the Port of Quebec, that pollute and have a measurable negative impact on air quality. That impact is being felt by the population of Limoilou. These projects can go ahead. In every case, a superior or supreme court rules in favour of federal legislation. In the case of IMTT-Québec, the company in the Port of Quebec, the Superior Court ruled that Quebec's environmental protection act did not apply. When a company runs afoul of Quebec law, it does not worry too much about the fine because the courts are there to protect it. In every case, the rulings are handed down in federal courts by judges appointed by the federal government.

Given everything surrounding the appointment of federal judges, I will simply say that it is not enough to render a decision under the law. There must be the appearance of justice.

● (1200)

With respect to the provisions addressed in Bill C-225, it is clear that the shared jurisdiction over environment and land development is never even considered by federal courts.

The Quebec government has fought a number of battles over the years, because every citizens group that tried to mobilize was stonewalled by the federal government. We need to put a stop to companies under federal jurisdiction being allowed to do whatever they want without complying with Quebec's laws and regulations. Land development is an arduous task. It does not always turn out perfectly, but the people who devote their time to it do so within a framework that takes our population and our laws into account. Quebec has all the necessary mechanisms to oversee, guide and evaluate every aspect of a given project.

However, when these mechanisms are treated with contempt, when municipal bylaws, for example, become ineffective and legislation is called into question, people can become cynical, disinterested and even angry. Yes, people get angry. Fortunately, this anger is often channelled into mobilization, where protest becomes a force for change. In different regions of Canada, especially in Quebec, people have protested against many projects that threatened and are still threatening their land and their environment.

We are close enough to the people to know what affects them the most, and the laws are miles away from what the people want. The federal government needs to review the imposed hierarchy so that activities under its jurisdiction take into account what Quebecers want and need. Quebecers certainly do not need to see Ottawa's imperialist policy giving carte blanche to projects that break our laws and regulations.

On this subject, as spokesperson for the environment, I must point out that the Quebec government believes that its environmental and land development laws must apply at all times. Quebec's National Assembly has unanimously called for this many times. In Quebec, this issue is not only a political one. Municipalities, environmental groups, unions, the Union des producteurs agricoles and many more want the same thing: projects that obey the laws at every level. This will strengthen our democracy, and certainly better protect the environment.

This is 2020. The climate emergency motion was voted on in the last Parliament. The motion was tabled by the Liberal government. I think we need to review the order of priorities. We spoke earlier of 1867 and 1982. I will say it again: This is the 21st century and the climate emergency requires that we change our focus.

Land management and development and environmental protection must become the factors on which decisions to authorize projects under federal jurisdiction are based. I have often said that environmental protection is a cross-cutting issue. It affects all sectors.

The government with the most stringent legislation should have precedence. This should satisfy the parliamentary secretary, who

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was saying that federal laws would no longer hold. Effectively, the toughest law would prevail. In this case, Quebec's environmental protection laws are stricter than those of the federal government. In fact, federal laws are too permissive. Restrictive legislation can protect the common good.

Instead of strengthening its legislation, the federal government is catering to the private sector, and these companies can do whatever they want. There is no community building, and corporate individualism is encouraged.

We want to protect our people, our land, our living environments, our industrial, social and cultural fabric, and our environment. Members from Quebec, regardless of their affiliation, will see that there is a consensus on Bill C-225.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

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● (1205)

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from November 27, consideration of Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up the motion before the House, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan had three minutes remaining in his time for debate. He will also have five minutes for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to conclude my remarks on Bill C-7, I will speak to the way the bill would enshrine discrimination against people living with disabilities. I will explain how that is.

Historically, when people experience extreme existential angst or suicidal ideation and present at a professional environment, perhaps an emergency department, they receive suicide prevention care. The intervention the system provides to them is trying to prevent them from acting on their suicidal ideation.

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This is done out of a sense that suicide prevention is good for the person involved. It has been, and still is by many people, seen as consistent with small-l liberalism or a belief in autonomy more generally. When people experience these kinds of feelings, they are counselled and advised in a way that affirms the idea that life for them is very much worth living. This is the standard practice of suicide prevention as it has been practised for most of our history, and as it is practised for most people.

Based on what we have already heard regarding the experiences of people with disabilities, what they are sometimes presently experiencing when interacting with the health care system is that, when they come forward with the same kinds of feelings, they do not receive suicide prevention. Instead they receive suicide facilitation.

In other words, if I, as an able-bodied person, were to come to an emergency department with the same feelings as a friend of mine, who happens to be a person with disabilities, this friend would be much more likely to be offered suicide facilitation, whereas I would be offered suicide prevention. That is discrimination by definition.

The question for this House to consider is this: Who should get suicide prevention, and who should get suicide facilitation? This is an important question that people with disabilities are raising and have been raising at committee, that they would experience something different from the health care system than people who are able-bodied.

The direction in which members want to resolve that discrimination, according to their values, is an open question, but the fact is that people will now be treated differently if they have a disability compared with if they do not. That is very clear from this legislation and the fact that, overwhelmingly, all of the organizations representing people with disabilities that testified before the committee expressed grave concerns about the implications this would have.

I think we want to be the kind of country that treats people fairly and equally, and affirms the life and dignity of all people, regardless of whether or not they are living with a disability. This is one of many concerns that was top of mind and presented at the committee discussion on Bill C-7. I hope members will listen to it, take it seriously and think about it as they proceed to vote on these amendments at report stage.

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, one thing the member left out of the equation is the incredible efforts provided by our medical profession, individuals who, I believe, would provide proper and consistent advice. I do not think anyone would encourage the type of behaviour the member is implying in his comments.

I wonder if, upon reflecting of some of his comments, he might take this opportunity to recognize the sense of professionalism provided by the health care workers in our health care system today.

• (1210)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the member is referring to some of the comments I have raised about the committee testimony, which already shows concern for people with disabilities being treated differently in the system, even being pushed toward eu-

thanasia or assisted suicide, and the need for safeguards against that.

I agree that the vast majority of our health care workers are well intentioned and do great work. Three out of four of my siblings, as well as my wife and my father, all work in health care, so I probably have more direct familial contact with people in health care than many other members.

There are hundreds of thousands of people in this country working in health care. The reason we have safeguards is not because most of those people might make problematic decisions; it is because there is always a risk, and we have already heard from people in the disability community that people are having these negative experiences, of being encouraged toward medical assistance in dying.

One person testified about being called selfish for not wanting this option. That is why we have safeguards in place. It is not for the general cases; it is for the exceptional cases, because life and death are still involved in exceptional cases.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a concern about the removal of the reflection period for people who might be suffering from mental challenges if they might qualify under what is understood as a reasonably foreseeable death. We know not all doctors are equipped to assess those challenges.

Therefore, could the member talk about the possible risks of removing the reflection period for people with mental challenges and how we could see some very dangerous consequences from that?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague's work on this issue. The reflection period is one of the amendments in front of us to vote on. It is important for members to understand the reflection period can already be waived in certain circumstances. For any argument that the reflection period might not be appropriate in certain circumstances, it can already be waived. However, the reflection period creates a default, a sense that we should not have same-day death.

A person may be experiencing an extensive set of challenges on a particular day that may be very real but very transient. The reflection period is designed to ensure that the choice people make reflects considered exercise of autonomy over time, not a momentary place of darkness.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke eloquently about some of the shortcomings of the legislation. I want to give him a chance to talk about any particular amendments with respect to helping persons with disabilities and strengthening the legislation.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, many great amendments were proposed at committee that would have helped the situation. Some of those amendments will be considered in the House. I am hopeful that those considering this bill in the other place will also take a look at some of the amendments.

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One amendment that would make a big difference to people living with disabilities is the requirement that a doctor or a nurse practitioner not be the one to initiate the conversation. If people come forward and say that they would like more information about MAID, then at that point the doctor or the nurse practitioner would engage and provide that information.

It should be clearly established in the law that people cannot have it suggested to them that they should consider it. If it is not something they want brought up and suddenly they are told by the system that they should really think about dying, it completely changes their engagement with the system.

Why not have in place an amendment that says that the first person to bring it up should be patient, not the doctor? We put that forward at committee. Unfortunately it was voted down, but I am hopeful people in the other place will consider this as something to maybe put in the legislation.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I last rose in the House to speak to the matter of physician-assisted death in 2016, I noted that the legislation then before us, Bill C-14, was neither the alpha nor the omega in the continuing conversations on the topic that Canadians have had for decades.

The Supreme Court had forced that legislative moment on reluctant politicians with the Carter decision, although the conversation had been simmering across society from the last century into this one.

However, in 2016, Bill C-14 brought us nowhere near where the Supreme Court had ruled Parliament must go. It was an interim step. It was a very cautious first step that was driven home with the Truchon-Gladu ruling in Quebec, which ordered that a class of people denied eligibility for medical assistance in dying by Bill C-14 were indeed entitled to access medical assistance in accordance with the Carter ruling.

The legislation before us now, Bill C-7, as amended in committee, under-amended I believe, and I will get to that in a moment, goes considerably beyond Truchon-Gladu. That said, the past five years of medically assisted death has brought Canadian society to a much more accepting place than in 2016; that increased acceptance of the practice justifies the additional provisions included in Bill C-7.

To my point that Bill C-7 was under-amended by the justice committee, the Conservatives hold that, for a variety of reasons, not least of which the WE scandal prorogation that wasted six valuable weeks in the summer, Bill C-7 has been indecently rushed through committee with not nearly adequate consultation. In the shadow of time allocation, signalled by the Liberal House leader last Thursday, it seems it will be denied adequate debate now during report stage.

This flawed process makes even more important the separate full and comprehensive parliamentary review of medically assisted death demanded by Bill C-14.

At committee, the Conservatives proposed nine amendments to better protect vulnerable groups, reasonable amendments, all rejected by the Liberals, but amendments which I hope Senate colleagues

will consider in the upper house. I say that with some expectation of that actually happening as a result of testimony before the Senate's legal affairs committee last week by the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion. In fact, the minister endorsed exactly the same point as was proposed by one of the Conservative amendments, which was voted down by Liberal members of the House justice committee. She said, unambiguously, that health practitioners should not be allowed to discuss the issue of assisted dying until a patient asked.

Admittedly, this is a particularly difficult issue and one of context. I understand why anyone, but particularly a person with disabilities might feel improperly, even terrifyingly pressured, depending on how the matter is raised by a doctor. There is quite a difference between a physician informing of a range of choices facing a seriously ill patient and directly recommending assisted death.

The Canadian Nurses Association advised the Senate committee that the law should explicitly allow doctors to raise the issue with patients, as did the Canadian Association of Medical Assistance in Death Assessors and Providers. Dr. Stefanie Green told the committee that it would be unprofessional not to lay all the options on the table. I am sure we will all follow Senate dealings on this question very closely.

The disability inclusion minister testified as well before the Senate committee that she was open to considering an amendment to Bill C-7 that would impose a 12-month sunset clause on the proposed ban on individuals suffering solely from mental illnesses to seek an assisted death. Legal experts have made it abundantly clear that if that clause remains in Bill C-7, it is destined, almost certainly, to return to the Supreme Court where it will almost certainly be found to be unconstitutional. This is another consideration to watch closely.

Over the years since Bill C-14 was passed, and now as Bill C-7 is being rushed to law, a dark cloud has hung over discussion and debate, and that is the government's still unkept promise, a broken promise actually, to better provide choice, a meaningful alternative to physician-assisted death.

● (1215)

In 2015, the Liberals made a campaign commitment to invest \$3 billion in long-term care, including palliative care. In fact, the importance of access to palliative care and end-of-life decision-making was one of the few unanimous points of agreement in the special joint committee's report to Parliament in February 2016.

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The government promised to expand the availability of accessible, affordable, acceptable palliative care for all those who for reason of conscience, faith or choice decided not to avail themselves of physician-assisted death. The Liberals' inconsistency in the matter of choice in other circumstances aside, this is a promise that must be fulfilled. It is essential that hospice and palliative care capacity in the country be vastly expanded to provide for those who would choose a meaningful alternative to MAID.

As I said in the House four years ago, my personal decision, which will determine my vote on this legislation, is a product of three individuals and their experiences and my own.

In my previous life as a journalist, I followed closely the unsuccessful legal crusade of Sue Rodriguez, as ALS steadily increased its smothering, deadly grip on her. I was seized by her rhetorical question posed to all Canadians, "If I cannot give consent to my own death, whose body is this? Who owns my life?"

When I first came to Parliament 12 years ago, I became close to another thoughtful, courageous Canadian, a fellow MP, the Hon. Steven Fletcher, Canada's first quadriplegic MP, re-elected three times. Steven did not give up after a life-changing accident. He met immense challenges and he overcame them.

However, in two private members' bills tabled several years ago, which I seconded, and in testimony before the justice committee in January 2016, Steven made a powerfully convincing argument for self-determination to one day make a final decision. Steven argued for a law by which an individual could make one's own decision based on one's own morals and ethics, but under guarantee there would be no pressure on that person from society, family, friends, or the facility in which he or she might be.

I was also powerfully persuaded by the tragically tortuous passing of my brother-in-law, a brilliant academic, by Alzheimer's. I informed the House during debate on Bill C-14 that should such an end one day face me, I would surely compose an advance directive and that one way or the other it would be fulfilled.

Finally, as a cancer survivor, I have had many hours of reflection during treatment and since to personally ponder the issues involved in medically assisted death and Sue Rodriguez's quite powerful rhetorical question: Who owns my life?

I am honoured to participate in this debate on Bill C-7 as I was with Bill C-14. Bill C-7 would correct the major deficiencies of the original legislation, but it is still deficient. Whatever happens in the Senate, I hope the parliamentary review, which should have occurred before consideration and passage of Bill C-7, will now more thoroughly examine this evolving law and properly lead to eventual amendments, chief among them measures to better ensure protection of Canada's most vulnerable.

• (1220)

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, when we talk about the beginning and the end of this issue, I suspect we will still not be at the end, that ongoing discussions will take place both formally and informally among parliamentarians going forward.

I respect the member's belief in Parliament. If an amendment is brought forward that has already been voted on and defeated in the House by elected parliamentarians, does the member support that very same amendment being brought forward in the Senate chamber where the Senate would pass something on which a clear decision was by members of Parliament?

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, in many instances that has been the parliamentary practice and tradition. However, the testimony of the Minister of Disability Inclusion last week before the Senate committee's pre-study of Bill C-7, and her unambiguous comments on two amendments that she would, in fact, support, demonstrate that the government either did not ask her or did not include her in the process, and that the Senate is well within its realm to consider those specific amendments proposed and send them back to this place for proper consideration.

• (1225)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken in the House before about my experience with MAID, where I was with a very beloved and dear family member. It was a very beautiful but sad day. I will always be grateful for that experience.

One of the things that is so important to me is the use of language. I want to be very clear that it is important that we do not use the word "suicide" in this. This is about a human being managing their own life journey. They are looking at a foreseeable death and they want to die in the best way they possibly can.

Could the member talk about the importance of language and making sure that, as we go through this process, we are very respectful of the people who have to make decisions about how they choose to leave?

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, indeed, language is important. Bill C-7, in many ways, has blurred the lines with regard to the most vulnerable in Canada. That explicit language should be and I hope will be eventually added.

I must say to her first point that I do not agree with the characterization of medically assisted death as suicide. I believe it is about determining by a profound, personal and dignified choice the manner of an unavoidable outcome.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I was tremendously moved by the hon. member for Thornhill's speech. The riding I represent is Saanich—Gulf Islands. I would have been, had I lived there then, the member of Parliament for Sue Rodriguez. She lived in North Saanich. Her struggle and her courage made an indelible impact, certainly on my constituents. That is one of the reasons I am so grateful that Parliament is moving forward.

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I just wanted to thank the hon. member for the honesty and personal nature of his comments. I am so glad that he is well and over cancer. Please God it remain so.

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her very caring, kind and gracious words. I look forward to our paths crossing again in the House, in this place, rather than by this imperfect hybrid means.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a previous speech at second reading, I noted how, perhaps 50 years from now or even sooner, we may look back on this era and these debates and ask ourselves how we could have been so foolish. History is filled with examples of ideas that were socially acceptable, celebrated or even considered the most moral option, but these ideas and policies were later shown to callously disregard the rights and dignity of individuals and communities.

As the bill went to the justice committee, I held out hope that parliamentarians would listen to the concerns of the disabled and other vulnerable Canadians who were sounding the alarm on the legislation and its implications for their lives. I hoped that the committee members would consider passing amendments to protect the vulnerable, such as extending reflection periods, which are the amendments that we are debating today, so that people would not feel that they are being rushed into medical assistance in dying.

Despite the overwhelming and compelling evidence, the committee majority really chose to ram through the bill with little consideration. There were only five meetings to hear witnesses, and of those five meetings, the majority were with the proponents of medical assistance in dying and there was very little opportunity, relatively, to hear from those who had concerns about the bill. This amounted to a mere hours of debate on an issue that is literally about the life and death of Canadians.

It is just wrong that the government is trying to ram through this important legislation in an expedited manner without taking time to listen and include the concerns of those communities who are vulnerable. It appears that the Liberals do not really want to listen to criticism or work to improve the bill and that they want to implement their agenda, regardless. In doing so, I believe they are ignoring the voices of disabled people, indigenous people, doctors and many others who have raised concerns.

In dealing with the amendments today, I am very pleased that my Conservative colleagues have strongly put forward these amendments related to the 10-day reflection period. I believe that the defeat of this amendment is removing a very basic safeguard for the protection of the vulnerable. The government claims that this would only apply to those with a reasonably foreseeable death and that there should not be a reflection period. However, we have seen the evidence that people who would not be under the existing legislation, individuals who do not have a reasonably foreseeable death, are receiving medical assistance in dying under the current legislation. The government has not strengthened or clarified the definition of what is reasonably foreseeable. The Liberals are actually planning to remove it as a requirement entirely.

I do not believe that the two streams the Liberals are talking about would apply any protections. The reflection period is essential to give Canadians the opportunity to make a decision and then

revisit that decision after deep reflection. I understand that no decision to pursue MAID is taken lightly, but by accelerating the timeline between the decision and the receipt of MAID, we are removing an opportunity for reconsideration.

I also do not believe that doctors are always in the best position to consider underlying mental health conditions. If someone comes in and seeks medical assistance in dying with this new expedited timeline, doctors may not be equipped to recognize people with mental health challenges. It could be that those struggling with their mental health will receive medical assistance in dying without their family being informed and without an opportunity to offer treatment or an intervention. This is obviously a very real and dangerous possibility. In fact, it has already happened.

According to testimony from Dr. Trudo Lemmens and in a recent article in Maclean's magazine, people have been seeking and granted MAID because they do not want to live with financial difficulties and loneliness. This is wrong. When did poverty get added to the list of justifications for accessing MAID? I have yet to see it in any legislation, but we are seeing it happen here, right in front of our eyes.

We must also consider that the will to live can fluctuate. Put simply, people who need to make a life-and-death decision must have the opportunity to reflect on that decision over a period of time. Dr. Harvey Chochinov, who gave testimony at committee, reported:

Our research group reported that the will to live can be highly fluctuant over intervals as short as 12 to 24 hours. In fact, 40% of patients who were prescribed lethal drugs in Oregon decided not to take [the drugs].

• (1230)

We also know that people facing chronic conditions may be suffering from suicidal ideation, but if they are given some time, they might choose not to follow through with that. It is clear that when it comes to issues of life and death, it is not black and white. The will to live, to continue on and to overcome can change over time.

Expanding further on the definition and enforcement of “reasonably foreseeable death”, the requirement that a death be reasonably foreseeable was one that a broad group of people could support in 2016, but since 2016, we have seen it abused in ways that people could not have imagined. One recent case comes to mind. Nancy Russell, an elderly woman who was struggling with pandemic-induced isolation, underwent MAID recently in order to, reportedly, avoid another lockdown.

I want to take a moment to say that my thoughts are with her family who recently faced this loss. I know it is not an easy situation. Nevertheless, this is a pertinent example of medical assistance in dying being provided when there was no apparent reasonably foreseeable death. Some have argued that old age in itself is a qualifier for reasonably foreseeable death, although that argument was not made when the original legislation was put forward. It was not the understanding of the public at the time we accepted this.

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In this case, however, if COVID-19 had been eradicated and a further lockdown avoided, it is very likely that this woman and maybe several others would not have pursued an assisted death. Therefore, it is clear to me that the reasonably foreseeable requirement has not been respected and is not being enforced or even defined well by the Liberal government.

Let us dive deeper. “Reasonably foreseeable” is not even considered a medical concept. Professor Alain Naud from Laval University stated in his testimony, “The term does not meet any medical concept or definition. It doesn't exist in any medical textbook. Yet it is the responsibility of physicians to assess the eligibility of patients.” The Canadian Bar Association, David E. Roberge, also stated that reasonably foreseeable death has caused “significant uncertainty in practice, and Bill C-7 does not give any guidance on how to apply it.”

Instead of doing the right thing and defining the terminology for the medical community, the government and the committee majority have decided to just remove the safeguard altogether. Clearly, the bill needs further study and clarity, because when it comes to life and death, doctors need a clear set of rules and guidelines, and the bill really fails to provide that.

When I listened to the Minister of Health's committee testimony, she talked about the need to create two streams, one for those with a reasonably foreseeable death and another for those without a reasonably foreseeable death. Since the definition of “reasonably foreseeable” is so ill-defined and subject to abuse, the so-called safeguards for the vulnerable in this case are not worth the paper they are written on. The fact is that there is no desire to intervene to protect the lives of vulnerable people and I firmly believe that once the next parliamentary review is completed, we will see the further removal of any safeguards.

Another point on this feature is that the concerns of the correctional investigator, Dr. Ivan Zinger, were not included in the committee study or in any of the recommendations. Dr. Zinger has raised deep concerns about medical assistance in dying in Canada's prisons and believes that there has been some abuse of process. I agree with his assessment. Prisoners with limited rights being granted medical assistance in dying is a deep, moral and ethical problem, and it is a problem that the committee chose not to deal with. He has even called for a moratorium on MAID in Canada. I did not see his testimony included. His concerns have not been raised or addressed and that is a real failure of the bill.

This brings me to another concern, which is that it seems the government wanted to use the bill as an opportunity to circumvent the will of Parliament. Ironically, it was the will of the last Parliament, when Liberals had a majority government, that we would have a mandated five-year parliamentary review.

The government saw an opportunity with the Truchon decision. Even in the Minister of Justice's own testimony at committee, he said that they saw this as an opportunity to get something done before the five-year review. It kind of undermines the whole point of a review when we need more time. This is a radical departure from where we have been as a country and we need time to experience this and come to a new understanding as a country. We have just

short-circuited that review and are pushing forward with the legislation.

● (1235)

In closing, I am pleased that we have brought these amendments forward. I hope we will give them their full consideration so that we can protect the lives of vulnerable people.

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, there is no conspiracy here. The coronavirus and the court's decision from the province of Quebec are important realities that we have to face.

The member said the government is ramming this legislation through. Need I remind the member that this is a minority government, which cannot ram things through without working with other political parties. Members of the Green Party, the New Democrats and the Bloc are supporting the legislation, from what I understand.

I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts on the idea that the majority's will is of more than one political party. This does not amount to ramming.

● (1240)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, this does not change the facts related to a bill dealing with an issue as important as the life and death of Canadians and changing the Criminal Code, regardless of whether other parties are supporting it or not in a minority Parliament. The fact is that we had only five meetings, the majority of which were with officials and people who have an interest in getting this legislation passed, and had relatively few meetings with people who are raising concerns about the bill. Therefore, yes, it absolutely is being rammed through.

If the government had not prorogued this summer, perhaps we would have had more time to thoughtfully consider this legislation and put forward some real, common-sense amendments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

I think it is important to put this debate back in its context. Indeed, the Supreme Court rejected the previous law saying that it violated certain rights. We have obtained two extensions now to adopt a new draft of the bill. We must comply with the Supreme Court ruling, but we must also have a law that allows people to die with dignity and avoid unnecessary suffering.

Is this not a laudable goal that merits our support?

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[English]

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I think the member is mistaken. The bill was never taken to the Supreme Court of Canada. It has not had an opportunity to weigh in on this because the government chose not to appeal the decision and defend its own legislation, which it had just passed a few years earlier with broad support from many parties in the House of Commons.

Parliament made a statement and passed a law. To allow it to be overturned so fundamentally in a period of just a few short years really just shows the momentum on this. The government is pushing for further removals of safeguards and it is shocking. Of course, we want to do things to stand up for the dignity and autonomy of individuals, but that cannot come at the expense of vulnerable people, the disability community and others who have concerns over this legislation.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's concern about the government's choice not to do a five-year review. That review was supposed to show whether people were following the first rules that were put in place. There are many anecdotal stories about where those rules were not followed, so to further remove the safeguards is quite troubling.

Has the member heard anecdotal stories in his riding where the rules were not followed? They would emphasize the need for this five-year review before we go further.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize my hon. colleague for her great work on fighting for better palliative care access for Canadians. This COVID pandemic has shown us how important it is to ensure that our seniors and those with disabilities who are living in extended care homes are properly treated and properly cared for. We should not have a situation where treatment is so limited that people are choosing medical assistance in dying as an alternative to health care.

I know the five-year review is going to happen, but my concern is that we did not wait. We did not give more time to study this legislation before moving forward with such a fundamental rewrite of our understanding of it.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about a constituent of mine, whom I will call Linda to protect her identity. As members of Parliament, we are constantly dealing with people facing different situations. I have told my staff that the number one priority we have is to help our constituents with whatever they are facing.

Linda called my office and was in distress. She was dying of stage 4 cancer, and it had spread throughout her body. She was in a hospice. She was in distress because when trying to make her daughter, her sole beneficiary, a co-signer on one of her accounts, the bank manager told her that unless she came to the bank, this could not be done. She explained to him that she was unable to walk and unable to get out of bed, as she was in a hospice.

She called my office and was really shaken up. She talked to my staff. I phoned the bank manager and got the same response from him. I was quite surprised and looked for ways to push this forward. I talked to other banks, and they said they would find a way for her to sign. I had conversations with her bank and its head of-

office, but that was not going anywhere fast. I then talked to the government ombudsperson, and finally, after many conversations with me, my staff and Linda, and after a lot of struggle, the bank found a way for her to sign the form.

This was a terrible way for Linda to finish her life, but she did it because she wanted to make a difference and help her family. She also did it for people who face a similar ordeal. She won before she succumbed to cancer.

I am mentioning this because I believe that in smaller and bigger ways, until our very last breath we can make a positive contribution. We can make a difference for our families and be an inspiration to others.

I think of my father, who died a few years ago. He was such an example for us as a family. We were with him before he passed into unconsciousness. In spite of his pain, he was thinking about us. He wanted to know how we were doing. He did not want to talk about himself; he wanted to talk about others. This surprised me, as did the fact that he was able to make a difference.

I do not want to come across as judgmental while talking about assisted suicide, or MAID, because people in my extended family have chosen assisted dying. Before COVID, many would have their families around to say their last goodbyes. However, 16,000 people have now made this decision. There are twice as many people dying through euthanasia than currently die in car accidents. This is skyrocketing.

I talked to a fellow a few days ago, a constituent of mine, who said that he was choosing MAID. That was his plan for down the road. He was very matter of fact and businesslike, and I do not think he was ill. This is becoming normalized in Canadian society, and that is concerning to me.

I know that words make a difference and we do not want to hear the word "suicide", but this has been called "assisted suicide". Suicide has always been seen as sad in our society, and as disturbing and tragic. We probably all know people who have committed suicide. I think of my own mother and think of others. It is about grieving.

• (1245)

I am concerned about the direction we are going, as this has increasingly become a benevolent action. It is seen that way. People do not want to be a burden on others. There are other reasons also.

In 1973, shortly after I became a teenager, a movie came out called *Soylent Green*. The main actors were Charlton Heston and Leigh Taylor-Young. It was a futuristic movie set 50 years later in New York City, or 2022, which is almost upon us.

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In the movie, New York City was overpopulated, with 40 million people. They were going hungry. Aging people would come into a big room with beautiful images of the earth on screens, and there was lovely music. After about 20 minutes, they would be euthanized. I remember, as a teenager, being shocked. I felt that what was happening was deceptive. The way it dealt with overpopulation was glamorized, and it just goes to show how society has changed over the years.

Let us consider the term “MAID”. It is a personification of a female servant, someone there to help and assist who is harmless. I can think of other images for assistance in dying that are much darker.

I know the bill says it would not apply to people who are struggling with mental illness, but for how long? Euthanasia advocates keep pushing the courts further and further, which we are looking at right now, to undermine and change the criteria and expand it. The bill would repeal the provision that would require a person's natural death to be reasonably foreseeable in order for them to be eligible for medical assistance in dying. This opens the door wide for future challenges to any criteria. Furthermore, the bill would remove the 10-day waiting period.

I met with Angela, who is one of my constituents. She belongs to a group of about 300 families who support each other in British Columbia. They have children with disabilities. This group is upset about the bill and the assisted suicide door it would open for people with disabilities. They feel a statement is being made in this legislation: that disabled people do not have a life worth living like other normal people.

It is simply a matter of time before mental anguish becomes a sufficient reason. Why would the barriers and timelines be reduced and reduced and then removed? We are seeing that happening right now. How many people with a mental illness have gone through great mental anguish and depression that has led to them choosing suicide?

I think of a Filipino nanny who, years ago, was absolutely distraught because she had a fender-bender with her boss's vehicle. She was a wonderful person. What did she do? She committed suicide. While I am not concerned about things going in this direction, I am very concerned with the direction the bill is going.

I think of myself and challenges I had years ago, in my early twenties. I faced a very dark and painful period, with suicidal thoughts. Suicide almost seemed very appealing in some ways. I never attempted it, but I understood it. I came through that time with the help of doctors, my faith and the woman who later became my wife, Marlene.

I feel that as a society, we should come around and bring about those supports. It is essential. We need to look at this and other ways to support people who are going through these challenges and to give them strength.

● (1250)

I have not had the opportunity here to talk about palliative care. I will, maybe, in the questions.

I will allow the members here to ask a few questions.

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the very personal comments of my friend across the way. Statistically, with roughly 7,000 Canadians having chosen assisted dying, I am wondering whether the member is completely against the notion.

Does he see some value in continuing to try to perfect the legislation?

● (1255)

Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Speaker, the figures, I believe, up to the end of September are 16,000 having chosen assisted suicide. Right now it is legislation that has gone through the Supreme Court. I am disturbed that the Liberal government chose not to appeal the decision of the lower court to bring more amendments and changes. I think that is very important.

I mentioned the second part of the story about Linda that really spoke to me was her clarity of thought. I asked her very briefly what her level of pain was, and she said she had no pain. She had clear thinking and she had energy, but she was dying and could not move. She said that in palliative care one can deal with total pain and mental anguish. That is where our focus needs to be, and it is not available to most Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his very personal speech.

I think we agree that we need to improve the care and inclusion of people with disabilities. Personally, I think that this very important option has not been given enough consideration.

On the other hand, in the case of a person with a disability who has all his or her faculties, who suffers from intense pain and whose life expectancy has been shortened but whose date of death is unforeseeable, the bill provides for a 90-day period during which the person could receive the necessary care we are talking about, namely, mental health support. This period would allow us to make sure that the person's desire to die is not the result of suicidal ideation. What does my colleague think about this 90-day period?

Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question.

I sincerely believe that a 90-day period is insufficient, because there is often a long wait time before a patient can see a counsellor and obtain the necessary support.

Also, I think that our society should send the message that we are there regardless of the situation. Whether or not a person has disabilities, that person can contribute significantly to our society and our country.

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[English]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his passionate speech but also for sharing vulnerabilities of his past life experience. We cannot forget these are real people we are talking about.

In my past line of work I had the opportunity, and was blessed, to work with palliative care patients in a hospital setting. I realized and experienced how healing, with reconciliation among broken families, that process can be, even though it is very sad.

I am wondering if the member could elaborate a bit on palliative care, and the importance of that and hospice care.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize those who are in the medical profession and volunteers in palliative care and in hospices. They make such a difference in the lives and the families of the others. That is something that I feel needs to be there. It concerns me that MAID is in the Canada Health Act, which guarantees public funding and access for all, yet palliative care is not available. It is only available to about a third of the population of Canada.

That is very disturbing. I talked with a doctor who said that they can control, totally, the level of pain and even the mental anguish. If patients are anxious, anxiety can be totally under control. I think people need to do that. I think a lot of people are afraid of the pain and the suffering that goes with that. It can be totally under control under palliative care.

• (1300)

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I have the privilege of speaking to Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying).

This bill represents a substantial change. Given the limited time, the fact we are in a minority Parliament and the fact that we are going to have a fulsome review of this bill, I would have expected a more targeted approach that directly addressed the Truchon decision so that we could get this passed quickly and move forward with legislation reflecting the Truchon decision.

The government has taken a very different approach. For all MAID patients, the government's legislation has made two major changes. One is in accordance with the Truchon decision: The reasonable foreseeability of a natural death test has been removed. Because of that, there has also been a global inclusion of a protection for individuals with mental health issues. It is a very limited exclusion, I might add.

When we look at what changes have been made for where death is not reasonably foreseeable, we are on two tracks: one where death is reasonably foreseeable and another where it is not.

Where death is not reasonably foreseeable, a couple of additional precautions and safeguards have been put in. First, one of two practitioners must have knowledge of the underlying ailment. One might say that would be a good safeguard for all those who want MAID, or medical assistance in dying.

The second is a minimum 90-day waiting period. I have heard much discussion on, and have had my own experience with, this. I

know many members across the way and on our side have experience with medical practitioners. These individuals are in demand. Often, these resources and supports are difficult to get. Getting this type of support to rally around people who may be contemplating MAID and who, in time, may decide not to opt for it, will be challenging, there is no doubt. In fact, I wonder aloud whether this might eventually be a reason the Supreme Court may strike this law down.

Where death is reasonably foreseeable, it is inexplicable why the government has included these various reductions in safeguards. They may very well be worthwhile amendments. They might be great ideas. However, now is not the time. We are due for a fulsome review of the complete legislation.

The Liberals have removed the two witnesses and made it one witness. They removed the 10-day period. Practitioners now can provide MAID on the basis of prior consent. No longer is final consent required. When someone is making the most important decision of their life, literally a life or death situation, that person's consent is no longer required. We may be able to debate this, and that is what the House is for. I would call upon all members to have a fulsome debate. Let us encourage these discussions and have a full parliamentary review.

Let us dig a bit deeper and go through what this legislation is for those who are contemplating MAID, but for whom death is not reasonably foreseeable. The legislation says eligible individuals must have a grievous and irremediable medical condition. That is defined as a serious, incurable disease or disability, in an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability, and having physical or physiological suffering that is intolerable to them and that cannot be relieved under conditions that they consider acceptable.

To paraphrase, eligibility requires an individual to have a progressive ailment in which they are suffering pain, either mental or physical. Please remember, and this is absolutely critical, there are areas in this legislation where someone can access MAID based on mental suffering alone. I will elaborate on that.

Before I go any further, I want to remind all members about something. I know we have a sense of this with the many great women and men in this chamber. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "The true measure of any society," and any legislation, I might add, "can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members."

As a parliamentarian and as a human being, I take these words very seriously. It is our shared and sacrosanct responsibility to the most vulnerable in our community to make sure that we are always there. To those who are struggling in our community, we have a commitment, above all else, to bring them back to the light.

Frank Stephens, author and disabilities advocate, said that people with disabilities' lives are worth living. I repeat: People with disabilities' lives are worth living.

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● (1305)

Anything that takes us away from that, we should seriously consider and not ram through legislation. Bill C-7 purports to protect individuals with mental illness, as it does not include mental illness in the definition of serious, incurable disease or suffering. The effect of this provision is to prevent people who are battling mental illness, and who may be in a horrible yet temporary situation, from accessing MAID so that we bridge them to another day. I think most Canadians would agree with that.

The challenge with the legislation is that if an individual has a pre-existing condition or a disability, they are not afforded this same protection. To be clear, if someone has a disability and is suffering through mental illness, they will have access to MAID. If they do not have a disability, they will not have access. That, by its very definition, is discrimination.

This sends a dangerous signal to persons with disabilities that their lives are not worth as much as others. That is not something that I can stand by. I would like to say to all those persons with disabilities out there right now that their lives are worth living, and I will fight for them.

I will move to the next part of the legislation, regarding folks with a reasonable expectation of death. For those individuals, for whatever reason, even though not relevant to the Truchon decision, a series of safeguards was taken off the table, one of which is the 10-day waiting period. This 10-day waiting period gives people the ability to reflect, to make sure that MAID is the correct choice. I cannot say strongly enough that MAID is permanent. This is a life or death decision. I do not think waiting an additional 10 days is overly burdensome, especially when, in circumstances where a person is suffering, it can be waived. In many cases, in the application of MAID, it actually is.

Another significant application safeguard that has been removed is the requirement of final consent. The removal of final consent is in direct contravention to the Carter decision, which requires clear consent to MAID. Removing this consent creates uncertainty. Once again, a safeguard that has absolutely nothing to do with the Truchon decision has been removed. This is a significant change in the law that should have been included in a more fulsome review.

To be fair, the legislation does allow an individual to void MAID on the day of their procedure; however, their consent is not required, which changes the entire onus of the decision. Instead of the doctor having to approach the individual, the individual has to seek out and give consent. As many have had the experience, myself included, when someone is in a difficult situation, it can be difficult for them. For example, does this mean goodbye, everyone, or does this mean stop? The way this legislation is framed, we are putting people and physicians in very difficult situations.

There is also a legal issue. Not to get too far in the weeds here, but we are putting one of the most important decisions on people who are incapacitated. It is trite law that one has to have capacity in order to make decisions. In this law, we are actually giving people who are knowingly incapacitated the ability to make the most important decision of their life: literally life or death. This is against all law and does not really make a ton of sense.

Overall, we need to look at the framework. My learned colleague talked about this as well. When we look at making decisions, these are not made in a vacuum. These are made with respect to the entire approach. We need to look at the medical system: a medical system that now, because of COVID-19, is even more strained. How are we going to get these resources?

In my riding of Northumberland—Peterborough South, I know the resources are strained when it comes to palliative care. We are not giving people the full right to decide if we are not giving them access to palliative care. We need to make sure that people do not just have the right to die with dignity, but the ability to live with dignity.

● (1310)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South for his past contributions at the justice committee.

By way of clarification, I would offer that some of the safeguards have been improved in the legislation with respect to track two, in particular, for those whose death is not reasonably foreseeable.

The necessity of moving forward quickly now is prompted solely by the need to respond to the Truchon decision and the court-imposed deadline.

A lot of discussion has taken place today, at committee and on Friday with respect to persons with disabilities and how we would ensure their rights are protected. I want to remind members of the House that in the Truchon decision, Mr. Truchon and Madam Gladu were persons with disabilities. When dealing with this issue of discrimination, the court said that if it denied the ability to make decisions about one's body, including the timing of one's passing, then it was actually denying the autonomy and competence of those persons who were disabled. Therefore, the old status quo was violating the charter rights of those individuals.

I wonder if the member opposite would want to comment on that finding in the Truchon case.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, the member's arguments are always extremely well thought out and all of his debates are extremely respectful.

Right now the bill discriminates. If people with disabilities are dealing with mental health issues, such as depression, they will have access to MAID whereas people without disabilities will not have access. That is discrimination and it is wrong. I will always stand up to fight for the most vulnerable, including persons with disabilities.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite a further response to some of the comments made by the parliamentary secretary.

We know that a small part of this bill responds to the lower court Truchon decision, but many parts do not in any way respond to that. The government has created an artificial time crunch by proposing to lump together all sorts of other complex aspects of this legal regime into a bill that is also responding to the Truchon decision. If the government were serious about meeting these timelines, first, it would not have prorogued Parliament; and, second, it would have separated out the parts of the bill that deal with the Truchon decision and then all of these other issues.

We are debating report stage amendments, all of which are totally compatible with the past findings of all levels of courts. No court has raised issues with the 10-day reflection period, which can already be waived. No court has raised concerns about the possibility of the 120-day period proposed in this amendment.

I think the member might agree that it is a bit sleight of hand for the government to use a court decision on the one hand, but then go in a completely different direction from that decision with many other aspects of the legislation.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, Parliament's very existence is to have important discussions and respectful debates like this. Therefore, we should be looking to get the expertise of a full review instead of trying to ram through things that were not part of the Truchon decision. Members of Parliament who are doctors and members of Parliament who are married to doctors have a lot of great connections with physicians across the country. We should be bringing that in for a fulsome discussion. We cannot talk about this too much.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my province we would see road signs saying "Speed kills". This bill picks up the speed on this thing, and that kills. We need proper restrictions, restraints and controls. In the absence of a review, the bill goes too far.

Would the member like to comment a little further on that?

• (1315)

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is a life-or-death measure. We are making important decisions, so a little more discussion to ensure we get this right is well merited. If the government wants to focus on speed, let us get the vaccines out today.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to take part in this debate. I listened carefully to the speeches and I am very thankful for my colleagues who have had a lot to say on the necessary protections for people with disabilities. I will follow suit.

Before I do that, I want to take the opportunity to wish my mother a happy 74th birthday. I can think of no person more worthy of recognition for her love and concern for the most vulnerable in our country. She has dedicated her life to making people's lives better at times when they need it. Therefore, I wish my mom a happy birthday, and I love her.

I will start with a quote from the executive vice-president of Inclusion Canada, Krista Carr. It captures the conversation around disabilities perfectly. At committee, she said:

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The lives of people with disabilities are as necessary to the integrity of the human family as any other dimension of humanity, and this threat to the lives of people with disabilities is a threat to us all.

I am very concerned. When I think back to times I have heard Liberal ministers speak, particularly the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, who I have a lot of time for, we have heard a lot of talk about a disability lens. In fact, during the election campaign back in October of 2019, an article ran on CTV under the headline, "Liberals vow to implement disability lens for all government policies if re-elected." The minister was quoted as saying that this was the next step to systemically entrench disability inclusion into the way the government did business and into the way the government made decisions.

It is intensely surprising and frustrating in the face of virtual unanimity from the disability community that the legislation gets it wrong, with 72 disability organizations, including every one of the national disability organizations, writing a letter to the government and saying as much, that the legislation needed to be rethought. It is particularly troubling because there was no need to get here. This was a driven by decision by the court of one province. It could have been appealed to the Supreme Court to get further guidance and clarity. Of course, there was a five-year review plan in the previous MAID legislation that would have been a practical and thoughtful way to move forward.

We have had the opportunity over the last several months to strike that committee. It could have been doing its work over time. Unfortunately, Parliament was shuttered for the better part of six months, with the odd sitting to pass extensions and other things that needed to keep going. For the most part, we were not sitting as a Parliament. For six weeks everything was shut down because the government wanted to avoid scrutiny on the WE scandal. We did not have to be here. That time would have been valuable to call experts in a meaningful way and have them weigh on this.

I had the opportunity to fill in at one of the committee meetings. It was, quite frankly, a complete gong show as we raced to hear hurried testimony from people who were experts in the field, weighing in on both sides of the equation. In the end, what was supposed to be a five-minute spot to ask meaningful questions to witnesses was shrunk down to two minutes. Then debate happened to try to get some of that time back. Quite honestly, it was hurried and rushed.

I think back in history to a quote by someone who I have a lot of time for, someone who has a lot of wise quotes, John Wooden, one of the most successful coaches in sports history. He once said, "If you don't have time to do it right, when will you have time to do it over?"

We find ourselves in this situation right now. We certainly have not taken the time to do this right and we will have to do some of this over at some point in time. In the meantime, there are likely to be very troubling ramifications for those Canadians living with disabilities.

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• (1320)

I talked about the community and all the different things the communities had to say.

I looked at recent headlines: iPolitics, “Equating assisted suicide with an equality right is a moral affront”, by Krista Carr; Michael Bach, Neil Belanger and Catherine Frazee, on November 23, in a Hill Times article titled, “Canada doesn’t need a shortcut to medically assisted dying for people with disabling conditions”; Gabrielle Peters wrote in Macleans, “Dying for the right to live”; and Trudo Lemmens and Leah Krakowitz-Broker, wrote in CBC under the headline, “Why the federal government should rethink its new medical assistance in dying law”.

I will focus particularly on the last one because from start to end, this piece gets it right. The authors start in the first paragraph, saying:

To meet the twice-renewed deadline imposed by the Quebec Superior Court in the Truchon case, the federal government is trying to push its new medical assistance in dying...bill through Parliament before year's end. Parliament should reject the key premise of this new legislation, and ask government to go back to the drawing board and start again.

It is not too late for that. Hopefully, if members of the government do not get this right in our vote coming up, hopefully, at least the Senate gets it right in its review.

Talking about people with disabilities, the authors go on to say:

[T]he bill makes their dying easier than living. Rather than instilling hope and helping to build resilience by focusing on options for living, health care providers will now be asked to discuss an early death...

[I]t seems unconscionable for governments to prioritize state-financed MAID, rather than putting resources into ensuring access to proper care and offering people a reasonable quality of life. In fact, expanding MAID is giving our health care system an all-too-easy way out.

These are very troubling words from the disability community, from experts across the country and across the range of disabilities, yet, being completely ignored by a government whose members have previously said that they would view everything through a disability lens.

I spend good part of my life, as many people know, speaking to university classes and folks around the world, at teachers conventions or whatever it might be, telling the story of my son Jaden who is 25 years old. He has autism; he is non-verbal. One of the things that we talk about all the time is the need to unlock potential, the skills and abilities that come with autism as opposed to just the challenges.

I would note that one of the most commonly used words at committee by the ministers was the word “suffering”. They talked about suffering, ending suffering, having a mechanism and the number of people suffering. Sometimes when people are talking about people with disabilities, especially people who do not have a disability themselves and maybe do not have the life experience of living with somebody who has disability, the tendency is to think of them suffering.

In fact, when we were debating the Canadian autism partnership project or the idea of a national autism strategy, in response to a question in question period, the Prime Minister referenced new tools and treatments for those suffering from autism. This mindset

is problematic. When one equates a mindset that thinks of people with disabilities automatically as suffering as opposed to people who have skills and abilities that we need to invest in, that they can contribute to making life better for all of us, we are on a dangerous path when we combine it with the legislation we are dealing with now and that thinking of people with disabilities.

• (1325)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the occasion to travel overseas with the member and I respect immensely his advocacy on behalf of autism, in particular, and on behalf of his son.

I do not think some of the things that were outlined in his comments are mutually exclusive. We can have supports for palliative care such as the \$6 billion we put into home care. We can have supports for persons with disabilities such as the accessibility for Canadians with disabilities act that was legislated in the last Parliament.

The member talked about the Senate review and we know there is a difference of views among persons with disabilities about the approach being presented in this legislation. The person who is sponsoring Bill C-7 in the Senate is a person with disabilities, Senator Chantal Petitclerc. I am interested in the member's views on how we get a point where we are ensuring to provide supports to persons with disabilities, grant them all of these supports and services that they correctly require, but also ensure that they have the ability to make decisions that are currently available to the rest of Canadian society, including able-bodied individuals—

The Deputy Speaker: We will have to leave it there.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, for clarity there is not just disagreement from disability organizations, they are absolutely vehemently opposed to this legislation moving forward. If we want to understand and get policy right in support of people with disabilities, we have to hear them and listen to them. We have to consult them and that absolutely did not happen in this process. I have no idea why that was the case. The government has talked a great game about hearing from people with disabilities and making sure we have a disability lens, but in this case that absolutely did not happen.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening attentively to this debate, which is understandably emotional, since this morning. There have been very moving testimonials.

I am listening to my friends the Conservatives talk about cancelling the bill or not submitting it for a vote now. I would like to ask my hon. colleague a simple question.

If there were someone here this morning who was waiting for this bill to be adopted in order to start an obviously difficult process, someone who was waiting for a sign from the government before taking action, what would my hon. colleague tell that person?

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, I would say that this is a very complicated issue, that there are strong opinions on all sides of this issue, and that unfortunately the government took an approach that did not consider all of those sides and all of those viewpoints. As important as it is to move forward for some people, it is equally important or maybe more important not to move forward with something that has the immense potential to have people end their lives when it would be a great tragedy if they did at this point. In recognizing the importance of this, surely as a Parliament we could move forward both expeditiously but also in a way that respects view from all sides including—

• (1330)

The Deputy Speaker: I have time for a very short question and response.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I am hearing throughout this debate is that there is danger and that a lot of mindsets are involved. My concern is more about the timing of the debate. With coronavirus and with social isolation, a lot of people are struggling with mental health issues and there are elders in care homes who are contemplating suicide and choosing MAID as an option because they are sick and tired of quarantine and they do not know how to handle it.

What are the member's thoughts on the danger of the timing of the bill?

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, for the reasons I brought up, the bill has some very significant flaws as it relates to people with disabilities. We are in a time during COVID right now where every one of those situations, every difficult circumstance is heightened and there is all the more reason to tread cautiously as we go forward. I really hope that, when the bill gets to the Senate, senators will treat their independence and their sober second thought very seriously and make sure that they get their approach right and make sure that the most vulnerable people in our society are listened to.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise and speak today for those who cannot, people who have been marginalized and whose voices have been silenced and cast aside by the governing class. They are those who would be victimized by Bill C-7. I would like to talk about the calls and the meetings I have had with constituents and with concerned Canadians about this, but first I have a personal story to share.

Last week the nursing home in Arnprior completed its professional and compassionate care for an elderly family member of mine, who has been in its care for the past few years. Audrey gradually declined into dementia and experienced extreme fear and anxiety over the last few years, yet in the final months of her life, knowing that death could come to her at any time, the staff, that is the doctors, the nurses and the personal support workers, continued to value her with the respect that every person deserves. They provided her with wonderful palliative care, and ensured her comfort in making sure that all her physical needs were met. They acknowledged her spiritual life and ensured she had access to the presence

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of her family and prayerful support of clergy as well. Last week, after 96 years, Audrey peacefully passed to eternal life.

This is the kind of care that recognizes the intrinsic beauty, value and dignity of the human person. It is the kind of care that should be the standard for every Canadian. Bill C-7 seeks to remove necessary safeguards that are meant to protect the vulnerable from euthanasia and expands access to euthanasia for those for whom death is not reasonably foreseeable. This bill is dangerous, and it will lead to countless early and tragic deaths.

As I mentioned, I have received calls from and met with concerned Canadians, including members of my community, and specifically members of the disabled community. They have been pleading for changes to be made that will protect them when they are at their most vulnerable. We need to ensure that human dignity is the foundational block on which we make all decisions in this place, and that the inherent value that each and every one of us has, regardless of disability or diagnosis, is enshrined, protected and preserved. It is an inherent and inalienable value that we have because of our nature.

So often, today, it seems as though the concept of human nature is lost, but, regardless of that, the fact remains that true dignity cannot be understood without the presupposition that people, by our very being, are bearers of value that must continuously be rediscovered and reaffirmed, not degraded, invented or imposed in an arbitrary and subjective manner.

We have heard testimony from people, especially the disabled community, who are fearful for what this bill would mean for them in the future, that it would both directly and indirectly lessen their inherent human dignity and human value. We have the chance to rediscover and reaffirm that value that is present in every one of us. We have the chance to look at the preferential option for the vulnerable among us and especially those who are vulnerable to this legislation. Of course, that option is to reaffirm the dignity of the human person.

• (1335)

So often in the past we have seen the outcomes of states and lawmakers who cast the dignity and value of the human person to the wayside, and the outcomes have not been very good. That is why this foundational block is so important. If we are to live and work in a truly right and just society, reaffirming human dignity must always be at the forefront of our mind as we make decisions, especially as parliamentarians dealing with bills like this one, where there are no higher stakes.

This brings me to the societal consensus used for the rationale of this bill. I find it hard to believe as a society we would come to a consensus that a bill was needed that has the potential to victimize the most vulnerable among us. Perhaps it is negating a foundation of essential value inherent in human life, which can make laws dependent on fleeting trends of dominant thought where we can see law being used as an instrument of power rather than subordinating power to the law. Again, the vulnerable must be front of mind.

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With this bill, death would be offered to people before they are offered or receive meaningful access to adequate care. When someone is at an extremely low point, imagine after a catastrophic injury that left them disabled, they would be offered death as a standard of care and not given the support and treatment they need to lift themselves up from that low point to feel good again.

During the previous Parliament, I was pleased to speak to the Accessible Canada Act. It is a life-affirming bill for which the dignity of the human person and preferable option for the vulnerable was at its very heart.

Now we have Bill C-7, which is an absolute departure from that notion. Instead of reaffirming the worth and inherent value of disabled people, this bill says they are worth less than the able-bodied and that their life for what it is and what it could be is not worth living.

We must stand up for and defend the vulnerable when we are in this place. We must be their voice when they are ignored and set aside. We must assure that someone's worst day is not their last. For all those who wanted to share their perspective, who wanted their voice heard but who were not able and not heard by the government, there were parliamentarians listening. For those who have practised and offered palliative care, like was done for Audrey up until the day she passed, I thank them. The work they do for people when they are at their most vulnerable is so important to ensure we, as a society, respect the value of people's lives until their natural death.

The government has made a habit of hastily putting legislation before this House. We have a court-imposed deadline we know it is seeking to meet, but this bill goes much further than just satisfying what has been asked of it by the courts and does so needlessly. It is not too late for the government to walk back from this dangerous and harmful bill.

● (1340)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will offer a clarification and then pose a question.

The clarification is that I do not think it is accurate to construe this as an offer to provide MAID. In track two a written request is made, then a 90-day assessment period takes place. During the course of that 90-day assessment, information about both palliative care and counselling needs to be provided, and it needs to be considered before MAID is actually delivered.

The point I want to make is a point that was made repeatedly by the courts, and it is about listening to persons with disabilities. The theme of the remarks are clear. The people who were listened to in the court were two people with disabilities, Mr. Truchon and Ms. Gladu.

Also, another vocal proponent for persons with disabilities Mr. Steven Fletcher, a former federal Conservative cabinet minister, said that it is condescending to not provide people with disabilities the same right under the same rules as everyone else to decide when their suffering has become intolerable. He said that there is a huge range of disabling conditions and no one, including disability rights groups, can decide for someone else what is tolerable.

I wonder if the member opposite would comment on the different perspectives amongst persons with disabilities on how we fulfill the duty to provide them with autonomy and the ability to give consent.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary raised the issue of offering MAID. In that initial period, access to palliative care is limited or not offered to many.

We have heard that the government has made investments in palliative care, but they are not enough. Before there is an established infrastructure and a law that puts death as the first offer and option, we should invest and enshrine supports for care, compassion and life. Palliative care should be the very first option for those facing death.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, who also made a very personal and moving speech.

The hon. member who spoke earlier said that medical assistance in dying was out of the question. We all acknowledge and respect the value of life, which is extremely important. We must also, in my opinion, respect freedom of choice and conscience, which is extremely personal. People can choose palliative care, which needs to be enhanced and made more accessible. We all agree on that. However, one does not preclude the other. Both of these choices should be accessible.

If palliative care were as accessible as it should be, would it not be fair to offer the choice of medical assistance in dying as well?

● (1345)

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, the government had an obligation to review their initial medical assistance in dying legislation, but tells us that COVID-19 is the reason those reviews were not completed prior to passing this legislation.

However, instead of challenging the decision of the court, and instead of only acting as far as the court had suggested, the government has gone much further, and has done so without properly consulting with Canadians and stakeholder groups. It is an inadequate consultation. We have not heard the heart of Canadians on this issue.

Why rush to pass this flawed legislation when it truly is a matter of life and death? We do many things in this place quickly, but we can certainly agree that this step too far is not one that needs to be done in such a hasty way.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that this is a very personal issue for many of us in the House. When this was first brought up in the previous Parliament, I held numerous open houses throughout my riding. Hundreds of people attended each one of those sessions, which is more than I have had at any town hall or open house in my riding on any other issue.

I will admit that the feedback I had from constituents at that time was split almost fifty-fifty. There were those who were opposed to doctor-assisted dying legislation and those who were in favour, but even those who were in favour of it expressed concerns at that time. They wanted to ensure there were strong safeguards in place that would protect the most vulnerable in our society from accessing doctor-assisted dying.

I voted against the legislation in the previous Parliament because I was very concerned that the safeguards that were in place in the previous legislation were not strong enough, but I was also concerned that it was open to interpretation by the justice system.

Unfortunately, my concerns have proven to be true as the Quebec court has now deemed we must remove one of the most important pillars of the safeguards that were in the previous legislation, which is that death is foreseeable and predictable. To remove that safeguard is dangerous and opening this legislation much wider than any of us as parliamentarians anticipated in the previous Parliament.

I know the Liberals are going to say that we need to trust the system as protections are going to be in place and some of things I am saying are going to happen will not going to happen. They said that in the previous Parliament, and those things did happen. The things that we voiced in our debates and discussions at committee did happen.

We know that people accessed doctor-assisted dying who did not have terminal illnesses and whose deaths were not foreseeable and imminent. Already those interpretations the Conservatives previously wanted to be ironclad proved to be as ironclad as a sieve. This just further opens the door to those concerns.

My colleague before me brought up the Accessible Canada Act. For disabled communities in this country, the key to this is trust and lack thereof. In the previous Parliament, the Liberals rammed through the Accessible Canada Act in 24 hours.

I chaired the committee meeting when the opposition, including the Conservatives, NDP, Bloc and even the leader of the Green Party at that time, unanimously agreed on dozens of amendments to improve that legislation. The Liberals refused to endorse any of them, except two. This was when every disability association and stakeholder in the country was unanimously supporting those amendments on the Accessible Canada Act to improve the legislation because it was too bureaucratic, cumbersome and confusing.

Already those in the disability community were looking at the Liberal government with an extreme level of mistrust. Now the government has brought forward Bill C-7 and, again, they are all voicing concerns. They want amendments to this legislation. They want strong safeguards to protect the most vulnerable and, once

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again, the Liberals refuse to listen or act. They are going on their own agenda.

I am sure members have heard many stories today, but this morning I had a call from one of my constituents. Her name is Orvella Small and her daughter Sheena Small owns Sheena's Sweets and Such in High River. It's a great, cool little candy store.

Sheena is an adult with a disability. She is very well known in the community, and very outspoken and energetic. Her mom phoned me this morning and said the direction this is going is beyond frightening. Sheena does not understand, despite her outgoing personality. Orvella said that with her disability, Sheena does not understand the impact MAID legislation could have on her or the disabled community.

Right now, Sheena is a successful entrepreneur in my community. She is an award-winning entrepreneur, but she also has a very important support system around her. Her mother, Orvella, said that she is not going to be here forever. She wants to know how she could trust that whoever takes care of Sheena after she is gone will have the same love for and dedication to her that she does. She asked how she could know that some day someone is not going to decide that Sheena's life is not worth living. Sheena is not going to understand that she may be pressured into accessing doctor-assisted dying.

• (1350)

Can members imagine the feeling of a mother who now has to worry about the future of her daughter when she is no longer here to protect her? She does not trust that her daughter understands the implications of doctor-assisted dying. Her words to me this morning were that she could not believe the direction that this is going. She is beyond words that the Liberal government is not listening to the disabled community to improve this legislation.

I had another call on the weekend from Rob Olive, an RCMP officer in Fort Macleod, which is a small town in the southern part of my riding. He has a 10-year-old son, Alex, who has AT, which is a very rare genetic disease. He and his wife, Crystal, spend much of their time sacrificing everything they can for Alex.

They have what they call Alex's Army, and it raises funds and awareness for this very rare disease, which takes the life of children by the time they are in their mid-twenties from either cancer, pneumonia or some other reason. There is no cure. This disease is relentless and it is fatal.

Rob and Crystal's concern is that, 10 years ago, they would have felt that there was no hope for children with AT. However, just recently, there has been a major breakthrough in treatment for AT in genetic therapy, so there is hope. Perhaps not for Alex, and they understand that, but there is hope for children with AT in the future.

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Rob and Crystal cannot believe that instead of putting resources into support and treatment, our focus right now, in the middle of COVID, is how to make death easier. What message does that send to those in the disabled community like Alex? Alex's Army is an invaluable part of our community, raising awareness and funds not only in my riding but also across Canada, and I know it has travelled around the world.

When I talked to Rob on the weekend he, an RCMP officer, wondered why the Liberal government did not challenge the Quebec court decision. Why did it not appeal it? Why did the government not stand up for the disabled community and the most vulnerable in our country to say that this was a line it would not cross?

Not only did the government not appeal the decision, but it also used it as an opportunity to continue to peel back those safeguards. It was bad enough to lose that pillar in the legislation about foreseeable and imminent death, but to now take the opportunity to make it even broader and expand it is sending a very frightening message to Canadians. Certainly those in the disabled community feel that they have been ignored. Not only do they feel ignored, but they feel that the statement from the government is that their lives are less valuable than everyone else's.

Again, I know that the Liberals are going to be saying throughout today that what they are saying is not like that and some of these things are not going to happen, but I know all of us have seen the reports of seniors who do not want to go back into a lockdown and be isolated are now asking for access to MAID. There are very similar concerns within the disabled community.

Many of those disabled youth and adults live in specific housing and are no longer able to access their support systems or their loved ones and their families. It is only a matter of time until disabled people feel that they cannot take that isolation, or that they do not want to put the burden on their family and loved ones, who are doing everything they can to see them. It is only a matter of time until they start asking for access to MAID, and not for any physical ailment whatsoever, but because of their mental health and the emotional stress they are under.

The legislation before us was never meant for death to be put as an emotional decision. It was intended to be based on a physical medical issue when death was imminent and foreseeable. We are so far from what it initially was.

We must ensure that the language in MAID is ironclad to ensure the protection and safety of our most vulnerable. The bill is far from achieving that and, in fact, it is telling Canadians, especially the disabled, that to die is easier than living.

• (1355)

Rather than focusing on making death easier, why are we not focusing on help and healing? We should be putting our efforts and resources into supports like palliative care and mental health treatment and into ensuring that we have vaccines and rapid testing for COVID.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just point out that what has happened since the previous legislation was passed is that the average age of people who access MAID is

75 years old. MAID is being accessed by 2% of the Canadian population, which is right in the middle of all jurisdictions around the world that also allow MAID. Most importantly, there is no evidence of medical practitioners being prosecuted or disciplined for having coerced or encouraged this type of behaviour.

The member raised the spectre of a mother passing and wondering what will happen to her disabled daughter and whether she would be forced into MAID by a different person. That actually betrays what the legislation says, which is that if somebody is in track two, they must make a written request to start a process of evaluation that takes no less than 90 days.

Could the member comment on that safeguard and whether that is doing the work to protect the importance of making sure these decisions are made independently and after due consideration?

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I am really happy the parliamentary secretary brought up that issue. Unlike every other country in the world that has doctor-assisted dying legislation, the MAID legislation, as it currently stands in Bill C-7, does not explicitly ask that the person asking for doctor-assisted dying access those mental health and health support systems within that 90 days. They do not have to do anything within that 90 days.

How about having an amendment that explicitly requires them to access every available health resource to ensure this is exactly the path they want to go down? In many cases, people cannot access those services within that 90-day time period. That is why we ask for that to be extended to 120 days.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are two types of people.

There are people who, based on their values, decide to no longer endure severe suffering and choose medical assistance in dying. The bill proposes to eliminate the requirement to provide final consent in the case of death that is reasonably foreseeable, which responds to the wishes of those who do not want to use palliative care and do not want to lose the possibility of providing that final consent if they receive too many sedatives.

There are also people who, based on their values, sometimes religious, absolutely want to live until the bitter end. It seems to me that my colleague is trying to impose the choice that those people would make on everyone else.

The legislation excludes medical assistance in dying in cases of mental illness. In the absence of a mental illness, we want people who choose not to endure severe suffering to have the possibility of exercising that choice. I want to know what my colleague thinks of that.

[English]

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I certainly understand my colleague's question, but my job here is to speak on behalf of my constituents. My constituents have been very clear that they do not support the direction that Bill C-7 is taking doctor-assisted dying in Canada. I know he brought up the fact that it is not accessible to people with mental health issues. We started, at the beginning of the last Parliament, with its not being accessible to the disabled and not being accessible for this and this. That has now changed. The Liberal justice minister has also hinted that it could be available to people with mental health issues.

Absolutely, I am doing everything I possibly can as a parliamentarian to speak to my constituents, strengthen the legislation and ensure there are safeguards in place to protect the most vulnerable in our society, disabled Canadians and those with mental health issues.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

FOOD SECURITY

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of this pandemic our government has been committed to supporting Canadians with emergency funding for businesses and families.

In Kitchener—Conestoga, Food4Kids Waterloo Region received funding through the emergency fund to improve Canadian food security. Food4Kids provides meals for children from food-insecure households on weekends and gaps in the school year when they would not otherwise receive food support from great programs like nutrition for learning.

I will mention the example of a single father with three children who came to Food4Kids in need of assistance. Through its support, it helped make sure the nutritional needs of his children were met, which allowed him the opportunity to better focus on his employment and continuing support for his family.

I am proud we are providing support to amazing organizations like Food4Kids that are doing the vital work of helping families that are facing challenging times. I thank Food4Kids for its amazing dedication.

WESTERN CANADIAN HISTORY

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Western Development Museum, in my riding of Saskatoon—Grasswood, does an extraordinary job of preserving the history of western Canada and telling the stories of our region.

Just last week, the museum received the Governor General's History Award for its Saskatchewan Doukhobor living book project, which was done in collaboration with Spirit Wrestlers Productions and the University of Saskatchewan. This incredible exhibit was focused on preserving the history and spiritual traditions of the

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Saskatchewan Doukhobors, captured the oral history of Doukhobor elders, presented a typical Doukhobor prayer service and explored the evolution of the Saskatchewan Doukhobor community since their arrival 120 years ago.

I thank the WDM for its continued dedication to preserving western Canadian history and offer my congratulations on this great achievement.

GURPURAB

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 551st anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism.

Being a Sikh, I proudly reflect on Guru Nanak Dev Ji's timeless teachings of hard work, honest living and selfless service. I feel proud to see Sikh-Canadian organizations in Brampton South and across Canada following Guru Sahib's teachings and helping the community. I would like to recognize those wonderful organizations, such as Khalsa Aid, Seva Food Bank, Sikh Sewa Society, CJMR 1320 and the local gurdwaras, for doing the commendable job of providing free meals, clothing and care kits to those in need during this difficult time of COVID-19.

Even those farmers who are peacefully protesting in India celebrated the Gurburab. I saw the images and videos of farmers offering langar to everyone, including those who are using force against them. I applaud them for following Guru Nanak Dev Ji's teachings of selfless *sewa*. This is the true spirit. I hope the issue will be resolved peacefully.

I extend my warmest wishes to everyone for a happy Gurburab.

[Translation]

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SAINTE-THÉRÈSE WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, December 4 will mark the 100th anniversary of the Cercle de fermières de Sainte-Thérèse, a very important women's organization in my riding.

Founded by a group of agronomists under the leadership of Marquise Desjardins, the Cercle de fermières has always been focused on community involvement. The Cercle de fermières has 180 members of all ages who contribute to the vitality of this organization, which puts caring, sharing and knowledge transfer at the heart of its activities with a view to improving the lives of women.

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We want to acknowledge the work of these extraordinary women. We commend the commitment of Lorraine Joly, president of the Cercle de fermières de Sainte-Thérèse, and the board of directors.

We wish their organization a very happy 100th anniversary.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

MEMBER FOR YUKON

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to a strong advocate for the north, the hon. member for Yukon. It was 20 years ago, on November 27, 2000, that he was first elected to the House. As the third longest-serving MP in Yukon's history, he has served six terms under four prime ministers. He has earned a reputation as one of the hardest-working MPs.

The member has been a passionate voice for a variety of environmental and social justice issues, a long-time advocate for ending poverty and homelessness, a founding member of the Parliamentary Friends of Burma, a proponent of the rights of those with FASD, a defender of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Porcupine caribou herd, and a voice for climate change and its dramatic impacts in the north.

I congratulate my territorial colleague on this milestone. I thank him for his many years of service.

Mahsi cho.

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CAMPOBELLO FERRY SERVICE

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Campobello relies on ferry boat service for direct access to mainland New Brunswick. As of December 1, the ferry will not operate again until the spring. For the next six months, the only way for island families to visit a doctor, get kids to a sports match, go banking or even fulfill court-ordered custody agreements is to cross a bridge and drive an hour through the state of Maine.

The Government of Canada recently responded to a petition calling on Ottawa to help New Brunswick and the New Brunswick government provide Campobello residents the same direct access to Canada that other Canadians take for granted every single day. Unfortunately, the government's reply was merely a statement of facts that the island has road access and ferries are a provincial responsibility.

However, one year ago, Parliament debated the unacceptability of U.S. border guards opening Canada Post mail going to Campobello. During those deliberations, the government appropriately opened the door to assisting with this ferry infrastructure. I expect that commitment to help New Brunswick still stands, and that the federal government will assist the province when a plan for reliable ferry access to Campobello is finalized.

Islanders are right to fight for equal access to Canada. They are after all Canadians.

[Translation]

LANGAR

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations to everyone celebrating the birth of Guru Nanak Sahib Ji. He brought enlightenment at a time when the caste system was particularly brutal. He challenged these inhumane practices from a very young age and dedicated his life to equality and social justice.

Langar is the perpetual incarnation of that commitment. This concept of a community kitchen is about sitting down with one another and sharing a meal, regardless of any imposed labels.

[Member spoke in Punjabi]

[Translation]

This means that no act is more generous than offering food to the needy. He taught us to be compassionate and to open our hearts to love our neighbours.

Throughout the pandemic, gurdwaras' kitchens have continued to run at full capacity around the clock, sending meals to front-line workers and anyone in need.

Gurdwaras' doors are open to everyone.

[Member spoke in Punjabi]

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[English]

ORLÉANS BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to give a shout-out to the Heart of Orléans BIA, which held its AGM last week, for its members' amazing work all throughout 2020.

[Translation]

They have done an excellent job informing our local small businesses about the federal government's support measures.

[English]

I want to send special thanks to its executive director, Tannis Vine; marketing and member engagement liaison, Rita Chalabi; and all of its board members for their engagement, collaboration and resilience.

I was also happy to help deliver, with my team, meals to the homes of their AGM participants. My thanks go to local businesses, Turkish Village Restaurant and Stray Dog Brewing Company, for their support.

[Translation]

I thank them for their continued hard work.

[English]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a world-class aerospace industry in Canada. We are ranked fifth in the world as an aerospace nation, but too little has been done to champion this sector.

The long-awaited space strategy, heralded by the government, was almost two years overdue. While we were waiting for it the Canadian aerospace industry shut jobs and was forced to pull out of high-profile projects because of a lack of funding.

Now we are dealing with COVID-19, which has upended the airline industry. Canadians have been left without refunds for cancelled flights, thousands of jobs have been lost and important air routes have been cancelled. Though other governments around the world immediately offered support for their airlines, the government did not acknowledge the crisis until eight months into the pandemic.

Our aerospace sector is a huge economic driver and offers well-paying jobs for Canadians. We must continue to support and champion this sector.

* * *

• (1410)

FARMERS' PROTESTS IN INDIA

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, happy Gurburab to Sikhs across the world. This important day marks the 551st anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's birth, the first guru and founder of Sikhism. Today, we commemorate Guru Nanak Dev Ji's legacy of truth, compassion and justice. He promoted a life of hard work and sharing one's wealth and food. These values stemmed from the fact that he, himself, was a farmer.

As we celebrate Gurburab, we cannot ignore the deplorable violence and police brutality that the Indian farmers' protest has been met with. All people have the right to peacefully protest, as this is a fundamental right in any democracy.

As the world watches the barrage of tear gas shells and water cannons faced by farmers, we also see images of protesters serving water and food to the very authority that is trying to oppress them.

Today, on Guru Nanak Dev Ji's birthday, I urge the Indian authorities to show compassion and respect to the women and men who feed the world.

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FARMERS' PROTESTS IN INDIA

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker,

[Member spoke in Punjabi]

[English]

Today is Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Gurburab, meaning it is the birthday of the founder of the Sikh faith. This year, Sikhs across Canada and around the world are thinking of and praying for India's farmers, who are peacefully protesting new farming legislation. Hun-

Statements by Members

dreds of thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana and other parts of India have made their way to Delhi.

Shockingly, along the way, these peaceful protesters were met with blockades, water cannons, batons and tear gas, but they persisted peacefully. In fact, they even provided food and water to the same security forces who were attacking them.

The right to peaceful protest is fundamental in any democracy. These farmers deserve to be heard and respected. Therefore, as the world watches, we urge the Indian government to hear out the farmers because the fact is, if there are no farmers, there is no food.

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GURU NANAK

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, Sikhs across the world are celebrating Guru Nanak Dev Ji's birthday, the founder of the Sikh religion.

The Sikh religion was established during a time of political upheaval and societal divides. Guru Nanak Dev Ji fought to uplift people regardless of religion, class, gender, caste or race by exploring non-oppositional ways of living with one another.

The passion and commitment that Sikhs display in all walks of life across Canada stem from his teachings. We believe in strength and equality in the face of adversity.

In my own community and across Canada, we saw Sikhs open their kitchens to ensure that our front-line workers had access to food and basic needs during the pandemic. This is exactly what Guru Nanak Dev Ji's teachings are, and we continue to live by those teachings.

From the Conservative Party of Canada, we wish everyone happy Gurburab.

[Member spoke in Punjabi]

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POLAR ICEBREAKER SHIPBUILDING

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud that Newfoundland and Labrador's Genoa Design is working with Seaspan of Vancouver, a major national shipbuilding strategy partner, as a key component of Seaspan's polar icebreaker team, along with Heddle Shipyards of Ontario.

Oral Questions

This pan-Canadian team offers design and fabrication opportunities from coast to coast, supporting thousands of jobs across the country over the multi-year life of the program. Our world-class innovation and Arctic marine expertise are well known and respected, and Genoa and Newfoundland and Labrador can provide unmatched value to the next polar icebreaker.

We have just seen the overwhelming confidence shown our technology sector with the sale of Verafin. The sector is strong and builds on a history of leadership in cold ocean technology, R and D and marine operations, including offshore oil development.

Genoa is another gem in our province. We are delighted to see it as part of the national shipbuilding strategy, and urge the government to support it and Seaspan in their bid.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

AWARDS GALA SPONSORED BY RIVIÈRE-DES-MILLE-ÎLES MP

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my first namesake awards gala was held on November 19.

It was a memorable evening that was carried live on Télévision des Basses-Laurentides and Facebook.

This gala honoured outstanding residents of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles. I had the privilege of handing out the education award to François Paquet. The sports awards went to Stéphane Pilon, Stéphane Proulx and Mario Lanthier, and the environment award went to Danielle Lajeunesse. The arts and culture award was won by Caroline Foley. The business award went to Éric Simard, and the community and social engagement award went to Aminata Bâ.

Finally, I gave out the MP's choice award to Zaélie Charbonneau, a talented 12-year-old classical dancer who has performed with the likes of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens.

Once again, I salute all these recipients for their involvement and for showcasing our magnificent riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles. These people are truly inspiring.

* * *

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, women in Canada make up half the population of our great country, and there are many challenges facing them. We see that women have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Loss of employment, precarious work and the difficulty of finding child care or caring for parents are all issues that need to be addressed.

The Conservative Party is full of strong women like myself, who are using their voices to ensure we hear from all women in Canada: young girls who need to get excited about careers in STEM, students and new graduates who need assistance to find success in business, moms who need quality child care, working women who need pay equity and a level playing field, single women, especially

seniors, who need help to afford to live and women facing domestic violence and human trafficking.

We have a new leader of our party with a vision to welcome in more women and to bring policies that will address the challenges facing Canadian women. Together, we can do it.

* * *

[Translation]

THE HOLIDAY SEASON IN ARGENTEUIL—LA PETITE-NATION

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish all my constituents in the beautiful riding of Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation a joyous holiday season.

I know that things will be different this year, and we must all be resilient in these difficult times. Because of the pandemic, many people will not be able to get together with loved ones during the holidays.

My thoughts go out to the essential workers who have been on the front lines helping people from the beginning. I hope that 2021 will let us spend these special moments with the loved ones we miss so much.

[English]

Happy holidays to everyone in my riding. I know this has been a difficult year. I hope 2021 will allow us to spend these special moments with our loved ones.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after a long spending spree, the government is set to present its economic update this afternoon.

Canadians obviously expect a real plan for kick-starting the Canadian economy, but we cannot talk about economic recovery until we know what to expect with the vaccines.

What is the government's budget plan for vaccination?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has one of the best portfolios in the world. In fact, we have options on seven highly promising vaccines, more doses per capita than any other country and three vaccines in regulatory approval. In fact, I should say four, because, of course, Janssen just applied today.

Even the CEO of Moderna has said that Canada placed its orders early and is in a really good position.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that all of the minister's figures are for theoretical vaccines, because we still do not have a single vaccine here.

Why is that? On top of other mistakes the government has made with respect to vaccination, it chose to partner with a Chinese company, and that partnership was a massive flop. As a result, the government was late signing agreements with other major companies whose vaccines are actually effective.

The economy is suffering tremendously. Canadians are losing their jobs, businesses are shutting down and the Canadian economy is fragile. We need an economic and budget plan for vaccination.

Are we going to get that plan later today?

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight the fact that we have a plan. That plan is to pursue international vaccine candidates. We have done that very clearly from day one. We have also invested in made-in-Canada solutions: AbCellera from Vancouver, VIDO-InterVac from Saskatoon, Variation Biotechnologies from Ottawa, Medicago from Quebec City—

The Speaker: One moment, please.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Manicouagan on a point of order.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The interpreter is saying that she is unable to provide interpretation because of the sound quality.

[English]

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members to wear the headsets that were provided by the House. The microphone on the headsets really works well. The interpreters are struggling at the best of times with long distances, and making the audio as clear as possible makes their job easy and allows us to hear what is being said, whether it is in French or in English.

Minister, I will let you start from the beginning so we can hear everything you had to say.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, we have been absolutely clear that we have a plan to support Canadians. It is a made-in-Canada initiative to support made-in-Canada solutions.

Oral Questions

That is why we are proud to have invested in AbCellera, from Vancouver; VIDO-InterVac, from Saskatoon; Variation Biotechnologies, from Ottawa; Medicago, from Quebec City; the National Research Council's Royalmount facility in Montreal; and ImmunoVaccine Technologies, in Dartmouth.

These are examples of the made-in-Canada solutions that are part of our plan to support Canadians to make sure they have access to safe and secure vaccines.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, regardless of whether the Liberals say it in French or English, “we have a plan” does not mean much to Canadians because they know all about Liberal plans.

Once again, last Friday, the Prime Minister embarrassed us by saying that he believed that half of Canadians would be vaccinated by September. He was quickly called out on that.

What we do know is that people in Britain and the United States will be vaccinated before Christmas. We also know that Europeans will soon be vaccinated while Canadians will have to wait.

What is the budget plan for the vaccination of Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, and numerous times, Canadians are well situated to get vaccines. In fact, on the weekend I spoke with my counterpart, the Minister of Health from the U.K., Mr. Matt Hancock, to talk about the U.K. and Canada working closely together on regulatory approval for the number of vaccines, many of which we share in our portfolios.

Canada is well served by the diversity of vaccines that we have purchased early and, in fact, in great quantity. Canadians can be assured that they, too, will have access to these vaccines that will bring us to the end of COVID-19.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve certainty, clarity and competence from their government, all of which have been sorely lacking both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Conservatives supported, with corrective advice, the range of emergency COVID programs, but those massive funding programs account for barely half the federal deficit.

Today we expect yet another rhetorical exercise in the reimagining of the Canadian economy, but where is the plan for economic recovery?

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 am happy to share with the hon. member that his calculation is mistaken. He seems not to realize that the significant closures, for public health reasons, associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have also contributed to the deficit.

The reality is that, going forward, we know we had a choice to have the federal government incur the costs associated with the pandemic or to have those costs fall to households and businesses. We made the decision to step up to be there for households and businesses to ensure they could contribute to the recovery once the pandemic is over.

If the hon. member has suggestions on how we can move forward to ensure a robust recovery, my office is always open.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the economic update will surely reveal just how large the deficit has become and how deep the hole out of which the country must eventually climb.

The lack of a plan for acquisition and distribution of vaccines threatens to have a delaying domino impact across economic recovery. However, the lack of a larger plan for fiscal recovery two years down the road, three years and more is equally unconscionable.

When will Canadians get a comprehensive plan?

• (1425)

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, while the Conservatives seem to be defending an outdated economic ideology, we are defending the households and businesses that have reached out to us during the course of this pandemic.

If we actually want to dig into what experts are telling us, I would direct the hon. member to the testimony of the chief economist of the IMF, who explained that for countries like Canada, which are at the effective lower bound for their interest rates, the wise thing to do at this point in time is to make public investments. She described it as not just economically sound policy but, in the circumstances, the fiscally responsible thing to do.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a few hours, the government will be delivering its economic update.

Perhaps we will find out at that time how the government plans to jump-start the recovery. Regardless of the measures it takes, it is impossible to jump-start the recovery if we are still in the midst of a pandemic.

It is not complicated. No vaccines mean no economic recovery. To date, the government has still not presented a vaccination plan. Perhaps it is keeping the plan a secret, but that is worrisome. My question is simple. When will the government present its vaccination plan?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned, we are well situated in Canada, with more doses per capita than any other country in the world and seven promising candidates in our portfolio. Four of them, as of today, are under regulatory approval, and there is a coordinated regulatory review with multiple credible regulatory bodies across the world.

Canadians can be proud of the work their government has done on their behalf.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we still do not have an answer.

Quebeckers have been in lockdown and have been making sacrifices for eight months. There is no end in sight to the pandemic, given that there were 1,333 cases today. People are losing their jobs, their businesses, their health and their lives.

What would it cost this government to realize that people deserve to know, that they deserve to be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel? What is the government waiting for? When will it unveil its vaccination plan?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as scientists around the world do important work on a vaccine for COVID-19, we are ensuring that Canadians will be able to be vaccinated when the time comes.

We secured different types of vaccines and hundreds of millions of doses to keep Canadians safe and well served. Some clinical trials have published promising results and seem to be progressing quickly.

We will continue to work with all our partners to ensure that Canadians will have access to a vaccine when it becomes available.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share Kristina's story.

Kristina is a single mother who lives in Gatineau. Before the pandemic struck, she held down three jobs. Now she is down to one, and she is having trouble making ends meet. For her, a vaccine means going back to work.

When will the Prime Minister deliver a plan for the vaccines?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, across our government we are working to make sure Canadians are well situated to get vaccinated when the time comes and these vaccines are approved as safe for use in Canada.

We are working with seven different manufacturers, with promising results. In fact, four of them have applied for regulatory review in Canada, and we have a process that will allow for our regulators to rapidly review evidence and work with other regulators. As soon as a vaccine is safe for use in Canada, Canadians will have access to it.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Australia, a very similar-sized country to Canada, has a plan that one can look up on its website, with detailed steps about everything that is going on with its plan. Kristina is a single-parent mom in Gatineau who is struggling to get by. Her kids need dental work. She has lost her jobs. For her, a vaccine will mean she can get back to work.

Why will the Prime Minister not tell Kristina what the plan is for the vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since very early on, we have been working with provinces and territories to ensure that our plans are robust. I want to remind the member opposite that over the last several weeks, we have immunized 16 million people for influenza, just in a few weeks. That speaks to two things: one, the experience that provinces and territories have in delivering vaccinations in their own jurisdictions; and, two, the fact that we have a public health care system that makes vaccination available to all Canadians free of charge.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am actually interested in the answer for Kristina as well.

Across the country, working-class women are worried about whether their child care centres are going to close and if they can get to work. It has been 11 months, with no end in sight. On Friday, the Prime Minister said that it would be September before most Canadians would have access to a vaccine.

When will the workers of the BrightPath Childcare centre in Vaughan have access to a vaccine?

• (1430)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly, Canada is well situated, with more doses per capita than any other country in the world. We are working closely with provinces and territories which have an immense amount of expertise in delivering vaccinations across the country. In fact, over the last several weeks, 16 million Canadians have been vaccinated for influenza. That demonstrates just how much of a world leader Canada is in immunization.

We will continue to support provinces and territories so they can also deliver on COVID-19 vaccines.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for 11 months, places of worship have cancelled in-person services to stop the spread of COVID and they have complied with every rule. However, now churches like Springs Church in Winnipeg are facing steep fines for allowing people to sit in their cars with their windows rolled up, while their pastors are standing far away on a stage, looking at RCMP cars, while they are preaching their message.

The Prime Minister said on Friday that it would be September before most Canadians would have access to a vaccine. Does the

Oral Questions

Prime Minister think it is appropriate for Canadians to have to wait until September to have their charter rights to worship respected?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Minister Friesen for taking strong action in Manitoba to prevent further spread of COVID-19. As we know, public health measures are important even while we wait for vaccines. That is what is saving lives, the strong leadership by health ministers and premiers who are stepping up to impose public health measures while the world waits for a vaccine.

Canada is well positioned. We are one of the first countries to have purchased vaccines. We have seven, in fact, in our portfolio, four of them under regulatory review as we speak.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is absolutely right in that Minister Friesen, Minister Elliott, Minister Shandro, every minister across the country needs the information that we are asking for today: When is the vaccine coming? When should they be ready? What is the plan? Where are the resources to do this? Every day we do not get an answer, more people die, more civil liberties are eroded and more businesses close.

The Prime Minister said on Friday that it would be September before most Canadians would get access to a vaccine. Was it because he was distracted with the WE Charity scandal, the botched deal with CanSino or both?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I spoke with Minister Elliott on Sunday, I think that was yesterday, and had a great conversation about the work Ontario was doing to prepare to receive the vaccines, in fact at all levels across government. At health levels, at officials levels, at the health care levels people are working together to develop plans. As the member opposite notes, the federal government has an important role, but provinces and territories have an even more important role. They are the experts on immunization.

We will be there for them as we deliver those vaccines and ensure they have what they need to make sure Canadians can access them.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the Prime Minister stated that the majority of Canadians would be vaccinated by September 2021. Does that mean 51% of the population? If so, that is not enough. We will not have herd immunity, we will not be able to get back to normal, and more lives will be lost along the way.

Can the Prime Minister give us an actual clear plan?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working on a plan for a long time in partnership with provinces and territories to ensure everybody is ready when the first vaccine is approved. As we know, worldwide, there is not a vaccine approved that is among our portfolio, but we have a leading one, and I will tell members why. In fact, we have had the vaccine task force guide us to put our bets here in Canada on the most promising candidates. We have four of them now in the regulatory approval process and we are looking forward to having good news soon.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is obviously not working because on Friday, the Prime Minister told everyone that the majority of Canadians would be vaccinated by September 2021.

The minister just told us that we cannot make a plan because we do not know when the vaccine will be approved.

Can the government make a decision, be honest with Canadians, come up with guidelines and develop a clear, precise plan? At this point, everyone is waiting, businesses are closing and people are dying.

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we have one of the best vaccine portfolios in the world. Canadians should be proud of the work this government has done on their behalf. In fact, it puts them in a good position, with more than 10 doses per Canadian, more doses per capita than any other country in the world and four of them are already in regulatory approval. It is because our regulators are recognized as world-class regulators. When Canada can approve a vaccine, it is a good demonstration of safety and effectiveness. Canadians can be confident that we will work quickly to ensure vaccines are safe and we can get them out the door.

● (1435)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how can the government claim to have the best portfolio of vaccines and say there will be 10 doses per Canadian when it has not yet brought a single dose into the country? It is ridiculous.

Can the minister also explain to me why her government signed an agreement with a company owned by the Chinese communist regime? An agreement was signed with CanSino Biologics, but it fell apart.

Why was her government forced to renegotiate all kinds of contracts at the last minute back in August, and how can she now say that there will be 10 doses per person when nobody even knows when the first dose will get here?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to invest in flexible production here in Canada so we can increase—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Manicouagan on a point of order.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, the interpretation is not working.

[English]

The Speaker: We seem to be having a problem with the connection for the minister. I am not sure if the headset is plugged in, or turned on or if it is the connection. We will try that again and see if we can make it work.

The hon. minister.

[Translation]

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, we immediately realized that we had to invest in flexible production in the country and increase our facilities, which we did.

I can assure the House that when a vaccine is ready and approved, we will be one of the first countries to get these doses from the developers under contract to Canadians.

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning I introduced a bill that asks for one simple thing from the federal government, that Ottawa respect Quebec's laws and municipal by-laws, period. The federal government is currently circumventing our environmental laws when it intervenes in Quebec. It circumvents agricultural zoning when it approves airport projects, allows telecommunications giants to erect cellphone towers anywhere they want without the public's approval. Asking the government to obey the law seems to go without saying. In fact, we should not even have to ask. It is the least the government can do. I am curious though.

Will the government vote in favour of our bill?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the hon. member, that is nonsense.

The hon. member seems to think that the federal government is a big meanie that always wants to pick a fight with Quebec and the other provinces, when it is the Bloc that is trying to create the impression that there is bickering, that we bicker with everyone all the time.

That is not true. We are working with Quebec on the environment, agriculture, and COVID-19. We are working with Quebec every day on everything, whether the Bloc likes it or not. I know that the hon. member would like there to be some big dispute, but there is none. We are working together.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa must respect Quebec's environmental laws; it is that simple.

Quebec has the strictest environmental assessment process in Canada. We are certainly not about to let the federal government run roughshod over it. That is why the Bloc Québécois is pushing for Quebec's environmental sovereignty. For instance, Ottawa must respect our soil decontamination standards. It must respect the laws that apply to our ports, including the Port of Québec. Federal projects must go through a BAPE assessment, like all the others.

Will the government vote in favour of upholding the rights of Quebec?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will always applaud the Quebec government's environmental efforts. Similarly, the federal government is also working extremely hard for our environment and for this planet, which we want to leave to our children and grandchildren. We can achieve this if we work in collaboration.

This may come as a surprise to the Bloc Québécois, but we can work together. There is no need to fight. Of course we respect one another's areas of jurisdiction, but this all means that we must work together for the well-being of all our constituents.

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SENIORS

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today is the deadline for seniors to submit their income information. Anyone who misses this deadline will stop receiving the guaranteed income supplement in January. We are talking about 12,000 of the poorest Quebecers. We are talking about people who need help and cannot get help because of COVID-19. In-person services are limited, and we all know that it is nearly impossible to get through to the CRA on the phone.

Can the government assure us that no low-income seniors will lose their guaranteed income supplement in the middle of a pandemic?

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are ensuring that the most vulnerable seniors continue to receive their benefits when they need them the most. Because of our temporary extension, over 200,000 seniors continue receive their GIS and allowance payments, even though they have not been able to submit their 2019 tax information. GIS recipients who have not already filed their tax information should file their taxes as soon as possible. We have sent letters to these seniors, and we have made calls to remind them to do so. We are making sure seniors do get their benefits.

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HEALTH

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our allies like the United States have been planning since May to deliver vaccines to Americans and will start vaccinating next week, but the Prime Minister has left it to the last minute and now has to call in the Canadian Armed Forces to actually clean up his mess. Our armed forces will get the job done. Of that I have no

doubt, but the Liberal government will still have to answer for its incompetence.

When will the Prime Minister table a plan to make vaccinations available to all Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the optimism in the ability of our armed forces to be part of our vaccination strategy which, I have to say, has been integrated very early on. We are so grateful to Major-General Dany Fortin for being embedded in the Public Health Agency of Canada to help with the logistics of deploying vaccines across the country, working closely with provinces and territories. This is a team Canada approach and an integrated approach at that, across all departments of government.

I want to thank the Canadian Armed Forces for their assistance.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised Canadians 250,000 doses of vaccines would be made by now, but he has not delivered one single dose. He put all his hope in the CanSino vaccine, but of course that deal fell through and there was no plan B. He has literally had to call in the army to fix all the problems caused by the Liberals dithering and delays. Now the Prime Minister says that vaccines will not make it into the arms of Canadians until September. September is not good enough.

Why should Canadians believe the Prime Minister now when he has misled them so many times already?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly the member opposite does not want to listen to me, but maybe he will listen to the CEO of Moderna who said Canada's early orders meant it was well positioned to receive early doses. This is the reality that the member opposite and his colleagues do not want to face. In fact, we were prepared and we have the best portfolio: seven promising candidates, four of them under regulatory review.

When the vaccines are safe we will be delivering them to Canadians.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that seniors have sacrificed a lot this year. Many have faced isolation from their loved ones and those living in long-term care have been particularly hit hard by COVID-19. They deserve certainty and clarity from their government, yet there is still no clear plan on testing or vaccines. While other countries have indicated that mass vaccine distribution will begin in the coming months, the Prime Minister is talking about September for Canadians.

Are seniors going to have to wait until September 2021 to see their grandchildren?

Oral Questions

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, now who is misrepresenting information to Canadians? It would be the member opposite because, in fact, she knows that that is not what the Prime Minister said. He said that, by September, 70% of Canadians will be vaccinated. He did not say that it will be until September. In fact, we know that we are very close. Canadians can be assured that when a vaccine is approved for safety here in Canada, we will be deploying it.

Canadians are well positioned to receive vaccines and we are thrilled with the ability to be able to provide them to Canadians.

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CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have watched \$450 billion be sent offshore without a single CRA investigation resulting in a conviction. This is on top of the 900 Canadians named in the Panama papers, who have also evaded prosecution by hiding their wealth offshore, but when the New Democrats proposed closing tax loopholes and bringing in a wealth tax, the Liberals voted it down.

Why does the government insist on protecting the ultra wealthy from paying their fair share, while leaving thousands of Canadians and small businesses on the brink of financial ruin from COVID?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has made it a priority to combat tax fraud in Canada and abroad.

Our investments in the CRA have been successful in combatting tax evasion. Last year, the CRA performed 1,463 audits related to international tax evasion, which represents 1,679 taxpayers, compared to the 43 audits conducted in 2013-14.

Our government's historic investments of over \$1 billion have given the CRA the tools it needs to do its job, and we are starting to see the results.

* * *

● (1445)

TAXATION

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, the government will give an economic update with a significant deficit.

Historically, the Liberals' and the Conservatives' solution was to cut services to the public. That always hurts the same people, meaning workers, families and the most vulnerable.

There is another possibility, and that is to make the wealthiest members of our society pay. The NDP is proposing a tax on wealth over \$20 million and an excess profit tax on certain corporations during the pandemic.

Will the Liberals adopt these progressive measures instead of burdening people with austerity measures?

[*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 have great respect for the hon. member, and I can assure him with no uncertainty that we will do whatever it takes to continue to offer support to Canadian households and businesses and do what it takes to get them through this pandemic.

On the issue of taxing the wealthy, if it is such a passion of the hon. member, I would return the question to him as to why he and his NDP colleagues opposed the Canada child benefit, which stops any child care cheques to millionaires and puts more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadian families. I would also ask him why his party opposed the very first measure we took when we formed government in 2015, which was to raise taxes on Canada's wealthiest 1% so we could cut them for nine million Canadian households.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada and India share very strong people-to-people ties. Many Indo-Canadians, particularly the 600,000 of Punjabi descent, are watching closely as hundreds of thousands of farmers are marching to Delhi in a peaceful protest. However, many of the farmers from Punjab have been met with violence from police and blocked from entry to Delhi. It is essential that people in a democratic society be allowed to protest peacefully without fear of violence in response.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs please advise us as to how Canada is expressing its concerns over this issue?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also want to acknowledge the strong people-to-people ties that unite India and Canada, which are both strong democracies.

As the member rightfully mentioned, the freedom to protest peacefully is a fundamental right that must be respected. Canada is concerned by reports of violence that some farmers have been met with as they march peacefully in protest.

As we believe in strong dialogue, we have made diplomatic representations at senior levels both here in Ottawa and in Delhi to express our concerns.

JUSTICE

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Justice introduced the assisted-dying bill, he said that “this bill reflects a consensus among Canadians”, yet there is not even consensus in the Liberal cabinet. The minister responsible for disability inclusion has said that assisted dying providers should not raise assisted death with persons with disabilities. Yet, Liberals rejected this amendment Conservatives brought forward to committee.

Will the Minister of Justice listen to his colleague and listen to persons with disabilities and make this amendment?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, medical assistance in dying, or MAID, is a complex issue. It is deeply personal. Canadians have diverse and evolving views, and we did our best to consult them quite intensively across Canada in round tables from coast to coast to coast, as well as in an online survey in which over 300,000 Canadians gave us their views on medical assistance in dying.

We reintroduced this legislation because it does represent a consensus in Canadian society. We need to move forward through this step to respond to the Quebec Superior Court's decision in Truchon, and we are doing just that.

• (1450)

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a consensus that the government's latest MAID bill lacks safeguards and puts persons with disabilities at risk. Witness after witness said this at justice committee. We heard from disability advocates who say this bill is unfair to persons with disabilities. Krista Carr, of Inclusion Canada, described it as “our worst nightmare.” I am sure many Liberal members are also concerned about the gaps in Bill C-7.

Will the government allow a free vote among Liberal MPs so they may vote against this flawed bill?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during those consultations we took great pains to listen carefully to the disability community and their advocacy, and they had a direct impact on the structure of the bill. The safeguards that are in place in the non-end-of-life scenario are precisely a result of the consultations that took place with representatives of groups living with disabilities.

We will continue to listen, and we are very proud of the legislation and the compromises it effects.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the right to peacefully protest is a fundamental right in a democracy. Thousands of farmers from across India, including Punjab and Haryana, have been protesting recent changes in agricultural policy. Canadians here at home with ties to Indian farmers are concerned about reports of the use of tear gas, water cannons and batons by the authorities against the protesters.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs comment on the issue my constituents and Canadians have been raising?

Oral Questions

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for a very important question that many members of the House and many Canadians are concerned about.

We are concerned about the violence that we have seen over the weekend as farmers march peacefully to Delhi. Freedom to protest peacefully is a fundamental right that must be respected. We believe in strong dialogue with India. That is why we made representations at senior levels over the weekend both here in Ottawa and in Delhi.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned by the recent escalation of tensions in India between farmers and Indian authorities. Freedom of speech is fundamental to a healthy democracy, including peaceful protests. Farmers feed cities. Their hard labour is crucial to the function of any country: no farmers, no food.

Authorities are using tear gas, water cannons and baton charges to shut down the peaceful protest. People all across the globe are standing in solidarity with the farmers' right to peacefully protest.

Why will the Liberal government not stand up for freedom and democracy and comment on the ongoing situation in India?

Chalo Delhi. I stand with farmers.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I answered before, we are concerned, as not only he and his constituents but other members have expressed in the House, about the reports of violence that farmers have been met with as they march peacefully to Delhi.

We believe in the freedom of protest. This is a fundamental right in a democracy. That is why, as I said to the member previous, we have expressed our concerns at senior levels both here in Ottawa and in Delhi. We believe in the fundamental right of protest.

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is the theatre of the absurd. Right now, the Standing Committee on International Trade is examining the free trade agreement with the United Kingdom. It is even hearing from witnesses. Earlier, it heard from the Minister of International Trade.

Oral Questions

The problem is that no one has seen the text of the agreement. The committee is analyzing a deal that no one has even read. The government is asking us to approve this deal before December 31 because of Brexit. That is absolutely ridiculous.

When will the government give us the text of the agreement?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was really good to be at the trade committee today. As I said, our officials are working very hard to get the legal text finalized so we can indeed share it.

I will respect our processes and the work of my colleagues on all sides of the House, and will endeavour to get this information to them as soon as it is available and ready. I think the continuity agreement is really great for Canadian businesses, because it provides the continuity and predictability that our businesses are looking for in trading with the United Kingdom.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that was just as clear as what we were told about the vaccines.

In other words, we are being asked to blindly trust the government when it discredited itself in previous agreements. This is the same government that would have sacrificed Quebec aluminum in CUSMA. It is the same government that did sacrifice supply management three times. We cannot approve an agreement without reading it. It would be irresponsible to give the government *carte blanche*.

The agreement is being examined in committee. Does the government not understand that we need it right away?

• (1455)

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with the hon. member that the work he and all colleagues do is extremely important. That is why I want to thank the officials here in Canada and the United Kingdom for all of their hard work. I know they are working as fast as they can to make sure they get the review completed.

The continuity trade agreement with Canada and the U.K. does this: It provides predictability and stability, and this is what businesses are looking for, particularly during this time. Our economic recovery counts on the stability in this important trading relationship with the United Kingdom.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House will pardon my nervousness. I just got a text message from my wife that my daughter's water just broke, and I am going to be a grandfather for the first time. I completely forgot what I was going to say.

Time and again we have asked the government for a commitment to bring 988 to Canada. Sadly, all we have received is scripted talking points and no commitment from the minister. This is not a partisan issue. Mental health associations are calling for it, national telecoms are calling for it and Canadians are demanding it. Either the minister supports it or she does not. Let us not give Canadians who are suffering false hope.

Does the Minister of Health support a 988 national suicide hotline in Canada? If she does not, she should have the courage to say so.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but say congratulations to the member opposite, because that is pretty exciting news to break to the House of Commons.

His topic is very serious, and I want to reassure him that I want to work with him on a national hotline. I have said that in the House. I will continue to do that work.

I think we should find a time to sit down and talk about it so I can show the member opposite the work the department has been doing. I fully support the premise, and I think we can work together to make it happen more quickly.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are using their white paper on official languages to buy time until the next election. Meanwhile, they are holding communities hostage.

The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne and the Quebec Community Groups Network want this.

Will the Liberals stop playing politics and introduce a bill to modernize the Official Languages Act before Christmas?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has been the official languages critic for several years now. Whenever he asks me questions about modernizing the Official Languages Act, the Conservatives' sudden interest in official languages surprises me, especially now that they are courting Bloc Québécois votes.

The Liberals are always here to support minority language communities. We are always here, ready to step up. We are going to work on a proposal for language reform that will set the tone for the next 50 years when it comes to protecting language rights in this country.

*Oral Questions***TELECOMMUNICATIONS***[English]***TRANSPORTATION**

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, truck drivers have been essential to keeping our supply lines open, but government red tape is blocking Canadian truckers from securing fast enrolment for transporting dangerous goods across the border. In-person interview sites are closed and CBSA has no timelines for reopening, no virtual option and no rules for deeming travel by truckers for fast interviews as essential.

When is the minister going to fix this unfair situation and put pressure on his American counterpart to deem travel for fast enrolment interviews as essential, or allow fast interviews to be done over Zoom?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will certainly look at that, but we have been trying to do everything possible to make sure that our truckers are able to move across the border, because they do represent an essential service. They are doing a fabulous job of making sure that Canadians are being provided with all the necessary goods that we need here in Canada. I will look into the point the member has just raised.

* * *

*[Translation]***WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY**

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, between November 25 and December 10, Canadians observe 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

It is an opportunity to come together to condemn violence, have conversations and renew our commitment. I believe men and boys can play a vital role in preventing gender-based violence.

Can the Minister for Women and Gender Equality provide an update on our national action plan and on how men and boys are being encouraged to be part of the solution?

• (1500)

[English]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Nickel Belt is absolutely right: Men and boys play a vital role in ending gender-based violence. That is why our government partnered with the Moose Hide Campaign, Next Gen Men, Catalyst Canada and Pauktuutit, to name a few, so that men and boys are working on healthier relationships, have the tools to be more than bystanders online and offline and can be part of the positive change that is so desperately needed.

I know my colleagues here are playing important roles as mentors. They are leading by example. They are opening doors to progress in terms of pathways for employment and career development. We look forward to the day when we do not have to have 16 days of activism against gender-based—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia.

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during this crisis, Service Canada locations that provided essential help for those who were in need were closed and critical health care visits have been conducted virtually. Safe help was a single click away. The problem was that many did not have reliable broadband connection. The requirement for connectivity is not about social media. It is about the health and well-being of our loved ones.

Will the minister commit to funding shovel-in-the-ground solutions for Kootenay—Columbians, like in Yahk and Kaslo, now, not in five or 10 years?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have positive news for my colleague. As of November 9, there has been a call for applications. It is open. This is the single largest investment in broadband in Canada's history. Our government has put it forward. We are taking a matter of days to review and assess project proposals that come forward, for rapid response. For longer-term projects, there is another \$1 billion set aside.

The short answer is yes. I ask the member to reach out to my team and me, and we will do what we can to help.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after months and months of delays, the Liberal government finally announced its scheme to improve high-speed Internet in rural communities. Unfortunately, its funding decisions will be based on service maps that are filled with inaccurate data. This is happening in Grand Manan, in communities outside of Grand Bay-Westfield and up north around Baie Sainte-Anne. These are just a few communities in my province. This is disqualifying many communities in New Brunswick from applying for the program today.

Why have parameters been proposed that will mean many rural communities will not receive high-speed Internet?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have good news for my other Conservative colleague as well. Those maps he referred to have been updated. They have been updated as of January. We continue to update them. The hexagon model is gone.

I encourage him to reach out to my team and me if he has any questions about it. We have set up a concierge service, a one-stop shop for smaller communities that do not have capacity to go through the process on their own. We will be there to help them get connected to this essential service.

In addition, our government invested 10 times more in connecting New Brunswickers than the previous government did. Let us finish the job.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people like Mr. Poirier from Saint-Georges are under stress because their Canada Revenue Agency files are frozen.

These individuals want to co-operate with the CRA, but they cannot reach the agency. One of my staffers spoke with an agent, who was very friendly by the way, who said the CRA is currently processing claims from November 4. That is nearly a month of delay.

People do not want any trouble with the CRA. They are already under stress because of COVID-19. When will the government bring in the human resources needed to respond effectively to Canadians?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague that, during the pandemic, all CRA employees have had to work from home.

I encourage my colleague to come and see me or call me after question period. I will do everything I can to help him.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during this pandemic, Canadians came together to get through the first wave of this unprecedented time. Our federal government was there for Canadians.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance please update the House on what we might expect later today in the fall economic statement and how our government will continue with our commitment to be there for Canadians throughout the second wave and as we recover.

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 can confirm that later today the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of Canada will present the fall economic statement in the House of Commons for 2020, which outlines our government's plan to support Canadians through COVID-19 and that we will ensure the economy that follows this pandemic is more robust, inclusive and sustainable than before.

As we battle the second wave of the virus, we know we are going to be in for a hard winter, but spring is going to come. We are always going to be there for Canadian households and businesses in my home province of Nova Scotia, in that member's community of Pickering—Uxbridge and from coast to coast to coast, as we have been from the beginning of this pandemic.

* * *

● (1505)

CHILD CARE

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in August, we were finally able to get the Liberals to support our mo-

tion calling for \$2 billion for child care to help families during the pandemic. Months later, the Liberals are still making families wait. This funding is essential to help providers follow health directives and create new affordable licenced spaces to help parents, especially women, who have jobs outside of the home to get back to work.

When will the government stop making families wait or is this what we all feared? Another broken child care promise.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that this year alone we have invested more than \$1 billion to help provinces and territories continue to create more affordable and quality child care for Canadians, a record amount of money for this year.

We have worked hard since 2015 to create 40,000 child care spaces across Canada. We have invested more than \$7.5 billion in early learning and child care. We are committed to creating a national system of child care that is affordable and is high quality for all parents. This time, I hope the NDP does not join the Conservatives and derail something we should have done a long time ago.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, on December 12, the United Nations will be marking the fifth anniversary of the successful conclusion of the Paris negotiations. The Paris agreement stands as our best hope to avert runaway global warming. We have had some good news and the U.S. is planning to rejoin under President-elect Biden.

Could the hon. minister update the House on where Canada is toward improving our target as we are required to do within calendar 2020?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has made very clear its firm commitment to bring forward a plan to exceed our 2030 targets under the Paris agreement and to define pathways to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. We have previously put into place what is by far the most significant and comprehensive climate plan in Canadian history. I look forward to bringing forward a plan to exceed our 2030 targets in the very near term.

We will then be engaging consultations with indigenous peoples, provinces and territories and with Canadians generally as part of informing and finalizing Canada's updated nationally determined contributions well in advance of COP24.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS OF CANADA

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table today, in both official languages, the Public Accounts of Canada 2020, and also to inform the House that the Auditor General has provided an unqualified audit opinion on the Government of Canada's 2020 financial statements.

* * *

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: Pursuant to subsection 7(3) of the Auditor General Act, it is my duty to lay upon the table the fall 2020 reports of the Auditor General of Canada.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Orders 108(3)(g), these reports are deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

* * *

• (1510)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Agreement between the Government of Canada and the ITER International Fusion Energy Organization for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Fusion Energy, done at Ottawa and Saint-Paul-lez-Durance on 15 October 2020.”

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development regarding the main estimates, 2020-21.

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs entitled “Supplementary Estimates (B) 2020-21.”

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Public Service Renewal) and to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the sixth report later this day.

Routine Proceedings

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages in relation to the motion adopted on Tuesday, November 24 regarding the modernization of the Official Languages Act.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Public Service Renewal) and to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier this day be concurred in.

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

Hearing no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

SOUTHERN GULF ISLAND WATERWAYS

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to table e-petition 2837, which was put forward by constituents in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

The petitioners are really concerned about the ongoing use of the waters surrounding the Southern Gulf Islands as a free parking lot for freighters. They point out that the freighters are causing damage to this environmentally sensitive ecosystem. They are very concerned about the freighter collision this spring, recent incidents of anchor dragging and the potential for a serious disaster involving these ships.

The petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to eliminate the 33 commercial anchorages throughout the Southern Gulf Islands, to improve the grain supply chain and terminal infrastructure, evaluate the transport of U.S. thermal coal through the Port of Vancouver and implement efficient international shipping standards, such as the just-in-time arrival computer system, to better facilitate trade and the Canadian economy.

The Speaker: I would remind hon. members, when presenting petitions, to be as concise as possible. Let us know what is on the paper. I want to make sure everyone gets a chance to present their petitions.

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

FIRST NATIONS FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour today to present a petition that was initiated by Ms. Denise Whitehead from my riding.

Government Orders

The petitioners say that under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, every individual in Canada is equal before and under the law, and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination. To this end, they are hoping that the First Nations Financial Transparency Act be enforced to ensure the accountability and transparency of bands to their membership, for the receiving of federal funding so that every head counted in the official first nations band membership numbers be included and that off-reserve members of the bands, who have been treated as aliens in the past, be included in the disbursement of funds and services.

They call upon the Government of Canada to enforce the First Nations Financial Transparency Act to ensure that off-reserve band members get equal levels of service from their bands.

● (1515)

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I have to present today is from petitioners from across Canada calling on the House of Commons to protect the conscience rights of physicians and health care workers and institutions.

FIREARMS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the third petition I have to present today, petitioners from across Canada seek to support the health and safety of Canadian firearms owners. The petitioners recognize the importance of owning firearms and are concerned about the impact of hearing loss caused by the damaging noise levels of firearms and the need for noise reduction. The petitioners are calling for the legalization of apparatus to moderate the sound of firearms, as in the majority of G7 countries.

The Speaker: I would again remind hon. members to be as concise as possible.

Presenting petitions, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

PHARMACARE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the petition from the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith was so very important that I am glad he took his time. Those freighters are driving us crazy.

I am presenting a petition about the high cost of prescription drugs in Canada. We spend more on prescription drugs than we spend on doctors. The petitioners call for a comprehensive pharmacare program that ensures the prices of drugs are brought down, that prescriptions needed are available for every Canadian as part of our universal health care coverage, and that drugs, before being approved for use, are thoroughly scrutinized to make sure they are effective.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to be presenting a petition highlighting the gross abuses of the fundamental human rights of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China. This petition highlights stories that have come out about birth suppression, forced abortion, the forced insertion of IUDs and other measures that total-

ly go against the fundamental human rights of Uighur women and are aimed at bringing about a dramatic reduction in population that petitioners believe tragically constitutes genocide.

The petitioners are calling for that recognition and also calling on the government to use the Magnitsky act to target those involved in these horrific abuses.

* * *

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 at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of all the pieces of legislation that I have debated in the House over the years, this one, Bill C-7, more than any other, deeply distresses me.

Four years ago when the Supreme Court created the right to assisted suicide in Carter, whether we liked it or not it became the law of the land. The court also set out the parameters of what that right entailed, and those parameters were addressed in Bill C-14 with the appropriate safeguards built in. Among those safeguards the most important was, arguably, that death had to be reasonably foreseeable in order to qualify for medical assistance in dying, or MAID.

Fast forward to 2019. In a puzzling decision from a Quebec court, a single judge ruled in Truchon that parts of the federal law on MAID were unconstitutional because, in her view, they were too restrictive. Among the safeguards deemed too restrictive was the requirement that death be reasonably foreseeable. One single judge of a lower court made a decision for all of Canada that was literally about life and death. What is worse, the Liberal government chose not to appeal this decision to the Supreme Court. Canadians have a right to ask the Prime Minister why not. Instead of appealing the case to determine whether the nine justices of the Supreme Court agreed with the lower court judge, this government immediately brought forward new legislation, presumably because Truchon reflected the Prime Minister's own ideology.

The new bill is a dramatic departure from the protections included in the original MAID legislation. It has confirmed the fears of many: that the initial legislation represented the crest of a steep, slippery slope towards a much more expansive and dangerous approach to euthanasia.

One of the primary functions of government is to protect the lives of its citizens. In fact, the right to life is expressly enshrined in our charter. Sadly, the bill before us fails to protect the lives of our most vulnerable. It would remove the critical safeguards contained in the original MAID legislation. Removing these safeguards would have irreversible consequences. What is deeply disturbing is that Liberal MPs steadfastly refused to allow additional hours of debate to ensure that the law would reflect the will of Canadians, and they obstinately refused to accept reasonable amendments to Bill C-7 that were brought forward by our Conservative MPs.

These amendments were supported by a broad cross-section of stakeholders and included things such as leaving in place the 10-day reflection period before choosing death, ensuring the right to withdraw consent and protecting vulnerable patients by requiring the patient to be the one who first requested information on MAID. These were eminently sensible amendments that supported the autonomy of the individual while protecting the vulnerable, so it is fair to ask why the Liberal government did not support these amendments and why there is a rush to ram this legislation through the justice committee.

The Truchon case also highlights the role that judicial creep plays in the evolution of social policy in Canada. Four years ago, many of us expressed great apprehension that the original Bill C-14 would be expanded by future court decisions, and that these decisions would leave more vulnerable populations exposed to the reach of medically assisted suicide. Although our concerns were summarily dismissed at that time, Truchon and Bill C-7 have fully borne out our concerns, which is why more and more disability groups, I believe around 72, have set the alarm bells ringing and are vehemently opposing this legislation. They argue that this legislation amounts to “a deadly form of discrimination”, making it easier for disabled persons to die than to live. Again, piece by piece, the protections for the vulnerable that were promised in the original assisted suicide bill are being stripped away. In the future, things can only get worse unless we say a clear no to Bill C-7.

● (1520)

I have great sympathy for our fellow citizens who suffer from intolerable pain and are pleading for relief. Concern and compassion are hallmarks of life in Canada, and are qualities I hope we never discourage or disparage. However, I would also hope the primary focus of care for these individuals, at least in the first instance, would always be a higher level of palliative care.

What the government has done instead is focus on expanding the opportunities for Canadians to end their lives rather than improve them. This bill would allow Canadians with a mental illness or other disability to end their lives through assisted death even if they were nowhere near death. The government's own annual reporting revealed that, last year, 87 disabled Canadians who died with medical assistance had been denied access to critical disability support

Government Orders

services. That is simply unacceptable. Canadians with disabilities deserve better.

To fully understand the slippery slope I referenced earlier, one need only look to the recent report from Dr. Ivan Zinger, Canada's chief correctional investigator, who exposed deep flaws in our current MAID regime as manifested in Canada's prisons. He cites the case of one terminally ill prisoner who was serving a two-year sentence. The inmate sought compassionate early parole to die a natural death in his community. Parole was denied. He then sought and received an assisted death. This is a gross misapplication of assisted suicide, and raises important questions about whether the government is adequately supporting Canadians who are facing difficult end-of-life decisions. Dr. Zinger has called for an absolute moratorium on all assisted suicide in Canada's prisons.

More broadly, I call into question whether the government is exercising the requisite caution and care to avoid unnecessary overreach and ensure that MAID is not abused or misapplied.

Equally disturbing is the concern that MAID would increasingly be used by the poor to escape their dire circumstances. A recent article in Maclean's, entitled “Dying for the Right to Live”, concluded that some disabled Canadians were considering MAID because they “simply cannot afford to keep on living.” The article referenced Susan, which is not her real name, who explained that because she had dietary restrictions food banks were not an option for her, and that a livable income was literally a matter of life and death. She said:

An increase [in income support] is the only thing that could save my life. I have no other reason to want to apply for assisted suicide, other than I simply cannot afford to keep on living.

How many other Susans are out there, for whom expanded availability of MAID represents a quick exit out of their circumstances? Who is next, children or perhaps Canadians struggling with mental illness who ask for assisted suicide because they fear being a burden to their family and friends? These are the vulnerable the Liberal government promised to protect. Members will recall that when the former minister of justice originally tabled MAID, she emphatically declared, “we need to be absolutely confident that we would not be putting vulnerable people at risk”, yet here we are today chipping away at the very protections that were so blithely guaranteed by our Liberal colleagues not so long ago.

Government Orders

I do not believe that Canadians expected that assisted suicide would be extended to those not terminally ill or near death, nor do I believe they would support MAID being used to displace a commitment to deliver a higher level of palliative care in our country. Similarly, I do not believe Canadians are in any way comfortable with the idea that our country would shirk its responsibility to the indigent by providing MAID as an escape from abject poverty.

• (1525)

For something as final as death and something as precious as life, should we not be taking a greater amount of time and care in debating and implementing the end-of-life options for Canadians? Instead of ushering in a new world of options for Canadians to seek death, should we not be doing our very best to incent Canadians to choose life?

• (1530)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, by way of clarification, amendments were accepted at committee. One was by the NDP with respect to accessing expertise in rural and remote communities and one by the Green Party in respect to ensuring consultation happens between the Minister of Health and the Minister of Disability Inclusion.

Over the last couple of days we have heard a lot of debate on safeguards and why some safeguards are being eased while others are being increased. What I would put to the member is that we have the benefit now of four years of data after the advent of Bill C-14 in the last Parliament. What that data has shown us, and what the results have shown us, is that some of the safeguards were not doing the work they were intended to do.

The 10-day reflection period, for example, was prolonging suffering among those who were availing themselves of MAID because some were ensuring they would be able to provide final consent on that 10th day by depriving themselves of their own pain sedation medication.

Does the member agree that, in certain instances, safeguards like that need to be revisited and altered to address the need to be compassionate and alleviate suffering?

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, certainly, we should always be open to reviewing legislation, safeguards and some of the regulations attached. However, the amendments he suggested were accepted by the Liberals at committee are the least substantive of the amendments that were submitted.

With respect to prolonging suffering, the 10-day reflection period was intended to make sure that people had a proper opportunity to consider what it meant to receive medical assistance in dying. Prolonging suffering is never the intent of government, and it should not be of any member of this House.

The focus, however, should be on providing palliative care, alleviating that suffering and encouraging people to live fulsome and productive lives that are free from pain. That is where the focus on palliative care should come in. Sadly, the government has completely abandoned making palliative care the focus of end of life care.

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.): Madam Speaker, I have been listening throughout the day to many of the comments from the Conservative Party, and they always want to emphasize the role of the Liberal government. I think it is important for us to recognize a couple of things.

One is that all lives are of equal value. I genuinely believe that, as I know my caucus colleagues do. The second is that it is important to note, because this is a minority government, this could not be done without the support of other opposition parties. We have the support for the legislation from the Conservatives, the Greens and the New Democratic Party.

I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts. Is it the Conservatives' intention to hold off on preventing the question to be called, or does the member see us continuing to debate this indefinitely?

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I would remind the member that it was the current Liberal government that actually brought forward this MAID legislation, and, more critically, failed to appeal the Truchon case, which was a case that came up from a lower court from a single judge. To then make a life-and-death decision in a piece of legislation that affects life and death without consulting the nine justices of the highest court in the land is grossly irresponsible.

That is why I am asking this member and his party to reconsider. It is very clear this legislation was rushed through to try to comply with an arbitrary date that was set by that lower court judge. This deserves a full airing and review at the highest court of the land. Sadly, the Liberal government has refused to do that for Canadians.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be joining the debate on this issue. It is an important one, and I want to make sure I reflect what my constituents have been telling me on Bill C-7. The vast majority of them want me to vote against this legislation because it would remove a great many safeguards. It would also, in my view, violate some of the intentions set out in the debate we undertook on Bill C-14.

I remember this was a deeply, deeply personal issue for many parliamentarians in the last Parliament, and it is a deeply personal issue to many of my constituents now. They have stories of loved ones who have grievous chronic conditions and were found to be ineligible because of the way Bill C-14 was structured, but they found solace in the fact Carter had paved the way at the Supreme Court to allow for this exemption to the assisted suicide provisions in the Criminal Code. While this is a debate that is deeply personal to parliamentarians and constituents, the law is not, and the law has to be as clear as possible.

In preparing for this debate, I went back and looked at Hansard to see what I had said previously on this. I had problems with the term “reasonably foreseeable”. I could foresee that a judge at some point would strike down this provision. That is exactly what I raised as an issue with Bill C-14 at the time, and it continues to be an issue in Bill C-7.

“Grievous and irremediable” is the term used in paragraph 127 of the Carter decision. I am always worried when I start quoting decisions of various judges, as I remember it was H. L. Mencken who said that judges are simply law students who grade their own exams.

However, I went through the Carter and Truchon decisions again in preparation for this after hearing the excellent contributions at second reading debate by my colleague, the member for St. Albert—Edmonton. He rightly pointed out that this should have been appealed to the Supreme Court, the original judicial body that decides the laws of the land and if they conform with our Constitution.

Paragraph 682 of the Truchon decision reads:

Individuals in the same position as Mr. Truchon must be allowed to exercise full autonomy not only at the end of life, but also at any moment during their life, even if this means death, where the other eligibility conditions for medical assistance in dying are met.

Looking at the Carter decision, it does not conform to Truchon. Again, this should have been appealed to a higher court. Bill C-7 goes far beyond what was in the Truchon decision and what that single Justice Baudouin said. I really think the government did a great disservice to Canadians by not appealing the decision in order to get a final verdict for parliamentarians to be able to legislate on this question. At the end of the day, we are supposed to be the ones who legislate on behalf of our constituents.

I have concerns many of the safeguards we have talked about are being eliminated. There is a doctor in Calgary, Dr. Thomas Bouchard, who said that the way the government is legislating on this question is reckless. As well, the timeline is incredibly rushed. I would much rather hear from more parliamentarians in the chamber reflecting on the views they are hearing from their constituents, so we can get this right the second time around, now that we are relying on the Truchon decision in the matter.

The UN rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities said that MAID violates the right to life of persons with disabilities. I had a disabled daughter who passed away in the last Parliament, and I cannot but think that had she been able to grow up to be an adult that she would have been placed in an awful situation. I likely would have been her guardian in her later years, and I would have been placed in a situation looking after a loved one who would be rendered eligible for MAID. I cannot be there all the time.

I have had many constituents tell me they are concerned about their minor children and whether, once they have grown up and become adults, they will be able to be with them all the time to ensure that, when they go to the hospital with a medical condition, MAID is not pushed onto them. My constituents are concerned that MAID may be pushed on them because palliative care options may not be there. They are concerned the chronic conditions that are found to be grievous, irremediable and cannot be cured with current medical

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technology would lead to them being pushed into MAID by physicians, whether rightly or wrongly.

My colleague from Foothills and my colleague from Abbotsford raised excellent points, and I do not want to retread on the same matters they spoke about.

• (1535)

Constituents in my riding have constantly told me that they understand the debate on whether medical assistance in dying should exist in Canada. It was settled in the previous Parliament in Bill C-14. The question before us is what types of safeguards need to be in place.

In the Truchon decision rendered by Justice Beaudoin, it says that it should be open to people beyond what the Carter decision of the Supreme Court said. This is the box that Parliament should legislate within. We have to be conscious of that. Just as I have issues with death needing to be reasonably foreseeable, there were ways that we could have fixed those issues, but not with what is in Bill C-7. It goes far beyond what Truchon called for in any of the sections. In reading the decision, I do not see Bill C-7 meeting those goals.

Every single step in the process is a safeguard for that a person. They may change their mind, reflect on the questions, or obtain access to better palliative care or new technologies that render care for them better and simpler, or perhaps relieve them of a chronic condition.

I am thinking of my other three live-in kids, who have a chronic kidney condition called Alport Syndrome. It is incurable right now, and it leads to kidney failure eventually. I do not know if many members have spoken to those who are on dialysis, but it is deeply unpleasant.

I know one person on dialysis who does half marathons. I have walked 100 kilometres in the Kidney March right next to Said, who lives in my riding. He is a two-time kidney transplant recipient. He told me how difficult dialysis is and how one's mental health suffers from it.

He explained the difficulties around it, but he persevered and went through it. I think of my children in the future. If a cure is never found for their Alport Syndrome, and they are on dialysis or waiting for a kidney transplant, what will the options set before them be? What will be the safeguards available for them when the time comes and perhaps they want to make decisions and a choice like that.

I have had constituents who are surprised by their family members having made a request for medical assistance in dying at the hospital. They were completely unaware of. That should be taken into account. That is why the 10-day cool down period allows family members to be in the know.

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All of our deaths are reasonably foreseeable. That was my complaint on Bill C-14 in the last Parliament. However, we do not have to die alone, and family is there for those types of difficult places. I was there for my daughter when she passed away. Even though we may consider this debate difficult, after a judicial decision, we have to get it right. Our personal views should be set aside. What our constituents believe to be the right thing to do in this matter matters the most.

I am trying to reflect what I have heard from my constituents who have expressed deep concerns over the lack of safeguards. Too many of them are being eliminated merely four years after the previous legislation was passed in Parliament. This is probably going to be the most important debate that many of us have in the scope of our parliamentary careers. I know that is what I will think after my time in Parliament is done. This will have been the capstone, the greatest, most important debate.

I want to reflect what my constituents have said. While dying with dignity is a slogan I have often heard, so is living with dignity. We have to ensure we put the resources and the time. We have to ensure the ability to protect our physicians and nurse practitioners, who are providing this service in the different provinces and territories, and that proper safeguards are in place, so that those who are vulnerable, those who are disabled, are not looked upon as the next person for whom MAID should be offered.

Safeguards are important. This legislation does not meet the expectations of my constituents. I will have to vote against it.

• (1540)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I offer the sympathies on behalf of everyone in the House with respect to the personal loss the member has had within his family.

I would point out a couple of clarifications. In terms of the consultations that went into the preparation of the bill, 300,000 people did fill out a questionnaire and about 125 experts were consulted. There was a lot of due diligence done in that regard. I asked these very questions about the prosecution or discipline of any medical or nursing professionals in the course of delivering MAID in the last four years, and there has been no evidence of that.

The member has read the case law and I appreciate that. I want to take him to one part of the Truchon decision because it goes to the heart of what is alleged to be discriminatory here. Paragraph 678 of the Truchon decision says that, when you deny the ability for people like Mr. Truchon and Madame Gladu to make this kind of choice, you are actually discriminating against them in failing to appreciate their competence and their autonomy. I wonder if the member opposite could comment on that paragraph of the decision.

• (1545)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I have paragraph 678 right here and I am looking at it. I have read it. In Truchon, they found that paragraph 241.2(2)(d) was unconstitutional.

Again, this a lower court decision. The right thing to do here would have been for the government to appeal this to the Supreme Court of Canada and have it confirmed there by whatever decision the Supreme Court's nine justices, supposed to be the best legal

minds of Canada, made as to whether Justice Beaudoin was correct in her determination of paragraph 678 in her decision. That would have been the right thing to do.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I as well would like to offer my condolences to the hon. member and thank him for sharing that story so that we can learn.

I actually have a question. I am aware of some of the concerns that have been raised by the disability community, particularly in regard to the failure of mentioning the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, specifically related to article 19, which refers to the rights of persons with disabilities “to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment of persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community, including”, and then it goes into that.

I know the member said he would vote against this. If the government was open to making some of these amendments to reflect the concerns coming from the disability community, would he then be open to supporting this particular bill?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, it is actually a very good question. I was hoping, through the committee process of the House of Commons, at the justice committee, which I participated in for some of the meetings as a substitute for some members, that we could reintroduce the safeguards that are being eliminated beyond the Truchon decision, ensure that we protect the conscience rights of physicians who are also a party to this decision-making process, include better safeguards for persons with disabilities, and find wording somewhere between “reasonably foreseeable” and what the government is doing in Bill C-7 to put a better scope in for end-of-life care and determine it that way. In that case, I would absolutely reconsider how I would vote on this.

However, because of the way it is structured in Bill C-7, I would rather get it right on a matter as important as life and death.

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that common-sense and well-thought-out speech. My question again has to do with COVID-19. We see right now that there is a pandemic of mental health challenges within this pandemic. Loosening the safeguards in a bill like MAID makes me wonder if the member thinks it might have a very detrimental impact on Canadians who are struggling with mental health and that it might potentially create a climate for a suicide pandemic, looking to MAID as an option rather than the last resort. As we know, death is final and irreversible.

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Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, again that is a great point to raise. I remember having a meeting maybe a month and a half ago, before new restrictions came in Alberta, with about 20 or so constituents. Every single one had a story of a suicide they were connected to: a co-worker, a family member or somebody they knew in their neighbourhood. The youngest that I was told about was a 14-year-old who had committed suicide.

There is this great and deep harm being done to people's mental health because of this pandemic and everything that joins with it. I did a Standing Order 31 statement on it just a week ago. Over 2,000 more suicides are expected in Canada and legislation like this does not make it any simpler for people who will find themselves in emergency care units and who will be perhaps in despair about the situation that they find themselves in. It is an excellent question.

• (1550)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to enter into the debate on what is such an important issue. I attempted to enter into debate on Friday but due to some technical difficulties and the challenges that we all face regarding COVID, I was not able to. Therefore, I am pleased to be able to join the report stage debate on Bill C-7.

I am going to attempt to address a number of different issues throughout my remarks today, acknowledging the fact that this is an incredibly sensitive subject on which there is a diversity of opinions, views and perspectives. Importantly, I feel that diversity needs to be respected.

I would bring to members' attention a couple of comments that the Minister of Justice made in question period earlier today. He said something like that there are diverse and evolving views on this, and that is absolutely true. However, it was the next statement that was incredibly troubling to me and, I know, incredibly troubling to many who have participated in this debate. Certainly, the hundreds of constituents whom I have heard from on this matter are troubled as well. The minister went on to say that this "does represent a consensus". It is incredibly troubling that the minister would use language as definite as that to basically shut down what is valid debate on such an important subject, a subject that is literally life and death.

To use a specific example of the diversity of views that exist on this subject, I posted on my Facebook page the other day a question posed by the member for Vancouver Granville, the former Liberal justice minister, about this very issue, on which that member's perspective is very different from the current Liberal justice minister's. In the myriad of responses, both on Facebook and those that came into my office, I found it incredible how many people reached out to provide feedback and say what they hoped the bill would include and what they hoped it would not include, and many more wanted to provide input.

The minister talked about how the Liberals heard from 300,000 Canadians, and that is great. I forwarded the consultation information to many constituents who were curious about this when those consultations took place. I find it very interesting because, in fact, in many cases I had constituents who forwarded the information they sent to the minister on the consultation also to me. I am afraid, certainly from the perspective of those people in Battle River—

Crowfoot who also reached out to me, that this legislation does not address the diversity of views that exist. I could continue on this particular subject, but I think the definite nature in which the government rushed this legislation through is troubling further.

Notwithstanding the proroguing of Parliament, which is a subject that I have litigated in this chamber prior to this point, and certainly we will hear a lot more about that, especially as we enter into what will cut off my questions and comments time, the fall economic update. However, the fact is that this legislation is being rushed through. There were many further witnesses who would have provided valuable input to the discussion regarding this bill in committee. There was a whole series of amendments, and many good amendments. In fact, the two amendments that are being considered at report stage deserve valid consideration. They are two eminently reasonable amendments that would ensure that there are safeguards put in place so that Canadians are protected. I sat in on the justice committee for a short time and listened in on more of the debate. There is much more that should have been said.

• (1555)

I find it troubling that, in typical Liberal fashion, they seem to have manufactured a level of urgency. This was introduced in the last Parliament. They prorogued Parliament and then said it had to be done and there was only a short time frame in order to do it or else there would be significant consequences. It is that manufactured urgency that does not lead to the best public policy outcomes. This is incumbent upon all parliamentarians.

In fact, I find it interesting that the parliamentary secretary to the House leader was just talking to one of my other Conservative colleagues. He asked how long we planned to drag this out. It is concerning that on a question as important as this, including life and death for the most vulnerable among us, the government would think it is an opportunity to rush legislation through. It is incredibly concerning that they would demonstrate what seems to be such flagrant disregard for the diversity of perspectives that exist.

There is no question, as I have read the bill carefully and, as I said before, followed the committee proceedings very carefully, that we need to ensure that the most vulnerable among us are protected. I listened carefully to a press conference that included some disability advocates and professionals from indigenous communities in our country. They were addressing specifically the direction the bill was taking. It is incredibly concerning that it seems those perspectives were not heard in the Liberals' forcing through of this legislation.

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In a community where there is already a suicide epidemic, the government is pushing through something that goes contrary to the value of life that these indigenous folks were talking about. It is incredibly concerning that those issues are not being addressed effectively. We have heard from health care professionals who say the lack of safeguards provide an opportunity for this to be abused. There is nothing more final than death. It is absolutely essential that we get this right.

When I was walking to go sit in at the justice committee, I was speaking with a friend on my cellphone and he asked what we were debating today. I said medical assistance in dying. We talked about that. What I find interesting is a statement he shared with me. He said, "Isn't it something that you are literally going to debate something like life and death?" We all need to take incredibly seriously the information that is put before us.

I did want to touch very briefly on how it seems the legislation fails to acknowledge them and almost creates two classes of Canadians, specifically when it comes to the protections and safeguards that need to be in place regarding Canadians who have disabilities.

I am absolutely thrilled to have many folks in my life with a wide range of disabilities. There is a young man who comes into my office who has a disability and he is an absolute joy. He volunteers and he loves to come in and help his member of Parliament. He calls himself my special campaign manager. He is an incredibly valued part of my constituency. I had classmates who had disabilities. There are many perspectives across this country.

The unintended consequences of this bill being rushed through, with its wording being ambiguous, is that it could have significant consequences in the way we approach a subject as important as this. It leads to the fact that those who are most vulnerable within our society may feel the most significant consequences of not having appropriate safeguards in place.

I see my time is coming to a conclusion and I know there are very pressing subjects to discuss further. I would just finish by saying this: Let us all take seriously what I would suggest is one of the most important aspects of our job as parliamentarians, which is to ensure that Canadians are protected and can live with dignity.

With that, I will be unable to support the bill and would encourage members to carefully consider it as we go forward.

• (1600)

The Speaker: It being 4 p.m., pursuant to order made Wednesday, November 25, I now invite the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to make a statement.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's fall economic statement supporting Canadians and fighting COVID-19.

[Translation]

COVID-19 is surging across Canada right now. We know the winter ahead will be hard. For far too many families, it will be a winter of loneliness and grief, but we also know that spring will follow winter.

The message I would like to share with Canadians today is that we will get through this. We are a resilient people; we are a resourceful people; and we have a plan.

We know what we must do to get through the dark months ahead, and we know what we must do to bring our economy roaring back, once this pandemic is beaten.

Every life lost to COVID-19 is one life too many, so we need to redouble our public health efforts until the virus is crushed. We do not have the luxury of fatigue. We have arrows in our quiver.

[English]

We are better prepared today than we were last spring. Canadians and Canadian businesses now have access to a comprehensive package of federal support measures to help them weather shutdowns ordered by public health authorities.

We know how to keep most of our economy, from manufacturing to mining to jobs that can be done remotely, operating safely, even while the virus is still circulating in our communities. We have learned how to keep many of our children in school.

Our ability to treat the disease has evolved. As of late November, more than 5.5 million Canadians had downloaded the COVID Alert app. We have the PPE and ventilators we need. We have learned to wear masks, keep two metres apart and wash our hands.

Most importantly, safe, effective and plentiful vaccines are on the way. We do not know precisely when this pandemic will end, but we do know that it will end.

This fall economic statement outlines the measures taken by the Government of Canada to fight and defeat COVID-19, to support Canadians through this crisis and to rebuild Canada's economy once the virus is beaten. We will do whatever it takes to help Canadians stay healthy, safe and solvent. We will invest in every necessary public health measure, and support Canadian families and businesses in a deliberate, prudent and effective way.

• (1605)

[Translation]

We understand the sacrifices that have been made and are being made by Canadians, right now.

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Many small business owners have shut their doors. Workers are still without jobs. Parents have put careers on hold to keep their families healthy and safe. Young children diligently wear masks for hours every day in school, knowing they are helping to protect their grandparents. I thank them for that.

Canadians are doing their part. It is only right that we in this House do ours by ensuring the economy that comes after this pandemic is more innovative, inclusive and resilient than the one that preceded it. From the onset of COVID-19, our government has done everything in our power to combat the virus and mitigate its harm, using every tool available.

[*English*]

Eight out of every 10 dollars spent in Canada to fight the virus and support Canadians has been spent by the federal government. To date, the government has procured more than two billion pieces of PPE and we have assembled a comprehensive, world-leading portfolio of vaccines.

The government has invested more than \$1 billion in vaccine agreements, securing a domestic supply of up to 429 million doses of seven promising vaccines, which is more than 10 doses for every Canadian. In fact, Canada has secured the most diverse and extensive vaccine portfolio of any country in the world. Every Canadian can rest assured that a safe and effective vaccine will be available to them free of charge.

The battle against COVID-19 has proceeded on many fronts. We have invested in health care, increased testing and tracing, and directly supported provinces and territories as they fight the virus. This has been a team Canada effort.

[*Translation*]

Total support so far includes \$322 billion in direct measures to fight the virus and help people; and \$85 billion in tax and duty deferrals. This is the largest economic relief package for our country since the Second World War.

Last spring, the Canadian Armed Forces did heroic work in our long-term care facilities in Ontario and Quebec, saving Canadian seniors' lives.

In the summer, we announced more than \$4 billion so provinces and territories could build up their testing and contact tracing capacity, part of our \$19.9-billion safe restart package.

To help stop the spread of the virus in vulnerable communities, we worked with cities and communities to ensure that voluntary self-isolation sites would be available as an alternative to crowded housing. Alongside these essential health measures, we have introduced robust economic programs to help people, businesses and organizations of all sizes survive this pandemic. Together, these supports form a comprehensive safety net, which will be in place until the summer of 2021.

[*English*]

The Canada emergency response benefit, the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency business account were quickly developed and rolled out so that people could pay their rent

and mortgages and feed their families while doing their part to defeat the virus by staying home.

• (1610)

From March through October, the CERB alone supported 8.9 million Canadians. Seniors received a special old age security top-up of \$300. Qualifying Canadians with disabilities have received additional support, worth up to \$600. In August, the government announced the Canada recovery benefit, the Canada recovery caregiving benefit, the Canada recovery sickness benefit and enhanced employment insurance. Each will be in place through the fall of 2021. This safety net is providing essential security to millions of Canadians.

This month, the government launched new measures for businesses with a new commercial rent subsidy, paid directly to businesses that, this week, will begin receiving support for up to 65% of their rent or mortgage interest, retroactive to September 27. Businesses will also begin receiving new lockdown support of an additional 25% of rent or mortgage interest where a shutdown is required by public health order. This means qualifying businesses in lockdown can have up to 90% of their rent covered.

We are extending the Canada emergency wage subsidy through to June 2021. More than 3.9 million Canadian jobs have been protected by this program alone. In December, Canadian businesses will be able to apply for a top-up to the Canada emergency business account loan and grant program. Already, more than 780,000 small businesses across the country have taken advantage of the \$40,000 CEBA loan, of which \$10,000 is forgivable. The top-up is an additional \$20,000 loan, of which half will be forgivable.

[*Translation*]

We know that small businesses are the heart of our communities and the engine of our economy. Small businesses are the foundation of Canada's middle class. We know this crisis is hitting family businesses particularly hard, imperilling in a few months the work of a lifetime, and often of generations. That is why it is so important to support our small businesses and the middle class families who have built them.

Routine Proceedings

These measures provide economic certainty to Canadians in a turbulent and uncertain time. They will help get us through the winter. These measures are targeted and flexible. They are most generous to those in greatest need. They are an essential complement to our health care response. They allow people and businesses to do the right thing, knowing they do not have to choose between public health and putting food on the table.

Our commitment to employee sick leave and to supporting businesses where local shutdowns are ordered are examples of this approach. With the second wave upon us with full virulence, we are taking additional steps to help Canadians and Canadian businesses get through to the other side, solvent and intact. We are providing \$1 billion for a safe long-term care fund for the provinces and territories, making fresh investments in PPE and preparing for the largest vaccination mobilization in Canada's history.

We are providing new resources to help improve ventilation in our public buildings to make them safer. To help workers and businesses, we are raising the wage subsidy back to a maximum of 75%, recognizing the early months of the year are the toughest for many businesses, now more than ever.

• (1615)

We know that businesses in tourism, hospitality, travel, arts and culture have been particularly hard hit. So we are creating a new stream of support for those businesses that need it most, a credit availability program with 100% government-backed loan support and favourable terms for businesses that have lost revenue as people stay home to fight the spread of the virus.

[English]

This is the most severe challenge our country has faced since the Second World War. It is our most severe economic shock since the Great Depression and our most severe public health crisis since the Spanish flu a century ago. Canadians should know that their federal government will be there to help them get through it, come what may.

Today, I have spoken about the nature of the threat we face and the remedies we have provided. The fight against COVID-19 continues, but there is now light at the end of the tunnel. After winter comes spring. The seeds we have sown and will continue to plant in the weeks and months ahead to protect Canadians' health and save our jobs and businesses will help us come roaring back from the coronavirus recession. This careful husbandry will prevent the long-term economic scarring that would otherwise delay and weaken our post-pandemic recovery.

I am the daughter of an Alberta farmer. Canada's farmers spend the winter fixing their tractors, combines and seed drills, and stocking up on supplies. While the ground is frozen, they get ready for seeding when the earth thaws.

Like all those great Canadian farmers, the work we do today will stand us in good stead in the spring. When the virus is under control and our economy is ready for new growth, we will deploy an ambitious stimulus package to jump-start our recovery. Spending roughly 3% to 4% of GDP over three years, our government will make carefully judged, targeted and meaningful investments to create jobs and boost growth.

[Translation]

Our stimulus will be designed, first and foremost, to provide the fiscal support the Canadian economy needs to operate at its full capacity and to stop COVID-19 from doing long-term damage to our economic potential.

Key to this plan will be smart, time-limited investments that can act fast while also making a long-run contribution to our future shared prosperity, quality of life, competitiveness and our green transformation.

• (1620)

[English]

The government's growth plan will include investments that deliver on our commitment to create a million jobs and restore employment to pre-pandemic levels as well as to unleash some of the Canadian economy's preloaded stimulus, the additional savings that have accumulated in the bank accounts of some Canadians and on the balance sheets of some businesses.

Our growth plan will foster economic rebirth in the short term and strengthen this country's competitiveness in the long run. Today, we are presenting a down payment on this plan. These are measures we can begin safely taking now. They include investments in the green economy and job training, particularly for youth and care providers, rural broadband, airport infrastructure, rapid housing, economic empowerment for vulnerable communities and measures to immediately build up our health and social infrastructure.

[Translation]

We know that Canada's future competitiveness depends on our ability to take advantage of the net zero green economy.

Our growth plan must continue to advance our progress on climate action and promote a clean economy. We will plant two billion trees over the next 10 years, provide 700,000 grants to help homeowners make energy efficient retrofits, and build zero-emission vehicle charging stations across the country.

These measures will encourage consumer spending and investment while greening our economy and creating well-paying jobs.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

This is a recession like no other we have faced. Women, young people, new Canadians, Black and racialized Canadians have been disproportionately hurt by the COVID-19 recession. They are, after all, the Canadians who are most likely to work in some of our hardest-hit industries, including care, hospitality and retail. We know that first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples are also disproportionately affected by this pandemic. Our growth plan will be designed with this particular damage in mind and will seek to heal it. This unique recession demands a unique response.

COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated the systematic barriers faced by Black entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium-sized businesses in Canada. Therefore, the government, in partnership with Canadian financial institutions, has announced an investment of up to \$221 million, including up to \$93 million from the Government of Canada over the next four years, to launch the country's first Black entrepreneurship program.

There is an unacceptable gap in infrastructure in indigenous communities, so our government proposes to invest \$1.5 billion, beginning in 2020-21, to speed up the lifting of all long-term drinking water advisories in first nation communities.

COVID-19 has been especially hard for young children and their families. We know that many middle-class families are really struggling. Therefore, to provide immediate relief for families with young children, our government proposes to introduce temporary additional support, totalling up to \$1,200 in 2020-21, for each child under the age of six for low and middle-income families entitled to the Canada child benefit.

We know that COVID-19 is rolling back many of the gains Canadian women have fought for and won in my lifetime. That is why today, as part of our commitment to an action plan for women in the economy, we are laying the foundation for a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. Just as Saskatchewan once showed Canada the way on health care and British Columbia showed Canada the way on pollution pricing, Quebec can show us all the way on child care.

I say this both as a working mother and as a finance minister. Canada will not be truly competitive until all Canadian women have access to the affordable child care we need to support our participation in our country's workforce.

- (1625)

[Translation]

This is a feminist agenda and I say that proudly. It is also an agenda that makes sound business sense and is supported by many of Canada's corporate leaders, people who have witnessed first-hand the toll this crisis has taken on women, their families and our children. We can only all do better when every one of us is contributing to our full potential.

[English]

As we build back, we have it within our reach to build back better, tackling challenges that hold us all back: homelessness, systemic racism, the unfinished and essential work of reconciliation.

Economic downturns are always especially hard on young people. The COVID-19 recession is particularly damaging in this regard because of its impact on the service sector in which many students work. Among other steps, the government proposes to reduce student debt by eliminating interest on the federal portion of the Canada student loan and Canada apprentice loan for 2021-22.

I remember vividly struggling with my own student loans and I am glad to help relieve our young people, who are swimming so hard against the COVID-19 current, of this additional burden.

In the coming months, we will work with Canadians and consult broadly to design the growth plan that will guide our recovery and set our course for the years to come.

Our country entered this crisis in a strong fiscal position, allowing our government to take decisive action to help people and businesses weather the storm. That action has helped so much. To date, Canada has recovered almost 80% of the more than three million jobs lost at the outset of the pandemic. Compare that to the United States which has recovered just over half, but there is still a lot of hard sloging ahead.

First, we must defeat the virus. Only then, when the threat of lockdowns and resurgence is passed, will our economy be ready for a return to full, stable, long-term growth. Canadians understand that this crisis demands targeted, time-limited support to keep people and businesses afloat and to build our way out of the COVID-19 recession. The support and investments outlined in this plan, including our stimulus, will foster a resilient and inclusive recovery.

Fiscal guardrails will help us establish when the stimulus will be wound down. The government will track progress against several related indicators, recognizing that no one data point is a perfect representation of the health of the economy. These indicators include the employment rate, total hours worked and the level of unemployment in the economy.

The data driven figures will tell us when the job of building back from the COVID-19 recession is accomplished and we can bring this one-off stimulus spending to an end. When the economy has recovered, the time limited stimulus will be withdrawn and Canada will resume its long-standing, prudent and responsible fiscal path based on a long-term fiscal anchor, which we will outline when the economy is more stable.

Routine Proceedings

● (1630)

[*Translation*]

Make no mistake. As we have learned from previous recessions, the risk of providing too little support now outweighs that of providing too much. We will not repeat the mistakes of the years following the great recession of 2008.

In this fall economic statement, we are being transparent about the continuing uncertainty. We are planning and preparing for all eventualities. The rate of infection, the severity of shutdowns, the deployment of a safe and effective vaccine, all of these are variables in our economic outlook and our path to recovery.

But as our fiscal plan shows, brighter days are ahead. We can afford the investment we must make to reach them. Canada entered this pandemic with the strongest fiscal position of any G7 country. We retain that position today.

Federal debt-servicing costs, relative to the size of our economy, remain at a 100-year low. We are locking in those low costs by issuing more debt into longer-term instruments at these historically low rates.

Canadians want a tax system that is fair, where everyone pays their fair share, so the government has the resources it needs to invest in people and keep our economy strong.

That is why we are moving ahead with implementing GST/HST on multinational digital giants, and limiting stock option deductions in the largest companies.

Canada will act unilaterally, if necessary, to apply a tax on large multinational digital corporations, so they pay their fair share just like any other company operating in Canada.

[*English*]

Our growth plan is far-reaching and transformative, but does this mean that the worst of the COVID-19 crisis has passed? Sadly, it does not. Indeed, our country's most difficult days may come in the weeks and months immediately ahead.

Hospitalizations are on the rise, and the virus continues to take a terrible toll, particularly on our elders. That is why we must redouble our public health efforts, obey public health instructions, physically distance, wear masks when in public, avoid social gatherings and wash our hands. We must all do this. We can save lives.

Canadians can and should avail themselves of the federal programs now available. This safety net is there now so that people can make the right decisions to protect our health. If we do the right things, if we hunker down and heed public health advice for these last remaining months, we will also be doing the right thing for our economy. We will bring closer the day when every Canadian can get back to a normal life. Most importantly, we will greatly lessen the mortal toll of this disease.

After nearly 10 months of the pandemic, we are all tired, but we also know that vaccines and a better day are coming. To get to that day, we must first help each other get through the winter. Our grandparents and great-grandparents lived through hard winters too, in times of war and depression, on frozen prairie homesteads and in windswept fishing villages in Atlantic Canada, all across our vast

country. The living survivors of those days, now our most vulnerable elders, are counting on us to buckle down for another few months.

We can do this, we must do this and we will do this. Canadians have faced tough winters before, and we have always emerged stronger. We will this time too.

● (1635)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want their lives back, and they were expecting to hear news today that the government had fixed its failures so that Canada will not be at the back of the pack to receive pandemic relief in the form of a vaccine that would give them their lives back. With the highest unemployment, other than Italy, in all of the G7, they were expecting a plan for paycheques; instead, they got a plan for more credit card debt. About \$400 billion will be added to our national credit card this year, which is eight times bigger than the previous all-time national average.

While the Conservatives supported the CERB, the small business loans and the wage subsidies, those account for less than half of that record-smashing deficit. In fact, we have gone from a debt-to-GDP ratio of 30% to 56%, now within view of the default levels that we hit in the 1990s when Liberals were forced to slash health care to deal with the massive debt crisis that existed at that time. We are not at the cliff or even on the edge of the cliff. We can now see the cliff, and this government is running toward it as quickly as humanly possible, with the biggest deficit by far in all of the G20.

The government spent the most to achieve the least. With all that spending, we are going to be at the back of the pack on vaccinations, we have the second-highest unemployment in the G7 and we could not get rapid testing approved in time to get Canadians safely back to their lives.

The minister has said that she would impose “limits” on our debt to avoid the brutal constraints of the marketplace. Will she tell us today, when speaking of the debt, what exactly those limits are?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite touched on a lot of issues, ranging from vaccines, to support on businesses, to debt, deficits and fiscal anchors. I am going to try and touch on most of those.

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Let me start with vaccines, and let me say something that is very important for Canadians to appreciate, because it is a key element in building the confidence we all need in our economic recovery. Canada has the most expansive portfolio of vaccines of any country in the world. We have 10 doses for every Canadian.

We have, like a smart farmer or investor, hedged our bets. There are seven different vaccines in our portfolio and four of those vaccines, from Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson, are already submitting data on a rolling basis to Health Canada regulators. That can, should and will provide a great deal of confidence to Canadians.

Let me quote Moderna's chair, Noubar Afeyan, who, by the way, came to Canada as a refugee child. He said that Canada is near the front of the line to receive 20 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine from Moderna. "The people who are willing to move early on with even less proof of the efficacy have assured the amount of supply they were willing to sign up to. In the case of Canada, that number is about 20 million doses." Let us think about that. That is 20 million doses of a single vaccine and there are 38 million Canadians. He continues, "The Canadian government, like others, have also reserved the ability to increase that amount. And those discussions are ongoing."

This is very important for building the essential confidence in one another and in our economy. We have an extensive vaccine portfolio and it is going to make a world of difference.

Let me speak briefly about the issue of debt and deficits. I will say two things. It is important for Canadians to appreciate that the interest charges on our debt that we are paying right now are the lowest in a century. The government is acting prudently to push out the maturity of that debt so we can lock in today's low interest rates.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 crisis is a health crisis. Health care is the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

The provinces and Quebec have been hammered by this crisis. Quebec alone is \$3 billion short to meet the excessive demand caused by COVID-19. The federal government has slashed health transfers year after year. These transfers now represent just 22% of overall spending in Quebec and the provinces. This 22% helps the provinces. Quebec and the other provinces called on the government to provide an additional \$20 billion to bring that percentage up to 35%. That was before COVID-19.

This government has presented an economic update and proposed a stimulus plan, but it has proposed nothing for health transfers, even though an increase in those transfers is the main demand of the provinces and Quebec. The government has no regard whatsoever for what the provinces and Quebec are going through right now.

The Liberals want a stimulus plan. That all depends on a vaccination plan.

They say they have bought lots of vaccine doses. They were panicking, of course. They knew they were behind the times, so they got busy buying more than they needed. That was not a smart move.

The smart move would have been to get ready for when the vaccine arrives. When will we get the doses? What is the timeline? How many doses will we get, and who will be vaccinated first? Which provinces will be prioritized because of their rates of infection? We have no information about any of that. What will the rules be around vaccinating people and sending doses to the provinces and Quebec? We have not heard a word about that. It is ridiculous.

We are in the middle of a health crisis. Why has the government not spared a thought for Quebec's and the provinces' health needs? Why is the government not taking meaningful steps toward creating a vaccination plan for all Quebecers and Canadians?

• (1645)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I will start by speaking about federal aid for the provinces and territories. It is truly historic.

Let us begin with the safe restart. We have invested \$19.9 billion in the restart. We have added another \$2 billion for the restart in schools, and as I announced today, we will be providing another \$8 billion for long-term care, ventilation and personal protective equipment. We are there for the provinces and territories. We are there for Canadians.

I want to add, for my hon. colleague's benefit, that we are there for Quebecers. We are there for Quebec businesses. Since the start of the crisis, eight out of every 10 dollars has been spent by the federal government. Twenty-five per cent of Quebecers received the Canada emergency response benefit. We saved the lives and families of 80% of Quebecers. This winter will be a hard one, so we have decided to raise the emergency wage subsidy to a maximum of 75%. That is a lot.

With respect to the vaccine, I think that Quebec must be proud of Noubar Afeyan, who is a Quebecer. His family still lives in Quebec. It is because Canada welcomes refugees that the world has this vaccine. Yesterday, Mr. Afeyan told the CBC:

The people who were willing to move early on with even less proof of the efficacy have assured the amount of supply they were willing to sign up to.

That is the case for Canada. We will have 20 million doses of the Moderna vaccine. It is one of our vaccines.

The Speaker: We have a minute left for one last question, so 30 seconds for the question and hopefully 30 seconds for the answer, too.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are struggling to put food on the table, struggling to keep a roof over their heads, but when they read the economic update, they will see that austerity is coming.

During this pandemic so far, we have seen \$53 billion of wealth going to Canada's billionaires. In this document, we see no wealth tax and no excess profits tax. The web giants are not obliged to pay \$1 of corporate tax.

For the pandemic and for the rebuilding, the question is very simple. Why does the government continue to refuse to have Canada's billionaires pay their fair share?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, I am accustomed in the House to facing many accusations, but I did not expect to be accused of a policy of austerity this afternoon.

When it comes to taxing the web giants, we are clear on our intent to levy the GST/HST equally on all service providers in Canada. That is fair, and I know Canadians believe in fairness. We also made very clear that while we much prefer working inside the OECD to have a multilateral approach to taxing corporate revenues of multinationals, if that job is not done, Canada will act unilaterally and in January 2022, we will impose our own tax, because that is fair too.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has proven her government has no plan. Without a plan for vaccines, there can be no long-term plan for our economy. Without rapid testing in wide distribution, we have missed out on a critical medium-term tool.

The Minister of Finance, in her speech, seems to realize she is putting the economy on hold. She will say that the economy will be rebuilt once COVID is beaten. Rapid tests could help preserve the economy and the vaccine will help us beat it. The government is late and has no plan for both. Canadians should see that off the start.

This year has been a very difficult year for Canadians. We all know that. The year 2020 will be remembered as the year a global pandemic came to our shores and took the government completely by surprise despite many departments warning of it for months. It will be remembered as a year of foreclosures, rising unemployment and uncertainty. Worse, for 12,000 Canadian families, it will be remembered as a year of grief and tragedy.

● (1650)

[Translation]

This year has been hard for everyone, for people of all ages. It will be remembered as the year of the pandemic that took this government by surprise. It has been a year of shutdowns and unemployment, but, even worse, a time of sadness for nearly 2,000 Canadian families who have lost a loved one.

However, Canadians have shown courage. They have been following the guidelines and helping small businesses. They have been there for friends and family.

[English]

Through it all, Canadians have shown courage and fortitude. They have respected directives from our health authorities. However, Canadians are hurting. Canadians want their lives back. This fall economic statement shows that they cannot rely on the Liberal government to get their lives back.

Canadians are not difficult people. They have complied, followed rules and tightened their belts. They are reassuring their worried children and taking care of aged parents. To this effect, I am really glad the Liberal government and the minister took my proposal from this spring on support for parents by boosting the Canada child benefit. There it was, on page 10 of my leadership platform. I am so glad the Liberal cabinet was reading it, just as hundreds of thousands of Conservative members were. I am glad because this was a concrete proposal to help families, especially working moms juggling it all, helping families through the toughest time in our modern history.

However, we know that Canadians need more. As I said, Canadians want their lives back. They have only asked one thing from the government, one simple thing, "What is the plan?"

What is the plan for widespread use of rapid tests? What is the plan for rolling out the vaccine? When does it arrive? Who gets it first? Do we have the freezers for the -70°C vaccine? A robust portfolio in 2023 does not help us as we enter 2021.

This fall economic statement answers the question on whether there is a plan, and it answers that no, there is not a plan. As the red ink on our balance sheet turns a dark crimson, we are facing a \$399 billion deficit, not \$400 billion. It is a bit like spending \$19.99, not \$20. It is only \$399 billion. Canadians know that not even half of that went to the emergency programs.

The government is not providing a plan and it is not providing clarity. It is clear, having been late on rapid tests and on the border, that there is no clarity or competence.

● (1655)

[Translation]

What is their plan?

The Liberals have turned their backs on millions of Canadians, and all this government can think to say is that there will be more debt, more unemployment, no vaccines and no transparency.

Why has it taken months to deliver rapid tests? Why does the entire population not have access to them? When will we get the vaccines? Who will be vaccinated first?

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Today's announcement just proves that the government is improvising. Canadians are fed up with the government's incompetence and chronically delayed responses.

[*English*]

This economic statement is another disappointment. Is that all the Liberals have to say to the thousands of unemployed workers left behind by the mismanagement of the government? Is that all they have to offer to Chris Rigas, owner of the Old Firehall restaurant in Niagara, who is struggling to get by because of restrictions? How does this statement help Rodney and Tina Grace, who have been working seven days a week to keep their Best Western open in Bridgewater, Nova Scotia? Of the businesses in Surrey, British Columbia, 30% still do not qualify for the wage subsidy because of red tape and rules from the government, but most of their staff qualify for the CERB benefit. Guess which decision businesses are faced with.

If the government spent half as much time meeting with real Canadians and small business owners than it spends on photo ops, it would know that workers and small business owners are asking for clarity. Canadians in a pandemic are not asking it to ban single-use plastics. They are asking for details on when the vaccine will get here, how it will be distributed, how it will be preserved at -70° Celsius, how they can save their aging parents from a seniors home or hospital bed. The Prime Minister needs to get his priorities straight.

It is hard to take the government seriously when we know how this all started. We should think about how much better off Canada would have been if the Liberals had not shut down the pandemic early warning system. They did that in 2019, without any consultation with scientists or opposition parties in Parliament.

For 20 years, Canada had the world's leading pandemic early warning detection unit. It helped stem the advance of H1N1 and Ebola. In other parts of the world, Canadians were helping to protect others. However, the government's incompetence led to that department not helping Canadians. The government preferred to shut that down and rely on open-source data from China rather than intelligence work gathered by Canadian experts. As a result, we had zero warning of the incoming pandemic. In many ways, the Liberal government took the batteries out of our smoke detector.

[*Translation*]

The Liberal government closed the borders two months too late. It flip-flopped on the risk of transmission between individuals and mask wearing measures.

The Conservatives were good sports. We tried to work with the government as much as possible. We tried to improve its erratic response. Above all, we were there to help workers who really needed it. We voted in favour of emergency measures and programs to help them.

The Prime Minister's idea of leadership was to tell people to apply for the CERB instead of helping workers keep their jobs. He really must live in an ivory tower if he thinks that Canadians like that solution. People want to work, not wait around for government cheques.

[*English*]

The truth is that the economic response by the Liberals has been erratic and confused at every step. We wonder why the Liberal government underspent on its own estimates for the wage subsidy by tens of billions of dollars, while overspending on the CERB by tens of millions of dollars. It did not have a plan to preserve the economy amid the storm of the pandemic. Millions more Canadians were put on the CERB than necessary when their jobs could have been maintained easily through an effective and swift wage subsidy.

● (1700)

[*Translation*]

This approach perfectly illustrates the difference between the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party. The Liberals believe that Ottawa has all the answers and has to give orders. We believe that the best solutions come when Ottawa works with the people on the ground. We want to work with partners, not a paternalist like the Prime Minister.

If only the Liberals had a clear plan. What we are hearing today is a government in panic mode that wants money to hide its incompetence. That is unacceptable. Canadians deserve better.

[*English*]

From my experience in the military and in business, I know one has to learn from setbacks and failures. We must strive for excellence in what we do and promote an approach of continuous improvement. Teams do that, businesses do that and charities do that; why does the Liberal government not do that? It has not even learned from what it got wrong or slow in the first wave of the pandemic. We were last in line on rapid tests, and now we are virtually last in line for vaccines. Countries with populations of about 2.7 billion will be seeing the vaccine before Canadians, many this year, and we cannot even get answers from the government on whether we have the logistics to receive it.

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The job of government in a crisis is to provide certainty and confidence in citizens who are worried. We must provide a plan, clarity, stability and competence for those who rely on us. The upheaval we are seeing in our country lately is in large part because of the misguided measures of the government. It was late on the border, late with programs, late with rapid tests and now late with vaccines. While the Prime Minister prefers to compare himself to the worst student in the class, when it comes to the spread of COVID-19, I want Canada to strive to be the best. That is what Canadians expect. Unfortunately, we are far from that right now, after the ongoing rapid test debacle, and this week Canadians are learning. Even today, the minister, in response to her speech, will not let us know which month next year vaccines will first start arriving. The government had the duty to learn from its errors in the first wave, but, instead of that, it has failed to provide vaccines for Canadians at the same time we will be seeing vaccines roll out with all our allies.

The Prime Minister has played the victim card; he has said his government was helpless and that Canada did not have the capability to manufacture vaccines. Not only is that complete rubbish, in the words of a leading scientist at the University of Ottawa, it is complete political spin, and it also does not explain why millions of people from Indonesia to Brazil will be receiving the vaccine before Canada will be. Again, the truth is that the Liberal government was slow to respond, and it made a critical, and sadly in some cases fatal, error to put all its eggs in a basket with China. Since the CanSino deal fell apart in August, the government has been scrambling to catch up, and it does not want anyone to know that it is months behind other countries. As I said earlier, countries with 2.7 billion people will be served before Canada. This means we are near the back of the line.

While Americans are talking about mass vaccination throughout all of January, our government is only speculating about getting part of our population vaccinated by September. That means 10 extra months of health risks for Canadians, business closures and economic uncertainty. Canadians want their lives back. The Minister of Health talks a great deal about the whole of government effort and the robust portfolio, but there is only one way to describe the performance of the government when it comes to vaccines: incompetent. Canadians, in the midst of the second wave, would rather have one dose of the vaccine in the next month than the largest portfolio 18 months from now.

• (1705)

[Translation]

This Liberal government does not inspire confidence, whether because it paid \$370 million for medical gowns from a company with almost no experience or because it gave its friend Frank Baylis a \$237-million contract for ventilators. The WE Charity scandal showed that friends of the Liberals were trying to profit off a pandemic. At a time when public confidence is so important, the Liberals are continuing to use their donor list to select future judges. It is one scandal after another.

“Uncertainty”, “lack of focus”, “massive spending”, “special treatment for friends” and “out of touch with the reality of Canadians” are the only ways to describe this government. The damage is real. Millions of people no longer trust the Liberals and know that they have been forgotten.

[English]

This should not come as a surprise. The Canadian economy was already showing serious signs of weakness before the pandemic hit. Ignoring the Conservative warnings, the Liberals took pride in running large structural deficits and raising taxes in good economic times, and in ideological policies opposed by the entire country, like Bill C-69. Tanker bans, pipeline cancellations, bad trade deals and the inability to negotiate tariff avoidance have resulted in \$160 billion leaving Canada before the pandemic.

Within two weeks of one another, a great Canadian company, Teck, cancelled a \$60-billion project for our GDP out west and the world's most famous investor, Warren Buffet, pulled out billions from a project in the east. There were already signs being sent by the Prime Minister that Canada was not open to job creation or investment at a time we need it. It will take a change in government to change that sign for the world. British Columbia has seen half a dozen sawmills close and the aluminum smelter in Kitimat, one of the greenest operations of its kind in the world, were left out to dry in both NAFTA and aluminum tariffs.

Canada was already at a crossroads under the Liberals before the pandemic and they are setting this country up, for the first time in our history, to pass on to our children a country with less opportunity and more division. However, it does not have to be that way and I want to prove it.

The middle-class values that myself and many of my colleagues were raised with, mine in Bowmanville, Ontario, taught me to work hard, help my neighbours and strive to be the best I could be. I was taught to learn from setbacks, never to accept failure, to pick myself up, dust myself off and get better. This led me to serve 12 years in the Canadian Armed Forces, alongside some of the most exceptional Canadian citizens around. It also led me to respect the value of hard work and perseverance and the nobility in work itself.

My first job was as a dishwasher and a short-order cook in high school and my last job before the military was with TransCanada, inspecting pipelines back at a time before the current government when that company was still proud to have Canada in its name. I respect people, and my colleagues do, who work hard to provide for their families, whether they are uniformed and unionized plant workers or entrepreneurs, whether they work the night shift in Mississauga, Ontario, or get up at 5 a.m. to open their small businesses in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

There is a nobility in that act of discipline, perseverance and working hard for one's family. We cannot lose that in this country. Conservatives will fight hard to ensure that we never lose touch of that fundamental value upon which Canadian society has been built.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

I believe it is my duty to be a partner to the provinces and the first nations. I will be a champion for small businesses and non-profit organizations. I believe in the tremendous potential of Canadian energy, softwood lumber and minerals. Canada produces the most ethical and environmentally friendly energy in the world, and we want to work more closely with the first nations to develop that energy.

Reconciliation needs to be about more than just fine words. We need to do more than just look at the mistakes of the past. We need a real plan for the future, a plan that instills pride in communities that are all too often forgotten and brings them sustainable wealth. The James Bay Cree and the Huron-Wendat in Quebec are an example to all of Canada.

[*English*]

We need to get this country working again. Hard work emboldens the soul and builds a nation. Hard work helps families. Those families build communities and make us proud to be Canadian.

Let us just think of Jacqueline and Barbara's 7Rooms Home Décor & Gifts in Ocean Park, British Columbia. They bought the store just before COVID. It has been extra tough for businesses like that, but Jacqueline and Barbara persevered, worked harder, re-branded and they recently reopened. Congratulations to Jacqueline and Barbara. That is the Canadian spirit. They do not want more debt saddling the next generation. They just want an opportunity. They could have packed it in, but they did not. They stayed open, they adapted, they persevered.

When I questioned the Minister of Finance in the House on behalf of energy workers in Alberta, she boasted about how many people she had put on the CERB in that province. Albertans especially, but Canadians do not want the CERB. They want the ability to get their lives back and to get back to work. They want a government that helps them build their livelihood in their communities, rather than pushing them to close shop and move away. It comes down to a clash of vision between the somewheres and the anywheres: those who love their trade, their pursuit, and are loyal to local businesses versus those whom the government wants to flock to a trendy job that is no way connected to the community or the betterment of our country.

While this Prime Minister seems to think that every Canadian can simply work on their laptop from the local café, that is not reality nor is it what Canadians want. Conservatives are here to fight for those who build things in Canada, those who get their hands dirty and take pride in doing a job well before they come home for the night. Whether they are pulling resources out of the ground, in Canada, or pulling resources out of their brain, educated in Canada, we need to applaud and help them do that. That is why we were hoping for a plan for rapid tests and for a vaccine. Unlike the fi-

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nance minister, I do not want the economy to crash and be rebuilt after the pandemic; I want to save it and make sure it is stronger after the pandemic.

We are here for the manufacturers, the aluminum and steel industry, the small business owners and the first-generation Canadian who started a business and now hires and employs seven other families. We are here for the farmers and the commercial fishermen. We are here for the indigenous entrepreneur and the working moms and dads juggling child care and the ability to get on the GO train to go into work in the city. We are here for those Canadians who want their lives back, who want the ability to work hard and want the ability to pass on to their children a Canada that is limitless in its potential. They deserve a government with a vision like that, not a government that is late at every step in the worst year in our modern history.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Canadian workers deserve a government that fights for them, a government that is not obsessed with the idea of pushing our industries to make a transition in the midst of a pandemic, a government that is patriotic and is not afraid to fight on the world stage for quick access to vaccines, a government that knows that Canada has an identity and a history we can be proud of.

[*English*]

This crisis and the rebuilding from it will take grit. It will take determination, perseverance and bold decisions, but, most important, it will take a plan to chart our course forward. That is why it is so disappointing. After a record period without a budget, there is a stealth budget introduced today with no plan.

COVID has set us back, but COVID will not stop us with the right ideas, with principled, ethical leaders who understand the value of a job, whether it is someone's first job out of school or their last job before retirement, and with a government that will put the prosperity of all Canadians ahead of the special interests of a select few.

If we have a government like this, Canada will emerge from COVID-19 stronger, richer and more determined than ever before. That is my mission. That is the mission of my colleagues with me here today and that must be our country's mission. That is why I am so disappointed with the finance minister's update today. There is no vision. There is no expression of values, including the value inherent in working Canadians.

The lack of a plan to address the most critical issues facing our country, in one of the most challenging years in our country's history, will only fuel the fears and uncertainties facing Canadian families across this great country.

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Now is not the time for experiments. Now is the time for experience. Now is not the time for building back with slogans. Now is the time we show we have our citizens' backs. We need to have a plan for the challenges we face today so that our children will have the same opportunities we did, tomorrow.

● (1720)

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, the leader of the official opposition started off by talking about how the government will be remembered in 2020. I believe that what Canadians are going to remember is that in a year of a crisis of a pandemic, a worldwide pandemic, the Government of Canada stepped up in a very real and tangible way to work with the provinces and territories, indigenous leaders, many organizations, non-profits, private sector and so many individuals, with the one possible exception of the official opposition, at least most of the time. We came together, recognizing that we needed to minimize the negative impact of the coronavirus. By working together, we were able to make a difference.

Does the leader of the official opposition not agree that by making an effort to work together collaboratively Canada has been very successful to date and will continue to be going forward because we have the right approach in terms of combatting the negative impacts of the coronavirus?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, the only collaboration I saw in the remarks today was the fact that the finance minister did adopt the child care plan I advanced last spring. In the spirit of team Canada, I was a little upset she did not thank me for the suggestions. However, if it is good for Canadian families, I am happy with that knowledge alone.

The member started off by asking what Canadians will remember the most politically amidst the pandemic. On this side of the House, what we will remember most, and what a lot of Canadians will remember most and be most disappointed with, is that even in a pandemic with no parliamentary oversight there was one special line for Liberal insiders and another line for all other Canadians.

There was the WE Charity scandal, where the Liberals prorogued the House and had a cover-up of historic proportions rather than answer reasonable questions about it. We had sole-source contracts for a former Liberal MP colleague of theirs whose seat was hardly cold from having sat in the House before he got untendered contracts, which the government members have tried to mislead Canadians about. They are saying it is with another company, even though the name of the respirator is the Baylis ventilator.

That is one of the disappointing things I will remember. Rather than team Canada, where some of us even offered to sit on an all-party pandemic response team, there was one line for Liberal insiders and one line for all other Canadians. On this side, we are going to fight for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the official opposition had plenty of suggestions and advice for the government on what it should have done and what it should do in the future.

I would like to hear his thoughts on a measure proposed by the Bloc Québécois that could help reduce the deficit, namely slashing all subsidies, tax credits and public funds paid to fossil fuel companies.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question.

We are here for all Canadians and all Quebecers. I am proud of our blue collar workers in Quebec's regions, from Saguenay to Abitibi. I am proud of our natural resources, which are the most environmentally responsible in the world.

That is why, in the midst of this pandemic, now is the time to think about jobs for all Quebecers. It is an opportunity to create wealth for everyone. I spoke with Premier Legault about this during our meeting. I will be a partner with the National Assembly. I will not be paternalistic, like this Prime Minister.

It is time for Quebecers to take another look at the Conservative Party, because we are here for the well-being of all Canadians. We are here to protect the French language in Montreal and across the country. We are ready to form the next government, and Quebecers deserve better.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know the member is a student of history. He knows that through previous crises we have had strict laws against excess profits and strict laws against profiteering, yet in this pandemic, Canada's billionaires have added to their wealth to the tune of over \$53 billion so far.

The papers the government distributed today indicate that what it intends to do, eventually, is to withdraw supports for people. However, the PBO has said there are two alternatives, one is withdrawing supports and the other is increasing revenues. However, in this document, there is no wealth tax and there is no excess profits tax. The web giants, who have made billions of dollars through this pandemic, are not obliged to pay \$1 of corporate tax.

Would the member agree with us that what needs to happen is that the government needs to take a strong stand against excess profits and put in place, on the revenue side, the kinds of things that would make a difference so that people can get the supports they so desperately need?

● (1725)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I know my friend from New Westminster—Burnaby is addressing questions to the leader of the Conservative Party, but I am the wrong person to suggest we need to raise taxes to. In fact, we probably need to provide some relief to small businesses and seniors who are struggling.

The problem is, and that member finds it every day in question period, there are four parties on the extreme left of the political spectrum in Canada right now. His declining party, the Liberal government, the Green Party and the Bloc are all on the far left. There is only one party in the centre, centre right.

[*Translation*]

The others are on the radical left.

[*English*]

There is only one party in the centre, centre right fighting for working Canadians.

I would invite the union members in that member's riding to take a look at the only party that supports building things in Canada and supports getting our energy and our resources to market. When it comes to some of the corporate excesses, I have been calling that out, too. I prefer caveat emptor, buyer beware. We should look at which grocery chains are squeezing suppliers, when that is one of the only sectors that have seen record profits amid a pandemic. Canadians want to support small local businesses and suppliers that respect local farmers and local producers, and are not squeezing them. We do not apply big government, but we will call out, particularly in a time of crisis, what we think is not appropriate corporate conduct.

I am very proud of our shadow minister of agriculture. After her efforts, we suddenly see the Liberal government respond, both on the grocery issue and, to my colleagues from across Quebec, on the compensation for our farmers, which was promised years ago and held up.

Not only are we opposing as the official opposition, but we are proposing. We are proposing to get Canada back on track and build our country back stronger.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, the member says he supports climate action and dealing with the climate emergency that we all voted we were in last year.

I would like to ask him about the proposal that the Liberals have, straight out of the Green Party documents, of creating a national energy grid to tie the provinces together. I would note that there was a geyser hit for geothermal in Saskatchewan that could put lots of former oil drillers to work, transferring their skills as we work through a just transition to make sure those workers have good-paying jobs, as we work towards the energy future and leave the fossil fuel era behind.

I just wonder what he thinks about this proposal that the Liberals have put forward, and what his ideas are in terms of clean, green energy in this country.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I actually arranged a call with the Prime Minister so that I could talk about working with the incoming administration on projects, getting Keystone done, being proud of energy independence between Canada and the U.S., and also looking at ways we could work together to build our economy stronger. There were two reports issued by the Prime Minister's Office on that call. The second one is the accurate one. The first one went out before the call took place.

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What I will say to that member is that I am proud of what we produce here in Canada. On the myth that energy is going to change in the next century, we will see a diminishment but the free world should be using resources from the only exporting country that has transparency, that has human rights adherence, that has environmental measures to reduce carbon intensity and that partners with first nations.

We are the environmental social governance leaders of the world with our energy and resources, and we should promote and be very proud of that.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by saying that we certainly hear our share of outrageous comments in the House.

We have not had a budget since the last election. It has been more than a year. The good news is that in today's economic statement, the government announced that it will present a budget in the spring. We look forward to that. We have been asking for one for a long time.

This summer the government provided an update that ended up being nothing but a snapshot of where we stood, what money had been spent so far, how big the deficit was and what the projections were. It was a useful document, but it lacked a vision and a plan for the future.

We thought that today's statement would finally give us what we wanted. After all, budgets are important in Parliament and are ideally presented once a year. There is often an update in the fall to brief us in the meantime.

At present, the government is going into debt and putting taxpayers and the public in debt as never before. Since it is providing no budget documents, or very few, we had pinned much hope on the document presented today. It contains a lot of good ideas, but unfortunately, we will have to wait until spring to see anything concrete. That is what the document says. It is a little late, and it is disappointing.

There are two fundamental elements that are important to the Bloc Québécois. We have a number of demands that would address certain needs, and they are not very complicated. Our job is to go see citizens, households, families, businesses and all the organizations working in society. These people tell us what they need and what problems they are having. Our job is to collect all this information, to represent them and to deliver their message. We want to be the voice of these individuals and businesses.

If there is one predominant issue that all Quebecers agree on, it is funding for health care. That is the case across the country, not just in Quebec. On the eve of the throne speech, all the provinces agreed that better funding for health care was needed. We are in the midst of a full-blown pandemic, a public health crisis, and this document has nothing, or just about nothing, for health.

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The Speaker: I want to remind everyone in the chamber that there is a presentation being made. Someone is speaking. I want us to respect that person, and we all want to hear what the hon. member for Joliette has to say.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Joliette may continue.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was starting to get a little difficult to speak in the House because the leader of the official opposition was having a loud conversation with one of his members.

That seems to happen a lot in the House, and here is why. When an MP speaks French, many unilingual anglophone MPs do not bother to listen to the interpretation. They do not understand what is being said, so they have their own conversations at the same time. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs said, that is clearly disrespectful. I thank him for his understanding.

I will pick up where I left off.

Our number one priority, based on what we hear from the people we go see, among other things, is health care funding. Just before the throne speech, all the provinces, especially Quebec, called for more health care funding. They need a funding boost. They get barely 20% of their money from the federal government, and they want a little over one-third, 35%. If I am not mistaken, that is an additional \$28 billion.

The reason the pandemic hit our long-term care homes so hard was because the system was already fragile. I even asked the chief public health officer of Canada about this at the Standing Committee on Health, and she agreed.

Why was the system fragile? The system has been chronically underfunded for decades, and that is essentially because the federal government has been stepping back. When the program first started a few decades ago, Ottawa was funding half of health care spending. In the mid-1980s, its contribution dropped to 40% and continued to dwindle over the years. In the late 1990s, Ottawa fixed its deficit problem by slashing transfers, and health transfers were the first to go. Now, the federal government barely covers one-fifth of expenses, and the provinces have to cover the rest. About half of every dollar paid in taxes comes here, so it would make sense for half of health care funding to come from here.

There was a consensus among the provincial premiers, but there was nothing about health care in the throne speech, and there is nothing about it in this economic update either. What is worse, in the economic update, the Liberals are bragging that 80% of the money for the programs implemented during the pandemic came from the federal government. Well, whoop-de-do. The federal government only has that flexibility because 80% of health care expenses are paid for by Quebec and the provinces. Ottawa was supposed to do its part and cover half of that, but it stepped back.

The Premier of Quebec and the other premiers are not asking Ottawa to go back to paying an equal share. They are just asking Ottawa to pay 35%, which is one-third or just over one-third.

There is nothing about this in the economic update, but it gets worse. The government said that it was going to give \$1 billion for Quebec's long-term care homes but that the funding would be contingent on Quebec submitting a plan. If the federal government deems the plan to be acceptable, then it will release the money. In spite of everything, Quebec will only be given the funding on condition that it spends it in accordance with the plan. Come on. Could the House please respect the provinces' jurisdiction? Whether the money comes from the Government of Quebec or Ottawa, it is taxpayers' money. Let us respect the areas of jurisdiction.

What does Ottawa know about health other than to fund it? That has been Ottawa's responsibility and it is failing. On the ground we have our nurses, doctors and the entire system. Where is the expertise? The federal government's only responsibility in health care, in my opinion, is the care provided to veterans. When we look at the cost of each service provided, it is two and a half times what the provinces are entitled to, which means that if Ottawa were responsible for health, we would not have the means to support a public health care system. That is the problem.

In this document, there is not one red cent for health, except for the \$1 billion with strings attached, and on top of that they are taunting us with standards. The government is using a pandemic, a major crisis, to centralize powers. They are rubbing their hands with glee at the idea. They are going to take advantage of our moment of weakness, at a time when we are on our knees, to tip the scales in their favour and further centralize powers. That is unacceptable and appalling. It is disrespectful and it is just not done.

● (1735)

What about seniors, the most vulnerable segment of the population? In recent decades, there have been all kinds of programs for just about everyone. Those programs are great, sure, but they leave seniors out in the cold. The government said no to seniors. In the meantime, inflation is bumping up the cost of residence rooms, housing, and groceries.

During the election campaign, the government said it would enhance old age security, but only for people aged 75 and older. There is not one penny in this document. The government even backpedalled on its campaign promises. We felt that dividing seniors into two classes, those aged 65 to 75 and those aged 75 and older, was unacceptable, but there is absolutely nothing here, not a penny. This despite the fact that the pandemic hit seniors first and that they are isolated and vulnerable and their buying power has taken a hit. They have been completely forgotten in all this. We might have expected more and better. I am a little disappointed, but not just because of that.

There are some good things in this update. There are not a lot of things. The main message is that we will have to wait until spring to see the budget and what is in it, especially what is in the stimulus plan. Still, there are some little things worth noting, like the announcement that the government will be taxing tech giants. As of July 1, tech giants will have to collect the GST and the other taxes. Quebec does it, and it is worth it. It was high time because foreign multinationals had an unfair advantage over our own businesses.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is hard to hear what my colleague from Joliette is saying because so many conversations are happening, despite our limited numbers here.

Would you prefer to ask my colleague from Joliette to wait until the conversations are over, or shall we let him continue and ask that our colleagues show some respect? I want to hear what he has to say.

The Speaker: I will take the second option. I would ask members in the House to lower the volume. It was much better than before, but perhaps they have forgotten the instructions. I know that we cannot get close enough to whisper because of COVID-19, but if it is so important, I invite them to leave the chamber for a few moments and come back when they are ready to listen to what the hon. member has to say.

The hon. member for Joliette.

• (1740)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, once again, this is due to the fact that most members in the House do not speak French.

Rather than listening to the interpretation through their earpieces, they are going about their business and doing their work, and they forget that someone is speaking. Unfortunately, that is the reality that many of us too often face when we speak French in the House.

We are disappointed with regard to health care and vulnerable people, starting with seniors. A budget is supposed to be presented in the spring with a focus on the recovery plan. I will come back to that.

The statement does contain some worthwhile measures, such as the proposal to tax the digital giants, which would finally start to level the playing field. The government is even talking about using levies, a sort of revenue tax, in conjunction with the OECD. If that takes too long, the government even suggests that it will move forward in a year or so regardless. This measure could bring in a few billion dollars, so I look forward to seeing it implemented.

This is in no way about taking down foreign multinationals. It is simply a matter of treating the Amazons of the world, which conduct business online, the same way we treat our local businesses, which have been struggling since the beginning of the pandemic as people turned to online shopping. This is a significant measure that we have been calling for for a long time. We are very happy to see it happen.

I will now address the issue of the environment. For eight months, we have been saying that this would be a good opportunity for a green recovery when the time comes. The economist Jeremy Rifkin is calling for a green new deal. That would be a good thing.

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We expected today's document to start talking about that a little. However, the government is telling us that it will hold consultations and present a stimulus package, but that will be later, and it may equate to 3% or 4% of GDP per year for three years.

We wonder if the government is positioning itself to say that several promises will be made eventually, but they will come during an election campaign. To get everything that was announced, people will have to vote for the Liberals again. If the Liberals want to trigger an election over this issue, we will be ready. We already are. Seriously, though, we expected more for the environment because it is certainly an emergency.

We applaud the home energy efficiency grant program, which will provide \$5,000 per home to a maximum of 700,000 people. The budget for electric cars was almost empty, but it has been replenished. That is another measure that we applaud, along with the charging stations.

The government is pulling the same old rabbit out of its hat when it comes to its solution for the environment. It plans to plant two billion trees, a measure that will cost about \$3 billion. Sooner or later, two billion trees will be planted and all of the promises will be kept. The Liberals talked about this during the election campaign a year ago. How many trees have been planted? That is a question that my colleagues and members of other parties have been asking me. How many of the two billion trees have been planted so far? The answer is zero.

Mr. Alain Therrien: One tree has been planted. I planted an apple tree.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, the House leader of the Bloc Québécois just said that he planted an apple tree. He is already doing better than the government. According to my calculations, if it costs approximately \$3 billion to plant two billion trees, then the government should pay the House leader of the Bloc Québécois \$1.50 or so in compensation.

Once again, the government is going to have to do a lot more than that, and we hope that, in the next budget, the government will have a real plan for the environment. These are good measures and we recognize that, but they really are not enough.

Earlier this fall, the wage subsidy was extended and improved on. Most of the measures announced in today's document improve the wage subsidy, which we applaud because that is good. During a pandemic, implementing income support measures that help maintain employment relationships is the thing to do.

The same thing goes for the new Canada emergency rent subsidy. The first version of this commercial rent subsidy did not work. This second version was announced, we said it was good and we adopted it this fall. We applaud that.

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However, we had asked the Minister of Finance what we are now asking the government to do, and that is to present aid programs for industries that are struggling, sectors that are having a tough time. We need aid programs that target sectors that are in a particular situation. We expected to see that, since there had been rumours to that effect in the media.

• (1745)

Sadly, the rumours were not true. Instead, we are being told to wait for the next budget, that something is coming and that, until then, they are thinking about it. For instance, there is a section on assistance for the air sector. It sets out the measures that have been announced for airports, but the air sector and airports are not one and the same.

I met with some airport representatives last week, including one from the Montreal airports authority. Quite honestly, airports are struggling. They need programs. Airlines also need assistance, but nothing has been announced for them, despite the misleading title. We are being told to wait for the next budget and that something is coming. We have been waiting for quite a while already.

On top of that, the government managed to include the words “aerospace industry” once in its document, saying that it was connected to the air sector. However, since there is nothing for the air sector, that means there is even less for the aerospace industry.

This despite the fact that greater Montreal is the third-largest aerospace hub in the world, after Seattle and Toulouse. If we look at what is happening in the United States, France and Europe, it is clear that those countries are doing everything they can to support that industry. Of course, since planes are grounded and orders are being delayed, the industry is struggling. However, that sector of the economy has the highest value added. That means well-paying jobs and innovation.

There is the C Series in Mirabel, which was taken over by Airbus. It is the most fuel-efficient aircraft in the world. We have a little gem on our hands and what does the government do? For eight months now, all of the industry representatives, major suppliers and SMEs have been saying that a special assistance program is needed. They had to bend over backwards just to get access to the wage subsidy because Quebec invested a little money in that industry to prevent all of the expertise from being lost, something that Ottawa did not do. Under the program rules, the companies could not get help if public funds had been invested.

We managed to change that, but now a targeted program is needed. We cannot lose this cluster. This value-added sector is very important to Quebec and Canada. We are building planes in Ontario, Manitoba and some other places too. It takes a vision of economic interest, which is not found in this document.

It is the same thing for the tourism industry. We were told that a bit of money was included for that industry and that something will be done one day, but nothing has happened, even though this is an extremely important industry. It is the same thing for the arts. The government is talking about online events, but think about all of the festivals and other events. A lot of sectors are affected. I am thinking about summer camps. People are contacting us to tell us that it was a disastrous season. Sugar bushes and reception halls are also

having a hard time. Targeted measures are needed. The government is saying that these things are important but that it is going to wait for the next budget to do something. That is a problem.

As I said earlier, the same goes for the stimulus plan. The government says there will be vaccines. I believe Canada and Quebec will spend weeks or months watching the train go by because the government took too long and lacked vision. Word is that the vaccine will be coming soon, or at least our neighbours will be getting one, so now we can start thinking about economic recovery.

This gives us a great reason to hope we will come out the other end soon. This situation is tough, and we have endured it for months, but the possibility of a vaccine gives us hope that things will get back to normal and that new opportunities will arise. Unfortunately, there is no recovery plan.

Sometimes, people can make numbers say anything they want. That is not something I agree with, but one example from this document really made me laugh. In defence of its vaccine strategy, the government says on page 9 that Canada has the most agreements per capita. It lists fifteen or so countries and puts Switzerland at the bottom of the list. However, we all know that Switzerland has vaccine production capacity because plenty of headquarters, labs and pharmaceutical multinationals operate there. Once again, the government is trying to show that Canada did a good job, but in truth, we should be worried.

When we asked Dr. Caroline Quach-Thanh if we could have manufactured our own vaccines in Quebec or Canada, she said that Canada's vaccine manufacturing capacity is non-existent. There is a little work in Toronto, at Sanofi Pasteur, where Connaught Laboratories used to be. There is a little work in Quebec City at GSK, but they mostly focus on manufacturing seasonal flu vaccines, and vaccines for children and travellers.

Quebec had a strong pharmaceutical industry and some large laboratories in the past 15 years that would have had the capacity to quickly manufacture vaccines. This was all dismantled as a result of the inaction and political choices of successive federal governments.

I would like to go back in time. In 1987, during the Meech Lake accord negotiations, Quebec had leverage and managed to work well with Ottawa to establish an ecosystem that would foster significant growth of the pharmaceutical industry in Quebec. The province attracted five multinationals, an expertise was developed and about 2,000 high-calibre jobs were created.

Following the 1995 referendum, Quebec lost its leverage and Ottawa withdrew its support. Quebec tried to redouble its efforts, but it was not enough. The multinationals moved, closed their doors or reduced their staff one after the other. The process accelerated in the 2000s. Ever since the referendum, political decisions destroyed the industry.

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Then the pandemic arrived. Health specialists say that there have been many pandemics in the past, such as H1N1 and SARS. Some specialists even say that we are lucky because the current virus is not too deadly and that, despite the present crisis, it could have been worse.

We learned that the government had masks, gowns and equipment destroyed last year when it closed a centre. With respect to the protection and security of the economy, it was unacceptable to let go of such a leading-edge industry. Is it because it was located in Quebec?

Had the industry been sustained, we would have had the capacity to produce vaccines rapidly right here. Unfortunately, that interest was not protected. That is the tragedy of Quebec's pharmaceutical industry.

● (1750)

I would say that Ontario's pharmaceutical industry, though slightly older, is pretty much a joke, to paraphrase the other philosopher. I was talking about that earlier.

Established in 1913, Connaught Laboratories was a globally recognized leader, a massive success, the best in the world. The labs recovered their costs and succeeded at eradicating all kinds of problematic diseases affordably. They produced insulin for diabetes and even worked with Dr. Salk, an American, to produce the polio vaccine.

In the 1970s, under the elder Trudeau, Connaught was converted into a development corporation. It was gradually privatized over the years and then completely privatized under Mulroney in 1989. That was the end of Canada's vaccine production capacity and affordable expertise. Toronto Star columnist Linda McQuaig wrote an article about it in March based on a chapter in her book.

In order to develop the economy, a vision is needed. Some extremely important and highly developed sectors in Quebec could have brought us out of this slump very quickly. They were dropped, and now we are paying the price. When the time came to negotiate for vaccines, the government dragged its feet, and we are paying the price. The government is announcing funds to restart vaccine production, but that will not happen before 2023 at the earliest. That will not help us with this crisis.

Let's hope that we learn from past mistakes and complacency and that we do not repeat them. We have seen what happens when a neighbour decides for us and we are subjected to someone else's decisions. There were multinational drug companies and we had domestic expertise that meant we could produce vaccines for other parts of the world. Because our neighbour is the one who decided for us, we lost everything. Because our neighbour dragged its feet during the first few months of the pandemic, we will only receive the vaccine after others do.

No matter how many charts the Liberals put in this document to try to prove that Canada has more deals than anyone else, everyone knows that we are neither at the very back nor at the very front of the line when it comes to getting vaccines here in Canada. Quebec, then, is paying the price.

We were hoping this document would talk about health care funding, but there is nothing on that. We also hoped it would talk about funding for seniors, a commitment this government made, but, again, there is nothing there.

● (1755)

We expected there to be something for the recovery, but that is missing as well, just like the assistance programs for struggling sectors such as aerospace. The result is not very good, but the government is putting things off and telling us to wait for the budget.

This update did not have much to say about the environment and was well below our expectations. What is there is good, however, including the measures for electric cars and the energy efficient retrofit programs. However these measures do not go far enough.

As far as tax fairness is concerned, we applaud the announcements on web giants paying their taxes, potentially through the use of levies. We also applaud the measure to limit stock option deductions to \$200,000. We applaud the gesture, even though the limit remains high. We also applaud the special family benefit that is not insignificant.

We applaud the deductions of up to \$400 for the costs of working at home. It is a nice gesture for people who had to turn to telework and this facilitates the requests for that. The wage subsidy is increased to 75% of salaries paid to take into account the gravity of the second wave, which is good.

We will wait for the budget to be tabled. In any event, I am not sure if we will be voting on this document. At the end, two bills were introduced. We were expecting a ways and means motion at the end of the minister's speech. As I understand it, this motion is supposed to be moved before these bills can be voted on. At first glance, the bills seem worthwhile, but we will take some time to study them.

There was no budget last spring. The government has never spent this much money before, and we need a budget. We were expecting more from today's statement, and we are disappointed. The deficit is extremely worrisome, as it has reached an astronomical \$381 billion. We have never seen this before, so accountability is important, because this is a lot of money. Fortunately, a substantial portion of this money went to income support measures for people who lost their jobs and for businesses, which is important.

The government needs to show some transparency. We learned our lesson with WE Charity, with the ventilators from the former Liberal member who did not manufacture ventilators and with the management of subsidies connected to their chief of staff's husband. That is a lot, and we need more transparency. Four committees have studied these issues, but the Liberal members on these committees filibustered. We are asking for a special committee to study all of this spending. It was announced when we returned after prorogation, but things are taking a long time.

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Liberal members on the Standing Committee on Finance systematically filibustered proceedings for dozens of hours, preventing us from hearing people talk about their needs for the next budget. We need to be able to do our jobs. A special committee is needed to assess spending, because we are dealing with a significant deficit. If the money was well spent, then it was the lesser evil during this crisis, but a committee needs to look into it.

I think that about sums it up.

• (1800)

[*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, my issue is on health care. However, before that, I want to reaffirm that when we look at the vaccination issue as a whole, Canada is exceptionally well positioned to vaccinate in many different types of situations. This is because of the fine work that a special group of people, civil servants and scientists, were able to put together.

My question is related to the member's comments on health care. On the one hand, he says that we should be spending more money on health care. On the other hand, the member says that the federal government should have nothing to do with health care.

I believe in the Canada Health Act. It ultimately ensures that as a Canadian, no matter in which province I determine I will live, that there will be a health care system that provides the five principles set out in the Canada Health Act.

Is it the Bloc's position to get rid of the Canada Health Act?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to health, Ottawa's job is to provide funding.

Half of the taxes we pay go to Ottawa. It would therefore make sense for Ottawa to pay for half of the health care expenses, but year after year Ottawa decreases the share it pays. Ottawa is currently paying 21% or 22%. The provincial premiers are asking Ottawa to pay 35%. That would be a step in the right direction. There was nothing about that in the throne speech and there is nothing about it in the document that was distributed today. There is no commitment of any sort in that regard.

Quebec's long-term care facilities are struggling and do not have the staff they need. This has forced employees to work in several facilities, which is what led to the cross-contamination during the first wave of the pandemic. Did these facilities need Canada-wide standards or did they need money to hire health care aides and nurses?

To be honest, I visited some long-term care facilities because there are several in my riding. Just a few weeks ago, there was a major outbreak at the Saint-Eusèbe CHSLD, which is right in downtown Joliette. I did not hear anyone there say that things were not going well and so they needed Canada-wide standards. It is money they need, money to pay workers.

For decades now, since the mid-1990s, Ottawa has been withdrawing funding. This means that Quebec has had to make cuts because the money is no longer there. Tough choices have to be made, which weakens the system, as we have seen.

The Bloc Québécois, the National Assembly and I all firmly believe that Ottawa's role in health care is to pay its fair share. That would be half of the taxes sent here.

As for the vaccination issue, I would like to speak with my colleague again about it in six or nine months. We will see who is right, but I get the feeling that he has fallen for his party's propaganda. He seems to be one of the people who believe in it.

Quite honestly, if we compare Canada with other countries, there is no longer any production capacity here. We are neither at the front nor at the very back of the line. The government was slow to act last spring and dragged its feet before adopting any vaccination plan or strategy. We are going to pay the price for that, which will be no laughing matter.

• (1805)

[*English*]

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members of opposition parties, our desire is to scrutinize and offer suggestions to help the government perform well for all Canadians and I appreciate the co-operation we have had.

You mentioned transparency and accountability. Could you share ways, if those perhaps were dealt with better, in which Canadians would benefit more during this crisis?

The Speaker: I would remind hon. members to place their questions through the Chair. It is wonderful when it is peaceful, but sometimes it gets emotional and goes back and forth so that it gets out of hand. It is a reminder for all members.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by acknowledging my colleague and thanking her for her intervention and her positive comments.

It is true that we manage to find solutions, improve bills and suggestions and, ultimately, make things better for people because we do our job well.

Right now, we have a government that is spending like no government has ever spent before. It has to spend because the situation is very serious. However, at the same time, as we saw in the spring, the government is asking lawmakers to back off a bit because the situation is so serious. The government passes bills under closure and accelerates the process, and it asks lawmakers to take shortcuts and not bother it. Then it shuts down Parliament and asks us to trust it. At the beginning, that is what happened, but we got some surprises. It passed the emergency wage benefit. Political parties were not listed under the wage subsidy program, but the Liberal Party claimed it anyway.

Some friends of the Prime Minister's family own an organization. Public servants say that they can administer the program, but they are told that it will be administered by the organization's owners. The friends stand to make about \$10 million, because a friend is a friend. We learn that the organization is WE Charity but that there are so many hundreds of billions of dollars in play that it is impossible, under the current circumstances, to scrutinize everything. We must take it on trust. However, given the track record of the party in power, we no longer trust it.

We must continue to put programs in place, but there needs to be more transparency and oversight. For that to happen, we need a special committee to study the spending. That idea has been requested and debated since the House resumed sitting after prorogation, but the government does not want to talk about it. It does not want to explore issues of transparency.

We remember the sponsorship scandal. We thought the government had cast off its old habits. Just because the Liberals have a younger leader does not mean that the old habits have disappeared and that the people behind him have changed their ways. This is unacceptable. That is why we need an oversight committee, a special committee that will look at all of this, because we need to be able to trust them.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague well, and I know that he knows that as members of the Standing Committee on Finance, we also have to address the issue of revenues.

Let's look at all the budget cuts that were made in the past in response to the Paul Martin government's austerity measures. If we do not take care of revenues, then there will be cuts to the programs that help people.

My colleague talked about web giants that do not pay a single dollar in corporate taxes. We do not have wealth tax or an excess profits tax. As for tax havens, not one tool has been brought in by this government to deal with them.

My question is this: is my colleague concerned about the fact that the government is doubling down on a tax system that is unfair and refusing to go after all these billionaires who got \$53 billion richer during this pandemic without paying their fair share of taxes?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and his spot-on observations.

Many economists are saying that the problem with this crisis is that we will see a K-shaped recovery. We are hearing that more and more. The poor get poorer, and the rich get richer. This is a matter of tax fairness and tax justice. As a society, we need to create mechanisms to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities and that wealth is redistributed to some extent.

The French economist Thomas Piketty is suggesting a special tax on wealth and the ultra-wealthy. The Minister of Finance once wrote a book on plutocrats and billionaires. She explained how they get away with it. In my opinion, these are some very important questions to consider in order to figure out how to better redistribute wealth. Obviously, it could get complicated to implement and enforce this redistribution, since if we increase taxes on the ul-

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tra-wealthy, we need to make sure that they do not come up with an offshoring scheme. Nevertheless, this is necessary. It is important.

It is also important that we combat the use of tax havens, which continues to be legal here thanks to the government. We need to make things that are immoral illegal. The big Bay Street banks are raking in record profits this year. They all have branches in tax havens and artificially transfer their largest profits to those tax havens to avoid paying their fair share of taxes. That is unacceptable, and it needs to stop.

• (1810)

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off by saying that a big part of this economic update touched on things that have happened over the course of the last few months. As members are well aware, when we first hit the pandemic, the government was certainly willing to work with opposition parties, and the NDP stepped up.

Members will also recall that the first action of the government during the pandemic was to offer supports to the banking sector with about \$750 billion in liquidity supports from a number of different federal institutions. That was a bold move. It is not matched by any boldness to actually support regular Canadians at this stage in the pandemic.

We are well aware of what the member for Burnaby South did. The entire NDP caucus stepped up with a series of proposals that we knew would make a difference in the lives of Canadians. Canadians have really struggled through this pandemic. They are still struggling. We believed that there needed to be a series of measures that would make a difference in the lives of individuals as they struggle to put food on the table and keep a roof over their head.

We needed measures to support small businesses. People often give their lives to their small businesses, and we want to keep them operating so we can avoid the tragedy of people turning the key in the lock for the final time as they leave that small business behind. That was the measure that was brought to this pandemic response. This is what we proposed and pushed the government to put into place.

We had the emergency response. When the government had a series of holes in the emergency response benefit, we pushed for the student CERB as well, and we pushed for a 75% wage subsidy. The member for Burnaby South was very eloquent in this regard. Other countries had already done that, and we believed firmly that Canada needed to put in place a 75% wage subsidy too to make sure that businesses could continue to operate and people could continue to work.

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We then pushed support for seniors through this House. We pushed for a moratorium on student loans. We did not think that students should have to pay back their loans to the federal government during a pandemic. We pushed for supports for first nations communities. A number of members from our caucus were very strong in pushing the government to provide those supports.

We also pushed for supports for the people who were not receiving supports through other means. That is why we pushed for things such as the Canada recovery benefit. The member for Burnaby South, numerous times, pushed for a national sick leave, which is historic in nature. It means that people who are unfortunately not able to work because of their sickness, or are concerned about catching COVID-19, could actually, for the first time, take that paid sick leave and not have to choose between putting food on the table or doing the right thing. That paid sick leave is historic, and we believe it should be made permanent as well.

We provided and pushed for sectoral supports for a variety of industries. Members of this caucus, including the member for Courtenay—Alberni, who is our small business critic, pushed for an emergency rent subsidy. We pushed for very strongly for this and for our supports for people with disabilities. These are two areas in which the government basically only did a part of what was needed to be done to provide those supports and make sure that those Canadians had the wherewithal to get through the pandemic.

Originally the emergency rent subsidy the government rolled out was a program through a company that had ties to the chief of staff of the Prime Minister. The initial program that was rolled out was actually with a commercial mortgage company, and it was for landlords who held commercial mortgages. This is very clearly inadequate and a very strange approach.

We continued to push for the second emergency rent subsidy, which is a much better program. That program has not been retroactive for the course of the spring and summer. It should be because many of the businesses that went through all those difficult periods in the spring and summer are now living through these difficult periods in the fall. They need the wherewithal, and they need those supports.

• (1815)

We continue to press the government to make that rent subsidy retroactive to the spring for those business owners who were not able to benefit because the program is so complicated. It is actually a failed program in so many respects. With this new rent subsidy program, which the NDP applied pressure to bring to bear, those business owners would actually be able to benefit from it.

For people with disabilities, I have expressed on the floor of this House my deep disappointment. While the banking sector got three-quarters of a trillion dollars within the first days of the pandemic, the government had to be pushed and prodded repeatedly. The member for Elmwood—Transcona, the member for Hamilton Centre and other members of the NDP caucus pressed the government repeatedly, and finally, after an eight-month wait, the Liberals put in place partial supports. They are only for people with disabilities who are registered and exist in the federal database.

There is no doubt that there are many other people with disabilities who need support. The only way for them to receive support is with planning and forethought to make sure that those who are registered provincially for disability programs get supports. In short, what the NDP brought to bear was a series of measures that would make a difference for people, and we will continue to do this.

This is where my disappointment lies and our disappointment with the fall economic statement. We believe that those supports need to be continued. There needs to be a sense that all Canadians matter, that we can all come through this pandemic, and that, coming out of the pandemic, we can actually put in place a very solid foundation for Canadians in the future.

However, the government has refused to do this. With the fall economic statement, the Liberals have refused to take any of the revenue measures that have been suggested, not only by the NDP but by many forward-thinking people who are thinking ahead.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer is an independent officer. All Canadians can rely on his advice. He said, very clearly, that with the fiscal situation of the country there are only two alternatives. One is to cut those services and supports to people, otherwise known as program cuts or austerity.

Liberals may laugh at that, but they also laughed at austerity when we suggested it back in Paul Martin's day, and we know the result. The cuts in programs have an impact even to the present day. Ending the national housing program for the justification of austerity meant that today there are people who remain homeless because the federal government stopped building affordable housing, which is so necessary for so many Canadians.

We look at the fine print. We in the NDP do not only look at what is said, the basic speech and the basic balance sheet of this economic statement, we also look at the details. The summary statement of transactions clearly indicates that the government is planning substantial cuts in program expenses next year. Many of those program expenses came through COVID-19. The intention of the government is not, on the revenue side, to put in place supports that make our rebuilding sustainable. Instead, it is making the choice of looking to wind down programs of support without looking to replace them with other programs that can make a difference in people's lives.

Members will recall that so far during this pandemic, Canada's billionaires have added to their wealth in the order of \$53 billion. Canada's big banks, who received that massive dose of liquidity support within days of the pandemic hitting, are looking at substantially increased profits. In the next few days, when each of the big banks release their latest quarterly figures, there is no doubt that we will see an increase, just as we did in the spring and the fall. They have had \$15 billion in profits so far during this pandemic.

● (1820)

The reason 90% of Canadians support a wealth tax is they see that discrepancy. They see that contradiction of billionaires having massive increases in wealth, some web giants having massive increases in profits and significant profits for the banking sector through the pandemic, while so many Canadians are struggling to put food on the table, making ends meet and keeping a roof over their heads. Many small business people are struggling to keep that small business operating. They see the contradiction between the banking profits and the addition to billionaires' wealth of over \$53 billion. They are well aware of the massive amounts of money we lose every year to overseas tax havens.

As the House is aware, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, as an independent officer of Parliament, has advised all parliamentarians that we lose over \$25 billion each and every year to overseas tax havens. That means that over the last five years under the Liberal government, over \$125 billion have been lost to overseas tax havens. When we talk about the supports Canadians need now, those massive amounts of money have not been diverted to help Canadians, but rather have served to pad the bottom line of some of Canada's wealthiest people and some of Canada's most profitable corporations.

We also have the web giants. During this pandemic, we have seen substantial increases in profits by the web giants like Facebook, Amazon, Netflix and Google, yet they do not pay corporate taxes in Canada. The measures announced today, which only talk about implications around the GST-HST, are minor compared to the impacts of those web giants not paying that corporate taxation.

As well, we have seen significant subsidies going to oil and gas companies. The government wants to spend what could be up to \$20 billion on the Trans Mountain pipeline. The private sector walked away from this project, a project that has profound implications for the climate emergency. The government is intending to spend money on this project. The PBO will define that in the next week or two. It has been asked to produce a study and the bottom line in the rapid rise in construction costs. However, we are looking probably in the order of \$20 billion that the government wants to spend on a project that is not financially viable. Basically, it will have dramatically negative impact on any hope of Canada meeting its obligations to meet the climate emergency.

The question is very simple. Why does the government's priority always seem to be billionaires? Why is protecting that increase in wealth and those profits more important than ensuring we take care of regular people?

I mentioned people with disabilities earlier. Most of them have not had access to even that one-time emergency benefit of \$600. Getting that \$600 makes a dramatic difference in a person's life. A

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constituent of mine was unable to get medication for a number of months. With the \$600 the person did receive, they were able to get their medication for the first time in months.

When we think that most people with disabilities are suffering the same type of financial challenges through this pandemic and were not able to receive even that one-time payment, we can understand there has to be higher priorities than allowing Canada's billionaires to increase their wealth by tens of billions of dollars and Canada's banks to reap the profits they have during this pandemic, and having the web giants not pay a dollar in corporate tax. The priorities of the government really do not seem to be in conjunction with what most Canadians are feeling through this pandemic.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

It is really a matter of billions of dollars for billionaires.

When we look at this economic update as a whole, the government is giving Canadians crumbs compared to what is needed. Meanwhile, as I said, the government is not putting a tax on wealth or excess profits, web giants are not being required to pay business taxes, and tax havens are having a huge impact on the money laundering that we see across the country.

What is more, the government is still refusing to implement a public registry of beneficial owners, which would enable us to put an end to money laundering. The government could have and should have made investments in a different approach in this economic update. I am thinking about measures like pharmacare, which people across the country are calling for. I will come back to that later, but the reality is that pharmacare is essential. We have seen that. Coming out of this pandemic, people are still going to be in great need of a pharmacare program.

There is also child care and the day care system. That comes up all the time, but it is a shortcoming of this economic update. The issue of affordable housing is even more critical right now because so many Canadians are struggling and having difficulty finding affordable housing because there is a shortage of it across the country. Some members of the Liberal Party are saying that it is okay. I can point out every cut that was made under Paul Martin's government, which are, of course, still having an impact on today's lack of affordable housing in Canada.

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Of course there is the climate emergency. Trans Mountain might end up costing us up to \$20 billion. The Parliamentary Budget Officer calculated some estimates that will be released in the coming weeks. We already know about nearly \$13 billion to which is added nearly \$5 billion for the cost of acquiring the company, while the private sector saw no interest in Trans Mountain. Of course, we are in a context where the government is prepared to pay any price for this project, even though the private sector does not think it is profitable and did not want to invest in it. We know full well that the repercussions on the environment will be enormous.

These are not minor decisions. This is a series of decisions and Canadians are the ones who will pay the price for these bad decisions. The choice is very clear. We have to prioritize the needs of the people instead of always prioritizing corporations that make huge profits. We have to stop thinking that billionaires have to come first.

On this side of the House, we do not agree that we must not tax excessive profits, wealth, or the profits of web giants, and that these companies should not even pay a corporate tax just as everyone else in the country does. We do not agree that we should continue with the Trans Mountain project, no matter the climate cost to be paid and no matter the cost of construction. The private sector does not want to have anything to do with the project and taxpayers will have to pay for Trans Mountain.

That is why we can say that this economic update is extremely disappointing. This government refuses to think clearly, make good investments and take charge of its revenues. The Parliamentary Budget Officer was very clear about that: Either the government cuts services and the assistance it provides to people, or it increases revenues. There is a significant amount of missing revenue, and the government refuses to collect it.

● (1830)

[*English*]

What is missing from this economic update that could have made a difference?

We have the regular reference to pharmacare, which has been written for the last five years, and the government keeps saying that eventually it will do something about it. However, commitments for pharmacare have been made for over a quarter of a century and we still do not see or have in place a universal pharmacare program that provides supports for everybody.

Ninety per cent of Canadians support universal, publicly administered pharmacare in this country, so we are talking about a broad public consensus. Why is that? It is because we know that hundreds of Canadians die every year because we do not have universal, publicly administered pharmacare.

We know as well that a million Canadians are trying to pay for their medication now in a pandemic. They have to make the desperate choice between putting food on the table, heating their home and paying for their medication. In a country as wealthy as Canada, for anybody to be forced into that position is simply irresponsible governance. When a government puts a person in that position, the government is neglecting that person's basic needs.

The reality is that pharmacare brings a huge cost savings to Canadians. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, an independent, non-partisan officer of Parliament whose reports are well worth reading, says that we would save \$4 billion overall as Canadians. Businesses would save about \$6 billion, and individuals who are paying for medication out of their pocket now would save about \$5 billion.

What the economic update should have announced, instead of the direction the government took, is that we are moving to get pharmacare in place now, that we are actually going to put in place the steps that are needed and that we are going to sit down with the provinces. We already have an NDP bill on this, Bill C-213, which is coming up for a vote in February. Thousands of Canadians have written to their members of Parliament urging them to support Bill C-213, which is the legal framework for universal, publicly administered pharmacare.

The Liberal government should have said that it was going to sit down with the provinces now because it understands, from this pandemic, that it is time it actually put in place a universal pharmacare program in this country. It is long overdue. It should have happened 50 years ago, and the cost to Canadians has been enormous ever since. Now that we have a bill that would actually set the legal framework, the government should have sat down with the provinces to negotiate the financial framework and made sure that pharmacare became a reality in 2021. That should have been in the economic update.

What also should have been in the economic update is a real commitment to child care. Child care advocates across the country know how important child care is for our economic prosperity. The reality is that for every dollar invested in national child care, we get about six dollars in economic stimulus. It is probably the best investment a country could make. Countries that have universal child care programs know that with the participation of families and women in the workplace, there is a huge economic boon that happens when investments in child care are made.

● (1835)

Tragically, in this economic update, the government just basically drew the line on the next steps that should have been phase two for national child care. It basically stopped at phase one and said that was enough. However, the reality is that Canadian families are spending up to \$2,000 a month per child because there is no child care. We need to turn this around and put in place a child care program.

We already know from child care advocates the investments that are needed. The investment for next spring would need to be \$2 billion or more. The government is not even providing half of that amount and is basically freezing it at an amount that is well below what is needed for national child care.

A constituent of mine named Michelle works with her family and children. She says trying to find a child care space has been a real struggle. She has been able to substitute in with a local child care facility, which is filled up, so her child can sometimes have access to it, but she is like so many other families across the country struggling with child care costs of up to \$2,000 per child. They think this needs to happen. It is surprising to me that the government has not taken the opportunity, in looking to build back better, to build into the framework coming into 2021 a universal pharmacare plan and a national child care plan.

If we are looking to build back better, we need to establish the revenue foundation. We need to put into place the measures I spoke about earlier. We cannot keep giving \$25 billion away to overseas tax havens. We cannot refuse to put in place a wealth tax next to this profits tax when billionaires have increased their wealth during the pandemic by \$53 billion. If we do not put in place the revenue foundation, it will lead to, as the Paul Martin government found out, austerity and cuts.

When we look at the fine print of this document, we see that once we get past the spring, the government intends to dramatically decrease the number of supports that are going to regular Canadians. This should give everybody pause, because it is exactly what happened when Paul Martin was finance minister and we saw cuts to the national housing program, which was eradicated for a generation. We continue to deal with the fallout of those cuts.

We also have to deal with the climate emergency. We have the pandemic and the climate emergency occurring at the same time. The government is making these massive investments, up to \$20 billion, in ramming through Trans Mountain when indigenous people have raised huge concerns and when there is a variety of very legitimate criticism of the government in this regard. The government cannot pretend to be working on the climate emergency when it builds a massive pipeline that will undercut anything else that it does.

This economic update should have had an announcement that the government was not going to pour more money into Trans Mountain, the \$20 billion. Instead, the Liberals should have announced a shift to clean energy. That \$20 billion could have been used to create hundreds of thousands of jobs in the clean energy industries.

We know that in the United States, with the change in government, the most recent projections indicate that the clean energy sector will quadruple over the next 10 years. Canada could be in a position to take advantage of that if the federal government worked with the provinces on clean energy production and on ensuring clean energy investments. However, instead, the Liberal government is building a pipeline. It makes no sense. It means the direction the government is taking in this document is simply not sustainable.

● (1840)

There are issues like affordable housing and investment. Affordable housing and the right to housing that the NDP brought to the House just a couple of weeks ago are fundamental in ensuring that the needs of indigenous communities are met. They are fundamental and yet what we see from the government is an approach that prioritizes the needs of wealthy Canadians and Canada's most prof-

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itable corporations over the needs of Canadians from coast to coast to coast. This is what is most disappointing about this economic update.

There are some measures that we could all say we can support. Those measures are all below what is required in this time of a pandemic and at a time when so many Canadians are suffering. So many Canadians want to see a difference in this country, with a federal government that has quite often neglected so many fundamental issues, whether it is the climate emergency, the needs of indigenous communities, the need for affordable housing or putting in place pharmacare and national child care. Those are all legitimate needs that have not been met for years and yet the government continues to prioritize other things. The result is something that Canadians will say, particularly when they read the fine print, this is not the direction they want to see going forward.

What would the NDP have been announcing today? If we had been making this economic update, what would we be saying? Of course we would be talking about the programs that we would have put into place over the course of the last few months. I would say we would very clearly have taken a different and better approach in terms of the pandemic. Some of the suggestions and things we pushed, fought for and negotiated on are in place during this pandemic and some are not.

Some things are absolutely fundamental to us. First off, for people with disabilities, months ago we would have sought to get the provinces on board to make sure that the pandemic payment that went out to people with disabilities went to every single person with a disability across the country. We would have made absolutely sure of that. It would have meant a couple of months of preparation, but it would have made a difference. There is no doubt.

On the rent relief program that New Democrats had pushed and prodded the government to bring to bear, we would have made it retroactive for all of the businesses that simply could not access the program when it was originally set up. We would be making sure that those businesses could take advantage of that retroactively.

We would be making sure that the many holes we saw through the pandemic response were filled. That is an effort that we undertook. When we saw the government leaving holes, we fought back, negotiated and pushed to make sure as many holes as possible were filled. We would have taken the approach that everybody matters and we should not leave anybody behind.

In the economic update today, New Democrats would have been announcing that we are putting in place adequate funding for the next stage in the national child care program and we would have made sure that funding was available so that Canadian parents and families could see the next stage of child care funding being put in place, the national child care program that has seen delay.

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If it were up to New Democrats today, we would have said no more money for oil and gas subsidies, that we need to focus on the climate emergency, we will not be spending \$20 billion on Trans Mountain and would make sure that money goes to ensure clean energy development and jobs. We would be investing in indigenous communities. We would be making sure that the shortchanging that has created so much suffering and so many crises in indigenous communities was ended and the supports were in place for health care, housing, clean water, all of those things.

We would have made sure that today we were announcing an affordable housing program that ensures the right to housing and would put into place something that, within a short period, would actually end the homelessness crisis we are seeing in our country and that has been aggravated by the pandemic.

● (1845)

We would have made sure that we pay for these things by putting in place the revenue measures I mentioned earlier.

The first would be an excess profits tax, as we had in the Second World War because Canadian governments understood the importance of making sure that, when we are all in this together, everybody pays their fair share. We would have made sure that there was in place a wealth tax so Canada's billionaires with their \$53 billion in additional wealth during this pandemic paid their fair share. We would have made sure as well that the web giants actually paid a fair share of corporate tax, instead of taking the windfall profits they made during this pandemic and simply doing whatever they wanted with it.

In this economic update we would have ensured the legislative tools to crack down on overseas tax havens, which costs \$25 billion every year that Canadians simply cannot afford.

We would have been building a country where everybody matters and where nobody is left behind. We would have taken a different approach on this economic update.

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 have a passion for a national pharmacare program as I know many, if not all, of my Liberal colleagues have. We are very happy with the degree to which we have been moving on that front. Since we have been in government, a number of things have been set into procedure. We will have to wait and see and hopefully it will be sooner as opposed to later.

My question for the member is in regard to helping me better understand something. When I was in opposition in the Manitoba legislature, I sat while the NDP was in government. In budget after budget, several times New Democrats decreased corporate tax. Even when I challenged them on why they were decreasing corporate tax, they decreased it. Here in Ottawa the NDP members are advocating the very opposite. They are saying go heavy on corporate tax.

I wonder if the member could explain why the NDP at the provincial level decreased corporate tax when the national NDP seems to say, no, we should be increasing corporate tax.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the member asked this question knowing full well that Canada has the reputation of having the poorest tax system for corporate profits among all industrialized countries. We are also known as the snow-washing capital of the world: those who make illegal money want to launder it here in Canada because of the porous legislative tools the government has always refused to provide the CRA. As the House is well aware, the Canada Revenue Agency came to the finance committee a few months ago. When asked why nobody who was involved in the paradise papers, the Panama papers or the Bahama papers, all regarding notorious tax havens, has been prosecuted, the CRA said that after five years the Liberal government had not provided it with the legislative tools. Not one legislative tool do we see. The CRA has said it does not have the tools to prosecute what is massive tax evasion. The PBO has told us that we lose \$25 billion in tax dollars every year.

My question back to the hon. member for Winnipeg North is this. He is well aware of all those facts and is a very educated man. Why has the Liberal government steadfastly, in the last five years, refused to take action to crack down on overseas tax havens and put in place a wealth tax, or even an excess profits tax?

Why is it that, with the Liberal government, billionaires always come before people?

● (1850)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned pharmacare. We know the Liberals have been promising pharmacare forever and it is still not in the economic update. There were other things like that in the economic update, such as the two billion trees they were going to plant, yet they have not even planted one tree and they have been saying this for years. I see that proposing to fix the boil water advisories is back in, even though they promised that in 2015. It does not give me a lot of confidence that the government is going to implement any of the stuff that was in the economic update.

Does the member share my skepticism?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, do I share that skepticism? With respect to supply management, this time the Liberals say they are really going to provide support to the supply-managed sector.

With respect to the boil water advisories, this time the Liberals say they are really going to do it. The other times they were kidding, but this time it is really, really going to happen.

With respect to pharmacare, there is absolutely nothing new in this economic update, but the Liberals said, and the text reads, that they promise this time that they are really, really going to do it.

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The Liberals have broken promises for five long years. This economic update tells us that this time they actually mean the things that, before, they broke their promises on. I hope it is the case in at least those three areas, but there are many other broken promises that I do not think Canadians will forgive them for having broken yet again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He touched on a number of very important issues, including tax evasion and tax havens.

A lot of important things were left out of this economic update, which is very disappointing. We are going through a pandemic, of course, but there is nothing in here about provincial health transfers, pharmacare or dental care. The aviation industry, which includes air transportation and the aerospace sector, is not even mentioned. We are being told to wait and maybe there will be something later on.

My colleague stressed the importance of collecting all available revenue. I would like him to comment on one aspect of that. The government is going to make digital giants collect the GST. That is a very good thing, and it is fair, but it will not start until next January, whereas digital giants will pay their taxes in January 2022 at the earliest, and only if they are asked to. Consumers will pay the GST right away, but digital giants get a 13-month exemption and will only pay tax if necessary, according to what the Minister of Finance said.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his question. He hit the nail on the head.

The web giants are under no obligation. After all the promises this government has broken over the past five years, it is promising once again to perhaps force the web giants to pay some taxes.

It is sad when we think of all the people who need to find affordable housing and feed their families and who often need medication, too. These people are looking for assistance and support right now. They are getting some, but not very much, and the Liberals are indicating that it will come to an end next year, soon, depending on the program. Meanwhile, the web giants will not have to pay taxes for at least another year or two, or maybe five.

That is what is disappointing. Canadians' needs should come first. With this government, the needs of the billionaires and web giants always come first.

• (1855)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with a lot of what the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby has said. We need to close tax loopholes. We need to tax the billionaires. We need to deal with web giants and tax them properly. That is how we will pay for the programs we want, such as universal pharmacare, child care, taking care of our citizens with programs like a guaranteed livable income. I agree with them 100% about the Trans Mountain pipeline and the waste of money when we are dealing with a climate emergency.

My question is about funding that the federal government has put into another pipeline project, the Coastal GasLink project and LNG Canada to export fracked gas for a number of multinational corporations. There is nothing Canadian about LNG Canada. It is a bunch of foreign multinationals that are getting huge tax breaks from the NDP government in British Columbia, but also from the federal government.

I would like to know if he agrees with that and if we should just ban fracking and put an end to this climate-destroying process of energy extraction.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, that is a very complex and important question. What I, the member for Burnaby South and the NDP caucus have said all along about Trans Mountain is that \$20 billion is simply not justifiable on any grounds. That money needs to be focused on clean energy. We do not believe in oil and gas subsidies.

At the federal level, if we stop putting money into oil and gas companies and start putting money into clean energy, energy workers being able to work in the clean energy sector. I was an energy worker. I am a former refinery worker at the Shellburn oil refinery in B.C.

We have no action from the federal Liberal government. It simply refuses to make the necessary investments in clean energy for our transition. That should be the priority.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by recognizing that I am speaking today from the traditional territory of WSÁNEĆ peoples and I am honoured to represent Saanich—Gulf Islands. To the WSÁNEĆ indigenous peoples of this land, *Hych'ka Siem*. I am also going to apologize to my francophone friends.

[*Translation*]

I always want to speak a bit in French. The problem is that every time we have to change the channel, we lose time. That is why I am speaking only in English during my speech, and I apologize for that.

[*English*]

We received sombre news during today's speech. I want to acknowledge that the moment our hon. Minister of Finance stood to present where we are as a country right now, in British Columbia, Dr. Bonnie Henry presented the sombre news that we had a new record broken this weekend. Over the weekend, 46 British Columbians died, which is a new record, and we had 2,364 new cases. Records were also broken in Alberta.

I take to heart very much what our hon. Minister of Finance, the Deputy Prime Minister of this country, said. This is a hard time. COVID is in its second wave and it is surging. It is important to acknowledge that we have to try to work together. We have to hold on to a sense, which we seem to have already lost in this Parliament, that we are all in this together and Canadians want to see us working together.

Routine Proceedings

I also want to acknowledge that a bit of history was made today. I am the first woman to take the floor to deliver a speech since the Minister of Finance did. I acknowledge my friend from the Bloc, the member for Repentigny, got to put forward a question. However, as the first woman to deliver a speech since the hon. Minister of Finance did, I want to acknowledge that this is the first time in Canadian history that a finance minister has presented an economic update and that that finance minister was a woman.

It happens that our first female finance minister also delivered her speech to the highest number of women members of Parliament. With the two recent by-elections, we are now 100 women out of 338 members. That is not enough, but it is a historic breakthrough.

It is in the spirit of women believing we can accomplish more when we work together that I want to acknowledge the recent leadership on a number of files of the new leader of the Green Party of Canada. As fortune and luck would have it, and I certainly wish there were more women leaders of other federal political parties, Annamie Paul has replaced me as the Green Party leader. She is, again, the only woman leader at the federal level.

Annamie Paul, in Green values tradition, has been on the COVID front saying we have to work together. We cannot allow this to become partisan. I know it has already become quite partisan in the House of Commons. I would urge my colleagues from all sides of the House to put Canadians first and recognize that we can score points off each other later.

For now, I urge members to try to work together and keep the volume a little lower out of respect for people across this country who are afraid. They are afraid of catching COVID, and they are afraid of older relatives of catching COVID. In my case, as my daughter teaches school in the Burnaby school system, I pay particular attention to any economic statement that says we will get better ventilation in our public spaces because I remain worried.

I want to reference another very wise woman before I turn to the details of the speech. That woman is Margaret Atwood. It is one of the themes in our debates in Parliament, and it is a theme that really runs through the finance minister's fall economic statement.

There is the question of whether in a COVID emergency we can also be cognizant of a climate emergency. In the summer, Margaret Atwood was asked in a virtual speech she was giving to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities if she was concerned that, because of COVID, the climate crisis has been pushed to the back burner. Margaret Atwood said that she is not sure about other people, but her stove at home has two front burners. I want to make sure that as we build back better and look at economic recovery, we continue to remember that the climate emergency has not gone away.

● (1900)

We must ensure that every step we take is consistent with the kind of action we take as grown-ups in a climate emergency, as grown-ups who recognize that nothing has gotten better while we turned our attention to COVID.

Looking at the fall economic statement, I have to say that in some ways it predicts the path forward, and it gives us some quite substantial hints about what we may see in the next budget. We do not know when the next budget will be, but clearly there has been a lot of hard work going on here.

I did mean to say this earlier, so forgive me. Everybody has been working very hard. I just want to acknowledge that. In Finance Canada, they have been working very hard. Liberals, Conservatives, NDP, Bloc, all of us as members of Parliament have been working very hard, but goodness knows, so has the civil service and the people, whether their efforts are inadequate or not as we judge them today, who have been securing vaccines for Canadians, who have been securing PPE, who have been trying to figure out how we pay for this, how we fund it and how we go forward. I just want to stop and acknowledge everyone's hard work, and I want to thank the Minister of Finance for hers.

On where we are now and what needs to be done better, certainly I am very pleased to see that we may in fact, at long last, and as the Minister of Finance's speech noted there has been a generation waiting, have decent child care. Maybe due to the fact that the Minister of Finance has had to stay home and take care of her own sick children, we might in fact finally get proper support in this country for early learning and child care. We are told we could see something in budget 2021. We will not be satisfied with less than a full program for child care for Canadians. I am feeling more optimistic than I did before I heard the speech.

I am pleased that we saw recognition in the speech of the huge amount of work that needs to be done on reconciliation, a reference to the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry and to meeting some of those calls for action is important. We need to meet all the calls for action.

We certainly are looking at improvements in contact tracing and testing. We need to do more and do better. At-home testing would be great. Quicker results would be great. I note this on the vaccine front, and this is offered in the spirit of collaborative and practical thinking about where we are on vaccines. Angus Reid polling tells us that 39% of Canadians say they want the vaccine as soon as it is ready, and 38% say they would like to wait and see. People want to make sure that it is tested and safe and can be used safely.

I would like to encourage the government to think about vaccines in relation to making sure that we all agree who the front-line workers are and who needs to get it first, and that we recognize it would not be a really wise global course for Canada to hog all the vaccines so that every Canadian is vaccinated before, say, front-line health care workers in other countries.

Routine Proceedings

We need to take a sensible approach and make sure the vaccine is rolled out, and that those who are on the front lines get it first and that we recognize that we are all working together to ensure safety and reliability in the vaccines that are delivered. I hear concerns from my constituents on both sides of this, those who want it quickly and those who want to make sure it is tested properly.

I am very encouraged to hear more for youth in this budget. We let our youth down badly last summer. We need to increase the number of summer jobs, as is promised in this speech. My hon. colleague, the member for Fredericton asked in the House, just a few days ago, whether the government would agree that we should at least eliminate interest charges on student debt. It is very encouraging to see that will be done for one year, but let us keep doing it. Let us work towards abolishing tuition and giving our kids a good start in life without emerging with massive student debts, which unfortunately remains the case for so many of our young people. We can do better for our youth.

I was also really pleased to see the references to more pharmaceutical development, but it is very slow. We need to see a full pharmaceutical plan and we need to see it soon.

It was encouraging to see a recognition of the natural course of market share between fossil fuels and renewables. The economic statement notes the shift that was occurring before COVID hit. We were already seeing a massive shift of investment away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy.

- (1905)

This economic statement confirms that shift is happening, that the oil sector is not likely to recover and that the share of renewable energy, as affordable and reliable, is only going to increase. This is good and encouraging news and should underpin where we go when we look at measures related to climate.

I turn my attention now to the other emergency: the climate emergency. Since COVID hit, there have been more than 100 climate disasters that have collectively claimed 410,000 lives around the world. In that time roughly 1.4 million have died from COVID, but the climate disasters and the climate emergency will continue apace, and there is no vaccine against a climate emergency. We need to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and do so very quickly.

I was encouraged to see so much that really emerges from green strategy and Green Party policy, but really I am optimistic when I see the commitment to eco-energy retrofits for homes. This is described as being for homes, and we need to extend the commitment to all buildings. We need to make sure that commercial and institutional buildings can also make these investments in energy efficiency retrofits. They cost less per dollar of carbon averted, and they create more jobs right across the country in all the skilled trades: carpentry, electrical and insulation. It is a fantastic way to invest that builds our economies back at the local level, also helping local hardware and building supply stores. All the elements of eco-energy retrofits build our local economies.

I was very encouraged to see better infrastructure for zero-emission vehicles. I say yes to tree planting, to making sure that we are planting indigenous species and to getting into those areas that have

been burned off by forest fires and not recovering because the fires burned so hot: areas like the Thompson River valley and the Fraser. We have seen so many. The Elephant Hill fire area in British Columbia, for example, is still not recovering years later. We need to plant trees in those areas as part of our strategy to recover and protect our wild salmon. These things are interconnected, and it is a very important way to sequester carbon from the atmosphere. I hope that in the budget we will also see indigenous peoples referenced as part of tree-planting strategies. Let us also make sure the indigenous guardians program is expanded and properly funded.

I am very encouraged to see that peat, grasslands and other nature-based solutions to the climate crisis are being referenced here. For the first time it looks like there is going to be substantial money, but it does not look like enough. However, farmers are a big part of the climate solution. Regenerative management of our soil, and making sure there is crop cover all the time so the soil does not blow away, are actually significant parts of carbon sequestration, and should be properly funded as a way that helps our farming community at the same time as it reduces greenhouse gases. It is good to see nature-based solutions playing a role where the government appears to be going for the future of climate action.

Public transit is terribly important. I must note that the early reaction from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to this economic statement is that it is disappointed there was not enough for its budget planning at the municipal level right across Canada. I have flagged that for the minister and for the government to make sure the Federation of Canadian municipalities is brought in as a very close partner. It has solid data, and I have always been impressed with its work. Partnering with municipalities has served many federal governments very well, going back to Stephen Harper's government in 2008. Its infrastructure programs were rolled out thanks to our municipal order of government. We can do more there.

I want to raise a concern. Almost every reference to public transit that I have seen, including in this financial statement, focuses on urban public transit. We have a crisis in Canada, flagged in the report on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, of a lack of public transportation to get from A to B in rural areas. The loss of Greyhound, the loss of Saskatchewan bus services and the loss of bus service throughout the Maritimes for areas that are more remote is a real crisis.

Routine Proceedings

● (1910)

I hope that as we are building back better, the budget, whenever it comes out in 2021, has funding to ensure that people in remote areas have access to affordable, safe public transit so that young indigenous women and girls do not have to hitchhike and seniors do not have to get behind the wheel of a car when they do not want to drive at night because there is no other way to get from A to B. We can do better.

I was pleased to see the references to the interties for our electricity grid. It is important, as the financial statement points out, that we get off coal and decarbonize our electricity grid. However, just as the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith mentioned, the statement does not mention that shifting from coal to burn fracked gas to produce electricity does not produce major savings in greenhouse gases. It is a wash. We must therefore ban fracking and stop thinking that fracked natural gas plays any role in a solution to the climate crisis.

The financial statement also mentions nuclear reactors, or the so-called small and medium reactors that exist on paper. They are a proposal, a marketing strategy, for a dying industry. Do not put good money after bad. We have wasted billions of dollars in this country on a failed nuclear reactor strategy. Calling them small and modular does not make them a good place to put money.

We should invest in things that, per dollar invested, reduce the most greenhouse gases and create the most jobs. We need to keep that in mind along with the shortest amount of time between investment and return. If we keep those three things in mind, we will not need to put any money in nuclear at all, particularly in something that is a design project on paper and does not exist in reality.

What else do we need in the next budget? This has been flagged by a number of colleagues from different parties, and particularly the New Democrats and Greens have mentioned it before: We need to increase revenue flows. I applaud the minister for putting forward that we are going to need at least a three-year economic stimulus package to bring back our economy.

Come on; let us bring in a wealth tax. The billionaires have made \$53 billion since the pandemic started. Let us tax that wealth and make sure that Canadians can afford our pharmacare plans, our child care plans and our dental care plans for low-income Canadians, and afford helping our students and taking care of our seniors. We need to have a wealth tax.

● (1915)

I flagged that we need to have a guaranteed livable income. This is referenced in the statement, by the way, I think at page 79. There is reference to the fact that many front-line health care workers are of low income and in precarious jobs. That is just not good enough. Essential workers have been working hard and risking their lives in long-term care homes. These front-line workers are paid so low it is just a scandal.

Let us look at guaranteed livable income so that we know no one falls below the poverty line and that every worker in Canada keeps what they earn on top of their guaranteed livable income so they do not face insecurity, such as housing insecurity and health care insecurity, and are protected. We need to look at guaranteed livable in-

come and bring it into being, along with pharmacare and child care. We need to ensure that housing is a right and every Canadian has a roof over their head.

We need to look at doing more in taxing the digital giants. What the Minister of Finance said is encouraging, but as other colleagues have noted, if they are not paying their taxes, just GST and HST, for more than a year, it is not good enough. We need to start regulating and taxing the digital giants, whether it is Airbnb, Amazon or Google, that are threatening existing Canadian industries, whether they are the small businesses up and down the main streets of our towns or our newspapers and broadcasters. We are starting to recognize the threat, but there is more we must do.

I noted something amusing in the questions and answers. My colleague, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, asked the leader of the official opposition if he had any thoughts on the government's move toward clean, green energy. The leader of the official opposition responded, which I guess makes the Conservatives' position clear, that he is really proud of the Keystone pipeline.

Let me get to this question of fossil fuels and how we are funding them. It is more than time to stop subsidizing fossil fuels. Stephen Harper promised to stop subsidizing fossil fuels in 2009, and the Liberals promised it again in their platform in 2015. However, fossil fuel subsidies have gone up.

Routine Proceedings

• (1920)

One way of ignoring that reality is to have trouble defining what a fossil fuel subsidy is. Finance Canada told the Auditor General it was not sure how we would define it. Here is how we define it. Any time we put public money into producing energy out of fossil fuels and expanding that resource, we are subsidizing fossil fuels which means stop subsidizing fracking. Stop subsidizing LNG, which is being subsidized by the federal and British Columbia governments by the way. Stop spending money on pipelines. The Trans Mountain pipeline is 100% owned by the people of Canada. The minimum expenditure that is now committed is \$12 billion. It could be far more than that as my friend from New Westminster—Burnaby has noted. Cancel the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. We will still own the existing pipeline. It was a waste of money to buy it, but it is operating and brings crude into Burnaby for the last remaining refinery. There is no problem with that. It will be phased out over time, but stop putting public money into expanding greenhouse gases and for heaven's sakes, Prime Minister, pick up the phone, call President-Elect Joe Biden and say "Good for you for cancelling Keystone. It is a good idea. What can we do to put our heads together? We were very pleased to see a border adjustment tax on carbon. Let us put together a continental package of Canada, the U.S. and Mexico together saying we are going to carbon price and we are going to have a border adjustment to protect us from imports from countries that are not pricing carbon properly."

We have an incredible opportunity with an incoming U.S. administration, having appointed John Kerry as their climate czar. This appears to be a government that is serious. They are already ahead of us in reducing greenhouse gases even after four years of Trump. That is how poorly we have been performing. Let us seize the opportunity to call President-Elect Joe Biden and say we are with him, let us cancel all the fossil fuel subsidies and let us have both countries ban fracking because fracked natural gas produces methane and that methane is a powerful greenhouse gas. If we are going to preserve a livable world for our kids, we have to keep both issues on the front burner.

I will be digging into this report as I know the party leader and members of our caucus, the members for Fredericton and Nanaimo—Ladysmith will be working through all of the details in this very detailed document. I am encouraged by much of what we see. I think we will be increasingly clear on what is missing. Please, let us make this the turning point it really can be. Post-COVID, Canada can emerge as a country that actually gets our act together, where our productivity index goes up, where our competitiveness goes up, where our job creation goes up, because we will not be wasting any more money in dying industries that not only are dying, but threaten us.

We have to put our kids and our recovery at the heart of everything we do as a nation, climate emergency and fairness in the world, eliminating poverty in Canada, eliminating racism in Canada and taking a stand globally so that we help around the world delivering on all the sustainable development goals. We can do this. We have a really amazing opportunity. I plead with all of my colleagues to think of this as a moment where we stop thinking about question period as how can I make the other guy look bad, but how do we together make Canada look good.

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, the former leader of the Green Party can never be accused of not being bold. I appreciate the degree to which she is very forthright in her opinions. On the issue of pipelines or fracking, I disagree in part with what the member is saying, but I understand what the member is saying and why she is saying it.

In regard to the LNG project, what would she do with that specific project given where it is at today? She talks about the negative impacts of fracking. I do not quite understand what she would do with LNG today if in fact she had the power to do something on it.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, liquefied natural gas, when it comes from conventional natural gas, is a viable alternative and we used to call it a transition fuel when I was in Sierra Club in the early 1990s. Nobody in the environment movement calls it a transition fuel anymore because what we are dealing with is not conventional natural gas; we are fracking. Fracked natural gas has the same carbon footprint as coal, so it represents a major lie to tell British Columbians, for instance as our premier tells us, that this is going to be wonderful because they will burn it in China instead of coal and that will somehow help. The global atmosphere does not care where the carbon comes from. Carbon from fracking, and the methane that is released, does just as much damage to the atmosphere as burning coal in China. They should cancel it.

The fact that this is being heavily subsidized for a group of foreign corporations is a scandal. Most of the manufacturing, by the way, is taking place in the People's Republic of China to build what will then be shipped over to British Columbia. They should cancel it. It is a massive subsidy for jobs in the People's Republic of China. Let us put the jobs in Canada and produce renewable energy here.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if the former leader of the Green Party could clarify something for me. Earlier tonight, the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith said that he was excited about the geothermal drilling activity that happened in Saskatchewan that resulted in a gusher of a well.

The thing is, that well was actually drilled using fracking. We just heard the member talk about how much she has a disdain for fracking, but yet her colleague was talking glowingly about a well that was actually drilled using fracking. What is it? Do you support fracking or do you not?

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: Again, I want to remind the hon. members to place their questions through the Speaker, not directly to each other.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

• (1925)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the question from the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Let us be clear: When they are fracking, they are fracturing the bedrock for natural gas and they are actually fracking the gas, vast amounts of methane are released. However, there are transferrable skills. People who drilled wells for oil can drill wells for geothermal, and that is what happened here. This is a huge find. It is really important to recognize that actually 10% of all the abandoned wells through Saskatchewan and Alberta have potential to be tapped for geothermal.

Let us look at the opportunities transitioning away from fossil fuels and into renewables. Geothermal has huge potential, and those wells at depth, 10% of them that are already abandoned and are a liability on the books of Saskatchewan and Alberta, actually have potential to produce green electricity, and we support green electricity. We do not support fracking.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her response to the economic statement.

I think she will agree with the Bloc Québécois that the statement lacks vision. The statement contains some good things, but it is seriously lacking in vision.

She touched on forestry, carbon sequestration and moving toward cleaner, greener energy. The Bloc Québécois has presented a multi-pronged approach, focusing in particular on the forestry sector, which is a cornerstone of Quebec's and Canada's economies. I would like to know whether she thinks that is a promising avenue. The sector can work on research and development into products that allow us to sequester carbon.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Manicouagan.

I think the Bloc's approach is quite similar to the approach of the Green Party of Canada, because we need to invest in renewable energy, not in pipelines and fossil fuels.

I thank my colleague for her question.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have been talking a lot about some of the disappointing aspects of this economic update, but the biggest disappointment as far as I am concerned, and the member has been talking about bold actions that need to be taken, is that the current federal government is not stepping up on what have been immense levels of profit and increase in wealth during this pandemic. Billionaires have received about \$53 billion in new wealth in Canada. We have seen the web giants making huge levels of profits, and they do not pay corporate taxes.

My question for the hon. member is very simple. Does she feel it is important that the federal government actually take measures to increase revenue so that we are not in a situation where the federal government then cuts supports that are vitally needed for people because they have not put in place the revenue side of the equation?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for New Westminster—Burnaby. I actually referenced the same figure in my speech. The fact that the billionaire class has raked in another \$53 billion since COVID began is a shocker. We do need a wealth tax.

Also, I think we should look at the profits of the large commercial banks, which are taxed less in Canada than in some of our competitor nations, such as the United States. We are looking at the banks who have had record profits, and the billionaires have had record profits. Goodness knows, there are the digital companies, and as we approach the Christmas season, we endorse the campaign not to buy anything from Amazon, because those big offshore digital giants are eroding our bedrock of small businesses across Canada, whether they are hotels affected by Airbnbs or newspapers affected by news services that do not even pay for what they are getting.

I am very much in favour of looking at future revenue sources. Let us continue to push the Minister of Finance. At some point, we have to find a new source of revenue. We cannot imagine going through the kind of austerity program that I remember, and that I know the member remembers, from the early 1990s when we lost something like 30% of our hospital beds in a misguided approach to cut spending. It really hurt us long term. We have to be prepared to find other sources of revenue so that we can keep building the kind of society that we know we can. We are a wealthy country. We just have to get our priorities right.

• (1930)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to get in the last question for tonight.

I have never heard the former leader of the Green Party talk about nuclear energy as a solution for greener energy and a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I would like to hear her comment on this specific topic.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I think the nuclear promise for Canada was best summed up years ago by commentator Fred Knellman, who said that nuclear is a future technology whose time has passed.

There is no future for nuclear as part of our solution to the climate crisis. It is very capital intensive. It is not labour intensive and it reduces very few greenhouse gases compared with the big winners. Energy efficiency investments and renewable energy investments outpace nuclear so clearly that one would only put money in nuclear if one were deluded and addicted to the technology, and I am afraid there are still some people in Natural Resources Canada who fall into that category.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: It being 7:30 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, November 25, the House stands adjourned until Tuesday, December 1, at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:31 p.m.)

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