



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 150 No. 074
Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

COMMISSIONER OF LOBBYING

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to section 10.5 of the Lobbying Act, a report on investigation from the Commissioner of Lobbying.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), this report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, two reports of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group.

The first report concerns the 73rd annual meeting of the Council of State Governments West, the CSG West, held virtually by video conference on July 29 and July 30, 2020.

The second report relates to the National Conference of State Legislatures, NCSL Base Camp, held virtually by video conference September 15 to September 17, 2020.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to Bill C-208, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, transfer of small business or family farm or fishing corporation. The committee has studied the bill and

has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-277, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and An Act to amend the Criminal Code (exploitation and trafficking in persons).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing this bill that seeks to combat the scourge of sexual exploitation of minors. The bill implements some of the recommendations of the Select Committee on the Sexual Exploitation of Minors, whose report was unanimously adopted by the Quebec National Assembly less than four months ago.

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

* * *

[*English*]

CIVIL AIR NAVIGATION SERVICES COMMERCIALIZATION ACT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-278, An Act to amend the Civil Air Navigation Services Commercialization Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today. I want to thank my colleague from the west coast for seconding this important legislation.

Nav Canada right now is in the process of considering closure of traffic control centres in Whitehorse, Windsor, Regina, Fort McMurray, Prince George, Sault Ste. Marie and St-Jean in Quebec. The government has not been assertive on this. It has said that it has to wait for a study to take place, but through economic development and the changes that would take place with aviation, Windsor would see significant consequences and upheaval during the time of this pandemic, especially to keep regional airports alive. We are asking for a delay of the study and the closures.

Routine Proceedings

The government has said that it cannot stop the study from taking place because of legislation, so we have proposed tools for the government to stop the study and support air traffic control towers in existence right now. The excuse the government has that it cannot act would be lifted by this legislation. It could also be done through an order in council or through the government taking this legislation, just as it has taken previous legislation of mine in the past. I would encourage it to do so.

In particular, I want to thank pilot Dante Albano. There are others, but he has been a coordinating person for this and was active in creating a petition that thousands of Canadians signed in support of this initiative. I also thank the Air Traffic Control Association.

This affects economic development and safety. The Windsor airport has five different competing traffic zones, including the United States, that complicate this airspace. This legislation would give the government the power to immediately stop this nonsense, which will continue to go on for months, if not a year, with studies causing upheaval in local economies, putting public safety in jeopardy and, more important, creating confusion.

We are hopeful that the Prime Minister will look at this and do it through an order in council or steal this legislation in a positive way and implement it. We need to ensure that when we build back from COVID, we have the proper tools to do so. I would argue that having the safety and protection at regional airports to do those things would be a net asset as opposed to the process right now, which is destabilizing our air industry.

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

* * *

● (1010)

PETITIONS

MYANMAR

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

The first petition is on the coup in Myanmar.

The petitioners call on the government to condemn the coup in the strongest terms. They call for the immediate and unconditional release of all elected officials as well as political prisoners. They want the government to take actions against the Myanmar military and call for the repeal of an unlawfully declared state of emergency and respect the November 2020 election.

The petitioners also call for an immediate law barring Canadian businesses from exporting arms and technologies to Myanmar and to put forward to the General Assembly of the United Nations a resolution calling for member states to address the long-term threat to peace and stability in Myanmar. They would like to see members of the Myanmar military and their families and associates barred from pursuing education or business opportunities in Canada as well as a draft resolution, a motion, to refer this matter to the International Criminal Court.

RENT SUBSIDY PROGRAM

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am presenting is on the rental subsidy program.

The petitioners would like to draw the attention of the Government of Canada to the fact that many businesses are not currently eligible for the rental subsidy program because they are non-arm's length tenants. They draw to government's attention to the fact that for 22 years many businesses have been engaged in the tourism industry and are leasing or renting units. They would like the government to reconsider the rental subsidy program and ensure tenants who are currently excluded are included in this program. They request that the Government of Canada change the legislation so businesses are no longer falling through the cracks.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present a petition regarding Bill C-6. The petitioners have serious concerns about the consequences of the legislation, including limiting the options available for LGBT Canadians to receive counselling and the criminalization of conversations between children, their parents and other mentors about sexuality.

A recent Nanos poll has found that 91% of Canadians agree that consenting adults should be free to get the sexuality counselling of their choice regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This is consistent across regions, age and gender. This is precisely what Bill C-6 would ban, counselling that Canadians may choose for themselves.

The petitioners want to see a conversion therapy ban but not this conversion therapy ban. Bill C-6 would ban more than conversion therapy. Let us fix the definition used in the bill so we can ban the harmful and degrading practices that have no place in Canada, while maintaining the supports available for LGBT Canadians.

SAANICH INLET

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise virtually in the House this morning to present a petition signed by many constituents. It relates to the Saanich Inlet. Those who do not live on Vancouver Island will not be aware that there is a small inlet, like the space between my thumb and my index finger, just above Victoria. In that inlet, there is a very significant risk of contamination from mostly recreational boaters.

The petitioners urge that the Saanich Inlet be declared a non-sewage discharge area. This has been done, as some of the members from Cape Breton Island will know, for the Bras d'Or Lake. They urge the government take action and work with the province to declare Saanich Inlet a zero-discharge area. It has very low flushing capacity. It is an area that has increasingly strong biodiversity, but it must be protected.

Business of Supply

• (1015)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting two petitions today.

One is in support of Bill S-204, which has just passed second reading in the Senate. That bill is on organ harvesting and trafficking.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls the attention of the House to the humanitarian and human rights situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. It calls for a stronger response from the Government of Canada.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs 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 it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PLAN FOR REOPENING THE ECONOMY

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC) moved:

That, given that,

- (i) COVID-19 restrictions have had serious economic and mental health impacts on Canadians,
- (ii) COVID-19 restrictions have been advised by the federal government, including specifically by the Prime Minister on three separate occasions in November of 2020, as temporary measures to alleviate pressure on the public healthcare system,
- (iii) public health tools, such as rapid tests, shared data on how COVID-19 spreads and vaccines, have not been positioned as permanent solutions to replace COVID-19 restrictions by the federal government, including in areas of federal competency like air travel and border restrictions,
- (iv) the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom have both released public plans for economic reopening, while Canadian officials have not yet given Canadians clarity on when regular economic and social life will be able to resume,

the House call on the government to table within 20 calendar days, following the adoption of this motion, a clear data-driven plan to support safely, gradually and permanently lifting COVID-19 restrictions.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Edmonton Centre.

Before I start, I want to tell Lynne Walker that this one is dedicated to her.

Yesterday in the House of Commons, I asked the health minister what I thought was a very simple, non-partisan question. I asked when fully vaccinated seniors could give their grandchildren a hug. The answer we got back from the health minister, a year into the pandemic, could be summarized like this: She does not know, is not sure she wants to tell us, and believes it is a provincial jurisdiction, but she will give the provinces advice.

That is not what Canadians want to hear. I think that answer encapsulates best the need for this motion.

We are a year into COVID-19, and enough is enough. A year ago, Canadians from coast to coast pulled together to say we had to shut down the economy and undertake these restrictions in order to buy time for public health experts, all of us here in this place, provincial governments and municipal leaders to figure out what COVID-19 was, how it spreads and who was most vulnerable, and to develop tools to permanently combat it, like therapeutics, rapid tests and vaccines. A year into the pandemic, those tools now exist. The problem is that in Canada, we have not had clear guidance from our health officials on the circumstances under which widespread mass lockdowns can safely end. That is a huge problem.

Those who are watching today need to understand that no level of government in Canada has issued any advice on what fully vaccinated people can do. The only thing the federal government has said to date, when asked, is that vaccinated people still have to go into controversial quarantine hotels. The federal government has to at least tell people what the plan is to develop benchmarks on how these tools are going to bring freedom, prosperity and normalcy back to the lives of Canadians. Today, we are calling on every member of this House to support the federal government in developing a plan within 20 days on the benchmarks by which these tools can be used in order to let life get back to normal.

We all acknowledge that it is important to combat the spread of COVID-19, important to protect people from serious illness, important to prevent death. We have been doing that for the last year, all of us in this place. What is missing now is hope for the future. Canadians have no idea when lockdowns are going to end, and that has to stop.

Business of Supply

Why does that have to stop? It is not just me asking for this. We have Unifor asking for “a national recovery plan to include adapting border restrictions to safely reopen borders”. There is the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. The Tourism Industry Association of Canada has stated, “The news of COVID vaccine distribution gives us reason for cautious optimism”, but said that we need to plan for the recovery of Canada's tourism industry now. The Fitness Industry Council of Canada is asking for a plan. Mayors are asking for plans. Everybody is asking for a plan. It is not just stakeholders who are saying this; it is also medical experts who are saying, “We can't just live in a bubble and have a life of no risk. Everything we do has consequences.” We need a better path forward that uses these tools to protect Canadians' health while also ensuring that life gets back to normal.

These are stories from the CBC.

The federal government has to deliver this. Probably the most critical thing the federal government could do right now is deliver a plan with benchmarks on how lockdowns can be gradually, permanently and safely lifted.

We do not have that. How can businesses plan to reopen if they do not know the circumstances under which they are going to do that? Can we imagine being a restaurant owner right now, when every day it says in the news that we might lock down again, or we might not?

● (1020)

Public Health officials have not even been clear on the data showing where transmission is occurring and whether we are applying these tools to the most vulnerable places. A lot of Canadians are saying that it seems like a lot of reactive measures and a lot of guesswork.

Canadians have pulled together and Canadians have sacrificed a lot, but the federal government has to stop asking Canadians to sacrifice normal life. It has to stop asking people to sacrifice hugs, their mental health, their safety at home. It has to stop asking people to sacrifice those things, and it has to start giving them a plan for hope: “This is how we are going to reopen. These are the benchmarks. This is what we are using and this is how we are doing it.”

Other countries around the world are already doing this. This week Iceland has said that if people are vaccinated, there is no quarantine for them, and they can just come on in. In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has issued a reopening plan with benchmarks. Under the Biden administration in the United States, Dr. Anthony Fauci and the CDC have issued guidelines on what vaccinated persons can do. They have set an aspirational target of July 4, Independence Day in the U.S., and Dr. Anthony Fauci has said that the United States is going to have a normal Independence Day.

Why can we not have that here in Canada? Why can we not have nice things too? I want to re-emphasize that the federal government has not told Canadians what they can and cannot do if they have received a vaccine. It has not told airlines any sort of plan for safe border reopening. This cannot be a taboo topic anymore. The federal government is spending billions of dollars on lockdown restriction measures, so it has a responsibility.

All of the Liberals who stand up to talk to this motion today are going to say that it is not the federal government's job, that it is the job of the provincial governments. There is a big problem with that. We are in an emergency crisis situation, and it is the federal government's job to lead because it is spending billions of dollars, money that we do not have, to support continued lockdown restrictions with no plan to end them. To refute their talking points, that is problem number one.

Number two, Prime Minister has come out many times and asked for lockdown restrictions that are within provincial jurisdiction. On November 24, the Prime Minister said that the federal government is working with the provinces so that they can impose restrictions. He said that again on November 10 in a CTV article, and again in the Canadian Press on November 13. Those are just a few quotes from him that I pulled.

Yesterday in the House of Commons, to that question that I referred around hugs, the health minister said that the federal government is working with provinces and territories to develop guidance, with support from the federal government, on restrictions. The Liberals cannot suck and blow. They cannot say that it is politically convenient for them, ahead of a potential election that no one but the Liberals want, to offload this responsibility to the provincial governments.

To the bureaucrats who are watching this speech, if bureaucrats in Health Canada are advising the minister that it is not her job to provide guidance, why are we paying your salaries? If the health minister is not asking her department, with its thousands of bureaucrats, for guidance on this, why are we paying your salaries?

We need hope. We are not saying that we should just willy-nilly do anything. What we are saying is that the federal government has to start issuing direction to the airlines, to hospitality and tourism, to retail, to marginalized communities, to women who are having domestic violence issues. We need this plan. It should be a no-brainer.

The motion we have in front of the House of Commons today is asking for a data-driven plan. This is what the ask is: It is that the House “call on the government to table within 20 calendar days, following the adoption of this motion, a clear data-driven plan to support safely, gradually and permanently lifting COVID-19 restrictions.”

I said I was dedicating this to my friend Lynne. Her husband passed away. She did not even get to see him when he went in for his heart attack. People should not have to say goodbye to their loved ones over FaceTime.

Business of Supply

The federal government needs a plan. Every person in this House and every Canadian should support this motion.

• (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is truly amazing how the member has a consistent attitude, and I believe it is misleading, of providing false information. Is the member trying to indicate to those who are following this debate that the federal government is responsible for lifting lockdowns or restrictions? My understanding, according to the Constitution, is that the provinces are responsible. Canada is a vast country with many regions, and it is the provinces that put in the restrictions.

Is it the Conservative Party's policy that Ottawa should start overriding provincial jurisdiction? Could she give a clear indication of her thoughts on that issue?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, the federal government has full jurisdiction on the quarantine hotel debacle that has seen sexual assaults occur, so yes, that issue is its job.

Also, I want to quote the member of Parliament for Whitby, who tweeted that it was criminal negligence for provinces to not impose lockdowns. The federal government has been all over this. I ask members to think about how disgusting this is. After billions of dollars and thousands of bureaucrats, a year later the federal government is saying it is not its job. It is Legault's job, Doug Ford's job, or Jason Kenney's job. Liberals will not provide any support on this or any guidance. All they are going to do is have the Prime Minister come out of Rideau Cottage and say, "Well, I think you should lock down more." Then Liberal backbenchers will tweet stuff like that. They cannot suck and blow.

Nobody wants partisanship. That is what we just heard from the federal government, and the Liberals are spreading misinformation too. What we need is a plan, and every person in this place should support it.

• (1030)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am reading the Conservative Party motion. I am not out of sympathy at all with the sentiments expressed by my hon. colleague. I read with great interest the feature in Maclean's magazine written by Stephen Maher. It is clear that mistakes have been made. On the other hand, I do not see how I can vote for a motion that calls for a plan within 20 days to permanently lift COVID restrictions.

I certainly agree with the hon. member that we should have good advice as to whether, when we are vaccinated, we can hug our grandkids, but that is not the motion before us. I ask the member to explain the difference between her speech and the actual wording of the motion.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I would ask the member to avail herself to read the ask. It is not saying to lift restrictions in 20 days. It is saying to have a plan for the benchmarks that would be used to lift restrictions. The member needs to read the motion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Ms. Elizabeth May: I have read the motion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do want to remind the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands that she is not to use the mike for rebuttal, and I know that this has been mentioned on a number of occasions.

The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As a matter of privilege—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): On a point of order, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I should have said point of order before speaking previously. I apologize.

When an hon. member impugns the thoroughness of the work of another hon. member, that is a point of order. The member for Calgary Nose Hill and I have worked together for many years. I think she knows that I am an honourable person and, if I said I read the motion and I do not think the motion accords with her speech, that means I have read the motion.

I do not need to avail myself of reading the motion. The motion does not say the things that the hon. member said we should vote for. That is my issue.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the information provided. I think that most of this is a point of debate, so I will go to questions and comments.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am only stepping in here because we have had the Speaker rule a number of times on how people can use their mike in Zoom in a way that they cannot use it in the House. The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands just showed that abusive process.

Therefore, I think that when you are reminding people about the use of Zoom mikes, they need a reminder that they can actually override the ability of Parliament to do its work. I would caution the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands not to abuse that privilege.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the information provided by the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay. I did raise this prior to the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands asking for a point of order thereafter.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I very much empathize with what the member for Calgary Nose Hill is saying in her speech. I need to give a shout-out to our own public health officials for the job that they have done here in British Columbia.

Business of Supply

I want to ask the member specifically about the impossible choice that many workers have in this country when they are trying to decide between their income and their health. Does she have any thoughts on how the federal government can step in and show leadership in providing paid sick leave, so our workers can be assured that they do not have to make that impossible choice as a part of this economic recovery?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, any sort of plan on how we safely and permanently lift restrictions could certainly include a variety of measures to incent people to follow public health outcomes. We also need a plan on how we are moving forward. A clear, data-driven plan to support safely, gradually and permanently lifting COVID-19 restrictions is something that we should all get behind.

This is a no-brainer. I hope every member here realizes that in five years we will be looking back at this debate and saying, "I am so glad this motion passed", or accounting for why it did not.

• (1035)

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak to the opposition day motion.

Before I get into the specifics on economic recovery, I would like to take this time to reach out and thank the many members of all parties and Canadians at large who have supported me and my family through the passing of my son, Garrett Cumming.

Garrett had an extraordinary life in his 35 years on this planet, and I am extraordinarily proud of him. Garrett was like many at-risk Canadians and spent the year very isolated. His struggles demonstrated the incredible importance of our work in this place and the importance of getting things back to normal as soon as possible.

We must all recognize that there is no feasible way that we, as a country, can make any kind of significant recovery without addressing and conquering this health crisis. Small businesses will continue to flounder until they are forced to finally close their doors. New graduates who want to get a job will find applications unfilled.

Single-parent households will have this \$2,000 cheque, but they really want to get back to work to support their families. Sending out money as a crutch for individuals and businesses was needed to keep Canadians afloat, but it is simply not sustainable. We need to have strategies to plan and protect the compromised and get the economy back on track.

Spending to protect Canadians in the pandemic was the right thing to do and, frankly, Canada's Conservatives supported it, but we cannot pass unsustainable debt on to future generations. Once the recovery starts, we will need to get our spending under control and grow the economy. Only once we secure the health of Canadians will we be able to begin a meaningful talk on economic recovery, and the answer is not a lifetime of CERB cheques or government handouts, it is jobs. It is the dignity that comes with earning a paycheque. It is the freedom that comes from being able to control one's own finances at the moment.

Canadians are experiencing a joblessness rate that is 40% worse than the G7 average. At 8.2%, this means that more than 1.3 million Canadians are not working and could be working. We need a plan to come out of COVID-19 to create jobs, get our economy back on track and allow people to earn those paycheques. We cannot keep on putting this on the national credit card. Only jobs will provide Canadians with personal financial security. Jobs allow them to have good child care, education, nutrition and recreation. Jobs produce tax revenue, which helps reduce the government debt and protects our cherished social safety net.

Canada's Conservatives are offering a path, one of security and certainty. It may not be that glamorous, but it will safely secure our future and deliver us to a Canada where those who have struggled the most through this pandemic can get back to work.

Integral not only to our build back, but equally as important to sustain our country's growth, are two metrics that I have been following over the past year: Canada's competitiveness and Canada's innovation. With a country of our size and the sparsity of population, there is no way we can rely just on our internal economy to lead us to recovery. Canada will need massive growth in exports to fuel any kind of recovery. Spending on infrastructure should be predominately focused on those things that improve productivity, competitiveness and access to markets. Private sector innovation is what will lead us into the future and provide us with the technology we need both to shift to global sustainability and reinstate us as a world economic leader. This will give the world what it wants, which is more Canada.

The President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom have both released public plans for their economic reopening, while Canadian officials have yet to give Canadians the clarity for when regular economic activity and social life will resume. The U.S. is our largest trading partner, yet over a year has passed and we still do not have a reopening strategy for the border.

Carlo Dade, director of trade at the Canada West Foundation, said, "In 2019, the World Economic Forum's ranking of perception of quality of trade and reliability of trade infrastructure saw Canada drop 22 places...to 32nd in the globe." Moreover, Canada has fallen out of the top 10 ranking of the world's most competitive economies, and we have fallen near the bottom of our peer group on innovation.

Business of Supply

• (1040)

Little interest has been shown in expanding trade in industries in which we have a strategic advantage given our abundance. There is little mention about mining, the forestry sector, the agricultural sector and the resource sector. These are sectors that have proven in the past to drive the economy and contribute significantly to our economic health. The world wants and needs more of our natural resources and we should think about expanding our market share, not hasten its decline.

We need to stop scaring off investment like the government has done since 2015 and start encouraging it again. The most recent example is Chevron Canada, which stopped funding its Kitimat project. It is not surprising that it has had a difficult time trying to get someone to buy its interest in the project.

Instead of focusing on party platitudes, we need to get busy, help drive the recovery and get people back to work. If the government wants to focus on rebuilding the economy, it should consider some of the following. It should speed up approval of job-creating projects, large and small. The OECD ranks Canada 34th out of 35 countries for the amount of time it takes to obtain a permit for a new general construction project. All three levels of government have to participate in this. We need to be the quickest to build factories, shopping centres, business parks, mines and more. We should be removing, not adding, more regulatory burden. We should support the advancement of carbon capture technologies, unlock innovation in the technology sector, focus on the quantity and quality of R and D, and provide greater IP protection and policies that support retention in Canada, as well as have immigration policies that support the attraction of talent and, of course, we need greater access to offshore markets for our natural resources.

Economic recovery cannot be an Ottawa-knows-best approach where the government picks and chooses which jobs should be where, in which sector and which region. We can never recover if only the few get richer while working families get left behind. Specifically, I would recognize the government's failure when it comes to Canadians working in the tourism, airline and hospitality sectors, sectors that have been among the hardest hit. Conservatives would take immediate action in those sectors and get people back to work.

The tourism industry knows what needs to happen for us to head into a successful recovery. Across the board, stringent measures have already been implemented in an effort to assure that all tourism-related activities are safe, and it has communicated that to the public. It knows it has to build public confidence in travel and the risk perception surrounding it. That is going to determine the speed of this recovery. The Tourism Industry Association of Canada has said that "A plan to replace Canada's current patchwork approach of reacting to daily numbers is overdue."

While the government neglected to come up with a plan to innovate in tourism and hospitality, we saw fantastic collaboration from the Canadian airlines and our world-class institutions to provide solutions as the now-defunct rapid testing pilot program. This was a great example of a private sector success, only to be shut down by the federal government. Ed Sims, the president and CEO of WestJet, stated, "Countries around the world have taken action to limit

or defer costs to the aviation industry, yet our situation remains exacerbated by double-digit increases that are beyond our control."

At the end of the day, the government has an entire tool box at its disposal. It has a spending account in excess of \$700 billion; it has access to the most educated population on the planet; it has more land than it knows what to do with and resource potential beyond compare. It has absolutely everything it ever needs to get this country well on its way to recovery, like other countries who have much less have done. We need to look at the data and science when it comes to recovery, not what will make Liberals more electable.

We are too small a country to trade with just ourselves. We have the potential to lift Canadians economically in all corners of this great country and we have proven industries that can help us build back. Canadians are amazing innovators and innovation must be part of the solution, but not the only solution. Our country has an incredible amount of potential and we, as Canadians, can bounce back if the government allows it.

• (1045)

Rather than emerging from this crisis by relying on government cheques and handouts, Canadians should trust that they will emerge from this crisis with resilience and all the tools they need to rebuild this great country. We—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the time is up.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Drummond.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by offering my condolences to my colleague from Edmonton Centre on the loss of his son. I was very touched that he began his speech with that testimony.

I read the motion and I understand it, but I see that, in it, the Conservatives are once again proposing to infringe on the provinces' jurisdiction over the management of the health care system. I am a bit concerned about that. The federal government has some flexibility when it comes to health. It can approve and supply vaccines and, in this case, manage the borders, which it did rather late and in a somewhat questionable manner.

The Bloc Québécois can make proposals to stimulate the economy and provide some relief, but those recommendations mainly depend on health transfers, which must be increased.

Business of Supply

What do the Conservatives propose to provide the relief requested?

[English]

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his kind remarks. How can we increase health transfers without a robust economy? This really comes down to this question: When we are going to get busy and make sure that we have a vibrant economy again? Canada, even pre-COVID, had anaemic growth. We absolutely have to come up with a strategy to get this economy back on track, which will enable us to provide those health transfers that Canadians desperately need.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I too want to give my condolences to the member on the passing of his son Garrett. I saw his post online about that. He has my condolences and sympathies as a father. I can only imagine the pain he went through during that time.

What I find problematic about this motion is that while there are things the federal government is responsible for, there are also things it is not responsible for. The mover of the motion even said so in her discussion today in quoting the Prime Minister and saying that he had asked the provinces to do some stuff. That is a full admission of the fact that the Prime Minister does not have the powers, or certainly the federal government does not have the powers, for certain circumstances.

Would the member at least try to provide some distinction between what is the federal government's responsibility and what is not?

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Speaker, I would be glad to do that. The federal government can show leadership. That is what this is all about. This is about the Prime Minister showing some leadership, showing some direction to the provinces and giving them the tools they need. This is a leadership question and it is about time the Prime Minister got busy, showed some leadership and got people back to work in this country.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, I, too, offer my and constituency's condolences to the member.

We do know that the failure and negligence of the government to properly address the pandemic has impacted many. Each of us in our constituencies hears from the small business community about what is going on. Can the member provide us an example of things going on in his Edmonton riding and the feedback he is receiving from his business community about the perpetual lockdowns and the uncertain rules happening because of the lack of leadership on this end?

I am sure that the member is aware that early on in this pandemic, it was the Prime Minister who threatened to withhold money from the provinces if they did not follow some of the guidelines the feds were going to give out. He does carry a burden in this.

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Speaker, it has been devastating in Edmonton Centre. We can go through mall by mall, business by business and see a third or a quarter of them closed, depending on the circumstances. It has been devastating.

What business needs and how they need to reopen is certainty. They need somebody to tell them when we are going to see the opportunity to get back to business in full. That is what leadership is. That is what the government should be doing and I hope it does it soon.

• (1050)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to speak on the floor of the House of Commons virtually.

I must say that I am a little bit disappointed. Here we have the first official opposition day and the Conservatives have a whole spectrum of things they could have chosen to talk about today. I was hoping they would have reflected on the past weekend and talked about climate change. I believe it would have been a great opportunity for the Conservative leadership and members to say something very simple that would be very important to all Canadians. It is not really that difficult to say that climate change is real. We recognize that the Conservative Party over the weekend denied that climate change is real. Members voted down the motion. I thought it would have been a wonderful, interesting debate to see Conservative member after Conservative member stand up and tell Canadians that climate change is not real, which we in the Liberal caucus and the Greens and New Democrats recognize as real. That is why I was hoping that we would talk about that today. It would have been a great platform for the Conservative Party to set the record straight on what their beliefs really are on this important issue.

Having said that, there is no doubt that the number one issue in Canada has remained the same in the last 12 months. Our government's top priority, as the Prime Minister has indicated day after day, is the health and safety of all Canadians from coast to coast to coast. That is why we continue to take scientific advice and use an evidence-based approach to fighting COVID-19.

We indicated very clearly to Canadians that our goal was for Canadians to have free, safe and timely access to an effective vaccine. Due to the hard work of many, in particular our civil servants and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement working with the Minister of Health, we have put Canada in a good position. We have the highest number of doses per capita of any country in the world and the most diverse portfolio of COVID-19 vaccines. We are starting to see the tangible benefits of that work in terms of a number of doses being delivered. It is an ever-increasing number. That, I believe, demonstrates very clearly that we have turned the corner and that there is hope, so that we can look forward to things like the federal budget that will be coming down the pipe in the not too distant future, and that we will see the defeat of the coronavirus. At the same time, we still have to be very cautious. We all have a role to play.

With respect to the motion at hand, and after having an opportunity to ask a question, there are a number of thoughts that come to mind. The federal government does not have the constitutional authority that seems to be implied in what the Conservatives specifically want us to do. I posed that question for the mover of the motion. The Conservative Party, surely to goodness, understands provincial jurisdiction versus federal jurisdiction and who puts in the restrictions and the lockdowns. It is not Ottawa. That is provincial jurisdiction. We decided long ago, at the very beginning, that we were going to take a team Canada approach in dealing with the coronavirus, which meant that we were going to work with the stakeholders, in particular, our provinces, territories, indigenous leaders and so forth.

• (1055)

In a country as vast as Canada, the circumstances and situations vary significantly. In fact, the last time I was in Ottawa, Manitoba, on a per capita basis, was the worst in the country when it came to COVID-19 and the battle was not going well in that province. It put in additional restrictions and because it did that, it made an impact. Today, we are doing relatively well. The people of Manitoba and the provincial government took actions to reverse the wave, to bring it down to a much more acceptable number. Ideally we would like to be back where we were in June and July, and hopefully we will achieve that in the not too distant future.

Every day, if we listen to the local media, discussions take place about what should or should not be lifted and what Manitobans should be doing. Our situation is very different. We cannot say that what is happening in Manitoba is the very same as what is happening in Ontario, Nova Scotia or British Columbia. It varies. That is why we have constitutional authorities that reinforce the provincial jurisdictions and responsibilities of putting in these restrictions and are, in good part, for the provinces.

When I posed this question for the Conservative health critic, in her manner, she talked about travel restrictions. Just the other day, I asked a Conservative MP in the House if he supported the travel restrictions that were currently in place. He said, yes, that he supported them.

What the Conservatives want is something I suspect a vast majority, if not all, provinces would object to, which is having the federal government dictating when restrictions would be lifted. We need to continue to work with provinces, listen to what science and our health experts tell us and continue to build upon the momentum that is having a positive impact in all our communities across our country. We can best do that by working with Canadians, which the Prime Minister has done from day one.

When I say the Prime Minister, I say that intentionally, because the previous speaker challenged the leadership of the Prime Minister of Canada. The member's response to a question was that the Prime Minister should show leadership and that leadership had been lacking. Nothing could be further from the truth. From day one, the Prime Minister has been in front of this issue, working with Canadians and stakeholders in general to try to come up with ways to minimize the negative impacts of the coronavirus. The Conservatives have been at times supportive, but most of the time at odds.

Business of Supply

• (1100)

As we continue to focus on the health and well-being of Canadians in developing policies and taking actions to support that, the Conservatives are looking under rocks, trying to find a scandal, or where money might have been spent that was inappropriate or trying to tarnish different aspects of the expenditures of government.

We saw that amplified during the months of June and July when the opposition had thousands of questions to ask. Did the Conservatives ask questions about the vaccine back then? Not that I can recall.

I know Conservatives will ask me some questions. Maybe they can do a bit of research in-between. I would ask them this: How many questions did the Conservatives ask about vaccines back in June and July of 2020?

The government, through the advisory committee, was aggressively looking at ways in which we could ensure we could acquire the vaccine from more than one company. That leadership was coming from our government. What leadership did the Conservatives have on the file? Then they get this brain wave.

I can recall back in the fall when the Conservatives were talking about rapid testing and, oh my God, the world was falling apart or the sky was falling. The Conservatives were trying to give an impression that the federal government had dropped the ball because we did not have rapid testing. There were 25 million-plus rapid tests, I believe, and less than 1% were actually being used back in February. Many provinces were in the decimals, yet we would have thought that was the answer to everything.

The government recognized that the best way to fight the coronavirus was to listen and follow the advice of science and health experts, to take a team Canada approach by working with provinces and territories, which are the bodies responsible for putting in the restrictions in their economies, and, most important from a national perspective, to have the backs of Canadians to ensure we were in a position to protect our economy. Having the backs of Canadians and protecting our economy puts us in a better position so that when the economy starts to reopen, when things get back to that new normal, Canada will be in a position to not only recover but to build back better.

The first few years, we emphasized, and we continue to emphasize, the importance of Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it. We have been trying to advance that very important initiative. We have not forgotten about it; we continue to work on that. We continue to work on economic measures so that when the time is right, we can see a healthier Canada, both physically and economically, where our society will be able to grow. That is one of the reasons why, for example, we have seen ongoing support toward trade agreements even though we have had to deal with the coronavirus. In other words, we can walk and chew gum at the same time, recognizing the importance of issues that have been emphasized through the pandemic. An example of that is supports for seniors.

Business of Supply

● (1105)

All members of the Liberal caucus talk about how important it is that we support our seniors. We have seen that during the pandemic, we saw it pre-pandemic and we will see it post-pandemic too.

Where we could improve and make it better, we will do that on issues like pharmacare. We in the government understand what our responsibilities are. For those following this debate, we take that very seriously. The government's actions to date clearly demonstrate this.

That is not to say we are perfect. There have been some mistakes. There have been opportunities for us, through our constituents, to see programs modified or changed, and understandably so.

From absolutely nothing, from no existence to up and running, we developed, through civil servants, the CERB program. That program served almost nine million Canadians. To me, that demonstrates very clearly the government's leadership in supporting Canadians.

I would challenge any Conservative member to indicate another government that has done as well in bringing forward a program to support a population. Out of nothing, we developed the CERB program that served almost nine million of our population of 37.6 million people. That is one of the ways in which we were there to support Canadians. That is leadership.

We saw it with respect to supporting people with disabilities, seniors and students. Those types of programs, which were enhanced in some cases and brought into place in other cases, were there because the Prime Minister indicated at the beginning that we would have the backs of Canadians, and we did. That was only a part of the plan.

As I indicated earlier, we could talk about businesses. We could talk to our Minister of Small Business or the former minister, who I knew quite well because I worked with her while she was government House leader. Small businesses are the backbone of Canada's economy and are absolutely essential to our future. Every member of the Liberal caucus will say that.

We were there and we continue to be there for small businesses. We created the Canada emergency wage subsidy program. Millions of jobs were saved. Businesses might have closed had that program not been there. What about the rent subsidy program or the emergency business account program? We even have the credit availability program. There is the regional relief and recovery fund program. During the last wave, we talked about the lockdown support program.

All these programs helped workers and supported small businesses. By supporting small businesses, we prevented many bankruptcies, I would suggest tens of thousands of bankruptcies, from taking place. That puts Canada in a much better position to recover. These types of things have been taking place.

We will continue to work with provinces, territories, indigenous leaders and other Canadians to ensure we continue to move forward on the right track.

● (1110)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I did listen with interest to my colleague's speech. He certainly focused on some of the things the government has done in the past, some of which were done reasonably well and others, I would argue, were a complete failure.

However, the motion is about the lack of a plan for the future. It is about the lack of a plan to reopen the economy. It is about the lack of a plan to deal with some simple things that the federal government is responsible for. For example, I am getting many calls in my office from people who say they have had both vaccinations, and so, what are the plans of Canada for our return?

We are talking about a plan for the future and the fact that the member's speech is lacking any information about that speaks to the fact that the Liberals have no plan.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member and the opposition are wrong when they say there is no plan. If they cannot see the plan, they need to get their eyes checked. I just went through a series of policies, announcements and things that the government has done to see the economy get back up and to put Canada in a position where we can build back better.

I say to my Conservative friends, "Open your eyes; there is a plan."

They are calling on us to tell them when we are going to lift the restrictions. We cannot do that. That is the provinces' responsibility. It is the provinces and territories that put in the restrictions. We work with the provinces and territories. If the member wants to know when British Columbia is going to lift more of the restrictions, she should be asking the Province of British Columbia.

We will work with the provinces and territories and continue to build on our plan to make sure that we can build back better.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think our colleague's take on the motion is pretty harsh and his statements pretty inflammatory.

That said, I would just like to remind him that Canada is the only G7 country that cannot make its own vaccines, that its lack of leadership on border management was disgraceful, that the government was dishonest and hid all kinds of information from non-Liberal MPs and citizens during the pandemic and that this government's failure to act put us four or five months behind in the fight against COVID-19.

I will now ask a question. I know I will not get an answer, but I will ask it anyway.

What does my colleague think about upping transfers to the provinces from 22% to 35%?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what is important is that with this government in recent years, we have seen more health care dollars transferred to provinces than by any other federal government. It is historically the highest amount of health care dollars ever transferred to them, but as my friend can appreciate, there is also a need for national standards in things like home care services and that Ottawa should not just be seen as an ATM for handing out money. We should be listening to what our constituents are saying on the issue.

I would hope that the Bloc would see what the Conservatives are trying to do with the motion. What are his thoughts about the Conservatives wanting us to tell the provinces to start lifting restrictions? Does he support that?

• (1115)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think the Liberal government loves provincial jurisdiction now as a reason not to do anything. Revera is a company that is owned by the federal government. Revera is a for-profit long-term care home, but the Liberals say that we have to have standards and they talk about getting profit out, but then when it is about doing something, they immediately say it is provincial jurisdiction so they cannot that.

The issue of workers being able to go back to work or to take time off if they are sick or to get treatment is something that does fall under certain areas of federal jurisdiction. Would the member agree to changing the Canada Labour Code to include time off for 10 sick days for all federal workers? Is he willing to work with us to ensure that federal workers come under protection?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the government has taken the initiative to ensure there is additional sick time given. I would encourage individuals who have “cousins”, politically speaking, in other provinces to encourage their provincial bodies to also do what Ottawa is doing, because the vast majority of workers in our communities fall under provincial jurisdiction.

As we have moved forward on this issue, it would be nice for us to see greater co-operation. That is really what Canadians want and something that we have been doing. We have worked very closely and diligently with provinces, territories and other stakeholders to ensure that we are able to maximize the benefits we are providing for all Canadians, and to minimize the negative impacts of the coronavirus.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, when I look at the current warnings, I appreciate that it is frustrating to be told by the federal government that it is a provincial jurisdiction, but here I am looking at what our public health officer for British Columbia is saying. according to a CBC story that was updated several hours ago. Dr. Bonnie Henry is again saying that we should not gather indoors at all, but that up to 10 people might be able to gather outside. The B.1.1.7 variant is more transmissible and, in the words of Dr. Bonnie Henry, the risk “for all of us remains high.”

I am having trouble with the motion before us today, not because of jurisdictional issues, but because I wonder how the government could implement a plan within 20 days, and there is no mention of

Business of Supply

benchmarks in the wording of this motion for a clear, data-driven plan. I would like to know how we might be able to do that, as I would also like a plan.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I would indicate that because there are opposition members who are saying there is no plan does not necessarily mean there is no plan. Maybe it is a plan they do not support or there are certain aspects they would like to see incorporated into a plan.

There is a plan. That plan has been in place. We have been implementing that plan virtually from day one.

I agree with the former Green Party leader on there being a bit of frustration. Yes, there is an obligation for us to work with provinces and territories to assist where we can, based on the health experts and science, and try to support them in whatever ways we can so they can make good decisions with respect to the whole restrictions issue.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, going back to the question by my colleague from the Bloc who brought up how Canada is performing in the G7, I think it is worth noting that Canada has by far the second-lowest fatality rate in the G7. Clearly, we must as a government, and this Parliament as a whole and Canada indeed through its citizens, be doing something right. Could the member comment on what he thinks we have been doing right in taking care of Canadians?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I think the most important thing we can do at this stage is to ensure there is free, safe and timely access to an effective vaccine. Canada has the largest numbers of doses per capita of any country in the world. If we look at the numbers, I believe they are very encouraging. By the end of this month, we will have eight million doses. That is a rapidly growing number. We are in a very good position to ensure that those who want it will be able to get that vaccine.

I am very proud of the way the government has been able to secure the contracts it has. Although it was a little bumpy here and there, we are exceeding our initial targets of six million doses by the end of the first quarter, which I think is—

• (1120)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Joliette.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

Before discussing the motion, I would like to comment on the speech from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons since it is directly related to what I wanted to say about the Conservative motion.

Business of Supply

When asked about this, the Liberal member said that Ottawa has never spent as much on health care as it does now. This directly contradicts what was reported in *La Presse* this morning in Joël-Denis Bellavance's article, which says that a government document intended for a committee of deputy ministers reveals that the financial situation in the provinces is untenable and that Ottawa must act.

This confirms what the Council of the Federation, which is the assembly of provinces, and several other groups, such as the Conference Board of Canada are saying—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but there is a point of order.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the interpreter just indicated that the sound quality is not good enough to be able to continue the interpretation.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There seems to be a technical problem with the interpretation.

Is the interpretation working now?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the interpreter just indicated again that the sound appears to be too distant and they cannot continue until it is resolved.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There seems to be a problem with the sound.

I would ask the member to lower his microphone or even unplug it and plug it back in.

Now everything is working. The hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I want the sound quality to be good enough for the interpreters to do their extraordinary work.

I will then resume my speech.

I was talking about the article by journalist Joël-Denis Bellavance in today's *La Presse* newspaper. According to the article, there is a document circulating internally among deputy ministers and within the government to remind everyone what a fiscal imbalance is. It also explains just how unsustainable the financial situation facing the provinces is and that a solution absolutely must be found. This confirms what the Conference Board of Canada, the Council of the Federation and the Parliamentary Budget Officer have been saying. Year after year, the PBO publishes a fiscal sustainability report reminding us that the provinces are facing an untenable situation. This is primarily due to the underfunding of health care by the federal government in Ottawa.

The deputy government House leader said that the government has never spent so much on health, as if the problem were resolved, even though the opposite is circulating within his government. He

said that Canada-wide standards are needed. That is tantamount to federal encroachment into Quebec and provincial jurisdictions. Not only is the government maintaining its underfunding, but it is also interfering in provincial jurisdictions.

Let me relate that to the motion we are debating today. The motion calls for a reopening plan. Back home, the Government of Quebec is in charge of health measures as well as the lockdown and reopening measures. These measures are debated at the National Assembly of Quebec and supported by Quebec public health. Decisions are based on scientific studies and analyses. That is how to do things. I really do not see how Ottawa has anything to do with that.

The government, the Liberal Party, is interfering by not fulfilling its role to properly fund health. The Conservative party is also interfering. The trend is to constantly interfere in other people's business and take over. The government misinterpreted its role during the pandemic on many fronts.

In the discussions over the previous speech by the Liberal member, an NDP member also said that interference is always used as an excuse for inaction, in other words, it is a good thing that Ottawa is interfering. The NDP always proposes those sorts of measures. Even my esteemed colleague from the Green Party said that although she is against the measure it is not because of interference.

If we exclude the Bloc Québécois, there is a sort of unanimity in the House about Ottawa having to interfere in jurisdictions, especially in the health sector. I find that completely unacceptable. The motion we are debating today is about health. Ottawa's primary role is to properly fund health care.

It is clear from opinion polls and from speaking to people on the street that Canadians are asking that health care be adequately funded. Although Ottawa is many years behind in this regard, that has to change. This is a priority.

Implementing a reopening plan is a decision that must be made by Quebec City, by Toronto, by the Government of Alberta and by every province. We must respect jurisdictions. In the House, we must deal with Ottawa's areas of jurisdiction.

I am certain that my colleague, who will be speaking after me, will talk about how the border and airports were managed. These are areas under federal jurisdiction. It has been a fiasco. The Liberal member spoke about the record number of doses of vaccines per capita that Canada has. I say bravo, that is very good, but can we get them in a reasonable period of time? Canada is truly behind compared to other countries, and that is unacceptable. I am not surprised, but, once again, I am very disappointed to see the approach and the actions of the other parties in the House.

I will come back to the motion to support safely, gradually and permanently lifting COVID-19 restrictions. I am sorry, but, according to public health authorities, we could unfortunately be facing a third wave very soon.

• (1125)

It makes no sense to permanently lift restrictions. We need to be practical and rely on the science. These measures are not taken lightly.

The government and the House can introduce good economic measures to get us through the pandemic. There are two aspects to the Bloc Québécois's approach.

During the pandemic, certain measures are needed to support people, businesses and organizations that are struggling. Since political parties are not struggling, they should not have had access to the wage subsidy. That was not stipulated in the act, and they should return this money immediately. The businesses and people who faced hardship need measures to help them through the economic crisis caused by this pandemic.

It is simple. We are calling for the support measures to be extended for the duration of the crisis, especially for the sectors that will experience long-term impacts from the pandemic. It is very important that the government commit to such support. We hope to see it and we demand to see it in the budget, which is long overdue, I might add. In addition, these measures must reflect reality. They must be targeted. These measures should not be like others we have seen in recent months that encourage people to stay home instead of returning to work once proper safety measures have been implemented.

We must also provide support for industries. I am thinking in particular of the cultural industry, for example, festivals, and of the hotel and restaurant industries, because they have been affected in more lasting ways. We need to support them until the crisis is over. We also need plans for targeted support for certain industries, such as the aerospace industry, which has been hard hit by the public health restrictions.

Why has Canada still not unveiled a targeted plan for these industries? That is very important. We are waiting and we hope that such a plan will be included in the upcoming budget.

I am almost out of time because of technical problems with the interpretation. I will therefore pick up the pace so that, in the minute I have left, I can at least list the subjects that I wanted to address.

The measures were extended during the pandemic, and now we are calling for a recovery plan that will help stimulate the economy and launch the industries of tomorrow that we believe in. Obviously, I am talking about the green economy and strong sectors. I spoke about the aerospace industry, but we also think it is important to have a strong pharmaceutical industry. Let us regain that expertise.

I will end there, Madam Speaker.

• (1130)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would like the member to know that his speaking time was not cut short by the technical problems, since the clock was stopped.

Business of Supply

Mr. Ste-Marie, the technical team will contact you to try to resolve the problem. The solution may be as simple as restarting your computer.

In the meantime we will move on to questions and comments.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his insightful comments during his speech.

I know that so far the debate has been somewhat muddying the waters around jurisdictional questions. I think we all understand that provinces have their own jurisdictions and that the federal government has its jurisdiction, but really what the motion is about is that Canadians, as a whole, including Québécois, want to get their lives back.

Would the member agree that the main thing that provinces and the federal government can do to get life back to normal is to get vaccines into the arms of its citizens?

I just pulled up a list. Canada ranks behind France, Germany, Poland, Italy, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, the UAE and, of course, Israel in getting its population vaccinated.

Would the member agree—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but there are only five minutes for questions and comments, and other people do want to ask questions.

The hon. member for Joliette.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question and reiterate what a great pleasure it was to work with him on the Standing Committee on Finance for a time. We worked well together and got a lot done.

Based on my analysis of the motion, this is yet more encroachment on Quebec and the provinces' areas of jurisdiction. However, the specific point my colleague raised, vaccine supply, is under federal jurisdiction.

The Liberal government says we have the most vaccines per capita, but that is all theoretical. Canada is far behind other countries on vaccine supply. There is still a lot of work to do on this, and I completely agree with what my colleague said about it.

• (1135)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, building on the line of questioning that was just answered, I am wondering if the member would like to comment on the number of vaccines per individual that are actually going into arms right now, because Canada's rate is among the top in the G7 in terms of how many people per 100 million population are actually being vaccinated right now.

Business of Supply

Sure, the previous discussion was about the total number of vaccines, but what about the rate at which they are currently being applied?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, what I am criticizing is how long it took to get the first vaccines.

After we were told that vaccination was a month behind schedule, what was the economic and social cost of that? That kind of delay has major repercussions.

I think Canada could have done much better and made things happen a lot faster, but that did not happen. Fortunately, we seem to be catching up.

I want to stress the importance of having domestic pharmaceutical capacity. Quebec had it, but when Ottawa dropped the ball, the industry moved away. That has to change.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Madam Speaker, does my hon. colleague believe that a plan for border opening should be laid out clearly by the federal government? That is what we are asking for in this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, the motion may imply that, but that is not the only thing it implies. It is basically Quebec's and the provinces' job, and their respective public health authorities and legislative assemblies, "to support safely, gradually and permanently lifting COVID-19 restrictions."

I hate the fact that the Conservative Party campaigns on respecting jurisdictions and giving the provinces a lot of autonomy and then, when it comes down to it, they show up today with a motion where that is not the case.

When I introduced the bill on a single tax return in Quebec, the Conservatives said they were in favour of it and that they would move a motion in the House. When it came time to vote, they abstained. The Bloc Québécois finds this approach by the Conservatives to be rather disappointing.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the Bloc Québécois and the people of Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

I must say that there are a number of worthwhile points in the Conservatives' motion. It is true that the COVID-19 restrictions have had serious economic and mental health impacts on Canadians and Quebecers. Governments around the world, in Quebec, in Canada, in the United States and in the United Kingdom had no choice but to implement increasingly severe restrictions to protect people from the spread of COVID-19. Some of the restrictions were questionable, but the majority of them were necessary. I am absolutely not trying to defend the government; I am simply trying to put things in perspective.

Yes, COVID-19 has had and continues to have some serious economic and mental health impacts. I read something on Twitter yesterday that really stuck with me. Jean-Marc Léger, an economist

and the founding president of Quebec polling firm Leger, said, "The 1st wave was a health crisis and seniors were hardest hit. The 2nd wave was an economic crisis and companies, businesses and workers were hardest hit. The 3rd wave is a mental health crisis and young people are being hardest hit."

He was referring to an article in Time about the deterioration of the mental health of youth in the United States. We can say that the situation is similar in Canada. According to one poll, psychological distress among young people 18 to 34 is greater than in other age groups. The social and emotional development of youth and the establishment of romantic relationships results from socialization with their peers. Restrictions that were designed to reduce gatherings, for example, have had a significant impact on youth. Experts say that the mental health of youth was already an issue before the pandemic. Today, 26% of millennials say they have suffered from depression. That is a very high percentage. There is a lot of talk about the economic cost of this pandemic, but, unfortunately, there will also be an extremely high cost in terms of mental health.

This is not the focus of my speech today because, as we know, health is a provincial jurisdiction. Quebec has everything at hand to efficiently manage its health system. All that is missing is the federal government's financial assistance, which it is still waiting for.

Certainly, governments had to respond to COVID-19 and rapidly institute temporary restrictions. These restrictions are temporary, not permanent, and that is an important distinction. Although some are more drastic than others, these measures are in place for a reason. As the motion states, the temporary measures were put in place primarily to alleviate pressure on health care systems. I think it is premature to lift some of those restrictions before the crisis is under control. The Conservative motion specifically targets restrictions in areas of federal competency, such as air travel and border restrictions. It calls for a clear, data-driven plan to support safely, gradually and permanently lifting these restrictions.

Thinking about lifting these restrictions makes me think of when they were put in place not that long ago. Today I would like to share with the House some particularly interesting tidbits I read in a very relevant book by the journalist Alec Castonguay entitled *Le Printemps le plus long: au cœur des batailles politiques contre la COVID-19*, a behind-the-scenes look at the politics of fighting COVID-19. The author interviewed dozens of key actors, politicians, bureaucrats and scientists who played a role in managing the crisis in Quebec and Canada. I learned a lot of things that are probably already public knowledge, but that I feel it is appropriate to mention here and now.

First of all, I was surprised to learn that the Global Public Health Intelligence Network did not detect any signals of the emergence of the COVID-19 virus in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. GPHIN, which is a unit of the Public Health Agency of Canada, acts like a smoke detector and was created in the late 1990s so that countries would not be taken by surprise by new fatal viruses, particularly following the SARS outbreak in the early 2000s.

I was surprised because, over the years, GPHIN had become the main early warning system for emerging infectious diseases for 85 countries. Normally, the World Health Organization relies on GPHIN for approximately 20% of its reports of new viruses in the world every year. That is quite a lot. However, in the case of COVID-19, GPHIN was apparently unable to sound the alarm earlier, mostly because of a lack of staff and funding. In fact, it seems that GPHIN's role was called into question by Stephen Harper's Conservative government in 2014, and that since then, the work of its scientists has been valued less highly. Unfortunately, the arrival of a Liberal government in 2015 did nothing to change that. GPHIN scientists stopped issuing alerts in May 2019, seven months before the emergence of SARS-CoV-2 in China. Even the Minister of Health said that she did not know that GPHIN had ceased normal operations.

I may be droning on a bit about this, but I do have a point to make.

● (1140)

Scientists have been predicting a pandemic for decades, but we were not ready. The federal government was clearly not ready. The cuts to health care obviously did not help. One of the most overlooked aspects was the procurement of personal protective equipment, but that is a subject for another day.

According to the book, the Liberal cabinet first learned about the existence of the Chinese virus on January 18, 2020.

Let me briefly lay out the timeline of events. The WHO declared an international public health emergency a few days later, on January 30. As Mr. Castonguay put it, the alarm went off, but no one woke up. In late February 2020, Canadians returning from all over the world—not necessarily from China—began bringing the virus home to Canada. While public health experts around the world believed that all suspected travellers should be tested, not just those returning from China, the Public Health Agency of Canada maintained its risk level in Canada at “low”. With the exception of travel to China, Global Affairs Canada was not discouraging Canadians from leaving the country.

On March 11, the WHO officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic. On March 16, a team from the Government of Quebec and Montreal public health went to the Montreal-Trudeau airport to inform travellers, since, strangely enough, the federal government had yet to put strict screening and information measures in place. Let us not forget that the government had been aware of the virus for two months by then.

Between March 1 and March 21, 42,000 foreign travellers and nearly 250,000 Canadians arrived at the Montreal-Trudeau airport from all over the world, including several countries that had major outbreaks.

In addition, 157,000 Quebeckers returned home by land, and nearly 37,000 Americans drove in from especially hard-hit states, including New York and Massachusetts. Travellers brought back nearly 250 different strains of the virus to Quebec alone.

Looking back, it is clear that a travel ban should have been instituted in mid-February in order to have an impact on transmission.

Business of Supply

Canada had just a few cases at the time, and Quebec did not have any. We know that it would have been hard for the government to justify such a measure.

Could we have done better with the little information available to us? That is a good question.

Border restrictions could certainly have been implemented more quickly. I am convinced that more could have been done, and more quickly, whether it was checking travellers' temperature, requiring rapid tests before boarding, or banning non-essential travel.

There was a delay between the time when GPHIN and the Public Health Agency of Canada started to become increasingly concerned and the time when the Liberal government finally decided to act. Had there not been this delay, things could have been very different.

Delaying traveller screening may possibly have allowed the variants to spread more easily within our borders. This recent experience has shown us that it is never too early to make plans to better prepare for the future. However, as we enter the third wave of the virus, lifting restrictions appears to be premature.

Right now, vaccination is the best way to get out of this pandemic. Until the majority of Canadians and Quebeckers are vaccinated, it would be completely irresponsible to allow people to travel freely again. Vaccinations are finally happening, but there have been delays.

If the Liberal government had been more proactive, it would not have waited until June to create a vaccine task force. Because the government failed to be proactive, no vaccines will be manufactured here until the end of the year and, more importantly, Canada is fully reliant on foreign manufacturers for its vaccine supply.

I appreciate the Conservatives' motion and sincerely believe that the government must present some kind of plan for getting out of this crisis. I honestly do not think the government has had a plan all along. The government is acting blindly and focusing more on its election platform than on getting us out of this crisis.

However, before suggesting that the temporary COVID-19 restrictions be lifted, both the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party should take the time to look back and admit that measures were too slow to be implemented and that if the government had acted more quickly, we could have saved thousands of lives. This is about lives lost. Just a few days ago, we paid tribute to the more than 22,000 lives lost, including 10,000 in Quebec.

I think that we have a short memory. We know that the financial and mental health consequences are enormous, but we have to remember that these measures are in place to protect our people's health and safety. I think that is what matters most during a pandemic.

Business of Supply

There were definitely problems with the mandatory hotel quarantine, but we must remember that, before and during the holidays, the government was unable to make sure that returning travellers were actually quarantining. With variants surfacing around the world, I think self-isolating for 14 days upon arrival is still essential. The same goes for land border restrictions. People who do not have an essential reason to travel should stay home. That is part of the effort we must all make to combat this accursed virus.

The government could certainly be more understanding and more flexible in some situations, such as family reunification or if a person has proof of vaccination. However, given that managing travellers and borders was such a mess from the start, I feel it is all the more urgent that everything be in order before we consider lifting restrictions.

• (1145)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member could indicate to the House the countries she would refer to as having done a good job at the beginning by invoking travel restrictions that she would have liked to see invoked at one time. In particular, I am thinking of the other G7 countries.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, that is a good question, but I think that was the point of my speech today.

We are dealing with an unprecedented crisis. We were certainly not prepared. We had to bring in measures quickly, without really knowing if they would work. In my opinion, it is premature for the Conservatives to demand a fixed plan based on solid data within 20 days when we have been flying blind from day one.

I am not saying that there is a country that managed to control the pandemic perfectly within its borders. Could Canada have done better from day one of the crisis? I think the answer is yes. Was it slow to bring in measures at the border? Again, I think the answer is yes.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member. I have a tough question for her.

Today we are voting on the motion moved yesterday by the NDP. I am in favour of the motion, which seeks to protect seniors in long-term care centres. Now is not the time to blame other jurisdictions, but the fact is that Quebec has the worst record when it comes to the number of seniors who died at long-term care centres. It is a tragedy, but it is not the government's fault.

However, I think that at a time of crisis, we must find ways to work together. Maybe we should stop focusing on borders and find a way to collaborate. Does my colleague think that it is possible to vote in favour of that motion while protecting provincial jurisdictions and the rights of Quebec?

• (1150)

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

What happened in Quebec's long-term care centres was indeed a tragedy, and that is what Mr. Castonguay says in his book. He says that the long-term care centres were a blind spot for Quebec's health care system and that they were the main victims of the first wave of the pandemic.

However, Quebec has a health care system that has all of the tools it needs to operate properly, and Quebec is trying to keep it operating properly, but federal funding is needed. I understand and share my colleague's interest in collaboration. However, the way the federal government can help Quebec manage long-term care centres is to immediately transfer funding to it, as the premiers of Quebec and the provinces and territories, as well as the Bloc Québécois, have been asking it to do for weeks, if not months. That is how the federal government can really help Quebec's long-term care centres.

[*English*]

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the same question I asked another Bloc member earlier. I realize there are jurisdictional issues, but it just seems to me that the whole issue of reopening comes down to the rate of vaccination, in which Canada has seriously lagged behind other countries.

Does the member not think that the government needs to take responsibility and admit its failure in this regard?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, I think we need to take the time to look back and learn from our mistakes in order to move forward. Obvious mistakes were made with regard to vaccine procurement. Everything is going relatively smoothly now, but Canada is lagging behind the other G7 countries.

I think it is good that the government is admitting that, but it should continue to give the provinces the means to vaccinate seniors, health care workers and all members of the public. That would ultimately make it possible to ease the restrictions that are in effect. That is how we will get out of this situation. In my opinion, the priority right now is vaccination, as the member so clearly pointed out.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very honoured to rise on behalf of the people of Timmins—James Bay. I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver Kingsway.

There has been incredibly beautiful weather in Ontario this week, and I see people out on the streets wanting to believe this nightmare is over. When I was in the market the other night, I saw many young people doing what young people do, hanging out and talking, believing that with leaving winter behind, so too have we left behind the nightmare of COVID, but that is not the case.

Business of Supply

We know there are some very concerning new variants. The B.1.1.7 variant is spreading quickly across Canada. We are seeing multiple new cases and health organizations are telling us that this is putting us at the beginning of a third wave.

The crisis of new virulent variants hitting communities across this country happens as we are struggling to get the vaccine rollout. This is a race against time. The United Kingdom has 44 doses administered per 100 people. The United States has 37 doses per 100 people, and Canada is still down at 10 doses administered per 100 people. This is about the decisions that were made and the decisions that are being made.

My hon. colleagues in the Conservative Party were talking this morning about when the border will be opened. On the weekend, they said they did not believe in climate change. Maybe they do not believe in the new variants and that we should open border. We cannot open the border until we get the issue with the vaccines dealt with.

The issue with the vaccines, of course, comes down to the decision made by the government to trust that the private sector would get them through this. The Americans made the decision to invest heavily in vaccine production and research. We did not do that in Canada, and it has put us in a situation where we are behind. We are behind at a time when we cannot afford it because of these variants.

Reopening the economy is incredibly important because we know it has caused massive damage to small businesses and personal economies across this country, but we need to look at how the lack of rights that exist for many workers has exacerbated the crisis. Right now in Peel, there is a situation where 600 cases of COVID have been found at the Amazon warehouse. That is 600 cases.

This is not a flu we are talking about. It has been proven that COVID can have long-term neurological and health damage to people, yet Amazon allowed 600 of its workers to get sick in that plant. It is a number that I do not think has been as staggering anywhere, except at the Cargill plant in High River, where there was also about 600 cases.

Families are affected in Peel, which is continually in the red zone. We heard Doug Ford make it seem like the people in Peel were out partying and not listening to the rules, when the reason Peel has such high rates is because so many people are precarious workers. They work in warehouses like Amazon where they have no choice but to go to work. If we are going to talk about getting the economy reopened, we have to talk about protecting the workers who have been on the front lines and cannot take a day off if they feel sick. There is evidence of people who cannot even get a vaccine because they cannot afford to take a day off work. That is how precarious their situations are.

In Ontario, 15,000 people have gotten sick with COVID because of workplace exposures. There needs to be coherence in saying that to get the economy back on track, we have to shut down this COVID spread in workplaces. To do that, people have to have basic rights to have safe workplaces, and if they need time off when they are sick, they can take time off so they do not make other people sick.

The issue of Amazon is something to look at, because Amazon is the symbol of everything that is wrong in the modern globalized economy. This is a company with 21st century technology and 19th century labour practices. The abuses of workers at Amazon have been documented again and again. I will ask members to remember when all of the Liberals were talking about team Canada, with all hands on deck, and that we are all in this together. At that moment, the Prime Minister shocked the country when he said who the partners would be for distributing medical equipment. It was not Canada Post or Purolator, places that have unions and good working conditions. No, we were going to partner with Jeff Bezos, one of the crummiest human beings on the planet, and make him our partner. What the Prime Minister effectively did was privatize and outsource to Amazon a key element of the pandemic response, and it is not just that Amazon is a crappy company in the way it treats its workers.

● (1155)

While our small businesses were going down in flames across this country, Amazon was literally making out like bandits. Why was that? It is because Amazon does not pay taxes the way small businesses pay taxes. We would have thought the Prime Minister would have seen what a symbol it would have been to stand beside small business owners across the country, compared with standing beside Jeff Bezos, who has a massive tax loophole that has allowed him to become billions of dollars richer.

Two of the worst companies in terms of the profits they made were Amazon and Walmart. They are now \$116 billion richer. Amazon and Walmart, by the way, were also two of the companies that gave the least to their employees. There are many big, big corporations whose executives actually said, "Hey, our employees are keeping us profitable. Our employees are going to get a better share." Costco, certainly a big, big player, gave a fair share, but not Amazon and not Walmart.

Why do I mention that? I mention it because we know that Walmart stayed open through the whole pandemic while all our little small-town stores and businesses were hanging by a thread and the owners were begging for loans because their businesses had to be shut. It is about that inequity.

It is also about the choice that this Prime Minister made to tie himself to Amazon, of all companies, with the abuse of its workers and high injury rates, and the fact that we knew it was not going to protect its workers from COVID. We saw Tim Bray, vice-president of Amazon, quit over the firing of workers in the United States. A vice-president of Amazon quit because workers were fired for asking, in a pandemic, to expand sick leave, hazard pay and child care for the warehouse workers who were trying to keep the business afloat.

The issue of child care was huge because, in the first wave when children had to stay home, workers had to continue to go in, as there was no support for them. The Prime Minister decided that Amazon was the symbol of what was going to make the Liberal government look good in the pandemic. It sent a very wrong message.

Business of Supply

What do we need to do? We need to work together at this point to get us through this third wave. I encourage people across this country not to let their guard down. This is the most dangerous point. We have come through two waves. In this third wave, we do not want to have ourselves hit again.

We need the government to have a plan for the vaccine rollout. It has been hiding again and again behind provincial jurisdiction. We saw how the United States brought the army in, and how it had a national strategy to get the vaccines out. We have a Prime Minister who is *mister laissez-faire*.

I mean no offence to the provinces, but Doug Ford failed the people of Ontario time and time again in not spending the money he should have spent. Regarding Jason Kenney, when everyone else in Alberta was doing their part, his MLAs were on the beaches in Mexico and Hawaii. Now he is using his \$30-million war room to pick a fight over the historical accuracy of a cartoon about Bigfoot. Jason Kenney thinks the biggest priority now is that a cartoon about Bigfoot is somehow inaccurate. I know there are a lot of Bigfoots that probably do support Jason Kenney.

I am mentioning Jason Kenney and Doug Ford because we cannot simply leave something as big as a pandemic to them, if that is what their priorities are. We need leadership from the federal government, and we are not seeing it. We need a commitment at the federal level, where we have 180,000 employees, to have the Labour Code say that workers will be able to take time off for sick leave. That is a simple change the Liberal government could make now. If the Liberals did that, it would keep people safe. It would get the economy back up and rolling because we know that if people can take time off when they are sick, they are not going to make other people sick, and it will save us in the long term.

Therefore, I am encouraging my Liberal colleagues and my Conservative colleagues to push for this simple change that we can do at the federal level to make sure that the workers who need to take time off, and we have hundreds of thousands of them under the federal jurisdiction, can actually get the time off. This is so they are not spreading COVID or any of its variants.

• (1200)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed, as always, the comments from the member for Timmins—James Bay. However, I do have a question about the actual motion, which he seemed to navigate around but not actually talk about.

Section (iv) of the motion says:

The President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom have both released public plans for economic reopening, while Canadian officials have not yet given Canadians clarity on when regular economic and social life will be able to resume...

Does my hon. friend believe that statement is true? Should the Prime Minister, once again, attempt to show leadership by telling Canadians when we can expect life to return to normal? The President of the United States has done that. The Prime Minister of the U.K. has done that. When will the Prime Minister actually show leadership and let Canadians know, with a data-driven agenda, when we can return to normal?

• (1205)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, this is what I was talking about for the last 10 minutes.

The problems we are facing right now are the new variants and the struggles we are still having with the vaccine rollout. Because of these, we cannot reassure Canadians of when we are going to be safe. We need to take a number of steps to get people to be safe, because restarting this economy is crucial. We cannot allow a third wave to happen. People are just so frustrated, so tired and have carried a heavy weight.

Every Canadian has gone above and beyond, time and time again. It is up to us to reassure them that we will get them there. We do need a statement, but we also need to recognize that until we have the vaccines to deal with the variants, we are dealing with a very unsure situation for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

We wasted an entire day yesterday debating an NDP motion calling for national standards in residential and long-term care facilities. Today, once again, we are debating a motion that essentially calls for a reopening plan. In other words, we will have spent two days debating matters under provincial jurisdiction.

Jurisdictions are not a purely administrative matter. The provinces administer health care. They run hospitals, hire doctors and work on prevention. The provinces do all that.

On what basis do my friends in the NDP and the Conservative Party think they know better than the provincial premiers how to handle this pandemic?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, the issue of jurisdiction is very important, but it is clear that the provinces were ill-equipped to protect seniors in long-term care facilities during the first wave, and that was the biggest scandal of the pandemic.

The governments of Quebec and Ontario had to ask for help from the army, the Canadian Forces, to protect seniors. Of course this is a jurisdictional issue. It is essential that Canada protect seniors across the country.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a very specific quick question in regard to the NDP's position on international travel.

Do New Democrats support the current system we have in place, or are there some specific changes they would put in place?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, clearly, until we get the issue of vaccines dealt with, questions of international travel are almost hypothetical at this point.

Business of Supply

I would love to be able to travel. I know many people who are dreaming of travel. However, until the government gets it together with the vaccines so we can assure people in other countries that Canada has beaten the virus, and until we know that other countries have beaten the virus, these questions are merely hypothetical.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague about something that is not hypothetical, which is the need for the federal government to address the protection of workers under federal jurisdiction in taking sick time off so they do not spread the virus and will be able to travel.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to start my remarks by outlining a few key principles I think are important for all parliamentarians to keep in mind.

One, all federal COVID-19 guidance must be based on the best available science and reflect both the state of the pandemic and the pace of the vaccine rollout across Canada.

Two, Canada's New Democrats understand that there is no trade-off to be made between saving lives and livelihoods. We know that we will not be able to get the economy back on track until we bring COVID-19 fully under control, and not the other way around.

Three, the federal government should provide Canadians with a clear path forward by releasing a comprehensive plan to put this pandemic behind us and begin the process of recovery.

Four, we think that the federal government should not wait until the pandemic is over to begin acting on critical lessons that we have already learned. As one example, the NDP believes it is time to bring in paid sick leave for every Canadian worker, national standards for long-term care, and a public vaccine and drug manufacturer. These are gaping holes in Canada's economic and health care fabric that we know need to be fixed. There is no reason to wait to get started on those issues.

While planning is always good, we must not prematurely ease essential measures that are critical to keeping Canadians safe. I will outline some of the major reasons why this is so important.

First, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada, with the continued increase in variants of concern, maintaining public health measures and individual precautions is crucial to reducing infection rates and avoiding a rapid reacceleration of the epidemic and its severe outcomes, including hospitalization and deaths.

The B.1.1.7 variant of concern, the one that was first identified in the U.K., is spreading quickly across Canada as we debate this today, causing doctors and experts to sound the alarm about a third wave of COVID-19 infections. Provinces have been easing restrictions after cases began to fall across the country in late January, and then the B.1.1.7 variant began spreading in earnest in mid-February.

Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia are each reporting more than 1,000 cumulative B.1.1.7 variant cases as of March 22. In fact, cumulatively, across Canada, we have 4,861 cases of the B.1.1.7 variant reported now. In addition, we have 244 cases reported across Canada of the B.1.351 variant first identified in South Africa. Finally, we have 104 cases reported across Canada of the

P.1 variant first identified in Brazil. Therefore, we have an increasing spread of variants.

Second, we are clearly entering a third wave. The Ontario Hospital Association issued a stark warning on March 15, saying that the province has now entered into a third wave, citing a sharp increase in cases of new variants of concern and rising admissions to intensive care units. Just days ago the Ontario Medical Officer of Health, Dr. David Williams, confirmed that the province is now in the midst of a third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Ontario, variants of concern cases now exceed 50% of all cases. Here in B.C., on March 22, B.C.'s provincial health officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, confirmed that this province is experiencing a third wave of COVID-19 infection. She pointed to an increase in the seven-day rolling average of new daily cases over the last several weeks as an indication that this is B.C.'s third wave. Finally, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada, nationally, COVID-19 activity levelled off at a high level since mid-February and that average daily case counts are now on the rise. The latest national level data show a seven-day average of 3,297 new cases daily.

Third, we have to look at the pace of the vaccine rollout. As of March 22, the United Kingdom has administered 44 doses per 100 people, with 3.3% of its population fully vaccinated. In the United States, 37 doses have been administered per 100 people, with 13.2% of the population fully vaccinated. Contrast that to Canada, where we have administered 10 doses per 100 people, with only 1.7% of our population fully vaccinated.

• (1210)

Fourth, if we compare strategies, in the coming weeks, the Biden administration in the U.S. will make every adult in the U.S. eligible for vaccination no later than May 1. Once all Americans are eligible to be vaccinated, the administration will ensure that every adult is actually able to get the vaccine by increasing the number of places Americans can get vaccinated, increasing the number of people providing vaccinations, providing tools to make it easier for individuals to find a vaccine and providing clear guidance to vaccinated Americans. The U.S. is also helping educators get vaccinated. The president has challenged all 50 states to get pre-K to 12 school staff and child care workers their first shot by the end of this month.

In the U.K., they have a similar strategy. The speed at which England will exit lockdown is set against four key tests: how the vaccine rollout is going, how vaccines are affecting hospitalizations and deaths, measuring infection rates and ensuring they are staying low, and ensuring that new variants are not undermining the other three criteria.

Business of Supply

What do validators say about the state of affairs right now? Well, a joint statement by the International Monetary Fund and the World Health Organization states that “At face value there is a trade-off to make: either save lives or save livelihoods. This is a false dilemma – getting the virus under control is, if anything, a prerequisite to saving livelihoods.”

This is mirrored by many people across this country.

Tyler Shandro, Alberta's health minister, has said, “There will be no easing of any restrictions at this time. This is the safe move. It's the smart move to make for our province right now and it's absolutely necessary to help us avoid a third wave that would take more lives and once again put more pressure on the hospital system.”

Dr. Peter Juni, scientific director of the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table, has said that “It's the presence of cases caused by new variants that's alarming.... [The] curve has gone upwards and upwards. It's skyrocketing at the moment.... What we need to do is, we need go harder.”

Quebec premier François Legault has said that “We look at what's happening in Ontario, in New York, in New Jersey and France and we have to worry. We have to be careful.”

Finally, Dr. Caroline Colijn, Canada 150 research chair at Simon Fraser University, has said that “We're probably not going to win the race between vaccination and the B.1.1.7 variant and partly that's because it's here now, it's already established and rising and it has a higher transmission rate, which makes it harder to control and so I think that's the concern over the next few months.”

Colleagues, what I am saying is that we cannot prematurely exit at this point in time. We have to keep the existing measures in place, we have to deepen them, and now is not the time to prematurely exit from these very measures that, if we do not continue, would cost more lives and would increase the rate of transmission that we have worked so hard to stop.

I will pause for a minute and talk about paid sick leave in Canada.

A large proportion of COVID-19 transmission has occurred in workplaces in part because workers do not have access to paid sick leave. We know that some jurisdictions, like B.C. and Yukon, have stepped in to provide additional support, but we also know that this support is not available to every worker in the country. Canada's New Democrats are calling on the Liberal government to fix the flaws in its current program to make it easier for people to access the program and get help more quickly.

I would like to move that the motion be amended by adding the following after a semi-colon: “and that in order to facilitate this lifting of restrictions, this plan ensure that every Canadian worker has access to 10 paid sick days, starting by amending the Canada Labour Code to include 10 paid sick days for all federal workers.”

• (1215)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. In the case that he or she is not present, consent may

be given or denied by the House leader, the deputy House leader, the whip or the deputy whip of the sponsor's party.

Since the sponsor is not present in the chamber, I ask the acting whip if he consents to this amendment being moved.

Mr. Michael Kram: Madam Speaker, the official opposition does not accept the amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There is no consent. Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 85, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the very difficult work that my colleague has done on the health committee and as the shadow critic throughout this pandemic.

The member talked about the need to keep an eye on the variants, that we need to be watching what is happening, but he also talked about other countries that have developed a plan. I think the fact that we have to be cautious has to be part of the plan, but this resolution talks about data-driven indicators. I think all Canadians will be watching and would like to know whether Canada is indeed going to put forward a reasonable plan, taking into account, of course, the variants and other issues.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, I know that as a former nurse, the member has a particular expertise in these matters. I think she will appreciate the very difficult trade-off that we have. What I think is important to recognize at this point in time is that our ability to reopen our economy and to restore some sense of normalcy to communities across this country is completely dependent upon our gaining control of the transmission of this virus. It cannot be the other way around. We cannot put the reopening of the economy ahead of getting control of the health issues. We have to make sure that we have the health—

• (1220)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would add that, as a nurse by profession, I am very concerned about the whole issue of health.

Although I am not surprised, I do not understand this insistence on additional standards when the real issue is that our provinces and territories need permanent support through federal health transfers that offset provincial expenditures.

Why keep harping on this issue?

[English]

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, what I always fail to understand about the Bloc Québécois position on standards is that it seems to fail to understand the way that the Canadian health system is set up. The Canada Health Act establishes standards. That is the basis of our entire health care system, of which the people of Quebec, I am sure, are very proud and count on. The Canada Health Act sets out five principles, including portability, accessibility, universality, public administration, etc. and those standards must be met in order for the health transfer to be received by the Province of Quebec and every other province and territory.

I fail to understand why the Bloc Québécois members rail against standards when the whole basis of our system is predicated on Quebec's meeting those standards. They want the money coming from the Canada health transfer, which I agree with my Bloc Québécois colleagues that it has to be increased. However, that is only the case if Quebec meets the standards set in the Canada Health Act. New Democrats simply want to expand our system using the same model that has been so successful and cherished by so many Canadians.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, as we are talking about a plan in today's motion and the member mentioned paid sick days, can he elaborate a bit more on what the importance of the current two weeks having to be taken in blocks, and not as individual days? What is the importance of that? The government continues to say that it has already put that in action, but it is not working and Canadians are asking for it to be different. Can he speak on that?

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, the problem is deep: 58% of all workers in Canada do not have access to paid sick leave, and that jumps to 70% for low-wage workers. Only about 10% of companies increased their paid leave policies in response to COVID. The CRSB, which the Liberal government brought in, does not provide immediate accessible paid sick leave. It pays less than a full-time minimum wage job does in most provinces. Of course, that policy excludes some essential workers, such as migrant workers. It is time to stop this patchwork approach and make sure that every worker in this country has access to 10 paid sick leave—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak to our Conservative opposition day motion.

I struggled a lot with what I was going to say in this 10-minute speech. The reality is that I probably have had enough experience over the last year and, indeed, the last three decades dealing with mental health and the challenges our most vulnerable communities deal with to probably fill an hour or even more with respect to that.

COVID-19 has really shone the light on and amplified a national crisis, and that is the mental health crisis. I know I am not unique with this experience and that my colleagues from all sides of the House are feeling it themselves and are hearing this every day in their offices that Canadians are struggling, now more than ever. We need our government to lead. Canadians need hope. They need to know their government has a plan for recovery. We cannot have a plan for recovery without a mental health plan.

Business of Supply

A mental health action plan is critical, now more than ever. Over 20% of Canadians are feeling more anxiety, more depression. We know that substance use and abuse, whether related to alcohol, tobacco or drugs, is up over the last year. Domestic violence is up over the last year. Calls to crisis lines and women's shelters have gone through the roof. We need to do better.

I was heartened last week when our leader detailed our five pillars for an elected Conservative government. The third pillar was putting forward a strong, mental health focused action plan for Canadians. As we move forward, the mental health and well-being of our nation must be at the heart of everything we do. There is no health without mental health. We need to view mental health the same as we view physical health.

I remember when a firefighter contacted me some time ago. He asked me why he had to become a statistic before anyone cared. I asked him to explain. He said that if he had a broken arm, or leg, or back or even had the flu, his colleagues would come around and would ask if there was anything he needed. He said that the brotherhood and sisterhood of first responders falls short when it comes to mental injury and mental illness. That is true with most Canadians. That alone fuels the stigma surrounding mental illness and mental injury. It is the unseen illness, the unseen injury, that Canadians are facing, and had been facing leading up to COVID, which has made it even worse. Sadly, all we have seen from the Liberal government is no plan, no hope and a website.

Yesterday, in question period, I asked the minister where the plan was to implement the simple three-digit 988 national suicide prevention hotline. Instead, she doubled down on the website. When I am sitting with family members who have been left behind due to death by suicide, or those who have contemplated suicide or those who are struggling, I hear what I call the “if only” conversations: “If only I saw the signs.” “If only I knew that my brother, my father, my husband or my wife was struggling, I could have done something.”

• (1225)

Not once have I heard “If only there were as a website I could log onto or my loved one could log onto.” When I am talking to national organizations or grassroots organizations charged with delivering such critical care to the most vulnerable on the streets, whether it is with the opioid or homelessness crisis, they never talk about if only there were a government website they could go to. They talk about their concern of not knowing whether they will be able to keep their doors open. For addicts who come through their doors and finally say that they want and need help, they want to be able to put those people in beds and get them the help they need.

Business of Supply

A real plan is exactly what we started to see with our leader last week when he announced our five pillars. The third pillar is so important, a real mental health plan, working with the provinces—

• (1230)

Mr. Michael Kram: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As much as I hate to interrupt one of my colleagues, I would like to inform the Speaker that all Conservative speaking spots today will be divided in two.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, a great colleague. I probably should have announced this earlier.

The plan our leader announced can be transformative. We will increase funding to the provinces and work with them on a mental health action plan. We will lead, not obfuscate, not push it aside and say that it is not our problem. We will implement the 988 national suicide prevention hotline. We will work with employers to incentivize them to provide adequate mental health support for their employees. It is so important to actually have a mental health action plan, now more than ever. An elected Conservative government will do that.

An elected Conservative government will put mental health at the heart of everything we do. It was our former Conservative government that launched the Mental Health Commission. In opposition, it was a newly elected Conservative MP who launched legislation that called on the government to develop the first-ever national framework for combatting post-traumatic stress disorder.

We have to be better. I have stood in the House and talked about this time and again. In our first emergency debate, we talked about the suicide epidemic in first nations communities, specifically At-tawapiskat. My colleague from Timmins—James Bay speaks so eloquently on this topic. One of our colleagues stood and said that he remembered that one of their first emergency debates 10 years ago was about the suicide epidemic in first nations communities. Sadly, we have not really moved beyond that.

I have stood in the House time and again and challenged our colleagues. For me, this is not a partisan issue; it is all our issue in being true leaders in the House. Our Conservative motion today calls on the government to show us the plan, to create hope for Canadians and to help those who are struggling.

Last month, a lady in my riding, Margaret Sweder, celebrated her 100th birthday. I called her and wished her a happy birthday. I do not know her. First, she was not going to answer the phone because she thought it was a CRA fraud call, because the number was from Ottawa, but then we talked. I asked her what she was missing most in this COVID pandemic and she said “a hug.”

This lockdown has had immeasurable impacts on Canadians, just the social aspect of being able to hug our loved ones, being able to spend time with loved ones—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Unfortunately, we have to leave it there.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, throughout this pandemic, we have heard from a lot of workers in processing plants across Canada who have been very concerned about safety in their workplaces and about a return-to-work plan. I know the member talked a lot about hope. Recently, my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway tried to move an amendment to the motion that would see us give 10 paid sick leave days to workers.

Why can we not give those workers hope so they do not have to make the choice between their health and their income?

• (1235)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, my colleague raised a very interesting point. I have to admit that I did not hear the amendment so I cannot comment on that. However, we must be doing everything in our power for our workers, for our front-line heroes, like the doctors, nurses, firefighters, police officers and paramedics, the grocery store stockers, the people who have been on our front lines like the truckers, ensuring that as a nation we still have some semblance of being open.

Imagine the mental health toll that COVID has taken on our doctors, nurses and our medical professionals. Think about that three to five years down the road from now and what we will be—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Madam Speaker, in my constituency mailer this month, I sent out a number of phone numbers for mental health support because it became clear the statistics were terrible: 42% of British Columbians have had a deterioration of mental health; 13% of British Columbians increased substance use as a coping tool for COVID; and 8% of British Columbians have experienced suicidal thoughts and feelings.

I wonder if my colleague believes that if we could get clear criteria, a plan that shows when and how the government is going to open, we could give hope and really secure the mental health of Canadians.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague from Langley is bang on. We need to create hope. Moreover, we have to not just create hope but have action, a real plan to open the doors to get Canadians back to normalcy of some sort, to get them back to work and to allow them to see their loved ones. It will go a long way in the mental health of Canadians, the mental well-being and wellness of Canadians, but there has to be a plan.

The government has to step forward with a plan. It has to lead. It has to have a plan and we have not seen one to date. All Canadians asking for is that. That is all Conservatives are asking for with this motion.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we need to have a plan, but do we want the plan to be based on politicians and a political deadline that is passed by the House or do we want the plan to be put together by experts? What if the experts say that it is not possible to do this in 20 days because they do not know what to expect?

Six months ago, we did not know that there would be variants. A year ago, we did not know the full implications of how this virus transmits. We are trying to put a political deadline onto experts by trying to somehow hold them to a deadline that has not been justified, seems to be arbitrary in nature and sounds like a good number.

Who does the member want the actual plan to be made by, politicians or experts?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, that is a typical Liberal response. We are well over 400 days into this pandemic, yet Canadians have failed to see any semblance of a plan. There was no plan for vaccinations. There was no plan to close our borders or to secure them. There was no plan to get us back to normalcy. All we hear is excuse after excuse.

I agree that we are in a pandemic, but we know more than we did back in January of 2020. Truly, at some point, the Liberal government has to lead and has to have a plan instead of excuses. All we hear is, if it were not for the Conservatives or if it were not for the NDP. The Liberals will blame everybody but themselves. They point fingers left, right and centre, but truly never, ever—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

• (1240)

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on a very timely motion moved by my colleague, the member for Calgary Nose Hill. Today I speak on behalf of my constituents of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, and as the official opposition shadow minister for agri-food and agriculture.

My office has received hundreds of calls and emails from constituents who feel abandoned by the Liberal government. Their concerns, interests and livelihoods have been sacrificed by waves of lockdowns. Canadians watch as countries around the world are safely reopening without seeing an end in sight to the heavy-handed restrictions we have here at home.

How much longer will Canadians have to wait to access COVID-19 immunizations? They need a concrete plan from the Liberal government on when and how COVID-19 restrictions will finally be safely and permanently lifted.

One year ago, on a public health directive, the federal government began locking down public places, the U.S.-Canada border, airlines, businesses, restaurants, schools, hospitals, assisted living and extended nursing facilities, churches and even family homes.

Business of Supply

We have seen the consequences for businesses and people's livelihoods. These include cross-border tourism business in stores and restaurants in resort towns. As well, it has been difficult to get farm machine parts, and the technicians who service the machinery, across the border. The consequences have affected young people's educations and the relationships, family lives and personal well-being of the young and the elderly.

Let us look at some of these consequences in more detail. In March 2020, when the lockdown began, Canada's GDP started to decline rapidly. Our unemployment rate rose immediately. Canadians began losing their jobs en masse as businesses were forced to close their doors. Sales at restaurants went down by 46% in March 2020, and by more than 56% in April. When restaurant sales are down, it creates a domino effect on the whole supply chain including farmers, food importers and wholesale food distributors. Families' entire life's work of building and running businesses has either been completely wiped out or, if they are fortunate, they may still be hanging on by a thread.

Mass economic lockdowns should never have been viewed as a long-term measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Lockdowns and restrictions were put in place to buy governments time to get permanent solutions, such as vaccines, rapid testing and variant testing. These tools now exist, so where is the plan?

Last year air travel plummeted, and travel to Canada was practically shut down. This is important to note, because most Canadians do not realize that their fresh produce in the winter, particularly tropical fruit, is imported as air cargo on commercial passenger planes. When commercial planes do not fly, importers are forced to pay a higher fee for air cargo. That cost is passed on to the consumer, which means higher grocery bills or having to forgo buying a favourite fresh produce.

These are some of the economic activities that have been affected, but how have the COVID-19 lockdowns affected Canadians' sense of well-being? As one might imagine, the segment of Canadians who rate life satisfaction as "high" fell from 72% in 2018 to 40% in June 2020. Young Canadians have experienced the greatest decline in mental health. Pre-COVID-19, 60% of young Canadians reported excellent or very good mental health, but by July 2020, that had fallen to only 40%. This is tragic.

Since the COVID-19 lockdowns began, parents' concern for their children's well-being has skyrocketed. Children are spending hours a day in front of screens with limited interactions with their friends. They are suffering from loneliness due to forced isolation.

Let me add that in rural Canada, as in much of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, high-speed Internet access and the cost of cellular data are very real and ever-present challenges. These are real-life problems that cannot be ignored.

Business of Supply

The consequences for the mental health of Canadians are significant. Prolonged lockdowns across Canada have led to increases in domestic violence, opioid deaths, mental health crises, business closures and mass unemployment.

These are real-life consequences of the COVID-19 government lockdowns. They are not nameless statistics. These are Canadians whose quality of life has been sacrificed for long enough. Canadians need hope. They need a clear, permanent path out of the lockdowns to preserve their mental health, and they need a plan to save their livelihoods while using any and every tool available to prevent COVID-19 deaths.

● (1245)

People need to live in order to live. The government's failure to approve and distribute rapid tests early on, its failure to secure reliable contracts and its inability to come up with a plan to get the country back on track are costing Canadians dearly.

I am going to shift my focus now to the consequences for the thousands of Canadians involved in agriculture supply chains. Let me speak first about the agriculture sector I know best, from personal experience. I grew up on a potato farm in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. My family grew and sourced potatoes for domestic and U.S. markets, so I have personal knowledge of fresh table food production in Canada. Even before the COVID-19 lockdowns, fruit and vegetable producers faced labour shortages. These producers cannot find enough willing Canadians to help plant, tend and harvest crops of fruits and vegetables. That is why Canadian farmers bring international workers to Canada, under the temporary foreign worker program and the seasonal agricultural worker program, to help with the growing season from January through harvest. They are critical to Canada's food sovereignty.

Last year, because of COVID-19, growers near my riding lost millions of pounds of fresh produce that was nearly ready for harvest. About a year ago, I began flagging to the government potential consequences for the 2020 season of fruit and vegetable production but, sadly and largely, it was to no avail. Last November, I asked the Minister of Health and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food how they planned to handle the entry of thousands of international farm workers for the 2021 season. I asked them for their rapid testing plan. All I got was radio silence.

As recently as the weekend before last, I heard from producers who were attempting the impossible: to comply with unworkable regulations from the government on quarantine for workers entering into Canada. For example, farm workers who only speak Spanish are required to phone nurses who speak only English or French. Employers have been required to forward test samples by Purolator courier from places where there is no Purolator service. Mixed messaging, excuses and shirking responsibility are not what Canadians expect from their government in a time of crisis.

Beef, pork, chicken, turkey and egg producers and processors have also been affected by COVID-19. Capacity on these processing lines has been severely reduced by social distancing measures and temporary plant shutdowns. This has led to weeks of backlogs. Beef and pork producers' capacity has been significantly impacted. At times, this has risen to a level of crisis for producers and processors.

Canadians have questions and, after a year of putting up with restrictions and lockdowns, they deserve answers. Any restrictions on Canadians' charter rights and freedoms must be demonstrably justified, meaning that the burden of proof is on the government to prove that the limits it has imposed are reasonable. Canadians know this is not happening.

We have heard, over and over again, from the Liberal government and its leader that these are unprecedented times. Though this statement rings true, it has been used and misused to justify the worst behaviour unbecoming of any government in a western democracy. It is time for the government to make Canadians' freedom its priority. Abraham Lincoln famously said, "I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crisis. The great point is to bring them the real facts". It is time for the government to stop treating Canadians like children in need of a caregiver. They want their lives back. They want to start earning paycheques and stop receiving government cheques.

In conclusion, Canadians want and deserve a clear plan that shows a path and a timeline to end the lockdowns. By now, Canadians should know when things are going to get better and what metrics their government is using to determine the timeline for reopening. They deserve a clear, data-driven plan to support safely and permanently lifting COVID-19 restrictions. The Liberal government cannot keep asking Canadians to sacrifice more without being clear about when the restrictions will be lifted. The Prime Minister needs to lay out a plan that will give Canadians a clear expectation of when life and business will return to normal.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): There has been a lot of discussion today, Madam Speaker, about which jurisdictions these matters fall within, whether provincial or federal. The member and I are both from ridings in Ontario. The Ontario solicitor general, who I would add is a Conservative, recently weighed in on this. She must be paying attention to what we are doing here. She said, "It is not the role of the federal government to advocate for or against lockdowns."

I am curious. Does the member agree with the Conservative solicitor general in Ontario, or does she think that she is wrong?

Business of Supply

• (1250)

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, I am hearing from my constituents that if the government had procured vaccines, if it got the contracts right in the first place and if it had not waited on things, we would see places opening. Why should grandparents not be able to hug their grandchildren? Why should my sister-in-law not be able to say goodbye to her father as he was passing away? Why should my other family members not be able to celebrate the life of the father they lost last month? The Liberals have failed on vaccines, and it is their responsibility to lay out the plan for Canadians to get their vaccines so we can reopen.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have often wondered if Twitter would have a negative impact on politics and I certainly thought I heard that today. I know the Conservatives do not believe that climate change is real. Now they believe the pandemic is not real. I could go on about the Liberal government endlessly. As much as I would blame the Liberals for everything, I cannot blame them for the fact that we cannot visit relatives because we are in the middle of a third wave of a pandemic. It is a scientific fact. It is a reality.

I know the Conservatives are more upset about Bigfoot than they are about science, but there is this idea that there is some kind of plot out there to stop people from visiting. The plot is the new variants coming out that have to be addressed.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, the government has not shown us any scientific data for a plan. If it showed us the data, we could have a plan, but we have no plan on rapid testing across the country. We had no plan on how we were going to get the vaccines here. We are still waiting for vaccines to come. Canadians deserve a plan from the government, and they need it to be data-driven. They deserve a plan that supports gradually reopening our economy.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, to the hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, I hate to be a pedant on this point, but Abraham Lincoln never said the quote that she put forward. It is not her fault. It is often misquoted. What Abraham Lincoln said, which is useful in this moment in time, is, “We must not be enemies.” We must listen to the better angels of our nature, which I think requires that we be less partisan in this place.

I have read the Conservative motion carefully, contrary to what the member for Calgary Nose Hill inferred. I have read the motion. It does not use the word “benchmarks”. It does not use the word “indicators”. I find myself unable to vote for it, although there are many sentiments being expressed by Conservatives, New Democrats and Bloc Québécois members in this place with which I completely agree. We all want more certainty, but we are in a race now between vaccines and variants, and the risk remains real.

Are the Conservative Party members on the floor of this place inventing words into their motion to make it one that we could vote upon?

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, what my constituents of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex have been asking me for months is to have the government show them a clear plan. They tell me the government has failed on securing rapid testing. It has failed on plans such as getting the vaccines here. We have farmers who cannot get

their machinery fixed right now because they cannot bring in the technicians from overseas who are the only ones who know how to repair them. They cannot get them to come fix their machines.

We are in the middle of the start of the growing season. Asparagus farmers and other farmers in Norfolk county are out today protesting these restrictions and the convoluted rules for workers coming into Canada to help with the harvest. They say it is worse this year than it was last year. The government has had one year to get a plan together to make sure that we could reopen safely and get through this. However, we still have seen no data. We have seen no plan, and it is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today. I will be sharing my time with the member for Newmarket—Aurora.

I do want to address this motion. I am glad that the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands asked a question last, because she hit on something that hit a nerve this morning, and rightly so.

The member for Calgary Nose Hill, who moved this motion, said that this motion was about benchmarks and establishing various different degrees by which things should occur, but it is not. The motion does not talk about that at all. We can have all the preamble that we want in the “whereas” clauses, but the only thing that matters is the “resolved” clause in a motion. In a properly written motion, we should be able to strip away the preamble and just use the “resolved” clause to give the direction that it needs.

The “resolved” clause says that “the House call on the government to table within 20 calendar days, following the adoption of this motion, a clear data-driven plan to support safely, gradually and permanently lifting COVID-19 restrictions.” There is nothing in the motion about establishing benchmarks.

I want to spend some time talking about the confusion within this motion. There are really two parts to this, because this motion is not completely within the provincial jurisdiction, in my mind. There are some aspects that fall within the federal government and some that fall within the provincial government. I will start by talking about some of those that I see as falling within the federal government but that I find very problematic in terms of the way the motion is set up.

The member for Calgary Nose Hill mentioned a couple of things in her opening remarks, borders and the airline industry, that are good examples of things over which the federal government has jurisdiction. The federal government has jurisdiction over the matters that are constitutionally given to it and that are set up through the practices of our country since Confederation.

Business of Supply

The reality is that for something like borders, there is a role for the federal government, but the question is whether the federal government should be required to come back to this House in 20 days and say, “This is how we will open the borders. This is the timeline.” That could only ever be the situation if we were able to know not what the results of the variables would be but what the variables are, and the reality is that we do not.

When we talk about opening a border between Canada and the United States, we have to realize that so much of it is heavily dependent on what they do in the United States, what action they are taking and where their numbers are. If we do not have the ability to influence that variable, how would we ever be able to say what the exact plan will be for how things will reopen? It just cannot be done.

The Conservatives talk about putting together a plan. I happen to think that it is a pretty good system that is in place. It is reviewed on a monthly basis by the Minister of Public Safety. He reviews it with the expert advice that he has, and he decides whether or not to extend it for another month. If the U.S. situation improves dramatically and the expert advice is that we should open that border, I am sure the minister will take that very important advice under consideration.

The same can be said about airlines. Canada is only half of the equation for international flights. Where are the flights going? Where are they coming from? So much of it depends on that and those other variables, so it is very challenging.

Let us turn to the other part of this, which is the discussion about provincial jurisdictions that has been coming up quite a bit today. Notwithstanding the fact that the member for Calgary Nose Hill and other members have stood up and said Liberals are just going to say that they cannot do anything because it is not their jurisdiction, in fact some things are not our jurisdiction, as is constitutionally afforded to the two different levels of government in this case.

• (1255)

When I think of some of the things that have happened in my riding, of the lockdowns that have come into place and how they have been lifted, I have an incredible amount of respect for Dr. Kieran Moore, our chief medical officer of health, who has steered our community through this wave. It has been incredible. We have had only one COVID death in our health unit in Ontario, and a lot of that has to do with the incredible work of our local medical officer of health, who is of course empowered by the provincial government. I think to myself, “Why would we think we have some kind of jurisdiction over our local medical officers of health and the jurisdiction to close businesses?” We do not regulate how businesses open and close. It is not within the purview of the federal government.

I quoted Sylvia Jones, the Ontario solicitor general, to the member for Sarnia—Lambton. The solicitor general said that it is not the role of the federal government to advocate for or against lockdowns and went on to say that the Ontario framework is working very well. I thought this was a pretty good quote, so I took this quote and I tried to tweet it to the member for Calgary Nose Hill. What happened? She has blocked me. The member for Calgary Nose Hill has blocked a member of the House on Twitter, and when I raise this

concern, other members from the Conservative Party are chanting “Hear, hear.” Are they even really interested—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Go on, go on. Do you have more to say? Please, keep digging—

• (1300)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): On a point of order, the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I am trying to follow my hon. colleague's meanderings. Is he actually weeping in the House that people are blocking him because of his incoherence at times? Did he say “blocking”? I was not sure if I heard correctly. Maybe it is a question of people having very wise judgment in that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am not sure that is a point of order. It is more a point of debate.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member for Timmins—James Bay and the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan did a lot better in trying to interrupt everything when they were together in the House, as opposed to doing it when they are present virtually.

My point is that the member for Calgary Nose Hill has blocked me on Twitter because she is obviously afraid that I am providing her with information that she does not want to see. What kind of elected official is it that actively goes out and tries to silence the members from other parties? How are we supposed to collaboratively get along in this place when the member for Calgary Nose Hill is blocking other MPs on Twitter? I just do not understand it.

Normally I think I would wear that as a badge of honour, but given the circumstances today and the fact that I want to give her meaningful information that she can use for this debate, I find it very troubling.

With that, I want to quickly read that quote again, because the member has blocked me. I want to make sure it gets through to her. Sylvia Jones, the Ontario solicitor general, has said that it is not the role of the federal government to advocate for or against lockdowns.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to start by expressing my sincere condolences to the member for Kingston and the Islands for having to go through the experience of having someone block him on Twitter. I cannot imagine what that feels like and I know the hearts of members in the House really go out to the member. We are having a debate on lockdowns, and he spent about half of his speech sharing from his heart what that was like.

I wonder if he could further share with the House on that point, but also if he would note that it is the responsibility of government to put in place economic policies with respect to rules and the responsibility of the federal government to lead in establishing a framework. Would he not agree that the federal government can work constructively with the provinces on these issues?

Business of Supply

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate that sentiment and I believe it comes from the heart. I do not think it would bother me so much, except for the fact that we are supposed to be sharing information around here so that we can work together. There is clearly a non-interest from the member for Calgary Nose Hill in doing that. She has taken her position on this issue. She seems to be entrenched in it. She does not seem to be interested in what other members of the House have to say to her. Therefore, I can only imagine that there is no sense of willingness to compromise or look for some common ground.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, like my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, I was also very touched. My goodness, I am still moved. I immediately did something about it and followed my colleague from Kingston and the Islands on Twitter. However, I should warn him that I will block him the first time he tries to give me any information. I certainly do not want to be influenced in any way.

My question is a little more serious, because we are discussing relaxing certain measures and presenting a plan for getting back to normal. I would like to know what my colleague thinks of the intentions expressed in the House over the past few days and weeks to encroach the provinces' jurisdiction over health care. I want his opinion. I know very well that he will tell me that the federal government has a responsibility and so on and so on. Above all, I would like to know if, in the many debates on the provincial jurisdiction over health care, the government is actually telling the provinces that they are not doing a good job and need to be told how to do it properly.

Is that the message the government is trying to send?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the only thing more predictable than the member for Calgary Nose Hill blocking somebody she does not like is the Bloc Québécois getting up at every single opportunity on every single motion or bill before this House to talk about transfers to the province. Whether it is yesterday's or today's opposition day motion, it does not really matter what they are about, as the Bloc is here to talk about health transfers.

The reality is that we need to make sure we allow the proper jurisdictions to implement and release those lockdowns based on the expert advice they get. There is a role for the federal government to play as it relates to its measures with respect to border security, which I addressed during my speech, and those should be done based on the advice being received by the minister responsible.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I lament the fact that things descend into the partisan. We are still in a pandemic. We still have variants. We may indeed be in a third wave. I do not believe we are in a position to demand that we have a plan by any particular number of days, but it is more than fair and reasonable to ask for more transparency about when we might be able to see recovery.

I fear very much that we make mistakes in this place by being partisan. I recall that in late January or early February of 2020, the

Conservatives were angry at the government for not doing enough to get Canadians out of Wuhan and repatriated to Canada. They have now forgotten that and think we should have closed our borders sooner.

All of us are doing our best. Is it possible we can try to set aside the partisanship and work to know when we can get people vaccinated and make sure the communications are clear? We are still at risk here. We must not push reopening when the variants are in the midst of our population.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I wish this member could bring forward opposition day motions, because I know they would work toward a purpose and not be politically driven.

This motion is completely politically driven. The Conservatives want us to vote against this so they can say the Liberals do not want to reopen things.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to contribute to the debate on the motion before us today.

I will start by acknowledging that it has been a very difficult year for all Canadians. Everyone has been affected by this pandemic in some way or another. In Newmarket—Aurora, we have shared in the suffering from the loss of life, fears for the future, the impact on mental health, the loneliness, and the challenges faced by small businesses, their owners and employees.

Let me assure all Canadians that the government remains committed to doing whatever it takes to help Canadians and Canadian businesses survive through this crisis.

To quote Martin Luther King Jr., “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

From day one, this government has been there with a comprehensive and fiscally responsible support package to help Canadians and businesses of all sizes weather the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, we have been able to respond from a position of strength. Canada entered this crisis in a strong fiscal position, allowing the government to take decisive action to provide the support that was needed to weather this storm.

We started with a low debt position and have been able to maintain that advantage relative to our peers, and with historically low debt servicing costs, the government has been able to afford to take on debt so that Canadians do not have to. Federal debt servicing costs relative to the size of our economy are at a 100-year low, and we are locking in these low costs by issuing more debt in longer-term instruments at historically low rates.

Business of Supply

The federal government has provided more than eight out of every 10 dollars spent in Canada to fight COVID-19 and support Canadians. These investments represent Canada's largest financial response since the Second World War. The International Monetary Fund in its recent staff report for the 2021 article IV consultation estimates that without Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan, real output would have declined by an additional 7.8% in 2020 and the unemployment rate would have been 3.2% higher. By providing Canadian businesses and families a financial lifeline to pull them through the crisis, the government has helped Canada avoid widespread business and personal bankruptcies and the possible negative impact of that for generations of Canadians.

However, it is not just support programs that the government has deployed. In fact, the very first thing the government and its partners did at the start of the crisis was to make sure that businesses had access to credit. Indeed, the first coordinated package of measures supported financial sector liquidity, the functioning of markets and continued access to financing for Canadian businesses. This included the business credit availability program in which the Business Development Bank of Canada and Export Development Canada have co-operated with private sector lenders to make financing and credit insurance available to Canadian business.

An important part of the program is the Canada emergency business account, which provides small businesses with access to interest-free loans of up to \$60,000, one-third of which is forgivable if repaid by December 31, 2020. After listening to Canadian business owners, the government modified or expanded the program several times, making it available to self-employed business owners and also increasing the maximum loan by \$20,000. As of March 11, more than 846,000 businesses have been approved for loans, for a total of more than \$44 billion.

The government has also provided \$306 million in short-term, interest-free loans and non-repayable contributions through aboriginal financial institutions, which offers financing and business support services to first nations, Inuit and Métis businesses.

Furthermore, the government deferred the collection of income and sale taxes from businesses, freeing up valuable short-term cash when they needed to cover other costs.

This comprehensive package of support has helped ensure that Canadian businesses were able to continue to pay their employees and their bills during a time of uncertainty.

Fighting COVID-19 and getting the economy back on track is not infinite. Once the need for support throughout the crisis has passed, the time-limited measures will be prudently withdrawn.

● (1310)

As government supports transition in the next few months from mitigation to recovery, we will draw upon the lessons learned from the experience of many countries following the 2008-09 financial crisis and during recoveries from earlier deep recessions. This experience suggests that most economies that withdrew fiscal support too quickly experienced slower growth afterward, and Canada will follow the advice of the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development that gov-

ernments maintain substantial fiscal support through the crisis and over the recovery phase.

As we normalize our fiscal position in the wake of the virus, we will once again do so from a position of strength. While the federal debt is significantly higher than in recent years, it will be far more manageable than at its historic peak in the 1990s.

When the virus is under control and our economy is ready for new growth, our government will deploy an ambitious stimulus package over three fiscal years to jump-start our recovery to support and grow the middle class. This additional spending has not been formally included in the government's fiscal framework yet, as the ultimate size and timing is highly dependent on the evolving health and economic situation.

Therefore, to ensure that Canada is prepared, our government is planning for four different scenarios regarding the timing, size and profile of the stimulus spending. The growth plan for strong recovery will take us toward an economy that is greener, more innovative, more inclusive and more competitive. The government has been working with Canadians to plan and prepare our investments for when the virus is under control. The key to this plan will be smart, time-limited investments that act fast while also making a long-term contribution to our shared prosperity, competitiveness and our green transition.

Despite recent encouraging signs of recovery, we have not yet turned the corner. About one million Canadians who had a job before the crisis are still out of work or working sharply reduced hours, and many small businesses continue to be greatly impacted by the crisis. The Government of Canada will continue to deploy the necessary fiscal firepower to fight the pandemic and then for us to recover strongly, while continuing to manage its finances prudently, retaining its low-debt advantage among G7 peers. The government's strategy will be implemented responsibly, with a sustainable approach for future generations.

● (1315)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to this debate carefully today, and government members consistently say there are jurisdictional issues and that we should not be telling the provinces what to do, because the provinces will have to decide what to do, and we should not be interfering in provincial jurisdiction; hence, the government cannot have a plan at the federal level. That is essentially the message.

Business of Supply

I was just looking on Joe Biden's website, where he posted a plan called "The Biden Plan for an Effective Reopening that Jumpstarts the Economy". The United States is a republic. It has 50 states with different jurisdictions. It has a federal government that has its own jurisdictional issues as well. If a country like the United States can do it with 50 states and other territories, why can Canada not publish a plan just like President Biden did?

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Madam Speaker, one of the things I have taken a considerable pride in is the way that the federal, provincial and municipal governments have been able to work collaboratively in response to the urgency of the situation. In large measure, that continues. It is my genuine hope, as I heard from other members, that we can go forward without salting this down with partisan motives and objectives.

There need to be a lot of conversations with the municipal and provincial parties so that we can go forward, but we need to remember that this is an evolving situation. There are so many changes. For example, we can look at the variants of concern and how they are impacting us or the province of Ontario, and how we are still at a very high level of infection. These things need to be considered so that we can be strategic, surgical and direct in the solutions that we—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I just have a few comments to make here. I think there are some interesting things to be said about provincial-federal jurisdiction. On that note I would say that we need to see more leadership, even if only publicly, on a plan to get out of this.

Further, I would like to comment on some of the financial points that were made. I understood the member to be saying that basically they opened the floodgates and did everything they could to pump as much money as possible into the economy, but I do not think we could do that again. We are talking about variants. We have had various other types of diseases like SARS over the last 10 or 20 years. We will see a pandemic again at some point in the future.

How are we going to deal with this again? We cannot just keep opening the floodgates to the nth degree every single time we have a circumstance like this. What does the member have to say to that?

• (1320)

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Madam Speaker, I fully agree that the lesson we have learned until now is that we need to prepare ourselves for situations like this. We are a global village and any pandemic could transition to Canada. I do not think Canada is any more isolated than any other country. That would not be an accurate assessment.

What we need to do is to go back to determine what happened so that we can do better. Some great examples of that are in some of the learning coming out of the health committee, such as the fact that we should be better coordinating our data points, that we should be designing better and making sure that we are sustainable as far as manufacturing vaccines goes.

Those are just a few examples of what we have learned and things that we need to learn from.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think one of the things that has frustrated me about the government's response to this pandemic is this failure to understand the appropriate role and relationship between the public service and our political leaders. The public service offers us expert advice that reflects different expertise in different disciplines, and then it is the responsibility of our political leadership to take all of that advice on board from a health perspective, from an economic perspective and from a social perspective, and to chart a plan or vision for moving us forward in the public interest, in light of all the different expertise that it takes in. Instead, the government says that it is just going to trust the experts, without appreciating its role of receiving that expertise, aggregating it and really mapping out a plan going forward.

Does the member think that the government has a responsibility to actually chart a plan to get us out of this challenge, or does he think that the government can continue to abdicate its responsibility?

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Madam Speaker, I do not agree that the government is abdicating its responsibility. In fact, the government is taking a very responsible approach toward the plan. We are listening to science and coordinating a plan.

To suggest that this could be done within 20 business days is absolutely ludicrous and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I address directly the motion before us today, I will first relay a story.

Back in 2017, the Prime Minister had an idea. His idea was to use an omnibus budget bill to create a new excise tax escalator on alcohol sold in Canada. This meant that the tax on most wine, beer and spirits sold in Canada would, by default, be increased every year without having to come to the House for debate. As opposition, we opposed this.

I warned the Liberal government what would happen if Canadian wines produced with 100% Canadian-grown grapes received an excise exemption. According to Wine Growers Canada, this excise exemption "resulted in more than 400 new wineries and 40 million litres of new wine sales....The annual economic impact of this growth is \$4.4 billion annually."

Business of Supply

As I warned the Liberal government, the problem with the excise tax escalator was that it would make wine produced elsewhere but sold in Canada more expensive against Canadian wines that used 100% Canadian-grown grapes and that there would be a trade challenge on this. To make a long story short, there was. The same Liberal government capitulated and agreed to remove the excise exemption previously enjoyed by Canadian grape growers. In turn, the Liberal government promised a plan to offset the economic damage it created in this industry, but here we are in 2021 and there is still no plan.

I do not share this story today to say “I told you so”. I share this story with everyone as a reminder that when governments do not think ahead of their actions, they can make mistakes with serious consequences. Now more than ever, we need to be vigilant and plan; we need to plan for our future today.

Canada has fallen massively behind other countries in how we have dealt with this pandemic. We were slow to close the borders, we were behind on things like PPE and rapid tests and now we are behind on vaccines. We have spent the most for a country of our size, but we all know we have not gotten the results we desperately need. I do not say that as a finger-pointing exercise. No prime minister would want to willingly be in this situation. COVID-19 is certainly not his fault, but, as the highest office in the country with the most resources to do something, he is responsible.

How has the Prime Minister responded? Indeed, as many released documents under production orders are illustrating, the Prime Minister's Office has often tried to manipulate, hide, deceive or distract from these ongoing failures. Now, here we are. We as parliamentarians must do our jobs to do everything we can do to help with this recovery. If members are in doubt of that, I will share a few thoughts and observations that, if some members have not been thinking about, we need to start thinking about collectively.

Let us will start with employment insurance. We know that with the phase-out of the CERB, many have transitioned to EI. People who would not normally be eligible are now receiving record amounts from EI. The challenge is that EI, by law, is required to be a sustainable program. While the Liberal government refuses to disclose the current status of the EI account, we know that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has forecast that the EI operating account is on track for a cumulative deficit of \$52 billion by the end of 2024, and that is just an estimate. For every day of delay that we cannot deliver a plan to get our own economy back on track, the EI expenses will continue to exceed revenue.

This is not partisan politics. That is not some isolated situation. This is occurring in every region of our country today. Again, EI must be sustainable. The EI account will not balance itself; it will require a serious plan. If employers are not hiring or are continuing to bleed staff, that will result in more weight on our EI system. That means higher EI premiums to make up the shortfall on those employers and fewer and fewer employees, yet the Prime Minister and his ministers continue to ignore this reality. I believe we all know, collectively, that Canada ignores problems like this at our peril. That is just one example of a need for an economic recovery plan.

I will give another from my riding.

The Okanagan, like other regions of Canada, relies heavily on tourism. American citizens who have been fully inoculated, 200 million-plus more every day, are calling to make reservations for upcoming summer and winter vacations. If we do not start signalling the science-based metrics we will abide by as well as who and under what conditions these tourists can come, they simply will go to other places and spend their dollars somewhere else, not here in Canada, where many of our small-scale accommodation providers and those small businesses that have been absolutely decimated by this pandemic are living off credit. They are having tens of thousands of dollars of bookings being thrown at them and they have no idea what to do. Why? Because the Prime Minister has been totally silent in announcing any kind of recovery plan.

• (1325)

While a lot of tourism is road traffic, let us not forget that many travel to my home province of B.C. by airplane. For those in the aviation sector, it has been just devastating. Here we are, one year into the pandemic and there is no plan, not even an assistance package for this critical industry. What will be the long-term impacts for Canadians be if our aviation sector cannot survive? What of our tourism sector?

Here is something I thought I would never see in my region. Kelowna International Airport is a major artery for economic development of the Okanagan, yet due to its ownership under the City of Kelowna, it has not received a dime in support from the federal government's wage subsidy.

In 2019, YLW was booming and had large and ambitious expansion plans. Major parts of that plan have had to be put on hold because of the pandemic. Without any strong COVID recovery plan, like the Leader of the Opposition has called for, the failure of the Prime Minister to act means less opportunity for jobs and investments both at the airport and around our region that rely on YLW.

Business of Supply

The director of Kelowna International Airport, Sam Samaddar, has said that without immediate changes, our country could see Canadians driving to the U.S. to catch cheaper flights from American airports when things return to normal in the future, because of Ottawa's low level of assistance now.

In the Kelowna Daily Courier last week, Sam Samaddar said:

The Canadian government's investment in the aviation industry, it's been appalling to be honest with you....And here we are a year into the pandemic and I can't believe we still do not have automatic contact tracing.

We are behind on contact tracing and on stockpiling PPE, rapid testing and vaccines. Speaking of vaccines, the Prime Minister has suggested that everyone who wants to be vaccinated will be so by the end of September. The problem is that losing another summer for tourism is a price that many can no longer afford.

I am certain I am not alone in seeing a growing number of "For lease" signs going up in many downtowns throughout my riding. Many of these small businesses that are closing have been around for many years. Most that I have heard from are either closing because they can no longer afford to keep the doors open or, in some cases, they do not see any clarity, they do not see any point and would rather cut their losses now.

Again, there is no plan from the Prime Minister. What we have heard is things like "build back better". What does that even mean? People cannot build anything without a budget. The Prime Minister has refused to table a budget for over two years. To build back better without a plan, nothing can be built. Essentially "build back better" is just another series of buzzwords.

When we look around our communities, nothing is being built by the government right now. A revised mandate letter was sent out earlier this year, in which the Prime Minister instructed his finance minister not to commit to any new permanent spending. Only months later, the same Prime Minister promised to permanently increase transit spending, most of it five years down the road. That is the problem.

The Prime Minister literally makes it up day by day. First, we are not increasing permanent spending, until we are. Most of it is five years down the road. We have no budget to show how that promise will actually get paid for. What could go wrong here? I think we all know that is not good governance.

In the absence of a plan, that is what we get: made-up promises as we go along. Five years from today, that massive EI deficit in the billions is going to need to somehow be paid for. How? By whom? Will workers premiums be further increased? If so, that leaves less net take-home pay at a time when inflation may be undermining our dollar. Is that what building back better looks like? If so, many would dispute that this is a better outcome.

One thing we do know is that these problems will not solve themselves. We all know that this current level of spending is not sustainable. I expect that when the Prime Minister first told his finance minister not to create any new permanent spending announcements, he did so with good reason. We also know that an election is coming at some point on the horizon and that the Prime Minister will only announce more spending. It is what he does.

The challenge is that we need a plan today, one that is scrutinized in this minority Parliament, one that is data-driven, that gives people hope and certainty. We need a plan that will help serve as our road map for how we deal with other countries that are ahead of us in dealing with the pandemic. We critically need to help small business. Let us not forget—

• (1330)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about the EI system, taking care of that and how we had to help Canadians out by using that system during this time. He raises some very good questions about how that re-payment has to happen, how we have to build that pool of money up again, on which the EI system banks.

I have a question for the member and I hope he takes it as a genuine question. Does he think we should not have spent that money? Does he think we should have spent less money? I am trying to understand where he is coming from. Yes, we have challenging questions ahead of us, but does he regret this Parliament having voted unanimously in favour of moving forward with those measures?

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I will simply remind the member that I was the former critic for the employment minister and we agreed to much of the COVID-19 spending, because people needed it then. However, what people need now is certainty so they can plan their businesses. They need hope so they know that Canada, when we work together, can get further together.

The member talked about the motion. We are calling for a clear data-driven plan to support safely, gradually and permanently lifting COVID-19 restrictions. I am asking for that. We need to answer those questions. The government is the highest office in the land and it is the best prepared to do this. Let us see some leadership from the Prime Minister.

Business of Supply

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have to agree with my colleague about the plan. We live in similar ridings. Sun Peaks Resort and Big White Ski Resort are beautiful ski resorts. They have been hanging on. However, people from across the border come here. They own homes here. They are saying that they just need a plan. They need to know if people are fully vaccinated. They want to know if that will be one of the criteria for the border reopening. They want to know what kind of dimensions or data we are looking at on either side of the border, because they have put significant money into real estate. They have been very gracious throughout this. They understand what is going on, but they want to have a plan. I expect my colleague has also heard very similar stories. I wonder if he could share some of them.

● (1335)

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, many hoteliers and many tourism operations right now are being asked if Americans can book, if they come here. The answer is that they do not know. They have no surety of how many staff they need to get and whether they can take deposits.

If we look at it, the Prime Minister has been in office longer than President Biden and Prime Minister Boris Johnson, yet those two leaders have put forward plans that show people a clear, data-driven approach they will take to have a reopening.

Where is our Prime Minister? He is doing announcements and trying to spend money. Again, he is not the same position we see other leaders in who have less experience. Why? It is a lack of leadership. If the Prime Minister still wants the job, he should start acting like it.

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Madam Speaker, in my view, there has been a lot of unnecessary fearmongering in relation to COVID-19 and I say it in this context. We have seen provincial and federal leaders not give us the correct clarity. We have seen case counts and death counts. Alberta, to its credit, has segmented it, so we can see that the majority of people who are suffering are seniors with multiple comorbidities. This information is helpful so not everybody will be afraid.

What could the Prime Minister have done to provide needed clarity and context so we do not see young children develop mental disorders over the fear of COVID-19?

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, my leader announced a recovery plan that would cover employment, getting that over one million jobs, seeing supports for mental health, like a national hotline that people could call, and seeing more accountability from the government. As we have seen time and time again, there is no transparency from the Liberal government.

These are the kinds of things Canadians want to hear from their leaders. Quite honestly, if the Prime Minister is not prepared to start presenting these things, he should simply resign from the position and let someone like my leader, who knows where the country needs to go to, give hope to Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to share some good news with the House. The Seattle Mariners will host 9,000 fans. They just got approval from Washington State, a very progressive and woke state south of the border,

whose ideological inclinations are very similar to the government's. They have signed off on a safe plan, according to that state, to allow 9,000 fans to participate at a major sporting event in Seattle.

Simultaneously we got the news that our Toronto Blue Jays are not going to be able to do anything similar. In fact, they put out a statement in which they said, “we had hoped to see improvements in the public health outlook as we neared the baseball season. With the ongoing Canada-U.S. border closure, we have made the difficult decision to play the first two homestands of the 2021 regular season...at TD Ballpark in [Florida]”. The Floridian businesses will get all of the benefit of that major sporting event.

It is not just sporting events that are reopening around the world. Australians and New Zealanders are finalizing plans for quarantine-free travel across the border between their two countries. Then there is Taiwan, which has pretty much the lowest COVID mortality rate on planet earth, even though it is right next door to the country from whence COVID originated.

The Brookings Institution, a progressive U.S. think tank, stated:

Taiwan has managed the spread of COVID-19 far better than most: It suffered only seven deaths among its 23.5 million people in 2020. Except for a few short weeks of lockdown in March last year, life in Taiwan has been normal. Schools, offices, and restaurants have been open as usual, although with temperature screening, hand sanitizing, and social distancing. Live concerts by Yo-Yo Ma and performances of “Phantom of the Opera” have attracted thousands of people into indoor arenas.

All of this is happening with seven deaths. It is not seven deaths per 100,000 or seven deaths per million. It is seven total deaths since COVID started in the country right next door. In fact, Canada now has 601 deaths per million; Taiwan has 0.42; Singapore has 5.13; and Australia has 35.6. In other words, even if we just compare Canada to Australia in that group, we have a factor of 20 times higher deaths per capita than they do, and we have among the most severe restrictions on our lives.

It is easy to wave one's hand and ask who cares about baseball or artistic conferences or travel between countries, as none of those things are core to human existence, so we ought not worry about the fact that they are still largely eliminated and restricted. However, the reality is they are but symbols of the massive human sacrifice that our people are being forced to make. Not only do we have a ranking of roughly 45 vaccinations per capita, we are ranked 11 out of 15 in the misery index. That is the overall combined misery that we have suffered during the COVID pandemic, according to the Macdonald-Laurier Institute.

Business of Supply

This is not just numbers and statistics. It is human lives. Calls to one suicide prevention line have risen 200% over the last year, reports CBC. That has prompted a Conservative MP from British Columbia to put forward a motion for a single suicide hotline. It is a good idea, but one that we wish we did not have to pursue. We wish there was no need for suicide hotlines, but the University of Calgary has found that for every one percentage point increase in unemployment, there is a two percentage point increase in suicides across Canada. That is the human cost.

Let us go not just to suicides, but also to drug overdoses, which have also spiked during the pandemic. They were up 50% in both Alberta and Ontario during the times Canadians were forced to lock themselves down. These statistics reflect what has happened right across the country.

• (1340)

Even the chief public health officer, Theresa Tam, wrote, “Statistics Canada found lower life satisfaction among unemployed Canadians and noted that this relationship is about more than just money”. She is pointing out in that statement what Canadians who are suffering lockdown in their homes or are restricted from their jobs have known all along.

This is not just a massive \$100-billion economic crisis, though it definitely is that. This is not just about a \$400-billion deficit, which is by far the biggest in Canadian history. This is about people's human and very real suffering, which has led to higher mortality rates in countless other areas. I think not only of the drug and opioid overdoses, but also of the suffering of seniors, many of whom, in the tragic stories we have all heard, have had to die alone, separated from the loved ones they have known all of their lives.

In a message I received recently from a senior, she told me she does not know what she has to live for. She has not seen her grandchild for a year and has not seen some of her children for an equally long time. Many of the activities that she enjoyed doing are now banned, and because she is over 80, she does not know how much time she has left. For someone in that age bracket, time is a precious and shrinking commodity, a reality the government, through its incompetence in managing the COVID situation, has exacerbated day by day. This is the very real human suffering that has resulted from the government's failure to safely protect our country from this pandemic and allow us to go forward and reopen our economy while protecting human lives.

For example, I think of our friends in Israel, where Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was on the phone at 3 a.m. with the companies responsible for delivering the vaccines. As a result, he was able to deliver more than 100 vaccines for every 100 Israelis, whereas we are now at around five. Tiny Israel, a small country with endless security and economic challenges, surrounded by hostile states, many of which are controlled by terrorists and tyrants, is managing to outperform Canada.

Then we can look at the other countries of the world, such as Singapore, a tiny island with no resources, and Taiwan, which is right next door to the origin of the disease. I know the Liberals across the way are thinking that Israel, Taiwan and Singapore are ahead of Canada because they are such advanced countries with which we cannot expect to compete.

There was a time when Canada had an advanced economy and was among the best places on earth to do business and deliver the necessities of human life. Sadly, those days are slipping away. I fear that we are accepting slowly, as the frog in the heating water, the “loserdom” the government is bringing us into. We have the highest deficit as a share of GDP in the G20, the worst vaccination rates in the G7 and the highest unemployment rate in the G7. These are the results for Canada.

There is almost a quiet acceptance that Canada, a country that used to be the best, can be behind the rest of the world. It used to be that the United Nations would say we were the best place on planet earth to live. We do not hear people talking like that anymore. They now talk about Ireland, which has a GDP per capita that is 70% higher than Canada. That is a country with a fraction of the resources and land of Canada, and nowhere near the geographic advantage we enjoy here.

We have to say enough is enough, that we are not going to accept “loserdom” anymore. We as a country should be the best, not just at procuring vaccines and protecting our population, but also at everything else. We have been blessed with more natural advantages than any country on earth and maybe any country in the history of the world.

It is time for us to hold ourselves and our government to a higher standard, so we can live up to the expectations we as Canadians had for so long. We need to pass on to the next generation a country that is second to none.

• (1345)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the long litany of what I assume were facts that the member presented. Although I am a journalist, every time journalists hear a politician use a number with a zero at the end it, we get a little nervous. They either round it up or round it down for political reasons. Fifty-four per cent of his party members cannot even get their head around the facts of climate change, so I will spare my analysis of his representation of the facts.

The member referenced Australia. I would like to know from the member opposite whether any trucks crossed an international border to get to Australia during the pandemic, or whether nurses in a city in Australia crossed a river to get to work in another country and provided health services in a place like, say, Detroit, during the pandemic and then had to return home at night.

Business of Supply

I would like to ask the member opposite as well, as he cherry picks everything, about his lavish, all-inclusive, champagne and penthouse trip to Taiwan with his wife, which was completely somehow avoided in his disclosure to the offices of Parliament. I would like to ask whether his indulgence with free travel played a role, in his quoting of Taiwan as a country to cite around COVID—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, of course the member's smear is absolutely false and most of his question was replete with factual errors. I can tell him that of the 2,000 people who came to Canada from the most affected region of China, after the military warned his government of a brewing pandemic in that country, none arrived by truck either. They all got here by plane, unless he is aware of a trans-oceanic bridge that they would have taken. No, they came here because his government left the borders open even after we warned it not to.

This member, of all members, should not be lecturing about politicians using numbers with zeroes on them. He regularly brags about how he has a \$70-billion housing plan that has been delivered to 10,000 homeless people in his hometown of Toronto. Toronto is now the sixth most expensive real estate market on planet earth, even though we live in one of the least densely populated countries in the world. He has been responsible for housing in that city for the last 15 or 20 years, and with all the money he is proud of spending, he has delivered one of the worst possible results.

● (1350)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am actually very interested to know what the hon. member for Carleton thinks about the approach that Australia took to its jurisdictional differences. Like Canada, Australia has very powerful state governments, as we have provinces, but it organized differently. The Australians had their federal national public health officer, the equivalent of our Dr. Theresa Tam, at the same table with each of the provincial health officers, their equivalents of our Bonnie Henry and our Rob Strang.

I am wondering if the hon. member thinks we might learn something about jurisdictional coordination to better approach pandemics from how Australia handled the COVID-19 crisis versus how Canada handled it.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, certainly the Australians, like people in almost every other country in our peer group, undertook practices that we could learn from. Here in Canada, there is no doubt that there was a lack of coordination, but part of it was that the government was spreading dangerous misinformation right from the get-go.

The Liberals told us that it would not help, in fact it would harm, if we closed our borders to travel from the affected countries. We later learned that they were wrong, and they now admit they were wrong about that. They actually told Canadians not to wear masks and then they flip-flopped and changed their minds on that.

The government's constant dissemination of false and misleading information is one of the core reasons why Canada has had, comparatively, such a poor response to this pandemic, relative to other countries.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his very thoughtful remarks here today. I also wanted to note his reflections on the impact on the human condition, whether intended or unintended, and the consequences we have seen. Certainly people are beginning to talk about an echo pandemic when it comes to mental health, including stress, anxiety, depression and suicide. They are also talking about the impacts on seniors, which he alluded to, where seniors have felt that they have lost control over their lives, as they have not been involved in the decision-making. I am wondering if the member could comment on these two points.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the member makes a very good point. I am very proud to partially share a riding name with her, even though she is from the wonderful province of Saskatchewan and my riding is in Ontario. However, I agree with everything she said, and I wish she had more time to say more on it.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe.

I will begin where we left off, with the Conservative members.

All day long, I have been listening to the Conservatives speak, such as the member for Carleton who spoke about “loserdom”. I should not be surprised, but I cannot believe I am hearing members of the opposition speaking about a public health crisis, which every single country is facing, in this manner. Every measure that has been put in place has been done with the health and safety of Canadians at the forefront.

As other members have pointed out throughout the day, the member for Kingston and the Islands went through the technical issues with the motion before us, and the fact that members on the floor from the Conservative side are trying to rewrite or downplay the language in the motion to suggest that it is somehow to come up with a framework. However, every speech I have listened to from Conservative members today speaks about the need to just reopen. It is like they have completely forgotten about the fact, or do not want to be confused by the fact, that there is a global health pandemic crisis ongoing.

Recently, we have seen over 5,100 new COVID cases involving the highest transmission strains. The highest numbers are in Alberta, Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec. However, the Conservatives stand and speak, one after the other, to say that we just have to reopen, and they point to the U.S. time and again as an example of reopening. The member for Carleton referred to the U.S. and Florida. Has anybody from the Conservative Party been watching what is happening in Miami, Florida right now? Are they seeing the incredible number of cases on the rise, and the number of people gathering? In fact, the Miami local government has issued curfews, road closures and, incredibly, more restrictions.

The Conservative Party is not known as the party of science and facts. I guess it never was, but it reconfirmed that over the weekend. This is a party that does not even understand that climate change is real. Conservatives claim that climate change is not real and therefore nothing should be done about it, and they want Canadians to put trust in them to handle a pandemic for which trust in scientists is at the forefront. Instead, they believe they know better than the experts, because they say so.

We are here to say that we are following public health guidance. We are going to listen to scientists and experts, because that is the way we are going to keep Canadians safe and ensure that we can open the economy safely and successfully in the future.

The other point I would like to raise is on the disinformation that the Conservative Party, starting with its leader, puts out. Conservatives continue to say that the Liberals want us to live in lockdown forever. This could not be further from the truth. The member for Carleton always references the “misery index”. Canadians are absolutely tired of this pandemic. We, as Liberals, are tired of this pandemic. Nobody wants to see their friends, family or neighbours get sick. However, if we do not have restrictions in place, and if we do not put strong health measures at the forefront of our policy, then what is even more miserable is seeing a loved one die. It is never being able to hug that loved one again because they have died.

With all the hyperbole that is going on with the Conservatives, I think that Canadians want to be assured that their leaders are following the best possible advice to ensure that Canadians remain safe. Hopefully, we can get through this crisis together and resume normal life again, but we are not going to get there with Conservatives rushing to a conclusion that is not based on science and evidence.

• (1355)

I want to go over a few of the areas the Conservatives continue to talk about. They say that it is time to reopen and keep pointing to the U.S. and the U.K., but I already brought up what is happening in Miami and the U.S.

It is nice the member for Carleton supports the state of Washington making its own local health decisions, but somehow Conservatives do not think provinces and territories have the ability and know-how to do that in this country, and want the federal government to go in with a top-down approach. It is interesting that they support U.S. state autonomy but not Canadian provincial and territorial autonomy.

Let me go over a few of the global health reactions right now to give Conservatives some perspective, because they seem pretty closed-minded to what is happening around the world. We are seeing lockdowns in Germany over the Easter holidays. Paris and France are entering a third-wave lockdown that includes 21 million people. Italy is having another Easter lockdown. Greece is currently closing schools and extending closures. The Czech Republic, one of the hardest hit countries in the EU—

• (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. member.

Statements by Members

The hon. parliamentary secretary will have three minutes remaining in the debate and five minutes of questions and comments after Oral Questions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

RAPID HOUSING INITIATIVE

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a little over 20 weeks ago, our government announced the rapid housing initiative, a \$1-billion investment. It did not just protect people in precarious shelters from COVID. It was also accompanied by a bold commitment in the throne speech to end chronic homelessness.

I am proud of, and quite frankly amazed by, how the program has achieved its stated goals. The plan was to create 3,000 units of housing and to work directly with municipalities and frontline housing providers. By working with the cities we can move fast, but by working with housing providers we also managed to make the dollars work deeper. Over 4,777 units of housing were created and acquired. Almost two-thirds of the projects in the project stream will fund indigenous-led housing programs and, because many of these units will house families and children, the actual number of people housed will be well clear of 5,000 people. When added to the now \$70 billion national housing strategy, it is clear that ending homelessness is within reach.

Our government knows there is more to do, but we also know what works. The good news is that there is more good news on the way.

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the failure to close the borders early, the elimination of the pandemic planning infrastructure and the lack of a true, national pandemic response with all provinces and parties caused more casualties than necessary in the COVID pandemic. Now, severe government restrictions have caused such a rationing of health care that one-quarter of a million urgent surgeries have been delayed. Sixty per cent of Canadians report minor to major mental health issues due to lockdowns, and one oncologist reports that we have a tsunami of cancer coming with screenings and early diagnosis at dangerous lows.

Statements by Members

At a Hamilton hospital, youth suicide attempts are up threefold. Thousands of people have died alone, and families were not able to have proper funerals for closure. Added to that are tens of thousands of small businesses, and the families they support, that have experienced financial ruin due to unreasonable restrictions, restrictions that unfairly affect single moms, our youth and hourly workers. People know how to socially distance, wear masks when needed and sanitize their hands and surfaces. Governments need to trust citizens and entrepreneurs to be safe, vastly reduce restrictions such as the Ontario green model, and let people have a semblance of normality after a year of COVID sacrifice.

* * *

SRI LANKA HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of the troubling reports of human rights abuses in Sri Lanka. Tamils in Canada and around the world have been fighting for justice and accountability for the gross past and ongoing human rights violations in Sri Lanka.

I have also met recently with Muslim members in my community who were horrified and deeply concerned with the recent government policy in Sri Lanka of forced cremations, which denied Muslims and other religious minority groups their basic burial rites. I am pleased to see Human Rights Council resolution 46-1 passed today, calling for increased international accountability and monitoring of human rights violations in Sri Lanka.

Canada must continue to stand strongly against these human rights violations and always support measures that promote peace, progress and reconciliation. Today's resolution is an important step toward furthering accountability. We must speak up, stand for justice and accountability and call for an end to further gross human rights violations in Sri Lanka. Our government will always stand up for human rights, both here at home and abroad.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday was the International Day of La Francophonie.

I want to take this opportunity to underscore the collaboration and friendship between Quebec and the other francophone states around the world. Every March 20, 300 million francophones celebrate the common bond shared by the French-speaking member states of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. This is one of the only international organizations that treats Quebec as a separate state. I am proud of that fact. This day is an opportunity to connect Quebec's political aspirations with its ability to take on the international role these aspirations entail.

Every single day in North America, people speak French as an act of resistance and self-determination. To paraphrase Pierre Bourgault, when we speak French in Parliament, sometimes stubbornly and often on principle, we are protecting our language, sure, but we are also protecting all the languages of the world from the hegemony of one.

• (1405)

NATIONAL IMPAIRED DRIVING PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day, on average, four Canadians are killed by an alcohol- or drug-impaired driver. Every year, impaired driving is the leading criminal cause of death and injury in Canada.

During the third week of March, we focus on preventing alcohol- and drug-impaired driving. This year, National Impaired Driving Prevention Week takes place from March 21 to 27. This is an opportunity for everyone to learn more and spread the word about how important it is for drivers to never get behind the wheel when drinking or smoking pot and to always pull over if they are tired or have to text.

National Impaired Driving Prevention Week is a reminder to everyone that when they get behind the wheel, they must be sober and focused, in fair weather or foul, all year long. It is that simple.

* * *

[*English*]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been a year since governments in Canada and around the world locked down their citizens in order to fight the COVID-19 virus. While they were accepted as being necessary at first, Canadians want to know the plan to bring these lockdowns to an end.

One million Canadians have lost their jobs and the dignity that comes with them. Seniors are locked away from the people they love. Extended families remain separated. Overdoses and mental illnesses are skyrocketing. The impact of these lockdowns on our children will take decades to address.

Delays in diagnostics and treatments for serious illnesses continue to have deadly impacts, and while we can watch hockey at the bar and shop in the hundreds in big box stores, faith communities are prevented from meeting together, their buildings empty.

Our physical, mental, spiritual and economic health has suffered long enough. It is time for the government to deliver a real plan to get us out of these lockdowns, because we just are not meant to live this way.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 16, I had the pleasure of hosting a virtual meeting with the Orléans Youth Council, alongside my provincial counterpart, MPP Stephen Blais, to discuss our youth environmental priorities with our special guest, Minister Jonathan Wilkinson. As climate change has long been among the most important issues raised by our youth council, their questions on pollution, emissions and carbon neutrality contributed to an exciting conversation.

I want to thank the outstanding members of the Orléans Youth Council for their advocacy on the environment and Minister Wilkinson for taking the time to join us.

[Translation]

As Francophonie Month comes to a close, I also want to mention that we celebrated International Day of La Francophonie on March 20. I am grateful to all these francophones and francophiles for cherishing, protecting and speaking French.

The Speaker: I would like to remind all members that they must refer to other members of the House by their title or riding only, not by their name. I am reminding everyone because people make that mistake from time to time.

The hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora.

[English]

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR WALK

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was proud to support my community in Newmarket—Aurora on the Coldest Night of the Year fundraising walk. This year they doubled their goal and raised over \$86,000 to help Inn from the Cold, a local charity that assists homelessness and at-risk individuals by providing shelter, training and transition to more permanent solutions.

I would like to congratulate these walkers, volunteers, sponsors and charities in Newmarket—Aurora for making this year's Coldest Night of the Year walk such a great success and thank them for their continuous commitment to helping vulnerable members of our community.

I would also like to recognize that Canadians across 145 communities participated in this annual walk and that a total of \$6 million was raised. I congratulate my colleagues in the House who participated in the walk in their own communities.

[Translation]

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINORS

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, at the opening of the sitting of the House, I did something important in Parliament. I acted as a legislator, but also as the father of two children.

I introduced Bill C-277, which seeks to combat the sexual exploitation of minors. This bill implements the recommendations set out in the report of the Select Committee on the Sexual Exploita-

Statements by Members

tion of Minors, which was unanimously adopted by the Quebec National Assembly.

I hope that my private member's bill will protect our children against sexual exploitation. Now, I also hope that the Liberal government will make this a priority. Our children must not become statistics. The select committee's report must not be forgotten or shelved.

I therefore urge all members, regardless of their political affiliation, to support this bill across party lines and help me give proper effect to its provisions. There is nothing more precious than our children. Let us protect them.

● (1410)

TWO BUSINESSES IN DON VALLEY WEST

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over 6,500 businesses responded to the government's call to action to combat COVID-19, including two companies in Don Valley West.

SecureKey Technologies Inc. created a secure digital ID software. This software is used primarily for online banking transactions, but it is also used by online government services, such as MyCRA, to ensure that Canadians have secure access to online services.

[English]

Our fine local brewery, Amsterdam, is also a COVID-19 hero. During the pandemic, it converted surplus beer-making capacity to make hand sanitizer and donated it to hospitals, including our own Sunnybrook.

I send a big thanks to these two companies and all the companies that have stepped up over the last year to protect Canadians. We are made in Canada and in this together.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, child sexual abuse devastates individuals, families and communities. Survivors deserve accessible, safe and comprehensive physical, mental, emotional and spiritual support. Offenders must face real consequences for the severity of their harm. That is why Conservatives prioritize compassion for victims and take action against dangerous criminals.

Conservatives brought in tougher penalties for child predators and strengthened the national sex offender registry and national DNA data bank. Conservatives fight against human trafficking and online child sexual exploitation and join more than 100 victims who want an investigation into MindGeek for child sexual abuse material.

Statements by Members

Little Warriors is a national charity founded by Glori Meldrum for awareness, prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse and is funded mainly by private donors and grants. The Be Brave Ranch is a one-of-a kind, specialized, trauma-informed, evidenced-based and groundbreaking treatment centre.

I want to recognize the crucial work of the Little Warriors team and the contributions of all the volunteers and donors. Every victim and every child matters.

* * *

ETHICS

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after three decades, investigations into the Prime Minister's behaviour, a half-billion-dollar, sole-sourced deal with his friends at WE Charity, replacing Parliament with a committee where only specific questions are allowed to be asked, and a record number of cover-ups, filibusters and tactics to delay this place, the trust that Canadians have put in the government is beginning to wane.

The Liberals may think highly of themselves, but ultimately they are accountable to Canadians. The Prime Minister likes to talk a lot about his values of openness and transparency; remember the phrase “sunny ways”. Unfortunately, his actions have not reflected his words.

We on the other hand, on this side of the House, are committed to taking real action. Canada's Conservatives will put the country first by enacting the toughest accountability and transparency laws that Canada has ever seen. We will toughen the Conflict of Interest Act and impose higher penalties. We will toughen the Lobbying Act to end abuse by Liberal insiders. We will increase transparency to end the cover-ups.

It is time for action. It is time to restore trust. It is time to serve Canadians.

* * *

● (1415)

MARY RIVER MINE

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq (Nunavut, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Baffinland mining corporation is looking to double the size of the Mary River Mine. Last month, Land Guardians braved temperatures as low as -36°C for days to have their voices heard to defend Nunavut from environmental and cultural harm.

Since the mine's construction, we have heard an overwhelming amount of community concern. One hunter reminded us of something really important. He said, “This is our land—our home—being destroyed and we have to think about our future—our children.” I want to make my position clear. This expansion is a threat to my people, to indigenous sovereignty and to our environment. The government has been largely silent on this dangerous project. Because of this, I will be hosting a telephone town hall tomorrow night at 7 p.m. EST.

When the people of Nunavummiut get phone calls to invite them to the town hall, please join me to raise your concerns and let us fight for our rights.

Matna.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CAROLE LAVALLÉE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, political engagement is a calling and sometimes even one's life work. It is the will to change things or, I should say, to make life better for one's constituents. In Quebec, this also translates into the fight for our country, and an extraordinary example of political engagement is Carole Lavallée.

Political staffer, director of communications—that is when I met her—chief of staff, member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert for three terms, chair of the Marie-Victorin school board and always a dedicated advocate, Carole has experienced all aspects of political engagement. With a sharp mind, piercing wit and extraordinary flair, Carole is an exceptional politician. As the Bloc's heritage critic, she brought the cultural community together in the fight for respect of copyright. She won a good many battles.

Today Carole is in palliative care, perhaps even in her final days, with her loving partner by her side. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, along with thousands of Quebecers, no doubt, I want to say the following:

Thank you for all your work and thank you for enriching our lives. Our thoughts are with you.

* * *

[*English*]

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this last year has only worsened Canada's pre-existing mental health crisis. Sadly, as this crisis worsens by the day, the Liberal government shamefully continues to ignore it.

Canadians who have hit their breaking point have been put on hold when they reach out for help, because the Liberal government has failed to prioritize a national three-digit suicide prevention hotline. Canadians struggling with mental illness, mental injury, anxiety or depression do not need another “free” government website. Through their MAID legislation, the Liberals have all but given up on struggling Canadians. What a disgrace. We should be helping our most vulnerable live, not only to survive but to thrive.

Mental health is health and mental health must be treated and funded properly. An elected Conservative government would boost funding to the provinces for health care, incentivize employers to provide mental health coverage to employees and get the 988 hot-line implemented. The Liberals have no plan, but Conservatives do, and we will act to secure Canadians' mental health care.

* * *

[Translation]

ROLAND BARBIER

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to acknowledge the contribution of an extraordinary man, Roland Barbier.

For more than 20 years, Roland worked for the Hochelaga community centre. Every day he fought against the stigmatization of poverty. He fought for those who were marginalized and gave them back their dignity. He brought people from all walks of life together for Opération sous zéro, a winter clothing drive that provides snowsuits to more than 4,700 children in Hochelaga and across Quebec every year. A few days before his retirement, Mr. Barbier helped a family find housing, furnish their apartment and stock up on food. It is proof that his love of people is contagious and inspires unity and support all around him.

I thank Roland for his patience, his dedication, his boundless generosity and everything he has done for the community.

On behalf of Hochelaga, happy retirement.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for a year, Canadians across the country have been in various stages of lockdown. Opioid overdoses are up. Canadians are feeling an increasing strain on their mental health. They deserve a serious data-driven, safe plan for reopening.

How long will the Prime Minister keep those Canadians waiting?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way during this pandemic, this government has been there for Canadians. We were there for families. We were there for workers. We were there for small businesses. We were there for provinces right across the country, and we will continue to be, with tens of billions of dollars transferred to the provinces, support directly for Canadians, all the while grounding ourselves in the best recommendations of science and experts. That is what we will continue to do.

We are all looking forward to a better summer, but to get there we have to work together to make sure we are pushing back on those variants, getting everyone vaccines and keeping healthy.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tens of thousands of Canadian small businesses are hanging on by a thread. Lockdowns are hurting main streets across the country, and family-owned businesses are in crisis.

Oral Questions

This has had an impact on the country's physical and mental health. The Prime Minister needs to commit to a data-driven, safe plan for reopening to give millions of Canadians hope.

Where is the plan? When is it coming?

● (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we have been there to support Canadians, and every step of the way we will continue to put both the protection and safety of Canadians and the benefits of our economy at the front line.

That is why we are deeply informed by experts and scientists in how we move forward. We will continue to ground our decisions based in science and evidence, unlike the Conservative Party that continues to doubt the use of masks from time to time. We will continue to stand up for Canadians.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's chief scientist does not agree with the Prime Minister's political decision to delay second doses, so he does not follow his own edicts in the House.

Taiwan has a plan for rapid tests and has been open. The United States and the United Kingdom both have fully published their plans for a safe and effective reopening. Why not in Canada?

The Prime Minister has been slow on the border, slow on rapid tests, behind the entire developed world on vaccines. Why are we also going to fail on the economic reopening?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning, we knew that the best way to ensure that our economy would come roaring back was to be there sufficiently to support Canadians, small businesses, workers, families, seniors and youth through this crisis. That is exactly what we have done. Every step of the way, we have deferred to scientists and experts. We also respect the provinces that make their own determinations around spacing of intervals of doses. We will be there to support them every step of the way.

Canadians have a government that is there for them. We will continue to be there for them.

[Translation]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our country has been on lockdown for a year. Canadians are suffering, their mental health is under increasing pressure and domestic violence is on the rise. There is no plan for rapid testing. There is no plan for mass vaccination. There is no hope.

When will the Liberal government decide to come up with a safe plan to reopen Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives in the House like to complain that we have not moved forward with rapid testing.

Oral Questions

On the contrary, for months now, we have been sending millions and tens of millions of rapid tests to the provinces, territories, the private sector, and even individuals. We will continue to give provinces, municipalities and workplaces the means to protect their employees and residents as spring arrives.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many countries have plans for their economies. Taiwan has rapid testing. The United States and the United Kingdom both have a public plan to reopen their economy.

Canadians are waiting. We are always lagging behind. We are tired of always waiting. Does the Liberal government intend to present a plan to Canadians for the safe reopening of the economy and, if so, when?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, we have not only had a plan, but we have also carried it out to protect Canadians and restore our economy.

We are working hand in hand with the provinces and territories, but the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about a plan for the economy. Unfortunately, this weekend, we saw that he has not yet understood that we cannot have a plan for the economy if we do not have a plan to fight climate change.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, “hand in hand” might be a bit of an exaggeration, but spring has brought with it some lovely surprises, including one or two collaborations between the federal government and Quebec, such as \$500 million for high-speed Internet in the regions of Quebec, an amount that will be transferred to Quebec by 2022. My goodness, that was in the 2019 Bloc Québécois platform. We are delighted.

Could this wonderful and emerging openness be extended to health transfers, which were called for by a unanimous vote of the Quebec National Assembly as well as the Premier of Quebec and all Canadian premiers?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the outset of the pandemic, we have been working hand in hand with the provinces, with the required investments and spending to get through the pandemic. Tens of billions of dollars have been transferred to the provinces and territories to help them ease the pressure on our health care system.

We will continue to be there to work with the provinces and to protect Canadians across the country. Once the pandemic is over, we will enter into discussions to determine how we will increase health transfers to ensure that Canadians are well served in the future as well.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what makes sense is more money for health care during

the pandemic, not after the pandemic. Nevertheless, it is spring, and things are looking up.

Yesterday, along with Premier Legault—who was accused of being a white supremacist—the Prime Minister condemned Quebec bashing. That is great, truly. Now what? What can he do to walk the talk? How can he signal to the rest of Canada that Quebecers are no more racist than the Prime Minister of Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to what my hon. colleague said at the beginning of his question, which is that the provinces need money for their health care systems now, not in the future, because we are in a crisis now. That is what we have been saying and doing since day one.

We transferred tens of billions of dollars to help Quebecers and all Canadians deal with this challenge to our health care system. We will always be there for Quebecers and Canadians, now and in the years to come. That is a promise.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after learning about complaints of sexual misconduct against his former chief of the defence staff, the Prime Minister not only increased his salary but extended his contract.

This sends a clear message to women in the Canadian Armed Forces that they are not safe and they are not taken seriously. Will the Prime Minister apologize and ensure that this never happens again?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the government, we always take all allegations seriously and ensure they are followed up by the appropriate independent authorities. That is exactly what happened in this situation.

After the ombudsman reported his concerns to the Minister of National Defence, the minister referred the ombudsman to the independent authorities mandated to follow up on serious allegations. It is not up to politicians to make these decisions and conduct investigations; it is up to the independent authorities, and that is exactly what happened in this situation.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, real leadership is about finding solutions, not looking for excuses. If, as a nation, we took the approach of the Liberal government looking for excuses, then we would have never had universal health care.

We know this pandemic has disproportionately impacted seniors, who were the hardest hit, particularly in long-term care, and we know that for-profit long-term care had the worst conditions.

Will the Prime Minister show leadership and support our New Democratic opposition day motion to remove profit from long-term care so our seniors are cared for with respect and dignity?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians in the House and across the country can agree that we need to ensure our seniors are getting the care, treatment and dignity they so richly deserve. That is something on which we are committed to working with the provinces and territories.

Unlike the NDP, we understand and respect the Constitution of Canada that designates certain areas of jurisdiction as being provincial authority, but we will work hand in hand with the provinces and territories to ensure that right across the country all seniors get the top quality of care. It is something we all want. It is something we are going to work together on, in partnership, to deliver.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a year of lockdowns has had devastating mental health effects on Canadians. Too many have said their final good-byes to a parent or a grandparent through a window, or not at all. We have missed too many funerals and too many weddings.

However, two weeks ago, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that vaccinated grandparents in the U.S. can spend time with their grandchildren. Here in Canada, grandparents are looking for some hope too. Will grandparents in Canada who have been vaccinated get to see their grandchildren?

• (1430)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, Canada's response has been guided by science and evidence and has been done in partnership and collaboration with provinces and territories. The member of the opposition knows that it is provinces and territories that set the public health guidelines. In fact, it is local public health officials who work to protect all Canadians in their jurisdictions.

We have been there for Canadians and the provinces and territories. We will continue to be there for them.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is abdicating its responsibility by refusing to make recommendations on this, and the Liberals need to acknowledge that.

For many Canadians, spiritual and mental health are linked. Gathering with people of the same faith and belief has been vital to freedom of worship and good mental health. With suicides and overdoses increasing, people have fewer places to go for help. For most of the last year, more Canadians could go to Costco than to their temple or their church.

Will vaccinated Canadians be able to attend their church, synagogue or temple? We are asking the federal government for direction on this.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the member opposite knows that those decisions around public health measures are related to the public health leadership in that

jurisdiction, whether it be provincial, territorial or local. We want to thank all the hard-working health care professionals who are protecting all of us during this very difficult time.

It is encouraging, though, to hear the member of the opposition talk about harm resulting from overdoses. I certainly hope it reflects a change in stance by the Conservative Party in its opposition to having compassionate harm reduction care.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week at FINA, I asked Philip Cross, who was the chief economic analyst at Statistics Canada for years, if he saw anything in Bill C-14 or the fall statement that would give him comfort that there is an actual plan on growing our way out of this crisis we are in today. His answer was a flat out “no”.

After 422 days of small business shutdowns and sector collapses, can the government tell us today what its plan is for economic recovery?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome that question because it gives me an opportunity to share some good economic news with this House. Last week, ratings agency DBRS Morningstar reaffirmed Canada's AAA rating and wrote as follows:

Canada's AAA ratings are underpinned by the country's considerable fundamental strengths, including its sound macroeconomic policy frameworks, large and diverse economy, and strong governing institutions.

I thank Canadians for working so hard to get through this global pandemic.

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about underpinnings. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said himself, “I haven't seen anything yet, at least, from the government on recent measures”, when questioned if the government had any outcome-based analysis when allocating government spending.

There are no metrics on productivity, growth rates or spending efficiency. If the government is not leading its decisions on economic recovery through traditional metrics, can it explain exactly what type of tea leaves or crystal balls it is consulting when determining its spending allocations?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the chips were down, our government was there for Canadians, and the results show it. Last week the IMF published estimates showing that without our government's economic response, real output would have declined by an additional 7.8 percentage points last year, and the unemployment rate would have been 3.2% higher. Our government stood by Canadians, and as a result of that support and the resilience of Canadians, the IMF projects our GDP will grow this year by 4.4%.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Health if fully vaccinated seniors can hug their grandchildren. Today my colleague, the deputy leader, asked her a very similar question, and she said it was the jurisdiction of the provinces to make that determination. I am wondering if she and her department are planning on issuing any guidance on what vaccinated Canadians will or will not be able to do.

• (1435)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will remind the member opposite that unlike the party opposite, we believe in science and evidence, including the evidence that climate change is real.

I will also remind the member opposite that it is in fact our work with the provinces and territories that results in national guidance. The guidance that has been developed with all provinces and territories is posted on our website, and I encourage all Canadians to check it out.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at a time when we should all be working together to encourage Canadians with regard to vaccine uptake, the federal health minister should be starting to tell the Canadian public what she and her department are doing with regard to setting benchmarks on advice for what vaccinated Canadians can and cannot do.

I will ask her again, because she did not give an answer. Is the minister planning on issuing, on the advice of her department, any guidance on what vaccinated Canadians can or cannot do, or is she planning on completely abdicating this to the provincial governments?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the member opposite is talking about vaccine hesitation, I will say this. What I am confident in is the safety of the vaccines that have been approved by Health Canada to save the lives of people, so it is really important that Canadians accept vaccination when it is their turn and that they talk to their health care provider if they have any questions.

We know without a doubt that vaccinations are saving lives and we will continue to be there for the provinces and territories as they deliver those vaccinations into arms.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec and the provinces are calling for increased health transfers in

order to deal with the pandemic, but especially because the cost of health care keeps rising, whereas the federal share of the funding keeps going down, causing Quebec and the provinces to go into debt.

Yesterday, in an internal document obtained by La Presse, the deputy minister of employment warned that the "trajectory of provincial net debt is unsustainable".

This confirms that what Quebec and the provinces are saying is true and that the federal government knows it. Why is the federal government refusing to increase health transfers?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister has been very clear. We have been there for the provinces and territories throughout this pandemic, whether it is through billions of dollars in direct financial support, purchasing of personal protective equipment, providing additional personnel to help in prevention and to support people experiencing tremendous outbreaks in their regions, ensuring that we have access to vaccinations or paying for all those vaccinations.

We will continue to be there for provinces, including Quebec and Quebecers throughout this pandemic and beyond.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the deputy minister is proving that the government is well aware that, despite the deficit from the pandemic, Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio is the lowest in the G7 while Quebec and the provinces are going in debt because of skyrocketing health costs.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer already confirmed it; the Conference Board as well, as did the Council of the Federation and the National Assembly of Quebec. Today, we have confirmation that the government knows that all those people are right.

However, it chooses to continue to starve the health networks by refusing to increase health transfers. Why?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite what my colleague might say, the Government of Canada is collaborating with the Government of Quebec. We are there when it comes to health and we have been there from day one of the pandemic, bringing in testing, providing personal protective equipment and procuring vaccines.

We will continue to collaborate with the Government of Quebec in the future. We will always be there for Quebec.

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it came to light that the Prime Minister approved a half-billion-dollar grant to a group that had paid his family half a million dollars, he said, “Listen, this thing was just dropped on the cabinet table, and I knew nothing about it.” Is it really believable that the Prime Minister would know nothing about a half-billion-dollar cabinet submission?

Well, actually, yes, it is, but people should see this email that was sent to his top adviser from Craig Kielburger: “Hello Ben, Thank you for your kindness in helping shape our latest program with the government.”

What role did the Prime Minister's top adviser play in setting up this half-billion-dollar handout to the Prime Minister's friends?

• (1440)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been shared on numerous occasions, the non-partisan public service recommended that this was the only organization that could deliver the Canada student service grant in the time and capacity that was required. Obviously the program did not unfold as we intended, and all of the money that was allocated to the organization has been—

The Speaker: I am just going to interrupt. The microphone is not picking up well.

Could the hon. minister just start over?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been shared, the non-partisan public service recommended that this was the only organization that could deliver this program in the timeline and degree that was required to respond to student and youth needs. Unfortunately, the program did not unfold as it was intended, and all of the money that was allocated for this program has been returned. Our government remains focused on youth and students and on responding to their needs.

It is unfortunate that the Conservative Party has been slowing and delaying Bill C-14, which actually would provide interest relief to student programs. I am pleased to see their interest in supporting youth and students and I hope we can continue providing programs to Canadians—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the minister said the program did not unfold as intended, that is because the Liberals got caught when they were intending to hand money over to their friends, but there they go again, blaming the non-partisan public service for the program, except for this little email from Craig Kielburger, who says, “Hello Ben”—the senior adviser to the Prime Minister—“Thank you for your kindness in helping to shape our latest program with the government.”

If these ministers cannot give us a straight answer about the role the PMO played in shaping the program, will they let this senior adviser come testify at a parliamentary committee under oath to explain his story?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows well that we believe strongly in the work of committees. They have a responsibility to examine legislation, make it better and ask questions. That is why we never turn away from having our ministers appear at committee. We did so without any hesitation many times, and we will continue doing it. That is how it works. Our ministers are accountable to this Parliament.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister approved a salary increase and a \$50,000 bonus for the former chief of the defence staff, even though he knew in 2018 about the allegations of sexual misconduct against him. Women serving in our military must be frustrated with the Prime Minister's decision.

My question is simple. What message does this send to the women serving our country?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take all allegations of misconduct extremely seriously. As I said before, I do not determine pay increases. That is done independently based on the advice and recommendations of the public service.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are used to the Prime Minister always passing the buck and saying that it is not his responsibility and that others are dealing with it.

I would ask the Minister of National Defence to go back in time and to remember his days in uniform.

Would he say the same thing to his female colleagues if he was still serving today? Would he give them the same answer, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure when the member served he served honourably, and I did the same thing.

We take very seriously our responsibility for the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces, and that is exactly what we are doing. We have absolutely zero tolerance for any type of misconduct. We take every allegation extremely seriously, and that is exactly what we did in this situation as well.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP Civilian Review and Complaints Commission determined Colten Boushie's mom was discriminated against when officers told her of her son's death. According to the report, police told her to "get it together", then asked her if she was drinking and even smelled her breath. This was said to a mom who had just lost her son violently. Imagine her pain.

Reconciliation grows from recognizing uncomfortable truths, not symbolic gestures. When will the Prime Minister stop talking and start acting to end systemic racism in policing?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is an important question. Certainly, our condolences and sympathy go to the Boushie family, and the way in which they were treated is unacceptable.

We thank the CRCC for its report. However, I would remind the member that we have made a clear declaration of moving forward on enhanced civilian oversight for all law enforcement agencies, including the RCMP. We are working towards modernizing the training for police and law enforcement, we are addressing standards of de-escalation for people in crisis and the use of force, and we are accelerating the work to co-develop a legislative framework for first nations policing as an essential service.

We are acting on these recommendations, and we are working to ensure that the RCMP is fully engaged in the reform.

* * *

● (1445)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after years of obstruction, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations finally agreed to an independent review of the rights abuses of the St. Anne's residential school survivors, but she made no effort to talk to the survivors, and now we know why. It is because the minister is arbitrarily excluding many of the survivors. She is refusing to let the survivors know if their claims were breached by the government's actions, and she is refusing to provide access to the evidence that her officials suppressed.

This minister has already spent over \$3 million fighting these survivors. When is she going to end these toxic legal games and just do what is right by the survivors of St. Anne's residential school? She should do the right thing.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the mistreatment of indigenous children, including those who attended St. Anne's Indian Residential School, is a tragic and shameful part of Canada's history.

To restore confidence, rebuild trust and maintain the integrity of the Indian residential school settlement agreement, Canada has approached the court to request an independent third party review of the St. Anne's Indian Residential School independent assessment process claims, which were decided without the benefit of Canada's 2015 updated persons of interest reports.

Throughout any review, Canada will fund health support measures for the survivors.

THE BUDGET

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past year, Canadians and Canadian businesses have faced an unprecedented challenge.

We, as a country, have gone through the worst health and economic crisis in over a century. Our government has been there for Canadians and Canadian businesses every step of the way.

With the vaccine rollout, there is now light at the end of the tunnel. Will the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance please update the House on when the government will present budget 2021, and the government's vision for the future?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada entered the global pandemic in a strong fiscal position, which allowed our government to provide unprecedented support to Canadians.

We will continue to do whatever it takes to support Canadians and Canadian businesses. We have a plan for jobs and robust growth.

I am pleased to announce that on April 19, at 4 p.m., the government will present budget 2021.

Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), I ask that an order of the day be designated for that purpose.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, fruit and vegetable growers who are bringing in international farm workers for the 2021 growing season are being asked to wait on phone lines with hundreds and thousands of people, and to wait for nurses contracted by the government to supervise their COVID-19 tests at day 10. If they get through, once the tests are complete, they are required to forward them to the lab by Purolator courier.

This just in: Purolator does not serve many parts of rural Canada and, where it is available, it does not work on the weekends.

Will the government give fruit and vegetable growers a workable solution for getting farm workers to work?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague and all Canadian farmers that we are working really seriously to make sure that the procedure is safe for temporary foreign workers and safe for Canadians.

We know there is a challenge around day 10 tests, but I can assure the member that we are working on it. We have already put in place additional resources and a line that is specifically dedicated to foreign workers.

* * *

• (1450)

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's hotel quarantine policy is not based on science, and is hurting the global work of Canadian humanitarian organizations. These organizations must now pay for hotel stays when they bring their workers home or transfer them through Canada to other locations. Humanitarian workers need to be travelling to fight this virus abroad, and that is why Conservatives asked for an exemption for them a month ago.

At the very least, will the government support an exemption from this policy for humanitarian workers, so that NGOs can focus their resources where they are most needed?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we tremendously value the incredible work that humanitarian workers are doing on the front lines here in Canada and around the world. The policy our government has put in place is designed to keep Canadians safe, which is why quarantine measures are very important. However, we stand by the important work humanitarian workers are doing.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadians are returning from Florida with vaccination certificates and negative COVID-19 tests in hand.

Will these Canadians be able to go directly home for the mandatory three-day period, without having to quarantine in a hotel?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will first remind Canadians that now is not the time to travel internationally. It is very important that we have proper public health protocols at the international borders. We have some of the strongest measures in the world. These keep our rate of importation extremely low and, as returning Canadians arrive in Canada, they will be expected to follow the regulations in place for all returning travellers.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week constituents of mine working in pipeline repair and inspection services were detained upon arrival into Canada, despite having pro-

Oral Questions

vided travel letters and government essential service worker permits to the CBSA agents. Workers who cross the border for essential work have been deemed essential for a reason.

Why is the government causing quarantine chaos and locking workers up in their COVID hotels, even when proper credentials were presented?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have taken the measures that are necessary to protect the health and safety of all Canadians. At the same time, we have introduced exemptions for workers, including essential workers, to ensure that we can keep our economy going. We will continue to apply those measures with great rigour so that we can protect the health and safety of Canadians and meet the needs of Canadians economically.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on January 27 the House of Commons unanimously called on the Minister of Immigration to grant citizenship to Raif Badawi. On February 16, I wrote to the minister to remind him. It is now March 23, and I am still waiting for an acknowledgement, but, more importantly, Raif Badawi is still not a citizen. When I asked the minister yesterday, he told me that he would continue to work with all members. Working together is all well and good, but it does not mean much if nothing gets done.

When will Raif Badawi be granted citizenship?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share my colleagues' concerns, especially with respect to Mr. Badawi's ongoing detention. We are very concerned for his safety. We are reviewing the requirements in the Citizenship Act, in light of the fact that Mr. Badawi is not on Canadian soil. We will work closely with Global Affairs Canada and will continue to work with all parliamentarians in our efforts to reunite Mr. Badawi with his family.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague on his improving command of French.

I know that the minister is talking to Irwin Cotler, Raif Badawi's lawyer. Mr. Cotter is a former Liberal justice minister who has represented other political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela.

I want to emphasize that because there must not be any partisan games in this matter. We are here, all together, to help a man who has been arbitrarily detained get out of prison.

Mr. Cotter has confirmed that the Minister of Immigration has the discretionary power to grant Mr. Badawi Canadian citizenship and that this would help his case.

Oral Questions

The minister could do that this afternoon if he wanted to. What is stopping him?

• (1455)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague once again for his question.

As I already said, I share his concerns for Mr. Badawi's safety, but this is not a simple matter. It requires careful consideration.

I am very concerned about Mr. Badawi's safety. I will continue to work with and co-operate with all my colleagues. I will continue to engage with the community and even the family of Mr. Badawi. I will work in close collaboration with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

* * *

[English]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, small businesses have borne the brunt of the pandemic: 60,000 of them have failed; nearly 20,000 are on the brink; millions of jobs are at stake; many need more loans to survive; and thousands cannot qualify. However, debt is no substitute for customers, and small business debt is threatening recovery.

Uncertainty from the government's lack of a plan is killing small business jobs. Will the government table a plan so that small businesses will know when they can have their customers back?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the hon. member's concern about Canadian small businesses. That is why I would like to urge him and all members opposite to join us in supporting Bill C-14. This is legislation that would help small businesses, and he does not need to listen to me. He can listen to Dan Kelly, who says, "Bill C-14 has some important measures for small business, including fresh funding for regional business support programs. CFIB urges all parties to ensure this support is passed quickly."

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week at finance committee, Philip Cross from the Macdonald-Laurier Institute said that there was nothing in Bill C-14 for economic recovery. The government has repeatedly said that program like the HASCAP and the RRRF were the answer for businesses that had fallen through the cracks, but the criteria for these programs is virtually the same as the other programs that are failing to reach Canadians.

The minister admitted at the finance committee that there was nothing in Bill C-14 for businesses that had fallen through the cracks because they opened after March 2020. When are the Liberals going to table a plan and do something about it?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I announced earlier today, we will be presenting our budget on April 19.

However, I must take issue with the simply false notion that Bill C-14 does not include measures to support small businesses. It would provide the RDAs with an additional \$206.7 million to repli-

cate CEBA loan limits for gap-filling programs and RRRF gap-filling capacity. Bill C-14 also gives us the formal authority to provide rent support programs for rent payable.

Many other important measures are there and I hope all members of the House will support this essential legislation.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently it was announced that 800,000 taxpayers had been locked out of their CRA My Account because their account information had been obtained by unauthorized third parties. That is close to one million Canadians who have been locked out of their accounts, many of whom rely on it to apply for their emergency benefits or file their taxes.

While the CRA has suggested this is just precautionary, it should never have happened. Will the minister ensure that Canadians are not paying the price for CRA's recklessness and make sure this never happens again?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the protection of Canadians' privacy is a priority for the Canada Revenue Agency. Those affected will receive a notice from the CRA indicating that they need to reset their username and password in the My CRA Account section. The CRA took this proactive measure for security reasons.

I want to be clear. The CRA's systems were not breached.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canada remains deeply concerned about the egregious human rights violations that are taking place in the Xinjiang region in China. We are particularly concerned by the reports of forced labour in the region and the ongoing repression and persecution of the Uighurs.

Oral Questions

Yesterday, along with the U.S., the U.K. and the EU, Canada announced targeted measures against Chinese officials who have been directly involved in these atrocities.

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs update the House on Canada's most recent actions?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville and chair of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights for his work on this serious issue.

More than ever, democratic countries must stand together to defend democracy and human rights. That is why yesterday we joined our allies in imposing sanctions on four individuals and an entity who have played a key role in the persecution of the Uighurs.

We will continue to call on China to stop the repression against the Uighurs and to hold those responsible to account.

* * *

• (1500)

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pre-COVID, Canada's emergency management experts had a clear pandemic plan. However, this plan was trashed along with pandemic stockpiles and our early warning system. Now Canadians are paying the price for this negligence, while the Liberals plan for the next election.

Lockdowns and restrictions are supposed to be temporary to buy governments time to get appropriate measures like rapid testing and vaccines in place.

Where is the government's data-driven plan for a recovery and why are Canadians being forced to endure perpetual restrictions while we wait for that plan?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, we have worked with scientists, public health leaders and, indeed, provinces and territories every step of the way to respond to COVID-19, from the early days where we supporting provinces and territories to acquire personal protective equipment and start up domestic manufacturing to now when we are acquiring the vaccines, paying for them and ensuring that provinces and territories have the systems to administer those vaccines.

We have delivered over 31 million rapid tests and we have ensured that provinces and territories have the money, the expertise and the support they need to protect the health of the citizens of whom they are responsible for taking care.

* * *

HEALTH

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, families want to be able to visit their loved ones in long-term care homes. Grandmothers want to hug their grandchildren. People in Point Roberts simply want to be able to go visit their doctor or their dentist.

The government now has robust data on the efficacy of vaccines. When will it update its guidelines on what are appropriate activities for fully vaccinated individuals?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her interest in the data and the science on vaccinations. She is right. What we do know is that vaccinations are indeed saving lives and the data is accumulating that they are a very strong protection against the experience of getting very sick with COVID-19. Where the research is still evolving is the effect on transmission.

We will always listen to the advice of public health experts, scientists, indeed, the leaders all across the country who are working so hard to balance the public health measures necessary to protect Canadians during this extremely delicate time.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want a government that works for them, but they do not have one.

Seniors are being left behind, businesses have closed their doors, rural Canada is being ignored and our vaccine rollout is among the worst.

Instead of doing his job, the Prime Minister is more focused on keeping his job. Canadians do not want an early election; they want a future. Why is the Prime Minister more focused on his political future versus the future of Canadians?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I disagree entirely with my hon. colleague's assertion. Since day one of COVID, our government has put the well-being of Canadians at the heart of our response. As the finance minister said today, we will be there every step of the way until we get out of COVID and build back better.

As the minister for rural economic development, I am proud that we are taking this opportunity in these difficult times to connect every Canadian to high-speed Internet, a service that is essential. No government has done more, and for rural Canadians, we have got their backs.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past year, Canadians have had to roll up their sleeves to deal with an unprecedented health and economic crisis.

Ever since the pandemic started, our government has been there to support Canadians, and we will be there for the recovery so we can build back better and make Canada even stronger.

Business of Supply

Would the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance please tell the House when the government plans to table its 2021 budget and its vision for the future?

• (1505)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

We went into the crisis on solid financial footing, and that enabled us to provide unprecedented support to Canadians.

I am pleased to announce that the government will table its 2021 budget on April 19 at 4 p.m.

* * *

[English]

CHILD CARE

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a recent CCPA report noted that because of high costs, there has been a substantial decline of 10% in child care enrolment in most Canadian cities. This was most extreme in Ontario. Accessible and affordable child care will play a vital role in rebuilding our economy. It will be essential in helping parents get back to work.

The Liberals supported our NDP motion to put \$2 billion into child care immediately, yet there is still no relief. Families are used to broken Liberal campaign promises. Is this just one more?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the immense pressure that COVID-19 has put on Canadian families, particularly parents. We are committed to being there for parents throughout this crisis to ensure that they take care of themselves, their children and their families.

That is why we introduced a series of measures to help families through this pandemic, but we also introduced measures to help the child care sector. We are committed to, of course, continuing our investments, but also to a more ambitious plan to ensure that each and every child in Canada has access to affordable and high-quality child care from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, compared to other countries, less than 10% of Canadians are vaccinated, and everyone is concerned.

Can the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry explain why, in spite of the resources available, the Liberal government could not bring in a proper plan for a made-in-Canada vaccine instead of depending on others?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite the opposite actually. Within 12 days of the World Health Organization declaring a pandemic, we were already there with \$200 million to support a made-in-Canada vaccine and therapeutics. Within 30 days, we added another \$600 million.

In fact, Canadians should know that within a month, we had almost \$1 billion invested to make sure that Canadians can rely on safe and effective vaccines through procurement and biomanufacturing in this country. We are going to continue to invest to ensure the resiliency of Canadians and to protect their health and safety for the future.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise again today on another very urgent matter. There have been consultations with other parties, and if you seek it, I hope you will find consent for the following motion. I move:

That the House denounce the racism in the RCMP as found by the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission in a report that also revealed that the RCMP destroyed records of police communications from the night Colten Boushie was killed, and condemn the cover-up by the RCMP.

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

Hearing none, the House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**OPPOSITION MOTION—LONG-TERM CARE**

The House resumed consideration from March 22 of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:09 p.m., pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the hon. member for Burnaby South relating to Business of Supply.

[English]

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

• (1510)

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

• (1525)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

Business of Supply

(Division No. 73)

YEAS

Members

Angus	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice	Cannings
Collins	Davies
Duvall	Garrison
Gazan	Green
Harris	Hughes
Johns	Julian
Kwan	MacGregor
Manly	Masse
Mathysen	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
McPherson	Qaqqaq
Sangha	Singh— 28

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alghabra
Alleslev	Allison
Amos	Anand
Anandasangaree	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Benzen
Bergen	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bessette	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Blois
Boudrias	Bragdon
Brassard	Bratina
Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Carr
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Champagne	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chen
Chiu	Chong
Cooper	Cormier
Cumming	Dabrusin
Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diotte
Doherty	Dong
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fergus	Fillmore
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Finnigan	Fisher

Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gallant
Garneau	Gaudreau
Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gould	Gourde
Gray	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hallan
Harder	Hardie
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Jansen	Jeneroux
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kelloway
Kelly	Kent
Khalid	Khera
Kitchen	Kmiec
Koutrakis	Kram
Kurek	Kusie
Kusmierczyk	Lake
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	Lawrence
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lehoux
Lemire	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Lukivski	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Maloney
Marcil	Martel
Martinez Ferrada	May (Cambridge)
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Melillo	Mendès
Mendicino	Michaud
Miller	Monsef
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Morrissey
Motz	Murray
Nater	Ng
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Poilievre
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rayes
Redekopp	Regan
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rood
Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Sahota (Brampton North)	Saini
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Saroya	Savard-Tremblay
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale

Speaker's Ruling

Schulte	Seeback
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shin
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Simms	Sloan
Sorbara	Soroka
Spengemann	Stanton
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tabbara
Tassi	Thériault
Therrien	Tochor
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Van Popta	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vignola
Virani	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Weiler	Wilkinson
Williamson	Wilson-Raybould
Wong	Yip
Young	Yurdiga
Zahid	Zimmer
Zuberi — 305	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 17 minutes.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the point of order raised on March 10, by the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon concerning a discrepancy between the English and French version of Bill C-19, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act with regard to COVID-19 response.

In his intervention, the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon informed the House of the discrepancy between the two versions of a section of the bill. Indeed, at the end of subsection 239(2) on page 12 of the English version, the bill stipulates that ballots should be sent to the “special voting rules administrator in the National Capital Region no later than 6:00 p.m. on the Tuesday”.

The French version, conversely, indicates that the ballot

[*Translation*]

“parvient au bureau du directeur du scrutin au plus tard à 18 heures le mardi”.

[*English*]

According to the member, the two texts have very different meanings, which created confusion during the debate at second reading. This discrepancy, he added, suggests that the bill is incom-

plete. The member cited an extract of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 734, to the effect that when such situations occurred in the past, the order for second reading was discharged. He thus asked the Chair to review the matter and rule on the admissibility of Bill C-19 in its current form.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

The member for Saint-Jean also stressed the importance of participating effectively in the deliberations of the House, while the member for Elmwood—Transcona enjoined the parties to find a solution so as not to unduly delay the study of the bill.

In response, the member for Kingston and the Islands clarified that the French wording of subsection 239(2) is, in fact, the right one. He explained that the government intended to correct the inconsistency during clause-by-clause consideration at committee. While an error did occur during the drafting, the member stressed that that in no way means that Bill C-19 is incomplete and that it was indeed in its definitive form when it was tabled in the House. Referring to a Speaker's ruling of January 1987, he added that the error did not make the bill inadmissible because it did not contain blank passages or reach the threshold required to render it incomplete set out in Standing Order 68(3).

[*English*]

In order to clarify the issue of a bill's form, it is important to review the existing precedents. A careful reading of the Speaker's rulings reveals that when the order for second reading of a bill was discharged, it was either because it did not comply with an order of the House or because the drafting of the bill was not done or not completed. The following passage must be added to the extract cited by the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon at page 734 of Bosc Gagnon: “A bill in blank or in imperfect shape is a bill which has only a title, or the drafting of which has not been completed.”

In my opinion, that is not the case with Bill C-19 as submitted to the House. Furthermore, the debate at the second reading concerns the principle of the bill and not its specific provisions. In the words of Speaker Fraser in a ruling rendered on January 26, 1987, at page 2,667 of debates, I feel that this difference “did not affect 'the essence, the principles, the objects, the purpose or the conditions' of the bill.”

[*Translation*]

In this instance, the error can be corrected by the committee studying the bill. Although it does not happen often, such corrections are sometimes made during the detailed study in committee to ensure that the English and French versions of a bill say the same thing. In the meantime, the government has clarified its intent, and the debate can thus continue on the motion for second reading.

[English]

I would like to thank the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon for his vigilance. Let me also take this opportunity to reiterate the importance of paying particular attention to both versions of bills, so that members have the same understanding of proposed texts, so they can participate fully in parliamentary business and can perform their duties as legislators.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Can you please inform the House if the English version is correct or the French version? My main point of contention, whether ballots would be counted within the riding or counted within the national capital region, has not been answered.

Can you please confirm if the English or French version is correct?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I can appreciate the member's concern. I was there when he spoke. It is the French version that is correct.

● (1535)

The Speaker: I was about to say the understanding is that the French version is correct, but it will be up to the committee to decide, along with the members of the committee, on which one will apply.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PLAN FOR REOPENING THE ECONOMY

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the point where I left off prior to question period, I was discussing other jurisdictions around the world that are also increasing or continuing lockdowns or restrictions. I was raising this point to bring up the fact that while the Conservatives ignore the science and ignore the evidence, we are still in the midst of a global pandemic in which lives are being lost and people are remaining sick, and we need to understand the transmission of the variants. While everybody wants to resume normal life again, we cannot do so until Canadians are safe.

I was speaking about jurisdictions because the Conservatives talked about the U.S. and the U.K., but I was talking about other jurisdictions. Germany is in lockdowns; France is entering new lockdowns; Italy is showing lockdowns over Easter; Greece is closing schools; the Czech Republic has lockdowns; Spain is issuing curfews; Belgium is in lockdowns until April; Portugal is in a state of emergency; the Netherlands has curfews. The member for Carleton brought up Ireland; Ireland is still in the highest level of restrictions.

Of course, again members, even throughout question period today, raised the U.S. as an example. However, let me point out that in the U.S., places like Miami are entering into new restrictions. I do not think the members opposite really want Canadians to believe that we should be following the examples of Miami or Texas,

Business of Supply

where they have got rid of mask regulations and restrictions. At every step in this pandemic, our government has been committed to following the best science and evidence, and as that science and evidence has evolved, we have as well.

We also must point out the fact that the Conservatives continue to ignore that lockdown restrictions or any sorts of restrictions are being decided by local jurisdictions and that there is not a one-size-fits-all. Some areas might require more restrictions and other areas might not. This is the Conservative notion that they know best and that they are going to tell provinces, territories and regions across this country what to do and ignore the science.

We saw over the weekend that Conservatives cannot even come to terms with the fact that climate change is real, so I have absolutely no faith in their ability to manage a health crisis or rely on scientists. When it comes to Canadians' health, we must rely on the best evidence and those who are in a position to guide provinces and territories with that evidence, and allow them to make the decisions based on local requirements.

Once again, the Conservatives think that they know best and that they should tell provinces and territories what to do, but we need to continue to protect Canadians so that we can come out of this crisis stronger together and get back to normal.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important topic.

We are not saying, in any way, shape or form, that lockdowns do not have an important health responsibility and consequence. What we are saying is that there can be no economic recovery without opening up the country at some point, when it is safe to do so. What Canadians need to understand is what those conditions are and when that opening can begin.

This motion is asking the government for a plan. It asks under what conditions, and when, we will be able to open the economy, because our businesses, large and small, need to know what those conditions are.

Is my hon. colleague against there being a plan for when we might be able to reopen the economy?

● (1540)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, this is what I think Canadians just absolutely cannot stand from Conservative members, which is that they talk out of both sides of their mouths.

If we read the motion, we see that it is not asking for a simple plan or conditions; the motion speaks to providing the conditions within 20 days for opening restrictions. As well, the member who asked the question comes from the same province I do, Ontario, and the provincial government has said it is the Ontario government that is going to determine the lifting of restrictions, based on the regional and local dynamics.

Business of Supply

The member opposite can say whatever she wants in the House, but the motion speaks for itself. The Conservatives continue to ignore science and evidence, and this is why Canadians do not have any faith in them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the context of managing COVID-19, I am curious to know what the parliamentary secretary thinks of today's motion in greater detail.

From a democratic point of view and in this context, we agree that we have wasted at least four or five months waiting for the federal government to act. The government put all its eggs in one basket with the deal for the Chinese vaccine. Basically, we might not be debating this motion today if the Liberal government had made concrete proposals for economic recovery and had acted quickly to produce vaccines in Quebec, in Canada. Canada is the only G7 country that did not do so.

Can everything that is happening today be attributed to the federal government's inaction?

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, wow, the Bloc and the Conservatives now just blame everything on the federal government. Meanwhile, it was actually the federal government that had been working with provinces and territories to supply them with vaccines, with the supplies they need and with PPE.

In fact, we have more supports available to provinces and territories and small businesses in Bill C-14, so why will opposition members not work with us to actually make these supports available to provinces and territories? If they are so concerned with ensuring that we have the best plans in place and the funding in place to support local jurisdictions, then why do they not vote in support of Bill C-14 so we can deliver on just that?

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member's statement about how federal COVID guidance must be based on the best available evidence and best available science, but the federal government should also be providing Canadians with a clear path forward, a comprehensive plan and process for recovery. The government cannot wait until the pandemic is over to begin acting on and learning these critical lessons. One of those lessons has to be about paid sick leave for every Canadian worker. The government must fix the flawed Canada recovery sickness benefit to make it easier for workers to access that program. Does the member agree that all Canadian workers should have permanent access to 10 days of paid sick leave?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, our government has been there for workers and businesses every step of the way. Through various COVID response measures like the caregiver response benefit, CERB, and the changes to EI, our government has made transformational changes in the shortest amount of time to make sure that we are there to support workers, businesses and Canadians, so that they do not have to choose between going to work or staying home because they might have been exposed to COVID-19.

We have been there every step of the way. We will continue to make investments, and I encourage all members to support Bill C-14, so that we can further those supports for Canadians.

• (1545)

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to participate in this important debate today on our party's motion that calls for greater clarity from the federal government on a path forward as we recover from COVID. As a New Brunswicker, I can say that circumstances in Atlantic Canada are unique compared with those in much of Canada, but one thing remains consistent: a lack of certainty from the federal government on what the path forward will look like.

As a member of Parliament for the riding of Fundy Royal, I want to speak for a few minutes on the situation facing tourism operators. Fundy Royal is home to some major tourism attractions, like the Fundy Trail, the Hopewell Rocks and Fundy National Park. Most tourism operators in my riding are small, independent businesses that have managed to build a successful business over their years in the communities. These are small entrepreneurial businesses that rely on tourism. In many cases, this has allowed families to stay in the same communities they grew up in, or it offers newcomers an opportunity to build on their dreams, often in rural communities that they have always wanted to move to.

In some cases, these businesses are operated by New Brunswickers who are getting older, but they keep on working because it is what they have always done. It keeps them young and it keeps them busy. In other cases, these tourism businesses are operated by young parents who rely on the income to help keep food on the table and build a life in New Brunswick for their children.

All of this to say that the past year has been especially devastating for those who operate in the tourism industry. Many operators used their life savings to survive last summer in the hope that they would have a path back to full recovery in the summer of 2021. Unfortunately, while U.S. President Joe Biden has said he is eyeing July 4 as a sort of independence day from the virus, that is highly unlikely to be the case here in Canada because of the Liberal government's mismanagement in acquiring vaccines early enough.

The provincial government in New Brunswick established a program to try to help tourism operators with a financial incentive to encourage travel across the province by New Brunswickers. I have heard from many business owners in my riding that this has been very helpful, but of course it does not replace the amount of business they would normally receive. They were counting on increased income from this year to make up for the very difficult summer of 2020.

What these business operators are looking for is some degree of certainty from the federal government on what the path forward will be. I am very concerned that we will see a number of tourism operators close because they are unable to get through this upcoming season. The reason for that is the fact there is such significant uncertainty for the path forward. They have no expectation of when things may return to normal. The messaging from the federal government has been mixed at best. These business owners need to make life-altering decisions on ever-changing scenarios. The uncertainty of the path forward, and even what next year will look like, is daunting to many of these business owners.

I met recently with Carole Alderdice, the president and CEO of the Tourism Industry Association of New Brunswick. She noted the impact of the lack of cruise ships on the Port Saint John and all of our local tourism operators. This includes every business, from restaurants to small shops to bus tour operators. Of course, most did not expect cruise ships to enter Canada this past summer or even this summer, but with the rapid rollout of vaccines in the U.S. and the Prime Minister's stating that Canadians would be vaccinated by September, some in the tourism industry were dismayed that the cruise ship ban will be in effect all the way until February 28, 2022.

Even more concerning is this: What if those cruise ships do not even come back in the summer of 2022? On the east coast, this would have a detrimental impact on many of our communities. For example, in 2019, Halifax saw 320,000 passengers arrive in the city. This had significant economic benefits for businesses, restaurants and regional tourism operators. The Port of Charlottetown, the Port of Sydney, the Port of St. John's, the Port of Saint John and many more in Atlantic Canada are all hoping that 2022 will see a return of those ships that local businesses rely on.

● (1550)

I also want to touch on the suspension of flights throughout much of Atlantic Canada. The president of the Atlantic Canada Airports Association said late last year that their industry cannot survive and operate in these conditions and that they are seeing the worst case scenario playing out today. In New Brunswick we have seen a significant reduction in flights, in particular into Saint John and Fredericton. There is also concern that these cuts may be permanent and that the airports will not see a return to travel once the pandemic is over. This would mean permanently lost jobs and significant impacts on local residents.

There are other communities that are feeling the impact and concern about the future, including Charlottetown, Gander and Sydney. The elimination of these flights will have a significant impact on communities in the long term if they are not restored. For example, these flight closures can have a significant effect on rotational workers. A rotational worker flying into Halifax who lives in North Sydney in Cape Breton would need to drive over four hours after landing, often after a very long flight. There are legitimate safety concerns about such a long drive, but it also raises the question of whether individuals will simply move out of their home communities to eliminate that long commute. The Atlantic Canadians I hear from are concerned that these flight cancellations will be permanent and, of course, the impacts permanent as well.

Business of Supply

Conservatives have called for a plan from the federal government that would include the restoration of Canada's regional routes. We need confirmation from the Liberal government members that they will do everything necessary to ensure that these regional flights return. Without them, our communities are at risk.

I want to touch for a moment on the government's policy regarding the quarantine hotels and the absolute failure these have been. We have heard about the truly horrific conditions some Canadians have found themselves in as a result of this terrible policy. Not only that, but there have also been issues with accessing the phone line to book rooms at these overcrowded hotels. Despite my colleagues calling for data from the federal government on why it feels these quarantine hotels are more effective at preventing the spread of COVID, the government has been unable to present any data.

I had a constituent reach out to my office recently who is very concerned about his family's return to Canada at the start of May. The constituent, Brodie, is a professional hockey player who has worked in Denmark and is accompanied by his wife, his five-year-old, a three-year-old and a baby just born in February. He said that when the quarantine hotel measure was announced in late January, it was too late for his wife to fly back to Canada before the measure came into effect. Brodie had previously self-isolated with his family in New Brunswick and followed all the rules. They would gladly do so again if allowed by the federal government, but now, as his work visa comes to an end, Brodie and his family face being stuck in a hotel room. If anyone has young kids, they should be able to understand how ridiculous it is to cram a couple, two toddlers and a baby into a hotel room.

Further, we all know that there has been widespread reports of Canadians not receiving adequate supplies of basic necessities while in these hotel rooms. Having a baby obviously makes this situation even more difficult, as far more resources are needed. I ask that common sense be applied and that Canadians be given the opportunity to simply conduct their quarantine at home, as Brodie and his family had previously done. The government's quarantine hotel program has been nothing short of an absolute failure and should be scrapped.

As the Conservative shadow minister for justice and the Attorney General, I want to touch briefly on the impacts of COVID-19 on the justice system. Quite early in the pandemic last year, I asked for clarity from the government on how the courts could respond to the increased delays due to COVID. I particular, I am concerned with the backlog in the courts and how they relate to the Jordan decision by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Business of Supply

The Minister of Justice had said that this is something he and his provincial and territorial justice counterparts are closely monitoring. While he referred to a sort of safety valve mechanism for exceptional circumstances, it is unclear how long that will be valid, as Canada hopefully recovers from COVID and the backlog in the courts remain. As the minister would know, the courts were already struggling with the backlog before the pandemic.

In conclusion, Canadians need a plan from the federal government on how our country will proceed going forward, which is what this motion we are debating today is asking for. For many Canadians, both 2020 and 2021 have been difficult years, but we need to do our part. Canadians are looking for leadership on the path forward and I call on the federal government to prioritize plotting a path forward for all Canadians.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the fourth clause of the motion states:

(iv) the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom have both released public plans for economic reopening, while Canadian officials have not yet given Canadians clarity on when regular economic and social life will be able to resume...

Does my esteemed colleague know that as of March 23, the United Kingdom has vaccinated 42% of its population and that the United States has vaccinated 25%?

The government cannot seem to keep up. Would my colleague agree, however, that it is premature to ask the government to table within 20 days a clear plan to support gradually and permanently lifting the restrictions?

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, as I laid out in my remarks, Canadians need to see nothing less in areas clearly in federal jurisdiction, like airlines, rules around cruise ships, the quarantine hotels and delays in the justice system. We are asking that Canada put forward something that it has not yet, that the federal government put forward a plan for recovery. Canadians need to see that. My constituents and New Brunswickers need to see that as we plan forward. The only way for them to plan and for the tourism businesses to plan is to see the federal government's plan for reopening.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is well known in the COVID crisis that one of the main vectors of disease transmission was part-time workers moving between long-term care centres and workers who could not afford to stay home when they were sick.

Dr. Caroline Colijn of the Simon Fraser University has said, "Even before COVID happened, workers were going to work sick because they had no other choice... Now more than ever, it's so obvious that what we need are real legislated, paid sick days for every worker across Canada."

I know my hon. colleague gets paid when he is sick and stays home from work as do I. Does he agree that part of a plan should include that every worker in Canada has the ability to stay home when he or she is sick and not be docked pay because of it by

amending the Canada Labour Code to give workers 10 paid days a year?

Hon. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, what we saw over the course of the COVID crisis in the last year was that many of the safeguards that were in place were inadequate. We saw that the response from the federal government was inadequate. For example, when CERB first came out, my constituents were struggling. If people earned even one dollar, they lost \$2,000. If people were trying to keep their businesses going, they were ineligible. If people were self-employed, they could not access this benefit.

As members of Parliament and the government, we have to look at ensuring those safeguards are in place. That is why I advocated for all of those changes that ultimately were made by the government so we could better help people who were struggling through this crisis.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and ask a question of a Conservative MP. I agree with something he raised in his speech, and that is the situation for cruise ships. I have been approached by many in the tourism industry along the B.C. coast who are simply flabbergasted that the Minister of Transport has made a decision that we know for certain, to close the season to the end of 2022.

I have been trying to get a meeting with the Minister of Transport to pursue this matter. I wonder if the hon. member has had any luck in determining why such a date so far removed from today has been selected.

• (1600)

Hon. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, even though my colleague and I are on opposite coasts, we have a shared interest in this very important issue. When the Prime Minister said that every Canadian would be able to be vaccinated by September, the cruise industry thought that could be good news for its industry. For Transport Canada and the Liberal government to come forward and say there will be no cruises whatsoever in 2021, and 2022 looks very bleak, is very troubling. My hon. colleague and I need to get answers from the government on that, because I have not seen the rationale.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Fundy Royal, New Brunswick, for his very interesting speech.

I would add that he is doing a great job in the official opposition shadow cabinet. I would therefore like to thank my esteemed colleague from the beautiful riding of Fundy Royal, which is not as nice as Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, but is beautiful nonetheless, because it is our neighbour.

Business of Supply

I think it is always important to reread a motion so that people watching know what we are talking about. Today's motion reads as follows:

That, given that,

- (i) COVID-19 restrictions have had serious economic and mental health impacts on Canadians,
- (ii) COVID-19 restrictions have been advised by the federal government, including specifically by the Prime Minister on three separate occasions in November of 2020, as temporary measures to alleviate pressure on the public healthcare system,
- (iii) public health tools, such as rapid tests, shared data on how COVID-19 spreads and vaccines, have not been positioned as permanent solutions to replace COVID-19 restrictions by the federal government, including in areas of federal competency like air travel and border restrictions,
- (iv) the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom have both released public plans for economic reopening, while Canadian officials have not yet given Canadians clarity on when regular economic and social life will be able to resume,

the House call on the government to table within 20 calendar days, following the adoption of this motion, a clear data-driven plan to support safely, gradually and permanently lifting COVID-19 restrictions.

I know that there were some great initiatives. Not everything was tossed in the trash. Some things were done right, but now we need to make adjustments.

Canadians need hope. They need it even more during this unique, historic, unprecedented time, a time we hope is not to be repeated. The risk remains great, however. This situation has been going on for a little over a year. We are in a public health crisis, and everything has been disrupted.

Let us give Canadians clear information. Let us give them hope. It is the government's job to put forward a responsible plan for Canada's economic reopening. I want to stress the word "responsible". It is in capital letters right here in my speech. We are not calling for an irresponsible reopening. We are asking for a responsible plan.

The President of the United States has released his plan. The same is true of the British Prime Minister. I would remind the House that our Prime Minister here in Canada has been in power for six years. The President of the United States has only been in the position for two months. He was elected in November, but took office in January.

The Liberals better not try to blame the weather or COVID-19, although COVID is being blamed for a lot these days. A new president in the United States took two months to submit a plan, while in Canada we are still dragging our feet. We are trying to move forward, but it seems to me that this government is not very proactive. Even South Korea, Germany, France and many other countries have released stimulus packages.

Let me be clear. This is not about asking the federal government to impose guidance on the provinces. The official opposition believes that it is up to the federal government to issue guidelines, because the lockdowns and restrictions were put in place to give the federal and provincial governments time to find permanent solutions.

We have the vaccines, we have the rapid tests and we have the variant tests. We finally have everything we need to present a clear

plan to Canadians—everything except a government capable of recognizing that our people desperately need a plan of hope.

Under the circumstances, Canadians have been very resilient and very co-operative. I think they deserve to have transparency and a plan. Having a plan does not mean opening the doors wide and letting everyone rush into agricultural fairs and movie theatres. Having a plan means having deadlines and benchmarks. Also, a plan can be adjusted. That is part of planning. We need to have this starting point.

As the representative of the people of my riding, Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, I, like every Canadian, believe we need hope.

It has been over a year now. People around the world are celebrating the first anniversary of this bug that has unfortunately infected the entire globe.

• (1605)

We are talking about a plan to support gradually and permanently lifting COVID-19 restrictions. As I just said, this is a gradual plan. It is not about going in blind or being irresponsible. It is about developing a data-driven plan, and these data exist. The idea is not to put our health in jeopardy or diminish protections for Canadians. The idea is to give Canadians hope.

There are indicators to meet in order to gradually reopen. Some provinces use a colour-coded system, in which the colour changes in relation to the number of people who are hospitalized, the number of deaths or the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases. These are indicators and benchmarks. We all experienced the first wave, and we adjusted. We came out of lockdown last summer and then went back into lockdown in the fall, but now can we have some hope?

I remind members that back in spring 2020, the provincial governments gave us hope. We can therefore ask that the federal government table a plan within 20 days. What we are asking for today is very simple. We want a data-driven plan to support safely, gradually and permanently lifting COVID-19 restrictions. The current government has no vision.

Last April, the members of the official opposition pressured the government to significantly increase support for small businesses and workers. At that time, the Conservatives promised to keep pressuring the government with respect to CERB. We kept that promise, because it was important to ensure that Canadians could quickly get the help they needed throughout this pandemic.

From the start of this crisis, the members of the official opposition have said that in addition to dependability, Canadians needed clarity and leadership in times of crisis. One year later, that is still true. Now, Canadians need clarity and leadership regarding when and how the restrictions can be lifted.

Business of Supply

Fittingly enough, this Thursday is International Procrastination Day. Procrastination is the tendency to keep putting things off until later, either in one specific area of daily life or in general. I think the government will have no trouble embracing this concept, since it is always putting things off until later. We see it in all of our rankings, which are constantly dropping. Canada was leading the way on many indicators, but now our rankings keep dropping. It is embarrassing to see Canada dropping in the rankings of the number of people who have been vaccinated under the current Liberal government.

I want to remind the House of a bit of history. It was this Liberal government that prorogued Parliament last summer, in the midst of a crisis. Was that to serve Canadians properly, or was it to protect itself from the damaging effects of the WE Charity scandal? The answer is simple: The government wanted to serve its own interests.

In the midst of a crisis, the government shut down Parliament for two months. Was that responsible? How can we trust this government?

There is plenty of evidence to show that our businesses, including those in Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, need help and need to know what is happening.

Here is a short message I received from a business about opening the borders:

Dear Member of Parliament,

We would like to tell you about a major problem.

Company X operates internationally, and much of our revenue comes from outside Canada.

Canada must open its borders to business now. The problems associated with the extended border closure are getting serious. If we want to keep competing with the U.S. on a level playing field, the borders must be reopened as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention.

Cordially,

It is signed by the company owner.

Here is another example. A company was benefiting from the commercial rent subsidy in the spring. The building owner was eligible, but now the business owner who is renting premises to the company is not eligible because the tenant is not at arm's length. The father could do it in the spring, but now the son cannot.

In closing, I just want to say that we need a clear plan, just to give people hope. We need a responsible plan that can be adjusted if the incidence of variants rises.

● (1610)

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was surprised to hear my colleague's remarks about procrastination day. This is the first I have heard of it.

To procrastinate means to put something off until tomorrow. Rather than always opposing ideas and thus putting them off until tomorrow, why can the member not be proactive and helpful and offer some concrete ideas? He is an elected member, too, and it is not just the Liberal government that governs. He is part of it. Instead of procrastinating, can he come up with any constructive measures?

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Repentigny.

We moved a motion today calling on the government to take concrete action, come up with a response plan and give Canadians hope. If that is called procrastination in my colleague's riding, Repentigny, then I do not understand.

Procrastinating is being on the job and constantly putting off things and tasks, either because you do not want to do them or out of cowardice. I have to say that my colleague's comment is not really relevant considering the speech I gave.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments and for the opportunity to practise my French a bit.

[*English*]

I appreciate a lot of the comments my colleague made. Obviously the pandemic has had a devastating toll from an economic point of view, and it speaks to the importance of having a plan for getting our economy back on track and a plan for reopening.

I am wondering if my colleague has any thoughts on the mental health toll of this pandemic. It has obviously had a devastating toll on mental health as well. Does he have any comments on how important a reopening plan is for mental health as well?

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear colleague. I appreciate his question. If he can practise his French, I can practise my English.

[*Translation*]

Yesterday, TVA relayed the following comment on femicide: "It is a frightening situation." Who said that? It was the mayor of the second-largest city in Canada, Montreal. It is a huge problem and we do not see what is happening in homes across Quebec and Canada.

It is clear that we need to provide some hope and that is why I talk about hope in my speech. Hope does not mean having a plan with very specific criteria saying we are going to open at this hour and close at that hour. However, can we at least have some guidelines, some indication to help us see what is coming? I trust Canadians. We are smart enough to make up our own minds and respect the guidelines put in place by the federal government.

Maybe the government is waiting until Thursday, procrastination day, to table something on Friday, since Thursday will be a day off. We know that the government has taken a lot of days off. I hope that all parliamentarians will vote in favour of our motion so that we can get a plan that gives hope to all Canadians.

● (1615)

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as of today, 9% of Canadians and 11% of Quebecers have been vaccinated. With the threat of variants, every country with a vaccination rate of around 8% to 9% is locking down again. That is the case for France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Germany and the Netherlands, and Belgium is seriously considering it.

Business of Supply

Joanne Liu, who has a lot of experience in the field with pandemic management, told us many times a few months ago that we had to stop playing yo-yo with people because it has a serious impact on their mental health. Today's motion mentions mental health. Yes, we do have to give people hope again, but we cannot toy with people and give them false hope.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Montcalm for his comments.

Indeed, we should not be playing yo-yo with people. The number of active cases is on the rise in the Lower St. Lawrence region of Quebec. The provincial government is adjusting its strategy. The people in this region were asking to be moved from the orange zone to the yellow zone. If the numbers keep rising, they will be put in the red zone.

I understand that we should not be playing yo-yo. However, we can set benchmarks. The people of the Lower St. Lawrence can understand that. The infection rate in this region is very low, and the people of this sector, this area, enjoyed a privilege, but now must adjust. There are no demonstrations in the streets of the Lower St. Lawrence region.

We do not want to play yo-yo; we want to give Canadians hope.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (FedDev Ontario and Official Languages), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Yukon.

[*English*]

I rise in the House today to speak to the opposition motion and, more specifically, on Canada's current border measures. To combat the continued introduction and spread of COVID-19, the Government of Canada has taken extraordinary action and implemented a comprehensive border strategy with many layers of precautionary measures. However, as the pandemic has progressed, new risks have been identified that require Canada to take even greater measures to limit international travel and strengthen our border measures.

The reason for this action is that new, more infectious variants of the virus that cause COVID-19 have been detected in all 10 provinces. The extent of the spread and the health impacts of these variants of concern within Canadian communities is not yet fully known. It is now more important than ever to ensure that strong measures are in place to reduce the risk of importation and community transmission of COVID-19.

Some Canadians, and I would say some residents of my community of Orléans, have voiced concerns about the stringent border measures in place. However, the Government of Canada has been very clear. Now is not the time to travel. With the emergence of new and reportedly more transmissible variants, domestic transmission rates of COVID-19 are expected to rise. Unfortunately, even here in our great nation's capital, we have seen the province changing our status from orange to red and the implications it has on many of our local businesses.

Also, following many conversations between the Government of Canada, the provincial ministers of health, our Minister of Health and our health experts, we know that our health care systems have limited capacity and infected travellers could burden them. We know that many travellers have and will require clinical care and can also transmit the disease in their households and communities.

Travel continues to present a clear risk of imported cases, including cases of new variants of concern, and this increases the chance of community transmission of COVID-19 in Canada. To monitor the importation of variants of concern, and to allow our health care system to recover, these border measures are necessary to reduce immediate risks and protect Canadians. I would like to take a moment to thank all of our health care heroes in Canada, especially in Orléans.

To date, we have enacted 47 emergency orders under the Quarantine Act to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in Canada. We have limited inbound travel from other countries, repatriated Canadians and strengthened measures at the border. We have twice made amendments to the Contraventions Regulations to include offences under the Quarantine Act, first to introduce new fines and then recently to increase these fines. I will say it again. Now is not the time to travel.

The measures we have implemented have reduced the volume of travellers arriving at Canada's ports, airports and land borders by nearly 95%. This has shrunk the daily number of imported COVID-19 cases, but despite this decrease in travel, with the emergence of new variants of concern, stronger measures have become necessary.

The Government of Canada introduced new emergency orders imposing stricter testing and quarantine requirements. I will remind Canadians that travellers who are entering our great nation by land or air are required to provide proof of a negative COVID test result for a test taken up to 72 hours before their arrival, or a positive result from a test taken at least 14 days, and not more than 90 days, prior to arrival. Upon arrival, they must take another COVID test. Air travellers must then also reserve and stay in a government-authorized accommodation for up to three nights while they await the results. A third test must be taken on day 10 of their mandatory 14-day quarantine period.

● (1620)

All travellers are required to submit their travel and contact information, including a quarantine plan, electronically using ArriveCAN before crossing the border.

Business of Supply

It is critical to our collective safety to further reduce the risk of importation of COVID and variants of concern, both before and after travellers arrive. Pre-departure testing, combined with testing all travellers upon entry and subsequently in the quarantine period, have shown to temper this risk. Identification of positive cases and genetic sequencing of the virus will help Canada detect novel variants of concern and support public health efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 in Canada.

Requiring travellers entering Canada by air to stay in government-authorized accommodations until they receive their on-arrival test results will help to identify and isolate those who may be infectious before they can spread it at home and in the community. Most importantly, changes to international travel restrictions and advice are based on scientific evidence and are developed in consultation with provincial, territorial and international governments.

The Government of Canada recognizes that entry prohibitions, mandatory quarantine requirements and testing protocols place a significant burden on Canadians, including mental health implications, and on the Canadian economy. However, these measures remain the most effective means of limiting the introduction of new cases of COVID-19 into Canada. With new, more transmissible, more severe, and possibly vaccine-resistant variants of the virus in Canada, this government continues to take a precautionary approach that will preserve domestic health care capacity and save lives.

The Government of Canada continues to monitor and review the available scientific evidence to determine further border measures, including the use of testing and vaccination to protect the health and safety of Canadians. The Government of Canada remains committed to working closely with provinces and territories, industry stakeholders, indigenous partners, and health care professionals on plans related to border and travel health.

We will continue to leverage international partnerships in order to ensure that we can effectively protect the health and safety of Canadians, and Canada's health care capacity.

• (1625)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple questions of in hearing her speech. I really want to ask her about travel. Travel is one of those things that Canadians have said that we need to lock down, but at the same time, we also have to continue to think about what travel means in our society. Travel means, of course, external affairs and making sure we have international business.

Prior to this latest lockdown, there was a protocol in place at many of the airports in Alberta, particularly in Calgary where I live, that actually did have testing in place that was very effective in making sure that we continued international business and abided by the best testing protocols.

Did the government consider the results of that protocol and how we were actually succeeding in maintaining international business before it decided to come up with a new protocol? Can it compare the two results it has seen so far, in terms of the effect on the economy, as well as if there has been an associated effect on less transmission? We have not seen that yet, so I would love to see that.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I must say, the first priority of this government has always been to protect the health and safety of Canadians. I know the pilot project he is referring to in Alberta. However, we have also seen, unfortunately, as we were studying this and evaluating the risk of these variants, numerous times in other jurisdictions international government being really afraid of this new variant. I will ask my colleague to listen to the evidence, and to listen to his province and all provinces, as this government has done since day one.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I am always surprised to hear my colleague say that her government is working closely with the provinces to find ways to deal with the variants.

A government needs to be like a responsible parent. A responsible parent would not let their child walk towards a staircase with an open gate. A responsible parent anticipates that their child might fall and closes the gate.

Similarly, in the context of the pandemic, the government should have quickly closed the borders. We would not be talking about variants right now if the government had been the responsible parent it is meant to be and had closed the borders when necessary, instead of taking a laissez-faire approach.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on this statement, which seems reasonable to me, in light of current circumstances, as we are under the threat of a third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question.

That is exactly what the Government of Canada has done from the start. At the very beginning of the pandemic, we knew that this was a worldwide problem, and we took extraordinary measures with respect to border restrictions. They were unprecedented. For the first time in history since the Second World War, the border between Canada and the United States was closed.

I am rather surprised to hear my colleague's comments because we listened to the provinces and others. The Premier of Quebec and the Prime Minister of Canada are working in close co-operation and are in regular communication to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Quebec.

• (1630)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, most of the opening levers we know, other than the international travel quarantine and economic benefits, are at the provincial, territorial and municipal levels. However, the federal government can play an important role through setting data-driven guidelines, as outlined in the motion.

Another huge issue is the need for proof of prior infection or vaccination. We know there are lots of practical and ethical challenges there. Maybe the member could talk about what the plan is on these fronts. The question of children is important too. With no licensed pediatric vaccine yet, what is the plan there?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's questions are very relevant. This is a conversation that is very live right now among G7 and G20 countries. As vaccinations are made available throughout the world, we know we will have to address this issue.

I know the Government of Canada is certainly reflecting on this, based on the evidence and the science that will be brought forward, not only here within our borders, but also by our international partners.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am speaking from the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

I stand in the House today to speak about the work our government is doing to enable a safe restart of the aviation sector and the work it has done to put in place strong public health measures within the sector to address the risks posed by COVID-19. I think what I say will answer some of the questions that were just provided.

I can assure colleagues that since the earliest days of the pandemic, our government has been dedicated in working with our vital transportation industry to introduce a comprehensive, layered system of measures and guidance to protect Canadians and those working in the transportation and shipping sectors. For the air sector specifically, this layered approach includes health screening measures and temperature checks to prevent symptomatic passengers from boarding flights to, from and within Canada. This approach also includes requiring passengers on all flights departing from or arriving at Canadian airports to have an appropriate mask or face covering throughout their journey. Canada was the first country to require such a measure, which we now see is standard practice globally.

In addition to ensuring that we had the right public health and border resources meeting those passengers arriving in Canada during the earliest days of the pandemic, our government issued a notice restricting most overseas flights to four airports in Canada: Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver.

To summarize these measures and the many more our government and industry were implementing to assist in mitigating COVID risks in the aviation industry, in August our government released "Canada's Flight Plan for Navigating COVID-19". The doc-

Business of Supply

ument was the foundation for aligning Canada's efforts to address the safety impacts of COVID-19 and was developed in collaboration with industry partners. It demonstrated to Canadians the extensive and multi-layered system of measures we had put in place and was based on the comprehensive standards and recommendations from the International Civil Aviation Organization's council aviation recovery task force report, the CART, and its guidance, in order to ensure Canada is aligned with the gold standard of international best practices.

More recently, in an effort to further curb the spread of the virus and new variants of COVID-19 into Canada, we added new rules on international travel. Under these new rules, all air travellers must also provide proof of a negative COVID-19 molecular test before boarding an international flight to Canada. Upon arrival, these passengers must take another COVID-19 molecular test and reserve a room in a Government of Canada-approved hotel for three nights, also at their own expense, while awaiting the test results. We are working hard to make improvements to ensure that this system is working effectively.

Our government also recognized that it was not the time to travel as Canada's public health officials worked to stem the increase in infections and began to roll out the largest immunization campaign in Canada's history. That is why, in addition to these measures, the government and Canada's airlines agreed to suspend all flights to and from Mexico and Caribbean countries until April 30 of this year.

Our government realized that the pandemic was also disproportionately affecting the aviation industry, including those in remote and northern communities like mine that depend so much on small air carriers for essential services. That is why the government announced funding of up to \$191.3 million for provinces and territories to ensure that remote fly-in communities continue to receive essential supplies. This includes the northern essential air services subsidy that has been in place for much of the pandemic.

To help mitigate the decline in business at Canada's airports, the government also provided rent relief for the 21 airport authorities that have ground leases with the federal government. Moreover, through the fall economic statement, an additional \$1.1 billion in financial support for the air sector was announced. This will be provided through a series of targeted measures designed to support regional connectivity, critical infrastructure investments and the continued operation of Canada's airports.

Air transport stakeholders have also benefited from relief programs that are general in nature, such as the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the large employer emergency financing facility.

Business of Supply

● (1635)

As we look to the future, we know that a strong and competitive air industry is vital for Canada's economic recovery.

Now I just want to digress for a moment as a northern MP. Coming from the north, in my personal opinion, there are two things that mainline carriers can do to help themselves during this pandemic, over and above all this other support. They must provide reasonable interline agreements with northern and regional airlines, with end-to-end airfares for those regional airlines. This would help both the major and the regional airline. The major airline could pick up remote passengers to add to their system, and they would not have to lose money by running partially filled flights where the other airline exists.

The northern and regional airlines would get seamless baggage transfers, protected connections and throughfare itineraries around the world, so it is a win-win situation for everyone. Why would anyone want two airlines, a major and a regional one, to lose money by running half-empty planes at the same time on the same route, costing the taxpayers even more subsidy?

This is just my personal view, but this is a better option than requiring capacity reduction in the markets where there are thin numbers of airline customers during this pandemic.

While preventing the spread of the pandemic will continue to remain the top priority of our government, we are looking to prepare for the restart of the air sector. Our government is working with industry to explore risk-based opportunities that will allow Canada to ease travel restrictions and reopen our borders when the time is right to travel, a time that we can begin to see is on the horizon.

Many of the measures I have outlined here, including testing, health screening, masks and quarantine, will likely remain in place for the near future. However, there may be room in the coming weeks and months for adjustments to support the aviation system and Canada's recovery from this pandemic, again when the time is right. This includes implementing a sustainable approach to reducing public health risks today and building resilience to safeguard the system against similar risks in the future. An example would be leveraging opportunities for safe contactless processing of passengers. These approaches will help rebuild public confidence in the safety of air travel.

As we eventually move from response to recovery, we will continue to have the latest in science and data drive the decisions that we make. Public health measures that mitigate risks posed by COVID-19 will remain a priority, and our government is committed to implementing and revising existing measures, when we are able, to allow the recovery of our vital aviation sector. We will continue to work closely with the aviation industry to do this, as we have done since the beginning of the pandemic.

I congratulate all those who have spoken today who understand the uncertainty that scientists have about the various waves and the transmission of the pandemic, but we will base our decisions on what they come up with as things evolve.

● (1640)

The Deputy Speaker: Just before we go to questions and comments, members, especially those online, will see that there is great interest in posing questions for the last three speakers this afternoon, so I would ask hon. members to keep their interventions as short and concise as they can, hopefully at less than a minute.

We will first go to the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the comments from the member for Yukon. He said that someday, maybe, there will be adjustments. I am going to use the border as an example.

Each month the Prime Minister simply says, "It is closed." There are families on either side of the border desperately wanting to reunite. There are property owners and many people in difficult circumstances. Would it not be reasonable to make some decisions around vaccinations and negative tests and have criteria that are laid out in terms of numbers, and to state whether it is going to be a phased reopening or will open the same way it shut down? It is time. Why have the Liberals not told Canadians what the criteria are going to be, instead of just saying, "We are going to adjust it someday, maybe."

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing up those difficult situations. We have a number of people in my community who have boats in Alaska, but they cannot visit for health reasons and to protect Canadians. We certainly want to get that situation solved as soon as possible, as soon as it is healthy.

I know the member was on the indigenous affairs committee. I will let her know that the airline in the north that I was referring to for improvements is half owned by the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, and we would certainly like to see interlining to support that airline.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one of the indisputable lessons of the pandemic is that our health care systems have been weakened because of chronic underfunding, and that occurred even before the pandemic struck. They will be further weakened during the pandemic and afterward.

If health is a priority for the government, why does it not immediately provide a substantial and sustainable increase in health transfers so that Quebec and the provinces can quickly recover their ability to take care of their people?

Business of Supply

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I could get the figures for the member, but the federal government has made huge increases in transfers to the provinces to deal with health care during the pandemic, and the Prime Minister has agreed to have discussions on the post-pandemic environment once it occurs.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as New Democrats, we have been calling on the Liberal government to fix the Canada recovery sickness benefit and its flaws to make it easier for people to access the program and get help faster. Workers need and should be able to receive full replacement income as soon as possible when they need it. They need to be able to take a day or two off at a time and have the protection of their job and have help when they need it.

As well, we find it totally unacceptable Canadians are not aware of the program due to the lack of publicity. Does my colleague agree the federal government needs to fix the flawed Canada recovery sickness benefit to make it easier for workers to access the program and get help more quickly?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we provided quick access to a lot of the programs. I have not had that input from my constituents, but if the member would send me a detailed email with the things that are not working and what he suggests could improve it, I will definitely get it to the right places.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, many of the Liberal speakers, although not this particular parliamentary secretary, have been talking about climate change and climate change science and contrasting it with COVID.

To my hon. friend, whom I regard as an environmental champion and who is the member of Parliament for Yukon, with permafrost thawing and the various threats we face right now, I am troubled by Liberal triumphalism on the subject of climate crisis when our targets are still the same ones put forward by Stephen Harper and we have the worst record in the G7 and about the worst record in the industrialized world.

Is there any reason for hoping that the government will improve our target to what is required, which is doubling it if we are serious about holding to 1.5 degrees?

• (1645)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for being a champion in relation to climate change, as we are in the Liberal Party, as well as for being a champion of the Porcupine caribou herd, which affects the Vuntut Gwitchin in my riding very seriously.

We do a terrible job at explaining all the various programs. I would be surprised if anyone in the House could mention all the initiatives. For instance, how many transit projects are there? As we know, one transit project reduces a lot of greenhouse gases; well, we put in place over 1,400 transit projects. We do a terrible job of outlining the over 50 major initiatives under way right now that are reducing carbon and greenhouse gases.

My understanding is that we have also said that we are going to increase our targets to be even lower than what we promised in the Paris accord.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Fredericton, Veterans Affairs; the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable, Finance; and the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, The Environment.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to join discussion of the opposition motion today and speak on behalf of my constituents in Regina—Lewvan and the broader population of Saskatchewan.

I want to read a couple of paragraphs from the motion that I will be speaking to:

(i) COVID-19 restrictions have had serious economic and mental health impacts on Canadians,

(ii) COVID-19 restrictions have been advised by the federal government, including specifically by the Prime Minister on three separate occasions in November of 2020, as temporary measures to alleviate pressure on the public healthcare system,

(iii) public health tools, such as rapid tests, shared data on how COVID-19 spreads and vaccines, have not been positioned as permanent solutions to replace COVID-19 restrictions by the federal government, including in areas of federal competency like air travel and border restrictions,

(iv) the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom have both released public plans for economic reopening, while Canadian officials have not yet given Canadians clarity on when regular economic and social life will be able to resume.

As well, there is the following resolution, which the member for Kingston and the Islands talked about:

the House call on the government to table within 20 calendar days, following the adoption of this motion, a clear data-driven plan to support safely, gradually and permanently lifting COVID-19 restrictions.

This is the motion brought forward by the member for Calgary Nose Hill, and I think it is incumbent on us to take it seriously. I know it has been politicized by several members of the Liberal government. This is not a politically driven motion; it is setting a timeline for when Canadians can regain their freedom. That is what this is about. It is about when we can return to life as we remember it prior to COVID-19. The U.K. has done it, with Prime Minister Johnson setting out a data-filled plan. The Biden administration has set a guideline of July 4, and I think it is unbelievable that anyone in the House could say that the Government of Canada should not have a plan to reopen our economy and return to pre-COVID-19 life as we remember it.

Business of Supply

I think about my three children who have gone through COVID-19 and not seen their grandparents. I think about when my uncle passed away last spring, and none of us were able to go to his funeral. I also think about the families throughout Regina—Lewvan and Saskatchewan who have had similar experiences. Canadians across the country have sacrificed, and now they are owed a plan by the Liberal federal government for when they can get back to normal.

I think I realize why Liberals do not like talking about a plan in general. We see time and time again that when they do set out a plan or a goal, they feel to meet their metrics. They wanted to plant a billion trees, as seen in their throne speech last fall. They failed. They said in their 2015 platform that they were going to run modest deficits. They failed. They said they were going to reduce the number of clean drinking water advisories for indigenous people by March 2021. They failed. I think this is where we are understanding why there is such a hesitancy to provide a plan to Canadians. It is because they feel they will not live up to it.

One member asked if we wanted politicians or experts to make decisions for us. I want politicians of all stripes to listen to the expert opinions and data, and then make a decision. We are elected to make decisions. If members on the Liberal side do not want to make decisions, they should get out of the way and let people who will make those decisions do so. I think it is time we had a government that started putting Canadians first, their mental health first, their economy, their safety and their plans for the future.

This motion is about hope for Canadians to have a better life. When we go down this path, people feel like this is just a Conservative motion, but I have a few quotes and statements to cite from people within the Saskatchewan government and business community that really add to the motion we are talking about today.

• (1650)

John Hopkins, the CEO of the Regina & District Chamber of Commerce, said, “The Regina & District Chamber of Commerce is of the view that restoring and growing the economy must be the priority of the Government of Canada as we emerge from the vaccination period. Millions of Canadians and thousands of Canadian businesses have been impacted by the pandemic. Now is the time to get the economy moving.” That is not a political statement and was not made by someone within the Conservative Party of Canada, but by someone who talks to business leaders every day across Saskatchewan.

Premier Moe said, “It is extremely unhelpful for the Prime Minister to be questioning the response of the provinces and creating a false choice between protecting the economy and jobs, and protecting against the spread of COVID-19.”

There has always been the argument by the Liberals that this is within provincial jurisdiction and they do not want to overstep their bounds. Time and time again the Liberal government has overstepped its bounds in provincial jurisdiction and now, when it is time to lead, Liberals vacate the premises and want everyone else to take the blame. Then they try to take credit for the pandemic spending, which all parliamentarians voted for and agreed to. When Canadians needed us, everyone, the Green Party, the NDP, the Liberals, the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois, came together and

voted for supports for Canadians when they needed them. I do not think anyone is going to argue with that.

James Bogusz, the CEO of the Regina Airport Authority, said in 2020, “This airport helps this economy in southern Saskatchewan by stimulating over \$800 million a year in GDP.... That is not a small operation. There’s so many jobs and lives that depend on the airport for income and related business. When there’s less aircraft operating, there’s less work. It’s such a big cascade effect. We feel very strongly that airports are worth saving.” This is the kicker: “We need Ottawa to step up.” I feel there are so many people across Canada who have that feeling right now, thinking that it is time for Ottawa to step up and lead. The Liberals have not done that, like others had done in other jurisdictions.

The Liberals have failed with many of their plans. The biggest failure they have had so far is the vaccine rollout. We have heard the numbers today about how we have 10.78 vaccines per 100 people and that we are 44th in vaccinations across the world and seventh in vaccinations per day. We are looking at how we can continue to have some hope and optimism when the Government of Canada has failed in its vaccination rollout. The provinces are ready to step up and do the job. My province is ready to step up and do vaccinations. It is just waiting for doses. There are drive-through vaccination stations in Saskatoon, Regina and other areas that are ready. They are waiting for more vaccines and for the Government of Canada to step up and deliver them.

Another stakeholder that has reached out on the topic of this motion is the Saskatchewan Cattlemen’s Association. The chair, Arnold Balicki, sent me a note that said, “Food processors are seen as essential. Of course they are, along with other parts of the economy selected as essential, but they rely on so many other aspects of the economy not deemed essential. It is all connected. Opening up our economy will help businesses survive, which help our essential workers to keep providing our food and other goods and services.” Throughout the country, people have stepped up and done their job to ensure there’s a safe food-supply chain. The Standing Committee on Agriculture has issued a report on processors and we know that more funds need to be given so that we can ensure that we have a safe food-supply chain. However, that needs to roll into a plan for reopening our economy and for Canadians to have the opportunity to not just rely on government programs and cheques, but to get back to work.

Business of Supply

Every job is essential to the person whose paycheque depends on it. That is something we need to get back to and remember: Canadians want to earn paycheques, not to sit at home and collect government cheques. That is where a safe, data-driven plan comes into play. There has been a vacuum of leadership on the part of the federal government. The Liberals have failed Canadians time and time again. I and many in Saskatchewan and across this country are wondering if the reason that the Liberals are unable to or are so scared of delivering a plan is that, as in the past, they will not meet their deadlines and fulfill their commitments and will let Canadians down again.

It is time to put a government in place that will secure our future and our mental health. Unfortunately, I do not have enough time to get into the mental health conversation, which my friend from Cariboo—Prince George did such a good job at, but it is time to get Canadians a reliable plan to reopen our economy so that they can get back to life as we remember it pre-COVID-19.

• (1655)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that the member started to use some quotes from the chamber of commerce and various organizations. I have a quote for him. Apparently the discussion here today has made its way to Queen's Park in Toronto and the Conservative government is weighing in on it.

According to a reporter at Queen's Park, the Ontario Solicitor General for the current Conservative government in Ontario, Sylvia Jones, said, "its not the role of the federal government to advocate for/against lockdowns." She went on to say that the framework in Ontario is going well.

Can the member clarify for me if he and Conservatives, through this motion, are saying that the Ontario Conservative government is wrong on this and that we should be impinging on its jurisdiction?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I am so glad the member rose to his feet again. I have a quote for him: "Who does the member want the actual plan to be made up by, politicians or experts?" We were elected to make choices. We were elected to make decisions based on the best information from experts.

What I would say to him is that this motion is not about lockdowns. It is about a reliable plan to open up our economy and get back to our pre-COVID-19 life. Does this member think there should be no plan from this federal government to give hope and optimism to Canadians? Has he totally vacated the leadership position? Does he not want to make any decisions and have everything decided for him instead? If that is the case, he should give up his seat and go back to his other job.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about vaccines. This government is a minority government, which means it is the most democratic it can be since we have to negotiate to reach a consensus.

My question is twofold. According to my colleague, what percentage of the population should be vaccinated before the economy reopens? What are the top three priorities the Conservative Party would suggest to the minority government?

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question and there might be the answer in some of the statements we have heard from our Liberal colleagues today. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development said there is a study they are looking at that is going to decide how to open and close borders and what restrictions there should be. I would love to see that study and have that information if it is available, so that we know what kind of data they are using to decide the border limitations and closures. If she has that study available, I would love it to be shared with us so that we could make more informed decisions as parliamentarians. For example, if there were a number, maybe the Government of Canada could say what vaccination rates we would need before we could have a plan to reopen, but there is no plan.

Also, I just received a text from one of my constituents asking, if someone has had COVID-19, are they in line to get a vaccination if it does not cover variants? Does someone need to get vaccinated again if they have already had COVID-19?

These are all questions that, if there were a safe plan to reopen and the government had done its job and given more information to Canadians, we would have the answers for.

• (1700)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have concerns when my colleague says that he does not think that experts should be listened to as a priority. We know that experts are saying that the virus is harder to control in workplaces where there are higher transmission rates when workers do not stay home when they are sick.

We have been asking the Conservatives if they support access to 10 days of paid sick leave. As we know, it is an important, data-supported tool for stopping the spread of the virus. Does he support that?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, if my hon. colleague had listened to my speech, I did not say that experts should not be given the opportunity to speak on what they know. I said that we should take that expertise, but that politicians were elected to make the decisions. That is why Canadians have this place. We should get all the expert advice and data, make case-by-case decisions and have a plan to give Canadians hope.

I would ask my hon. colleague not to put words in my mouth. We should take the expert opinions. However, people are put in the chamber to make those decisions to have a safe plan for Canadians to have hope and optimism that in the future they can get back to their pre-COVID-19 lives.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a year ago, Quebec and Canada were hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Business of Supply

I clearly remember Premier Legault's and the Liberal Prime Minister's press conferences. They were daily events that everyone tuned in to religiously to hear about how the coronavirus would affect our health, our jobs and our lives. There was even an expression the Premier of Quebec used back then: "We're putting Quebec on pause". That pause was supposed to last a few weeks. It went on for many more weeks and months, and now it has gone on for over a year.

We remember how people stood together. Across Quebec, rainbows and that slogan, "Ça va bien aller", were ubiquitous. At the time, everyone thought everything really would be fine. Good things happened. Political parties set aside partisanship, and the House of Commons unanimously passed unprecedented support programs in response to the calamity. That was what had to be done.

At the time, members may recall, we did not know how to protect ourselves from the coronavirus. We had no vaccine and no idea when it would be available. PPE for health care workers was scarce. I will never forget March 2020. Fortunately, Canadians listened, they followed provincial health guidelines and confronted the threat together, a threat we are still confronting today.

However, the Liberal government, which had a duty to warn Canadians of the threat to our country, failed. The first reason is that it scrapped the early warning unit whose mandate was to predict this exact kind of situation. Instead of preparing to protect Canada, the Liberal government sent tons of protective equipment to China. When asked to provide equipment for health workers in the provinces, the government was slow to do so. When asked to close the borders and take action to prevent COVID-19 from entering the country, it did nothing. When asked to take action to provide rapid testing immediately, it failed.

After seeing the Prime Minister on his front steps, it became clear that the Liberal government was quick to advise Canadians to take action to protect themselves, but it was slow to act itself. One thing is sure: Canadians and employers have been listening. Today, what we are asking for and what Canadians want is a plan. Canadians want to know one thing from the government. They want to know when the sacrifices they have made over the past year will finally end.

Everyone around the world agrees that mass vaccination is the most effective way to reopen the economy and get back to normal. Unfortunately, this government failed to provide vaccines quickly to Canadians, such that we are lagging behind the rest of the world when it comes to the vaccination rate. Canadians need transparency. Canadians want to have a clear indication of the effects of vaccination and the moment when vaccination will allow them to get back to normal life.

That is why the Conservative Party moved today's motion, to call on the government "to table within 20 calendar days, following the adoption of this motion, a clear data-driven plan to support safely, gradually and permanently lifting COVID-19 restrictions."

Lockdowns and restrictions were put in place to give the government time to come up with permanent solutions such as vaccines, rapid tests, and a capacity to screen variants. These tools exist now. The problem is that the current Prime Minister is incapable of en-

suring that they are widely used across Canada. Canadians want the government to tell them when and how we can safely and permanently lift the restrictions. The provinces are also asking the federal government the same thing. This plan is more than necessary and the federal government does not seem to realize that it has an important role to play.

It must first answer to those who have suffered the most during this pandemic. I will name a few groups that have suffered. First and foremost, I am thinking of Quebec and Canadian women, the first on the front lines of the health network, the first to leave their jobs to take care of their families. Unfortunately, they are also the most affected by domestic violence. Quebec is facing a dramatic increase in the number of femicides. According to a Radio-Canada article, there were six murders linked to domestic violence in just one month in Quebec, when there are usually one dozen a year on average. In Canada, in 2020, 160 women died from a violent act, which corresponds to one woman killed every two and a half days.

● (1705)

Claudine Thibaudeau, a social worker at SOS Violence Conjugale, told Radio-Canada the following: "The pandemic has been used by violent partners as a pretext to exert more control in the relationship. We feared this would happen, and it has. Many victims of domestic violence have also put off considering breaking up." As a result, there could be a second crisis ahead.

We owe all women transparency and, most importantly, a plan, to end the spiral of violence that many women are experiencing. We must especially prevent the spiral from escalating by ensuring that domestic violence organizations are able to plan for a potential second wave of violence.

We also owe young Canadians a plan. According to Santé Montréal in Quebec, more than one in five young adults perceive their mental health as fair or poor. In Montreal, 46% of young people aged 18 to 24 report symptoms of generalized anxiety or major depression; in other regions of Quebec, that figure is 31%.

With the coming of spring, we see that the police are ticketing more and more young people who are not abiding by the public health guidelines. Young people also have the right to know when they will get a vaccine and when they will get their freedom back. Teens will be teens, and we cannot expect them not to act their age.

I am thinking of our seniors, most of whom have not had any contact with family for months. Too many Canadian seniors have died alone. Seniors who have been vaccinated have the right to know when their vaccine will give them more freedom.

Business of Supply

Today, we learned that, starting March 24, the Government of Quebec is allowing dining rooms to reopen in long-term care facilities where over 75% of residents have been vaccinated for at least three weeks. At least these people now know part of the plan. What is the federal government's plan? What vaccination rate does it consider to be the threshold for lifting the health restrictions?

Businesses are waiting. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, or CFIB, many small businesses are no longer in business or are unsure of their future. The CFIB itself now has 15,000 fewer members as Canada enters a second year of the pandemic.

Borders are another issue. Everyone was calling for border closures at the start of the pandemic, but the Liberal government was conspicuously absent. At the time, there was no vaccine and no rapid test. Nobody really knew how to treat COVID-19 patients. Ventilators were in short supply, and the borders were open. Now, we have vaccines and rapid tests. Treatments are getting better and better, and the federal government has worked out how to keep the border more tightly closed than at the height of the pandemic. Is the Liberal government planning to take rapid testing into account in any way? Is it planning to take the vaccinations into account?

Hundreds of thousands of Quebecers will be returning to Quebec from their winter homes in Florida in the days and weeks to come. The vast majority of them have been vaccinated. They should not have travelled, but they did anyway. These people will come back. Will they have to stay in a hotel for the mandatory quarantine?

Let me be clear: The at-home quarantine should be maintained, but these people are expecting a clear plan because the situation is not the same now as it was at the start of the pandemic.

Canadians have been exceptionally resilient. Now they need leadership. The motion seeks to give them hope again. After giving so much for the common good, they deserve to have the assurance that things will improve, that the temporary measures will not become permanent and that there will be value added for everyone at the end of this vaccination process. What do scientists think? When do they think the measures could be lifted? Does the government plan to have rapid testing in place and improved screening capabilities for variants? What measures will the government take?

With current vaccination rates so low, we may have to keep the safety measures in place a little while longer, as we have seen in other countries, but we are also entitled to know what vaccination rate the Canadian government considers to be the threshold for taking action to improve the situation.

There is no need to wait for the last case before announcing what is on the horizon. Action can be taken immediately, and that is what we expect the Liberal government to do. It is also what we expect through today's motion. I hope that members of the House will adopt this motion so that we can all have a clearer vision of our future.

• (1710)

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the member's speech, he mentioned the relationship between the Prime Minister and the Premier of Quebec. In fact, the premier and the Prime Minister were together a few days ago in Quebec, looking at how we could work together, in collaborative ways, collaborative federalism.

The Prime Minister has now had over 26 meetings with premiers from across the country.

How does this motion fit within collaborative federalism and our working with the provinces and territories to look for solutions together, to have the provinces determine when they can open their economies safely, while being supported by the federal government in that effort?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Guelph for his question.

I recall many clashes between the Prime Minister and the Premier of Quebec, because the Prime Minister could not give Quebec everything it needed to deal with the pandemic. I remember that very clearly. However, my colleague from Guelph does not seem to remember much of this.

I do not remember seeing the first ministers making announcements together, standing side by side. I remember the first ministers all going their separate ways and one premier trying to make do with what the federal government gave him.

That is what I remember, not the other 26 meetings, not counting those from last week, the meetings to prepare for an election that the Liberals seem so desperate to hold as soon as possible.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I do not know if he heard the speech I gave a little earlier today. I spoke about several interesting tidbits that I had read in Alec Castonguay's book about the handling of the early days of the pandemic. I do not know whether he has also read it.

I learned that the Global Public Health Intelligence Network, which reports directly to the Public Health Agency of Canada, was unable to sound the alarm in December 2019 about the virus in Wuhan, China, because of a lack of staff and funding, seeing as Stephen Harper's government had decided in 2014 that these scientists' work was not important enough. The situation did not improve with the arrival of the Liberals in 2015.

This shows that there was no plan for dealing with a pandemic. The Liberal government has proven this from the start. It is flying blind. It had no plan.

Business of Supply

Does my colleague believe that it is realistic to give the Liberals 20 days to table a plan for emerging from the crisis and to lift COVID-19 restrictions when the majority of the population has not even been vaccinated yet?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank my colleague for the question.

I remind her that the rapid response team was created by the Harper government. It was dismantled by the previous government, which was quite unfortunate. It seems information was going everywhere but the right place, which is why we did not get a warning and ended up being caught off guard.

My colleague wants to know whether it is too much to ask the government to present a plan within 20 days. I think it would be more worrisome if the government has not already thought about a plan for getting out of this crisis and for getting Canadians vaccinated faster so that we can go back to normal as quickly as possible.

If the government is unable to give us the figures and forecasts in the next 20 days, that would mean it has not even started working on them yet. I think that would be even worse. The member should be even more concerned if the Liberal government is unable to answer these questions and present a clear plan within 20 days of the motion passing.

• (1715)

[English]

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, generally, today, there has been a discussion about the use of science. I want to ask the member to comment on perhaps a selective use of science.

I want to thank my wife for pointing out to me a Cochrane review that was done on the use of a PCR test, which has been the fundamental barometer of our approach to COVID at a federal and provincial level.

The gold standard is the Cochrane review. A specificity and sensitivity ratio for a test to actually diagnose this type of thing should be over 80%. Only three of 21 tests that were reviewed by Cochrane review, the gold standard in the medical community, showed any specificity or sensitivity over 50%. Its conclusion was that this should not be used to prioritize patients for treatment and that the diagnosis needed other things in relation to this.

Could the member comment on the selective use of science?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, to conclude my comments today, I want to be clear. We are not asking the government to lift the restrictions right away or to infringe on areas of provincial jurisdiction. We are asking the federal government to take into account the current reality and the availability of resources when it comes to vaccines, testing and treatment. We are asking the government to tell Canadians what it intends to do to get out of the crisis. That is what is important.

Canadians have the right to know what to expect. They have the right to know what will enable the government to ease the health

measures and to encourage Canadians to get vaccinated because, at some point, the government will be able to give Canadians some good news.

Right now, the government seems unable to tell us anything about the future. It is managing the crisis on a day-to-day basis, which is not good. That is doing a lot of harm to the economy and to the health of Canadians.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles has approximately 14 minutes for his speech.

The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to our motion.

A plan is basically very simple. When you have a plan, you give guidance and you know where you are headed. This situation is not an easy one. It is an extremely complex situation to manage. This has been the case around the world from the outset.

However, when someone is in a position of leadership and managing a government, they must be able to develop a series of plans and provide clear guidance. The problem we have had from the start of the pandemic in Canada is that, when it first hit us, we were all waiting. First, we were waiting to see how the government would react to a crisis that was rapidly coming into focus around the world.

We called for the creation of an emergency health committee, which met to start asking questions. I attended the January 31, 2020, meeting and I asked some very simple, basic questions. I asked the officials there about their plan and about what they were working on at that time. I asked them what measures they were taking under the Quarantine Act. They told us that they were getting set up and starting to look into it. I found that baffling. We could see how quickly things were moving around the world, yet in Canada, officials were telling us that they were starting to look into it.

We kept asking questions here, in the House, and in committee, but we never got any answers. We figured that maybe the officials were not quite sure where to go, but that at least we had a government, a Prime Minister, a few ministers and people in place to lead us. As a former member of the armed forces and business owner, I found myself thinking about what I would do in a global situation like this. I would create a council of war or emergency council that would meet 24-7 to make urgent decisions. During world wars and all emergencies, we expect the government to sit down and make quick decisions, and this situation is no different.

Business of Supply

When we knew that the virus was coming, the first thing we expected from the government was a decision on the borders, a plan. In response, we were told that everything was fine, that there was no risk, no problem. We saw that the virus was starting to enter. Since the virus came from China, we were initially concerned about the flights coming from there. Then there was Italy and the flights from Europe. Every time we asked a question about public safety, we were told that there was no problem, that our officers were providing information.

That is okay, but we saw that other countries were taking draconian measures by closing their borders and putting control systems in place. Asking for a plan is nothing new. We have been asking for one all along. I want to mention that we knew that the situation was not easy to assess, we knew full well that it was an unknown virus with varying effects.

As the weeks went by, we saw countries get organized and react. Watching the news we saw that countries were moving teams on the ground and things were happening. In the meantime, in Canada, we were told that there was no problem. Looking back at our initial concerns, our questions were legitimate. In an emergency situation, we usually want a plan. We did not have one, we simply got inane answers.

Obviously, the virus got into the country. It spread, particularly in long-term care homes in Quebec at the start. The virus obviously attacked vulnerable people and, today, over 20,000 Canadians have died because of it.

The government says that it is easy for the opposition parties because all they do is complain and ask questions. It is true that it is easy to do that. However, when we have been asking the right questions from the start and not getting any answers, we have the right to be concerned and to think that there is starting to be a major problem. That has always been the case.

Then the financial measures were addressed. We had to help businesses and go into lockdown. The Conservatives agreed. We knew that it would cost a lot of money, but we wanted to do our job. We had to step back and help businesses and Canadians. However, we wanted guidelines to be put in place to prevent abuse and so that the money would actually go to businesses that had to shut down and to people who lost their jobs.

• (1720)

The government's response was that Conservatives were trying to block the process and did not want to help Canadians. I find that kind of response to legitimate governance concerns so insulting. We just wanted to ensure good governance in the midst of that very complex situation. We were not against helping people. We just wanted rules that would prevent problems cropping up later. We wanted to work as a team. The Leader of the Opposition even asked the Prime Minister to sit down and work as a team, but that did not work out.

Once again, that is how it has been for the past year every step of the way. Every time we asked for a plan, there was no plan. Financial support measures now amount to \$400 billion, and there are some incredible questions being asked about how things were done that could have been avoided.

We are not looking to nitpick and identify minor problems. We are dealing with facts and situations that are blowing up in our face. Let us consider vaccine development. When these efforts began, we learned in oral question period that the federal government had conducted negotiations with CanSino, a company controlled by the Chinese Communist regime. Clearly, the Chinese government decided to thwart us and stopped the samples at the airport by prohibiting their export to Canada. We lost three months because it was not until three months later that we learned about the Chinese manoeuvre. We then had to renegotiate with other companies. We do not know the details of these agreements and we do not know what was negotiated. The only thing we are told is that Canada has the largest number of vaccine doses in the world, even though we know that the Canadian vaccination rollout is lagging behind that of other countries.

That is why we are asking questions about the planning process and about plans. When we see the decisions that were made, it seems to us that there were other ways things could have been done. If there is a problem, why does the government not sit down with the opposition leaders in private and ask them to make arrangements to figure out a solution together? Everyone would have been happy to do that because this was not a situation in which we were trying to score political points. It was not a situation in which we woke up in the morning and said to ourselves that we were going to ask the government questions to cause trouble for it. We were not there for that. We were all in the same situation. We all had to stay home and attend too many Zoom meetings. We are tired of Zoom meetings. We all want to be done with them. Business owners, residents, everyone in our ridings is fed up.

As a result, when we say today that we want a plan, we just want something to assess. The government needs to stop saying that the provinces bear all the responsibility, because we already know that they are responsible for administering the vaccines and screening people. All the Prime Minister needs to do is tell people when every Canadian will be vaccinated.

While the government says that we will all be vaccinated once by July 1, there is one small problem. One dose of vaccine is not enough, and a second dose is needed to be considered fully vaccinated. What happens then? If plan A is that everyone receives one dose of vaccine by July 1, this still raises the same concerns, the same uncertainty around the administration of the second dose of vaccine. If that is the plan, clarification is needed; otherwise, everyone will think they are free and clear and they can party beginning July 1, when that will not be the case. The government seems to be waiting to tell us, because it knows very well that this is problematic.

Political calculations are being made right now. However, the real calculations to be made should be about the mood of Canadians, their mental health and the disillusionment of businesses that have had to close. That is what is most important. When we ask for a plan, we simply want to be given the real story and told where we are headed. We will appreciate our government for doing that, but as long as it keeps this a secret, everyone has doubts, and that is where things go wrong.

Business of Supply

• (1725)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the member was talking, to my understanding, he kept saying that all the Conservatives are doing through this motion is asking for a plan, and that they just want to know what the plan is. However, the motion actually calls for a lot more than that. The motion calls on the House to table a plan within 20 calendar days following the motion, outlining the exact process.

The member before him criticized me for my previous comments when I said that we needed to listen to experts, because experts inform us. Yes, it is our job to make decisions, but it is our job to make policy decisions, not to implement actual policy.

I wonder if the member can comment on the discrepancy between what I understood him to say and what is actually written here about bringing back something concrete in 20 days.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, there is a simple answer to that question.

The pandemic has been going on for so long that the government should not even need the full 20 days because it should already have a plan. On November 12, 2020, workers in the airline industry on forced leave called for a plan. On February 19, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business called for a plan. On March 16, Unifor-Québec called for a plan. This is not the first time the government has been asked for a plan.

We are here to represent our constituents and to answer questions from them and from groups. We would like the plan within 20 days, but it should already be written. It is surely saved on a computer somewhere, so the government should hit send. If the government has not come up with any kind of plan in the past year, then we have a serious problem.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like my hon. colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles to clarify something.

With point (ii) of the motion, the Conservative Party seems to want to make the temporary restrictions permanent. Quebec and the Canadian provinces are responsible for what happens in health care within their borders.

Is point (ii) an indication that the Conservative Party wants to interfere in Quebec and provincial jurisdictions? Does it want whatever comes under federal jurisdiction to be permanent? Which restrictions should be permanent?

• (1730)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question.

The last thing the Conservative Party wants is to interfere in provincial jurisdictions. Unlike the Liberal Party, decentralization is what we are pushing for.

However, in a health emergency like the one we are currently experiencing, we expect the Public Health Agency of Canada to issue clear guidelines so that the provinces can do their job. When the

guidelines are not clear, governments do not know what to do. That is problematic.

When we ask for temporary measures to be made permanent, we are talking about health measures that will be adopted by the provinces, and they can apply them as they see fit. It is the lack of clarity that is causing the biggest problem.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[English]

He touched on many things in his speech. I know he is very cognizant of my riding, which is a very rural riding. We have had a lot of issues, in particular our small businesses and the huge impact that COVID-19 has had on them. Many of our constituents have health issues. They are talking about a 60% drop in cancer surgeries. There is a huge increase in mental health issues. Also, Canadians right on the border are coming back to Canada and going to rural areas. When they take the required COVID test, they are supposed to call Purolator. However, Purolator will not come to rural areas to pick those tests up.

I wonder if the member could tell the House how this plan would help these people in ensuring they can move forward with their lives.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We want clarity, and we want the plan to be public or clearly laid out, because it has to cover all parts of Canada. Provincial jurisdiction notwithstanding, the federal government is the one making the decisions, and these decisions have a direct impact on the provinces.

The provinces do not all have the same vaccine distribution infrastructure or the means to put it in place. For example, Quebec and Ontario have many more resources than Manitoba and New Brunswick. There are weaknesses there. Without encroaching on provincial jurisdiction, the federal government needs to give the provinces the means and the tools they need to do the work and deal with this extraordinary situation.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:32 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

• (1735)

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

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I would recommend a recorded division.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 24, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:47 p.m. so we can start Private Members' Business.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Accordingly, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

NATIONAL STRATEGY TO REDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM ACT

The House resumed from December 8, 2020, consideration of the motion that Bill C-230, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy to redress environmental racism, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is great to see you in the chair again. I hope to join you in Ottawa very soon.

It is an honour to join the debate today on Bill C-230, which deals with a national strategy to redress environmental racism.

Preserving our natural environment is one of the most important issues of our time as is building a more just society and supporting Canadians of all races and from all walks of life.

The people of the Kenora riding know the importance of our environment quite intimately. In northern Ontario, hunting, fishing and ecotourism more broadly are a part of our way of life and a major driver of our economy. We understand how essential it is for clean air, clean water and a vibrant natural environment now, but also preserved for future generations.

Unfortunately, we have also seen first-hand how legacy failures by various governments have harmed the environment and the health and well-being of racialized people.

After I was elected in 2019, I used my first intervention in the chamber to raise the issue of mercury poisoning in the Grassy Narrows First Nation. Members of this nation as well as those of Whitedog in my riding have been suffering the effects of mercury

Private Members' Business

poisoning, such as muscle weakness, cognitive impairments, and reduced vision, hearing and speech, for decades. It was not until last year that the government finally signed an agreement for a treatment facility in these communities.

In both communities, the water systems were contaminated when toxic waste was dumped into the English and Wabigoon river systems in the 1960s and 1970s. In 2016, it was reported that the fish in Grassy Narrows, specifically, still had the highest levels of mercury contamination in the province of Ontario. This is perhaps the greatest example of environmental racism in Canada, and the government allowed it to continue for five years under its watch without action.

Of course, we also remember the Prime Minister's smug and condescending comments toward protesters of this injustice at a Liberal fundraiser in 2019. He thanked these individuals for their donations without even attempting to address the real and urgent issues they were hoping to bring to his attention.

Contaminated or otherwise unsafe water is an unfortunate and unimaginable reality, yet it is the reality for many first nations across the country.

On March 1, The Globe and Mail reported that 39 first nations were under long-term boil water advisories. Several have gone without clean water for more than a decade. Last month, the Neskantaga First Nation, also in my riding, marked 26 years under a boil water advisory. Of course, members may recall that last year the residents of this community actually had to evacuate entirely because there was a breakdown of their water system.

The Liberal government promised that all long-term boil water advisories would be ended by March of this year. Of course, it is now March, and we know that the government is not close to reaching that goal and has not even set a new date for when it hopes to achieve that. It has blamed its lack of progress on the file on the pandemic, but that excuse frankly does not add up. We know it was on track to miss its timeline long before COVID-19 ever hit. We also know that many indigenous communities that have been incredibly diligent about fighting COVID-19 have nonetheless been finding ways to get essential work done on reserve, while protecting the health and safety of their residents.

Many indigenous people across the country, and indeed all Canadians, see this delay for what it is, and that is the government once again putting their needs on the backburner.

Private Members' Business

I truly worry about how continuing with the failures of the past will prevent us from securing a more prosperous future. If the government is serious about addressing environmental racism, I suggest it place much more urgency on the issues of clean water in first nations across the country.

• (1740)

We also know that many indigenous people, particularly in remote and northern communities, like those in my riding, will be disproportionately impacted by climate change, and ridings like mine will bear the brunt of many of the challenges. Remote communities face unique circumstances. Some of these challenges are related to their geography, of course, but many are exacerbated by chronic underfunding, discriminatory legislation and environmental neglect.

In the past few years, residents of communities such as Bearskin Lake and Fort Hope in the riding of Kenora have been forced to evacuate because of floods and fires, respectively. These extreme events are expected in my region; however, they have been increasing in frequency and severity in recent years.

I frequently hear concerns from residents of remote communities in Kenora who rely on ice roads as a major transportation route for essential items. Shorter and milder winter seasons, as we experienced this past year, are limiting many people's ability to use these road systems, and this is cutting off many northern communities from vital resources. Residents of these communities are resilient, but their opportunities are often limited by insufficient infrastructure.

Housing shortages, lack of transportation and limited access to goods and services all have negative impacts on health, nutrition, financial security and the emergency response in the north. These issues will only get worse as the climate changes and weather patterns become even more erratic.

Indigenous communities have been raising concerns about this for years, and since being elected, I have been fighting for real support in these areas. However, the lack of action from the government has been disheartening. Barely anything has been done to address the current challenges that remote communities face, let alone to prepare them for the consequences of climate change.

I do appreciate the very real and important issues the member for Cumberland—Colchester is aiming to address with this proposal. However, there are many questions we still need answers to. How will we prepare remote communities to respond to natural disasters if they continue to increase in frequency? How will we support hunters and anglers in maintaining their traditional ways of life as ice thins and wildlife behaviour changes? How will we ensure that communities relying on ice roads will not be cut off from the rest of the country when temperatures rise and winter seasons shorten? How will we ensure that houses and other facilities in these regions can withstand severe weather when the buildings they currently have are in an advanced state of disrepair?

• (1745)

These questions must be answered. Frankly, time is of the essence.

We can and must work to avoid the most devastating effects of climate change. We can invest in new technologies and work with industry to reduce emissions. We can support Canadians who want to practise sustainability in their daily lives. We can take transformational actions, just as former prime minister Brian Mulroney did with regard to acid rain, to combat the environmental crises of our time.

We also need to do right by the people who are already feeling the effects of environmental degradation. I do not believe we as Canadians can trust the current Liberal government to do that, because right now the Liberal track record on these issues has been all talk and very little action. The Prime Minister committed to preserving our environment, reducing emissions and bringing clean water to first nations communities, but under his leadership, emissions have risen, critical habitat has been lost and indigenous communities are still underserved.

How can anyone take the government at its word when its environmental record remains one of failure to back up its big promises with action? The government has had over five years to address these issues with meaningful legislation and tangible actions, but it has completely failed to do so. Its inaction has increased inequality, food insecurity and negative health outcomes for indigenous communities. We need to do better, and that is why Canada's Conservatives will continue to raise the voices of those who have been disproportionately impacted by these legacy government failures.

I will end my remarks there. It has been a pleasure to join the discussion today.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure for me to rise on behalf of the Bloc Québécois and the people of Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, particularly to talk about the environment.

I want to begin by thanking my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester for her work and for introducing this bill. I want her to know that the Bloc Québécois has big ambitions when it comes to the environment. We welcome bills that address this issue.

Her bill touches on a particularly worthwhile issue, a concept that has not been very well known until now, and that is environmental racism. I myself had to read up on this concept before I spoke about it, and I have to say that I learned a lot. I think it is important to talk about what this concept means.

Environmental racism is a grassroots concept, but that does not make it any less real. It is a concept that exists in the broader context of the environmental justice movement, which originated in the United States. It is based on the connection between nature and social factors, such as class, gender and race.

The Canadian Race Relations Foundation defines environmental racism as follows:

A systemic form of racism in which toxic wastes are introduced into or near marginalized communities. People of colour, indigenous peoples, working class, and poor communities suffer disproportionately from environmental hazards and the location of dangerous, toxic facilities such as incinerators and toxic waste dumps. Pollution of lands, air and waterways, often causes chronic illness to the inhabitants and change in their lifestyle.

According to this definition, the concept of environmental racism is intrinsically linked to that of systemic racism. At the same time, it is not exclusively linked to minorities because it includes more varied vulnerability criteria, so is calling it exclusively a form of racism justified?

There is without a doubt good reason to add environmental factors to the social determinants of health. Essentially, the definition of the concept of environmental racism seems vague. Without a clear definition of this concept, I think it is difficult to develop a public policy.

More pragmatically, the fact that this concept is linked to a wide range of social phenomena poses a real challenge in terms of public policy development. In this specific vision of environmental justice, policies have to adapt continuously to the variety of situations encountered.

The concept of environmental racism was popularized in Canada by Dr. Ingrid Waldron, a professor at Dalhousie University. According to her, every community experiences these issues in its own unique way, which makes it challenging to take concerted action for social, economic, political and environmental justice.

It is one thing for social movements to adapt their political battles to the realities on the ground. Just look at the opposition to pipeline projects like Energy East or the Coastal Gaslink pipeline.

The challenge is quite different for lawmakers who have to draft legislation that serves justice and has to apply to all citizens. A good policy is a universal policy that serves the common good and applies to the entire population. Universal public policies dismantle unequal structures and discriminatory practices. That seems to be the purpose of Bill C-230, but that will not be the result.

Whether in Quebec, France or elsewhere, the social policies that have best served the advancement of rights, social protections and reduced inequalities are universal policies that apply to everyone. I would like to remind the House that the Bloc Québécois strongly believes in the principle of universality, which involves promoting the economic and social well-being of all members of society.

The best way for the government to avoid discriminating based on differences is to blind itself to differences. If we institute new policies based on new rights, such as the right to a clean environment, everyone should have them. If the policy is well thought out, those who suffer the most from injustice will receive help and support from the government. If the rights and the eligibility criteria for government protection and support are universal, then the policy will eliminate inequalities based on differences. Unfortunately, Bill C-230 does not meet these criteria of universality.

The second problem with this bill is that it is a direct infringement on Quebec's environmental sovereignty. One striking example

Private Members' Business

is the following clause: "assess the administration and enforcement of environmental laws in each province". In other words, the federal government would no longer respect Quebec's environmental legislation. It would give itself the right to assess the administration and enforcement of environmental laws in Quebec and every province. I am sorry to say that the Bloc Québécois cannot agree to such a clause. Quebec's territory belongs to Quebec, and it is up to the Government of Quebec to protect it.

Bill C-230 puts the Minister of the Environment in charge of the national strategy. The choice of the minister is not bad in itself, but we need to first consider the intersectionality of environmental racism, which requires a horizontal approach involving multiple departments. For example, the environment is a shared jurisdiction, and social policy is not a federal responsibility.

● (1750)

Next, who is to say that the federal government has the constitutional jurisdiction to implement the measures in this bill?

The fact that the federal government wants to consult other levels of government is not sufficient, in the context of Canadian federalism, to justify that same government's intrusion in areas that are the jurisdiction of Quebec and the other provinces. The federal government can legislate on environmental matters, but only in areas under its jurisdiction.

Bill C-230 does not concern fisheries or navigation and shipping and does not apply solely to federal public property. The bill makes no reference to any criminal matters, nor does it establish an obligation to adopt environmental mechanisms in conjunction with provincial governments.

Need I remind members that the clause about assessing the administration and enforcement of environmental laws in Quebec is unacceptable to us?

The federal government has a long way to go if it wants to respect Quebec's environmental sovereignty at long last. It should start by taking care of its environmental responsibilities, such as the management of dangerous goods. The federal government's practices with regard to the management of radioactive waste are particularly questionable.

Under the Constitution Act, 1867, the federal Parliament exercised its declaratory power to assert jurisdiction over nuclear energy. The federal government therefore needs to accept responsibility for its decision and live up to its responsibilities by ensuring that no human being in Quebec or Canada is exposed to the hazards of nuclear waste. As for the rest, as I said at the beginning, Quebec's territory belongs to Quebec, and it is up to the Government of Quebec to protect it.

Private Members' Business

If the current government really wants to fight climate change and social inequality, it does not need Bill C-230 to do so. It does not need to bring up environmental racism.

There is already scientific evidence to show that it is the most vulnerable people, the most disadvantaged, the ones living in the poorest neighbourhoods, who experience the most direct harm from the environmental crisis. Yes, cultural minorities and immigrants are overrepresented in those neighbourhoods. Yes, indigenous people are among the hardest hit. The data is there. What we need now is political will.

We have known for more than 30 years that climate change affects our physical and mental health. Natural disasters, heat waves, floods, poorer water quality, reduced food quality and quantity, and the emergence or development of new diseases are all factors that affect human health. Not only are these phenomena getting worse, but they can also appear simultaneously. What happens then? Health risks skyrocket, and vulnerable people's lives are in jeopardy.

We can tell ourselves that the impact of climate change on health is felt elsewhere, far from home, but that is like burying our heads in the sand. Quebec and Canada are already feeling the impact of climate change.

Remember the 2018 heat waves. In and around Montreal, that heat wave killed 66 people. Mapping where those deaths occurred reminds us of the influence of social inequality on health, because the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods had the most deaths.

Other local examples include increasingly poor sanitation in indigenous communities. Rising waters and changing seasons are leading to a whole new set of mental health problems and food shortages.

The problems do not end there.

If we keep fuelling climate change with our polluting emissions, everyone's health will be compromised. Canada is already being hit with climate change events such as heat waves, forest fires and floods. They will certainly become more frequent in the coming years. The health risks of climate change include heat-related illnesses, lower air quality due to pollution, contaminated water sources, and diseases spread by insects, ticks and rodents.

The literature makes it quite clear that the least fortunate members of our society, which includes a huge proportion of indigenous peoples, racialized individuals and immigrants, will also bear the brunt of the consequences of climate change.

It is up to us as policy-makers to be aware of this and stop dithering over the need to immediately reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. If we do not, we will be contributing to jeopardizing the health of the public now and in the future.

That is why the Bloc Québécois position is not motivated by opposition to the will expressed in Bill C-230 to resolve a real social problem, but by whether the bill could change anything. The Bloc Québécois is concerned about quality of life and access to a healthy environment for all Quebecers.

Over and above Bill C-230, the appalling living conditions in some of our communities, which have no access to a healthy environment, are unacceptable, and governments must live up to their responsibilities in that regard.

Environment-based human rights need to be developed. These rights, and the policies that stem from them, will have to be universal. Everyone must have them, regardless of their differences. Only then will we have powerful legal tools to address the inequities and discrimination caused by unequal environmental factors, such as exposure to pollution or lack of access to clean drinking water.

Unfortunately, Bill C-230 cannot fulfill this vision.

The Bloc Québécois is working hard and pushing for an independent Quebec, one based on mutual recognition with indigenous nations, in which all citizens are equal and enjoy the benefits of social and environmental justice.

• (1755)

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Cumberland—Colchester for bringing forward this important bill to address environmental racism. The bill tabled by the member requires the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to develop a national strategy to promote efforts across Canada to redress the harm caused by environmental racism. I certainly hope that the government will support this bill and take meaningful action to really redress environmental racism.

As we know, across Canada toxic dumps, polluting projects, risky pipelines, tainted drinking water and the effects of the climate crisis disproportionately hurt indigenous, Black and racialized communities. We need look no further to see the impacts of Canada's colonial history on indigenous people. However, even as successive governments say they recognize these historical injustices, so far we are only seeing tiny, incremental measures to right such wrongs.

Private Members' Business

According to the government's own website, currently there are 58 long-term drinking water advisories in first nations communities. There are two in British Columbia, six in Saskatchewan, four in Manitoba and 44 in Ontario. I should note that many of these communities have had such conditions for years, and in some cases for decades. The First Nations Health Authority's Environmental Public Health Services indicate that there are both "do not use" and "do not consume" water advisories in our first nation communities.

"Do not consume" advisories are issued when a community's water system contains a contaminant, such as a chemical, that cannot be removed from the water by boiling. The water should not be used for drinking, brushing teeth, cooking, washing fruits and vegetables, making infant formula or other drinks, soups or ice cubes, for bathing infants and toddlers, or for pets.

"Do not use" advisories are issued when the water system contains contamination that cannot be removed by boiling and consumption of the water poses a health risk. Exposure to the water when bathing could cause skin, eye or nose irritation. In what universe is this okay?

Behind every community are the faces of the people: children, elders and people with disabilities. They are the faces of you and me. Water is life, yet they cannot access basic clean drinking water, which is essential to sustaining life.

This is happening in indigenous communities right now. This is what environmental racism looks like. As an ally of indigenous peoples, I have attended countless protests and rallies led by indigenous people: the first people, the protectors of mother earth, of water and land. They have demanded accountability. We have protested Canada's ongoing active engagement in land dispossession and resource exploitation in their territories.

Look at what is happening with the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. The Prime Minister ignored the voices of the indigenous people, elders and protectors of land. He ignored the science on the climate emergency, brought the Trans Mountain pipeline in and pushed ahead on the expansion.

The Prime Minister is completely oblivious to his own hypocrisy. He cannot call himself an environmentalist and buy a pipeline. Thousands of people have come out as allies to indigenous communities who are opposed to the expansion. Some have been arrested for fighting to protect the environment. Watch houses have been set up to monitor the situation, and people are there in the rain and snow. Land defenders continue to take to the streets to protest the TMX expansion. We must stop throwing away billions of dollars on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and fossil fuel subsidies.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has analyzed the Trans Mountain pipeline and shown that, in all the scenarios it has modelled, there is almost no chance that the pipeline would be profitable. That undercuts the Liberals' claim that the pipeline is needed to pay for green energy investments.

• (1800)

The Tsleil-Waututh Nation conducted an independent assessment of the project and found that there was a 79% to 87% chance of a spill in its waters over the next 50 years if the project is built. In the

worst-case scenario, it projected there is a 29% chance of a spill of over 100,000 barrels. The risks are real. The question is not whether there will be a spill; it is when there will be a spill. These risks are exactly the reason the Tsleil-Waututh Nation and other first nations have not given their free, prior and informed consent to the project.

The Prime Minister is buying the TMX pipeline and pushing ahead on its expansion, and this is a clear violation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. So much for the Prime Minister's most important relationship. This is no joke. The day the government announced it was buying the TMX pipeline, there were new environmental violations for the project.

The truth is that systemic discrimination has been embedded in our environmental policy-making. Enforcement of environmental regulations and laws is often lax. In fact, most recently, it was found that there have been repeat violations of COVID-19 protocols on the site. According to Burnaby Now, a report by the Canada Energy Regulator found there were "systemic non-compliances" of COVID-19 rules at the TMX expansion project.

Canada's environmental decision-making process excludes indigenous, Black and racialized communities. Make no mistake about it: This is environmental injustice.

There are other examples of environmental racism in Canada, including the horrific mercury poisoning in Grassy Narrows. In addition to the frightening health effects of mercury poisoning and cancer from toxic waste, the high levels of contamination forced the community to stop commercial and tourist fishing, one of its last avenues for traditional economic living, while the Ontario government continued to insist the poisoned fish were safe to eat.

In urban areas, 25% of the neighbourhoods with the lowest socio-economic status are within a kilometre of a major polluting industrial facility, compared with just 7% of the wealthiest neighbourhoods. This results in an elevated risk of hospitalization for respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses.

In Vancouver East, our East Village neighbourhood has campaigned for years, fighting against odours coming from the poultry plant in the community. The community has learned that West Coast Reduction is looking at increasing emissions of ammonia, nitrogen oxide and sulphur oxides. Rightly, my constituents are concerned about this.

Private Members' Business

I have brought this up with Metro Vancouver, which regulates air quality for our region. Councillor Adriane Carr is the chair of the Metro Vancouver committee that oversees air quality, and she has advised that it will consider input from concerned parties right up to when the permit decision is made.

In another part of my riding, community members are concerned about the activities of the port. They have been raising concerns about the well-being of a bird marsh at Crab Park. They are concerned that the Port of Vancouver's security fence, which has been put around the four-acre empty parking lot beside Crab Park, will negatively impact the birds there, and they note there are 26 species of waterfowl in Burrard Inlet.

Crab Park is a sacred space for the people of the Downtown Eastside. They fought hard for it and of course they want to ensure that it is protected. They also want to see a healing lodge at Crab Park to support people in our community so they are able to access a safe place, a place of healing, especially in the face of so much stress and trauma from the homelessness crisis, the opioid crisis and now the pandemic.

In 2019, Baskut Tuncak, the UN special rapporteur on human rights and hazardous substances and wastes, wrote, "I observed a pervasive trend of inaction of the Canadian Government in the face of existing health threats from decades of historical and current environmental injustices and the cumulative impacts of toxic exposures by indigenous peoples."

In September 2020, a report entitled "Visit to Canada—Report of the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes" was submitted to the Human Rights Council. It states, "Pollution and exposure to toxic chemicals threaten the right to life, and a life with dignity". It also says, "The invisible violence inflicted by toxics is an insidious burden disproportionately borne by Indigenous peoples in Canada." Canadians have the right to a healthy environment.

• (1805)

Both Liberals and Conservatives have failed to put words into action and, in 2019, they voted against NDP Bill C-438, an act to enact the Canadian environmental bill of rights, which was tabled by former NDP MP Linda Duncan.

In this Parliament, they also failed to show up for NDP Bill C-232, an act respecting a climate emergency action framework, which calls for the recognition of the right of all Canadians to a safe, clean and healthy environment grounded in a commitment to upholding the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This is a bill that was tabled by my colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is time to resume debate.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois does not support Bill C-230 because, although the Bloc Québécois believes in a cleaner and

fairer world, this bill is unfortunately a direct attack on Quebec's environmental sovereignty.

The Bloc Québécois is fully aware that there are disparities in living standards in Quebec and Canada. We are very concerned about that and have been for a long time. Our political agendas are already full of proposals that seek to make Quebec a cleaner and fairer nation.

It gives me great pleasure to say that, when it comes to environmental and social policies, Quebec sets an example for the whole world in the way it protects its land and its plant and animal life and the way it fights social inequality.

Although the Bloc Québécois does not support Bill C-230, we do support government efforts to work in concert with indigenous nations, the Government of Quebec and the other governments of Canada to counter the inequities experienced by our minority communities in their relationship with the environment.

We know that an important part of reconciliation with indigenous peoples involves joint initiatives to make Quebec and Canada cleaner and more just. Living conditions for some people and in some communities in Quebec and Canada with respect to the environment are unacceptable, and governments must uphold their responsibilities in this regard. Access to drinking water comes to mind.

Top of mind are our first nations, Métis and Inuit friends. The shame of the profound and indescribable harm done to them by the federal government's laws and decisions dating back to 1867 endures to this day. The federal government's misdeeds haunt us painfully and unremittingly.

It is difficult for indigenous peoples of Quebec and Canada to heal the wounds that the Government of Canada inflicted on them and, incomprehensibly, continues to inflict on them. Unbelievably, the Indian Act is still with us.

Nevertheless, there is hope, because we are all working on a relationship based on recognition, respect and co-operation. There is hope because the Bloc Québécois is working and fighting to make Quebec a country founded on mutual recognition with indigenous nations, a country in which all citizens are equal and everyone reaps the benefits of social and environmental justice.

While there are increasingly well substantiated links between rising pollution levels and various diseases and developmental disabilities, I would still like to take this opportunity to highlight the longer-term implications of environmental inequities, particularly for the different regions of Quebec. These repercussions are very real. One need only compare the populations of the two sides, west and east, of Montreal Island. Life expectancy on the east side, which is more francophone and very multicultural, is 10 years lower than that on the West Island. That is a sad reality.

Putting people's quality of life and health at risk puts the development and sustainability of our communities at risk. If we want to avoid environmentally risky industrial projects, we must create mechanisms that ensure the safety and health of citizens. We also need to be mindful of the support that must be provided to organizations that combat some of the negative effects of industrial projects. These elements have been increasingly well documented, and we know that the quality of the environment affects the physical and cognitive development of individuals. For example, there are statistics pointing to a higher incidence of pervasive development disorders.

April 2 is World Autism Awareness Day. I want to take a moment to acknowledge the painstaking and ground-breaking work of Mohamed Ghoul and his team. I have a huge amount of respect for Mohamed and Lucie Beauregard and the organization they run. They work very hard to help people with autism integrate into society, primarily through music. APPROSH is a clinical psychosocial intervention program developed by Mr. Ghoul for young people and adults who have neurodevelopmental disorders, such as autism.

Mr. Ghoul has been developing his training program for years and running the Maison-école des artistes autistes & le monde, a place for people with autism to come together and learn. Mr. Ghoul has been recognized around the world for his work, but his programs have been left out of Canada's federal programs. I am mentioning him today because it is important to think big and think about the potential impacts on the well-being of Quebeckers.

• (1810)

Let us come back to Bill C-230. In order to establish a national strategy to repair the harm caused by what our colleague from Cumberland—Colchester calls environmental racism, this bill provides that the Minister of the Environment consult with representatives from provincial governments, municipal governments, indigenous communities and other communities affected, as well as any other person or entity affected. The purpose would be to gather information and statistics on the location of environmental hazards and the health problems in the most affected communities.

The Bloc Québécois has no problem with everything to that point. However, Bill C-230 is problematic in that it stipulates that the Government of Canada will assess the administration and enforcement of environmental laws in Quebec. We categorically oppose that because when it comes to the environment, the laws and regulations of the municipalities of Quebec and the Government of Quebec have to apply in Quebec, even though the environment is a shared responsibility. That is indisputable.

What is more, the Bloc Québécois, through my colleague the hon. member for Jonquière, introduced Bill C-225, an act to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Fishing and Recreational Harbours Act and other acts with regard to the application of provincial law. We wanted the Government of Quebec to have priority, even total sovereignty, on matters of environmental protection on our national territory, but the other political parties opposed us.

We also introduced another bill, and it too was rejected by a majority of the members of this Parliament. It was in response to another bill that lacked scope and restrictions introduced by the Liberals who, in theory, want us to try to achieve their greenhouse gas

Private Members' Business

reduction targets under the Paris Agreement. We introduced Bill C-215, an act respecting Canada's fulfillment of its greenhouse gas emissions reduction obligations, sponsored by my hon. colleague for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia. This bill wanted to provide the means and some teeth to ensure that the Liberal government met its own commitments on fighting climate change, but it was rejected.

The House of Commons is in no position to lecture Quebeckers about the environment, because the parliamentarians of the other political parties are incapable of turning their words into coherent action while respecting provincial jurisdictions. Why is Ottawa again attempting to impose its will to the detriment of the state of Quebec? Furthermore, I would venture to say that for some time Canada has sullied Quebec's exemplary environmental reputation. Therefore, we are saying no to Bill C-230 primarily because Quebec's social policies are not within the jurisdiction of the federal government.

Furthermore, Quebec does not need any lessons from the Canadian government on social policies. A quick look at the history of Quebec and Canada shows how Quebec has long had forward-thinking and high-quality social policies that have even been copied by the governments of other Canadian provinces and territories. This is a credit to Quebec, and we are always proud to see our Canadian friends open up to our way of doing things and our way of building a more just society.

In closing, there is no doubt in the minds of Bloc Québécois members that Bill C-230, an act respecting the development of a national strategy to redress environmental racism, is nothing more than another attempt at federal interference, much like the ones we in the Bloc are accustomed to opposing day after day in most of the legislation introduced in the House of Commons. With Bill C-230, the federal government would no longer be content with disrespecting Quebec's environmental laws. It would assume the right to assess the administration and enforcement of environmental laws in each province. The idea of joint consultations with indigenous nations, Quebec City and Ottawa is certainly a good intention, but it must end with just consultations.

Private Members' Business

The Bloc Québécois will not allow the federal government to infringe on areas under the jurisdiction of Quebec and its municipalities. I would like to remind all members of this Parliament that Quebec's territory belongs to Quebec, and it is up to the Government of Quebec and Quebecers to protect it as they see fit. Once again, Bill C-230 clearly proves that a federal government that seeks to centralize authority has no respect for Quebec's sovereignty and jurisdictions. It is important to remind members of that. It bears repeating over and over, because the federal government does not seem to want to hear it: it is up to the Government of Quebec to enforce its own laws, period.

I will close with brief editorial note. A survey was presented this morning that clearly illustrates how the federal government wants to impose an energy corridor that would run through Abitibi-Témiscamingue, the Gazoduq project. The government wanted to move western Canadian oil through Quebec with energy east, but that project was rejected. It is now trying to move the project somewhere else, where it would affect a population that is perhaps more vulnerable and less involved, the population in northern Quebec, in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, in my riding. However, the people of Quebec do not support that project, and I would like the House to take note of that.

• (1815)

[English]

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, over the course of our nation's history, polluting projects have disproportionately been situated in areas adjacent to indigenous and racialized populations, which has led to increased impacts to human health in those communities. This is a reality that we need to confront, as Canadians, to become a more equitable society. I thank my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester for tabling Bill C-230, an act respecting the development of a national strategy to redress environmental racism, which follows similar acts she advocated for as an MLA in Nova Scotia.

Environmental racism is characterized by the disproportionate exposure of communities of colour to pollution and its associated effects on health and the environment, as well as the unequal environmental protection and environmental quality provided through laws, regulations, governmental programs, enforcement and policies.

Recently, the issue of environmental racism in Canada was emphasized by the United Nations special rapporteur on toxics and human rights, who visited Canada in 2019 to report on the prevalence of environmental and health discrimination faced by indigenous and marginalized groups.

Ultimately, he concluded that a pattern exists in Canada in which marginalized groups, and indigenous people in particular, find themselves on the wrong side of a toxic divide and subject to conditions that would not be acceptable elsewhere in Canada. This is the crux of the problem that we face.

In Canada, this environmental injustice for indigenous and racialized peoples stems in part from our history of colonialism: the lack of diverse representation in decision-making roles, the marginalization of racialized voices, income inequality and the gen-

eral blind eye that our system over our history turned to negative externalities such as pollution.

Communities of colour, particularly poor communities, have been seen as attractive sites for industrial facilities and other developments that impact the proximate populace because they were seen as cost-effective and efficient. For example, when a decision is made to situate a landfill in a particular location, the surrounding population that has the ability to move, does. However, those who are already at a disadvantage in society, and who do not have the capacity to oppose such projects, are forced to live alongside pollutants that may impact their health and their surrounding environment.

Environmental inequality is not relegated to decisions of where to site projects alone. Consequences for environmental violations are not uniform. In my home province of British Columbia, the maximum penalties for dumping garbage or waste on Crown land currently have upper limits of \$2,000 or \$1 million, while the maximum penalty for dumping garbage or waste on Indian reserves is only \$100.

In my community, the North Shore Sewage Treatment Plant has sat on the Squamish Nation's Capilano Reserve for the last 55 years. Known for emitting fumes, especially on hot summer days, the plant is situated metres away from the Squamish Nation community despite waste management facilities generating emissions that may be hazardous to human health.

Now, with the help of federal and provincial funding, construction of the new Lions Gate Secondary Wastewater Treatment Plant is under way. It will be relocated from the Squamish Nation Reserve to a location in the District of North Vancouver owned by Metro Vancouver. The new treatment plant is being constructed with 100% odour containment, and the old facility's land will be returned to the Squamish Nation for it to redevelop as it sees fit.

The reconstruction of the wastewater treatment plant will not only relieve residents of foul odours, but will also provide the north shore with cleaner water and a healthier ecosystem because, while the current plant only removes 50% of organic matter and 70% of suspended solids, the upgraded plant will ensure the elimination of 90% of all waste prior to the sewage entering the sea.

The neighbouring Tsleil-Waututh Nation is hopeful that the upgraded plant will help reduce contamination in shellfish harvesting areas both in Burrard Inlet and in Indian Arm. The North Shore Wastewater Treatment Plant serves not only as an excellent example of what redressing environmental harm can look like, but also as an example of how varied and extensive the impacts of toxic exposure can be for indigenous and racialized communities, with a sewage plant directly impacting the air of one nation and the food supply of another.

Elsewhere in Canada, approximately 90% of Grassy Narrows residents currently suffer from mercury poisoning as a result of Dryden Chemicals dumping mercury into the English-Wabigoon River system between 1962 and 1970. As a result of the dumping, all commercial fishing in the river system has been banned: the fish were shown to contain mercury levels 10 to 50 times higher than in other areas. As such, the Grassy Narrows Nation was not only subjected to severe mercury poisoning, but also to the elimination of the community's main source of income. Despite this clear environmental injustice, it took 50 years for the government to provide the people of Grassy Narrows with an effective remedy.

Another compounding issue is that despite greater exposure levels to hazardous substances, indigenous and racialized peoples have been shown to face further discrimination in health care. As an example, 62% of Grassy Narrows First Nation members living on reserve report barriers to health care. While in many examples we have a painful legacy of environmental racism, our legal frameworks are evolving over time to mitigate the risk of future such examples occurring.

For instance, the Impact Assessment Act, which became law in 2019 and replaced the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012, greatly increased the standard of public participation and transparency in environmental assessment. It became easier for the public to formally participate in assessments. It introduced a pre-assessment planning phase in which the public could participate to address clear issues such as project siting before the assessment in full began. It greatly enhances the consultation and accommodation process with affected first nations by requiring that this begin in the planning phase. It also incorporates traditional knowledge and creates the conditions for indigenous-led assessments.

● (1820)

In addition, with the introduction of Bill C-15, which if passed would implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into federal law, we would take further holistic action on reconciliation. Notably, this would also address environmental racism, as UNDRIP affirms that indigenous peoples have the right to conservation and protection of the environment.

Most importantly, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, or CEPA, is the main piece of legislation we have in Canada to ensure that we protect the environment and human health. However, this legislation has not been substantially updated in over two decades. The Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development studied CEPA and delivered a comprehensive report. Among the recommendations were that the government should recognize the right to a healthy environment. It mentioned the importance of considering vulnerable populations and risk assessments, and of developing legally binding and enforceable national standards for drinking water in consultation with provinces, territories, indigenous peoples, stakeholders and the public.

I look forward to the introduction of a reformed CEPA in due course. If we follow through on these and other suggestions made by the committee, we would go a long way toward addressing future environmental racism in Canada, but there will surely be gaps that remain after all this is done, which is why the bill that we are discussing today is so important in further studying and uncovering

Private Members' Business

where these gaps may lie. The bill would require the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to collect information about the locations of environmental hazards and information about the negative health outcomes in affected communities, ensuring that the public and the government are informed and aware of the dangers associated with hazardous sites.

● (1825)

The minister would also be required to examine the link between race, socio-economic status and environmental risk, thus examining how race and socio-economic status expose indigenous and other racialized communities to contamination and pollution.

Furthermore, Environment and Climate Change Canada would be required to develop a strategy to address environmental racism and to provide regular reports to Parliament on its progress. Bill C-230 would ensure that there is a routine assessment of the extent to which environmental laws are administered and enforced in each province and would promote efforts to amend federal laws, policies and programs in order to address environmental racism.

To conclude, I believe that this bill will make progress on issues of both environment and equity. I will be voting in favour of sending it to be studied further at committee. At this stage, we can involve the voices of provinces, territories, rights holders and stakeholders from right across the country in its deliberation and to further strengthen it. I invite my colleagues from across this House to do the same.

● (1830)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Western Economic Diversification Canada) and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (Canada Water Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today about the bill by the member for Cumberland—Colchester, Bill C-230, an act respecting the development of a national strategy to redress environmental racism.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-230 proposes to develop a national strategy to address the harm caused by environmental racism, in consultation with provincial and municipal governments and indigenous and other affected communities, persons and bodies. Given the important objectives of the bill, the government supports sending the bill to committee for further study. This would enable a broad discussion to take place on the environmental risks faced by marginalized communities and historically disadvantaged groups, and examine options to develop a strategy that is both practical and appropriate for the federal government. The activities proposed by the bill could help identify and fill knowledge gaps, providing different levels of government with the information needed to work toward addressing issues raised by the bill.

This would build upon the government's commitment to evidence-based decision-making that takes into consideration the impact of policies on all Canadians. The bill is timely and commendable. However, there are three sets of issues that the government is looking forward to discussing and studying at committee, and which the government would seek amendments to address.

First, a national strategy could serve to promote environmental justice, which is a concept that is already recognized in the bill, as a goal to strive to achieve through a coordinated national strategy. Environmental justice seeks to avoid disproportionate impacts of environmental harm on certain communities, for example, minorities, and includes other grounds of discrimination in addition to race, such as low-income communities and remote communities. Potential amendments would seek to further incorporate principles of environmental justice into the bill.

Second, there are some measures proposed in the bill that are more appropriately taken by provinces. We recognize that jurisdiction over the protection of the environment is shared among different levels of government in Canada and we would seek amendments to address the impacts on provincial jurisdiction.

Third, while the bill contains some important mandatory requirements, a flexible framework for developing a national strategy would be required. Amendments would aim to avoid pre-empting or prejudging the issues and findings of environmental racism that may be identified in the process of developing a national strategy. As I said, the bill deserves our attention and represents the beginning of a conversation that can build upon and complement efforts that our government is undertaking to strengthen environmental protections and to combat systemic racism. As a result, we look forward to careful study at committee and discussions on possible ways to reinforce the bill and its purpose.

Finally, once again I would thank the member for Cumberland—Colchester for bringing this bill forward, for her advocacy and her environmental passion, which are very important in this particular case. I hope that all members will join the government in supporting sending this legislation to committee for further study.

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that I stand on the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq here in Nova Scotia and thank them for sharing their land with us. *Wela'liog*.

To everything there is a season, a time and a purpose, and Bill C-230 is a bill whose time has come, for we are at a tipping point

or, hopefully, a turning point in Canada's history and indeed that of our planet.

For years, grassroots activists across Canada have been fighting for social and environmental justice for indigenous, black and other racialized communities. We stand on the shoulders of community leaders like Chief Dan George, Dr. David Suzuki in B.C., to Dr. Ingrid Waldron, Chief Andrea Paul, Louise Delisle, Doreen Bernard and Drs. Lynn and Rocky Jones right here in Truro, Nova Scotia.

One year ago I introduced Bill C-230, a national strategy to address environmental racism, in the House of Commons in Ottawa. Then recently, in January of this year, President Joe Biden signed an executive order to develop programs and policies to “address the disproportionate health, environmental, economic, and climate impacts on disadvantaged communities” in the United States. Surely this gives even more credence to the need for Canada to address this issue within our own borders. Therefore, let us do the right thing and acknowledge the injustices of the past by addressing the issues of systemic environmental racism with respect to the pollution of the land, air and water affecting a disproportionate number of indigenous, black and other racialized communities; acknowledging the equal and inherent right of all to clean air and water; meaningfully consulting affected communities; collecting vital data; recommending further action and redress; and embracing environmental justice by honouring, celebrating and protecting the natural environment.

Research shows that racialized people have higher rates of chronic disease and are more vulnerable to both climate change and new diseases like COVID-19 due to the long-standing structural inequities that have caused poverty, leading to unstable housing and food insecurity. Environmental racism is a major contributor to these inequities, since a disproportionate number of racialized communities are located in areas that have been exposed to major polluters emitting toxins associated with cancer, respiratory illness and birth defects.

We have much to learn from indigenous people around the globe, particularly women, as it is often the women who bear the brunt of inequity and are faced with the fallout of environmental racism. It is with this in mind that I honour all grassroots grandmothers and sacred water protectors, the women whose blood, sweat and tears has been spilled endlessly in the spiral of creation, fighting for their lives, their rights, those of their children and, I would add, for Mother Earth. If we are to survive as a species, the way we perceive, value and treat our fellow humans, natural environment and every living thing must change. I would like to believe it is changing with each new generation, as the obvious results of our human flaws and past mistakes become impossible to deny.

One of the biggest mistakes colonial society has made is the belief that some races and genders are more important or valuable than others and therefore that some peoples and communities are less deserving of a healthy environment than others. Not only is this premise false, but we also seem to have forgotten that we are in fact part of nature ourselves and are all connected to each other and to the natural realm. We are all born with the innate right to clean air and water. These simple elements are vital for our survival. Let us be honest, we have taken both for granted to our own detriment.

My parents taught me long ago that every child is born equal and deserves to be treated with mutual respect. My 97-year-old grandmother, Elizabeth, taught me that without hope we have nothing. The eyes of our children and grandchildren are upon us. Let us give them a reason not only to hope, but to believe.

The time to act is upon us. If not us, who? If not now, when? I humbly ask members to support Bill C-230.

• (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion. If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would ask for a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 24, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1840)

[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, I am raising an issue today in our adjournment proceedings that I originally raised on November 17 during question period.

As an MP, I often reflect on what it means to serve this country. Base Gagetown is located in my riding of Fredericton, and it is with

Adjournment Proceedings

a great sense of pride that I represent so many people who are also serving our country as current and former members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

There is a distinct moral, social, legal and fiduciary covenant between Canada and the active and retired members of the Canadian Armed Forces. I am here this evening because I am convinced that the government is not upholding its obligations to those who have sacrificed themselves, their health and their well-being.

I want to draw the parliamentary secretary's attention to a group of brave, driven and hard-working citizens in my riding who call themselves Brats In The Battlefield. They are veterans, children of veterans and private citizens who live in close proximity to our base. They are also victims of the application of pesticides and herbicides in accumulation at Base Gagetown over decades, and they are seeking answers. These individuals have lost too many of their loved ones already. Many are fighting a new battle of health as they confront cancer and other diagnoses that can be linked to chemical exposure. They deserve justice.

An independent public inquiry to address exactly what was used and in what quantities would help to uncover the answers these people have been seeking. The government confirmed in a response to their petition that all federal and provincial regulations were followed at the time other than in a few specific cases, but this is not good enough. In fact, it is outrageous. Policies have evolved over time, because we know more about these products than we once did. We need to apply current scientific knowledge to decisions that were made over the last 70 years, so that citizens can know with certainty what they were exposed to and what ongoing risks to their health they face.

If the government wants to take seriously its role and responsibility, it would convene a fully independent public inquiry that would make recommendations in relation to the application of pesticides at CFB Gagetown and its surrounding communities from the 1950s to the present day, well beyond the two-year window that was previously studied.

A fact-finding project was at one time convened, followed by a health risk assessment conducted by the chemical industry itself. It should come as no surprise that those affected find little solace in these reports. Furthermore, the Inquiries Act clearly states that an independent commissioner may be appointed, and that was never done.

Adjournment Proceedings

The mandate of Veterans Affairs Canada is to support the well-being of veterans and their families. This is an obvious component of that mandate. Members of this brave group not only feel let down, they feel walked on and locked out of the democratic process.

Having been born and raised in Oromocto myself, I know that the base is part of our identity. It is the heart of our community's economy. Those who have served there, and their families, deserve justice. I am calling on the government to do the right thing and take a long, hard look at what happened at Base Gagetown, at our ongoing use of herbicides and pesticides and what risks we are willing to take when it comes to human health.

I can only pray that these Canadians will still be alive long enough to receive the acknowledgement they deserve and to find peace in the hope that it will never happen again.

[Translation]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Fredericton, for her intervention and the work she does to represent veterans.

Although the 2020 season of remembrance was very different than what we are used to because of the pandemic, that did not prevent us from taking a moment to remember our fallen soldiers and those who bravely served to defend the peace and freedom that many Canadians helped protect during all those years.

[English]

We are particularly thankful for the Royal Canadian Legion for the ceremony it led at the National War Memorial and to Canadians for heeding advice to stay home during this difficult time and to celebrate Remembrance Day online. While events around the country were naturally scaled way back, I hope our veterans still felt the enormous appreciation we have for them even if it had to be conveyed differently this past year.

November is a time to reflect, but by no means does our acknowledgement of Canada's veterans limit itself to just a few weeks a year.

[Translation]

We work all year round to ensure that our veterans receive the support provided by military services and get the assistance they need.

As we all know, 2020 was a difficult year, especially for veterans and the organizations they tend to turn to for assistance and advice.

To help veterans, we put in place a \$20-million emergency fund for organizations that support veterans just before Remembrance Day. Groups such as the Legion, ANAVETS, VETS Canada, the True Patriot Love Foundation and others have incurred significant deficits because of the pandemic.

[English]

While Legion and ANAVET branches have been able to apply for funding through the Dominion Command, other organizations

apply for funding through the Veteran Affairs website at veterans.gc.ca. Through the support fund, we have made money available so that they could continue to operate to provide veterans and their families with the essential services that they count on.

[Translation]

As for the member's comment on homelessness, I want to say that one homeless veteran is one too many. Veterans, like all other Canadians, deserve safe and affordable housing.

When Veterans Affairs Canada learns about a veteran experiencing homelessness, the department takes immediate action to give them the support they need and works with its partners to help the individual find appropriate housing. There is also a veterans emergency fund to help them and their families buy food, find housing and stay safe when their well-being is at risk due to a financial emergency.

[English]

Finally, it goes without saying that the number of veterans waiting on claims is simply too high, but I want the member opposite, everyone in the House and all Canadians to know that our government is doing everything possible to bring these numbers down and accelerate decision-making. The strategy we introduced last June to reduce wait times included a \$192-million funding commitment to keep the 168 decision-makers hired through budget 2018 and to hire another 350 employees dedicated to reducing the wait time.

[Translation]

We expect these new hires to have a significant impact on—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The hon. member for Fredericton.

[English]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, remembering the sacrifices of veterans is one thing. Responding to their current urgent needs is another.

If I may, here is a list of presumptive diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure, some of which Canadian veterans and their families are grappling with: chronic lymphatic leukemia, soft tissue sarcoma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease, chlo-racne, respiratory cancer, prostate cancer, multiple myeloma, early-onset transient peripheral neuropathy, porphyria cutanea tarda, type 2 diabetes, and spina bifida in offspring of exposed individuals.

Agent White and Agent Purple were also sprayed in my community, along with glyphosate and DDT. Citizens were told these chemicals were just about safe enough to drink. Workers cleared fallen brush with their bare hands, fresh after a spray, while the children played in smoke clouds behind the application trucks. The contracted companies wanted to save a few bucks by cutting corners and increasing chemical concentrations. Now it is these citizens who are paying the price.

Will the government do what is right? Will it uphold the duty of care for veterans and their families? Will they undertake—

• (1845)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada will always support the brave men and women who have served in uniform.

[*English*]

The country we have today was built on the backs of those who chose to put the well-being of their fellow citizens ahead of their own by willingly assuming the risks that are inherent in military life.

[*Translation*]

We owe them so much. We can never forget what our veterans and fallen soldiers have done for us, and in return we must always be there to support them in their post-service lives.

FINANCE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here this evening to take part in the adjournment debates, which are always very interesting.

I asked the Minister of Finance when the next federal budget would be tabled. They let the cat out of the bag today: it will be on April 19. Canadians have been waiting two years, and the federal government will finally deign to present them with a budget.

It is important to remember that the 10 Canadian provinces and all G7 countries have been transparent with their people. They have not been afraid to table budgets despite the pandemic and its attendant inconveniences.

When I asked my question, I said that if a family went to a bank to ask for a loan but refused to produce its financial statements, the bank would of course say no. The problem with the Liberal government is that, when it goes to the bank to ask for a loan, it approves its own request. Naturally, we are very afraid that, in the upcoming budget, it will respond to its own request very generously.

We already know that the Liberal government has asked to increase Canada's debt ceiling by \$663 billion—not \$663 million, mind you, but \$663 billion—without presenting a plan to Canadians, a plan to reopen our economy.

We often wonder why the government is waiting until April 19 before presenting Canadians with its first budget in two years. To me, the answer is quite simply that the government is not ready. It

Adjournment Proceedings

wants to present a budget once a majority of the population was vaccinated.

Unfortunately, because of past bad decisions, because of a bad vaccine procurement agreement with a Chinese company, and after putting all its eggs in one basket and being unable to procure vaccines before or at least at the same time as the other G7 countries, we are now lagging behind. That is why we learned today that the next federal budget will be brought down on April 19.

What do we expect to find in that budget?

We expect to find a plan to reopen the economy that will rely above all on vaccinating the majority of Canadians. Unfortunately, we know that we will not be able to meet that objective at the same time as the other countries, because the government procrastinated.

However, other measures definitely need to be implemented. The next budget should have fewer slogans and a lot more money for workers and families.

It is important to protect jobs, especially during this period of economic recovery. Now is not the time to reimagine our economy, as we have heard the Prime Minister say so often. It is time to place our trust in the stable and traditional jobs that have existed in Canada for a long time, because those people deserve to get their jobs back.

The post-pandemic period is not the time to choose who will be the winners and losers, which workers will be favoured by a government and which ones will be overlooked during the next few years.

It is important for the next budget to send a clear message to all Canadian workers, especially women who were seriously impacted by the recent pandemic, such as those working in health care, retail and all highly affected sectors that had to close their doors, that their government has not forgotten them.

We are expecting a true economic recovery plan in the April 19 budget. The minister is promising the budget of her life. Given her past performance, I am immensely worried for the future of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

• (1850)

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am a little saddened that I do not see the hon. member's usual photo of the House of Commons behind him, as it is a good reminder of where we would all like to be in person.

Adjournment Proceedings

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this issue. As the member mentioned, the budget will be delivered on April 19. I do take objection to his comments that we are not providing a level of transparency. As he knows, the finances of the government, and the expenditures, are done through the estimates process, which he has participated in in his various committees. As well, there was a fall economic statement delivered back in the fall. It is now spring, and we are still debating the implementation bill of the previous economic statement.

I am hoping that as we move forward, in terms of the budget, we will have a more rapid debate so that we can deliver the types of programs that we have been delivering to Canadians to help them. That is what it is going to take to allow us to come rolling back after COVID-19.

We have been there for the nearly nine million Canadians who have accessed the CERB, more than 850,000 businesses that have accessed CEBA, the more than 5.2 million employees whose wages were supported by the emergency wage subsidy, and the more than 143,000 organizations that have used the rent subsidy.

We have been there for them from the start, and we will continue to be there for them.

We are already seeing the results. In the fourth quarter of 2020, the Canadian economy grew by more than 10% annualized. That is better than what we saw from the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy. Furthermore, employment recovered nearly all the ground lost in the second wave with the unemployment rate at its lowest since March 2020.

This is good news. It shows that we have done exactly what need to be done. We have been deliberate, prudent and responsible. We have sought to be transparent with Canadians.

Last July, we presented the economic and fiscal snapshot, which provided predictions for the economic situation on that. As I mentioned, building upon that, in November we presented the fall economic statement, which included even more extensive financial information and projections. We have offered an extensive five-year fiscal forecast, which took into account varying scenarios.

The hon. member mentioned vaccines. We are well on our way. We had promised Canadians six million vaccines by the end of March. We are missing that target, and instead are exceeding it by more than 50%. We are well on our way to 37 million doses by the end of June, and more than enough to vaccinate everyone by the end of summer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his kind words about my background when I am in my riding office. It is a reminder that the House must work for the good of all Canadians and take all Canadians into consideration. Now is not the time to capitalize on a post-pandemic economic recovery, after everyone has suffered. It is not the time to think up new methods and to pick winners and losers.

My colleague mentioned the economic statement. He was very careful to avoid saying we have gone two years without a budget, while many other governments and countries have presented bud-

gets to their citizens. This is important, and it is also important that the next budget focus on the economic recovery so that all Canadians can have equal opportunities to succeed and get ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, once again, the budget will be presented on April 19. Our priority is and remains the fight against COVID-19.

From the beginning of the pandemic, the government has used every tool and has done everything in its power to crush the virus and mitigate its economic harm. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity with budget 2021 to build an economy that is better, stronger, more inclusive and more resilient for our communities, families and the next generations.

We look forward to delivering on just that.

• (1855)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I will begin by acknowledging that I am speaking from the traditional territory of the WSÁNEĆ Nation, which is among the Coast Salish nations of southern Vancouver Island. *Hych'ka Siem*.

I also want to start by congratulating my hon. colleague, although I am not sure if I should congratulate him since he was already the parliamentary secretary for transport. Now he gets to debate me in the late show, because he is the parliamentary secretary for environment and climate change.

The question I asked of the hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change on December 8 related to Canada essentially exercising the loophole on our shipment of plastic waste to other countries. Long ago, we entered into the Basel Convention on hazardous waste, which prevents the export of hazardous waste to other countries except under certain conditions and with their prior, informed consent. In our move to eliminate ocean plastics, Canada and countries around the world worked to amend the Basel Convention such that plastics on their way to be recycled in other countries could be treated on different levels: as hazardous materials or acceptable for shipment to other countries. At a certain level, annex II plastic waste requires prior and informed consent.

The problem here, as I put it to the Minister of Environment on December 8, is that Canada has entered into an agreement with the United States, which has never ratified the Basel Convention. It is not a party to the convention, and that has created a loophole allowing the U.S. to send non-conforming plastic waste to other countries.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Minister of Environment answered my question by confirming that the United States is not a party to the Basel Convention, which was part of my question, and then he went on to say that the agreement between Canada and the United States dealt with waste vis-à-vis our two countries. However, that does not deal with the U.S. exporting further to non-OECD countries.

There is an increased level of concern about Canada exploiting this potential loophole, and there are things we could do about it. We could ensure that we amend our agreement with the United States to specify that it must deal exclusively with non-hazardous plastic waste as scheduled under annex IX of the Basel Convention. We could ratify the Basel ban ourselves to ensure that no plastic waste is exported to non-OECD countries. We could extend our manufactured plastic waste strategy under schedule 1 of CEPA to actually enact our ban on single-use, non-essential plastic. We could expand our integrated management plan and our approach for plastic products.

There is much more we could do to ensure that the side agreement Canada has executed with the United States creates all the same protections for the export of plastic products from Canada to the United States as would be the case if the United States has ratified the Basel Convention. We are not able to say that today. There is more to be done to ensure there is no loophole.

While on the subject of plastic waste, I think we need to expand beyond single-use plastics to look at polystyrene, which has many uses in a marine context. Wharves and buoys break down very quickly. These bits of styrofoam, or polystyrene, in our waters and on our beaches are a real threat to marine life, but they are not necessarily categorized as single-use products. They are more durable, but they break down. They are really a threat.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada played a leadership role in the negotiation of the Basel amendments on plastic waste during the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention and supported their adoption. Canada considers these amendments as very important, as they are key to strengthening controls on exports of certain plastic waste, leading to cleaner trade of plastic waste globally and contributing to a reduction of marine litter.

I am very pleased to inform the House that Canada accepted the amendments on December 29, 2020. As a result, since January 1, 2021, Canadian exporters must obtain export permits to be able to export these plastic wastes to parties to the convention. The consent of the importing country is required before an export permit will be issued. All parties to the convention have now accepted these important amendments, except for Turkey. This means that a global framework for controlling the transboundary movement of these plastic wastes is now in place. This represents an important safeguard to allow parties to deny the import of plastic waste subject to the convention, including prohibiting imports from non-parties.

The fact is that the Basel Convention states that parties to the convention wanting to trade waste subject to the convention with a non-party must enter into an agreement with that country that is a non-legally binding instrument or that is a legally binding instrument. Both non-legally binding and legally binding instruments can

satisfy the requirements of the convention. Such instruments must respect the obligations of the convention, and the traded waste must be managed in an environmentally sound manner.

As we know, the U.S. is not a party to the Basel Convention. Basel parties around the world can allow imports of plastic waste covered by the convention from the U.S. only if they have entered into an arrangement or agreement with the U.S., as required by the convention. Since Canada trades plastic waste with the United States, and in accordance with its obligation under Basel, Canada concluded an arrangement with the United States for the environmentally sound management of non-hazardous waste traded between the two countries.

The arrangement applies between only Canada and the United States. Plastic waste covered by the Basel Convention and destined to a party to the convention is subject to Canadian regulation and requires an export permit, which will only be granted if the importing party consents to the import. This is the case even if the waste ships through the United States.

There is no free pass for exports of controlled plastic waste from Canada to Basel parties when going through the United States, securing a commitment that non-hazardous waste traded between Canada and the U.S. is and will continue to be managed in an environmentally sound manner, as is at the heart of this arrangement. This arrangement is based upon the legislative and other measures put in place by the countries and, as such, is consistent with the Basel Convention provisions and allows trade to continue freely between our countries.

There is significant environmental gains in allowing plastic waste to move freely across the Canada-U.S. border. These include access to feedstock for recycling operations in Canada, recycling in the U.S. of plastic waste that would otherwise be landfilled in Canada and reduced incentives to export overseas. Canada's ratification of the Basel plastic waste amendments, along with the arrangement with the United States, mean that vulnerable countries can refuse to accept Canadian exports of plastic waste. It also fosters enhanced recycling in Canada and reduces plastic waste that can be sent to a landfill site in Canada.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1900)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I am sure the parliamentary secretary will not be surprised if I continue to maintain that Canada has not taken every step it needs to take and is capable of taking under the Basel Convention in order to ensure that bilateral trade with the United States is not just fully compliant with Basel, but goes beyond it, to ensure there are no loopholes for Canada's plastic waste, especially that which could be considered hazardous, from being exported to non-OECD countries.

I do want to make a more general statement that the notion that plastic can be recycled is largely dubious. A lot of Canadians separate their waste and want to see it recycled. Glass, aluminum, paper and paper products are largely of value and these materials are recycled, but plastic materials degrade very quickly. There is very limited access to actual recycling it. We need to take control of the matter and make sure we move off—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, Canada is committed to ensuring that exports of plastic waste have regulations. That is why

we have accepted and implemented the Basel Convention amendments on plastic waste. Canada and the U.S. have measures in place for the environmentally sound management of that waste. We are leveraging the mechanism available under the Basel Convention to continue to trade with the U.S.

The arrangement between Canada and the U.S. does not override regulatory obligations on Canadian exporters. Any waste covered by the convention shipped from Canada to a party to the Basel Convention is subject to our regulation and requires prior consent. Our government is acting responsibly by ensuring that countries consent to imports while fostering recycling and reducing plastic waste landfilling.

• (1905)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:05 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Commissioner of Lobbying		Mr. Gerretsen	5094
The Speaker	5087	Mr. Motz	5094
Interparliamentary Delegations		Mr. Lamoureux	5094
Mr. Easter	5087	Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	5096
Committees of the House		Mr. Desilets	5096
Finance		Mr. Angus	5097
Mr. Easter	5087	Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5097
Criminal Code		Mr. Gerretsen	5097
Mr. Paul-Hus	5087	Mr. Ste-Marie	5097
Bill C-277. Introduction and first reading	5087	Mr. Morantz	5099
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	5087	Mr. Gerretsen	5099
Civil Air Navigation Services Commercialization Act		Mrs. Jansen	5100
Mr. Masse	5087	Ms. Michaud	5100
Bill C-278. Introduction and first reading	5087	Mr. Lamoureux	5102
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	5088	Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5102
Petitions		Mr. Morantz	5102
Myanmar		Mr. Angus	5102
Ms. Collins	5088	Mr. Steinley	5104
Rent Subsidy Program		Mr. Trudel	5104
Ms. Collins	5088	Mr. Lamoureux	5104
Conversion Therapy		Mr. Davies	5105
Mrs. Jansen	5088	Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	5106
Saanich Inlet		Ms. Chabot	5106
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5088	Mr. Duvall	5107
Human Organ Trafficking		Mr. Doherty	5107
Mr. Genuis	5089	Mr. MacGregor	5108
Ethiopia		Mrs. Jansen	5108
Mr. Genuis	5089	Mr. Gerretsen	5109
Questions on the Order Paper		Ms. Rood	5109
Mr. Lamoureux	5089	Mr. Gerretsen	5110
		Mr. Angus	5111
		Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5111
		Mr. Gerretsen	5111
		Mr. Genuis	5112
		Mr. Champoux	5113
		Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5113
		Mr. Van Bynen	5113
		Mr. Morantz	5114
		Mr. Sloan	5115
		Mr. Genuis	5115
		Mr. Albas	5115
		Mr. Gerretsen	5117
		Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	5118
		Mr. Sloan	5118
		Mr. Poilievre	5118
		Mr. Vaughan	5119
		Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5120
		Mrs. Block	5120
		Ms. O'Connell	5120
GOVERNMENT ORDERS			
Business of Supply			
Opposition Motion—Plan for Reopening the Economy			
Ms. Rempel Garner	5089		
Motion	5089		
Mr. Lamoureux	5091		
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5091		
Mr. MacGregor	5091		
Mr. Cumming	5092		
Mr. Champoux	5093		

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Rapid Housing Initiative	
Mr. Vaughan	5121
COVID-19 Emergency Response	
Mr. Sweet	5121
Sri Lanka Human Rights	
Ms. O'Connell	5122
International Day of La Francophonie	
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	5122
National Impaired Driving Prevention Week	
Mr. Lightbound	5122
COVID-19 Emergency Response	
Mr. Strahl	5122
The Environment	
Mrs. Lalonde	5123
Coldest Night of the Year Walk	
Mr. Van Bynen	5123
Sexual Exploitation of Minors	
Mr. Paul-Hus	5123
Two Businesses in Don Valley West	
Mr. Oliphant	5123
Child Sexual Abuse	
Mrs. Stubbs	5123
Ethics	
Ms. Harder	5124
Mary River Mine	
Ms. Qaqqaq	5124
Carole Lavallée	
Mr. Blanchet	5124
Mental Health	
Mr. Doherty	5124
Roland Barbier	
Ms. Martinez Ferrada	5125

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Economy	
Mr. O'Toole	5125
Mr. Trudeau	5125
Mr. O'Toole	5125
Mr. Trudeau	5125
Mr. O'Toole	5125
Mr. Trudeau	5125
Mr. O'Toole	5125
Mr. Trudeau	5125
Mr. O'Toole	5126
Mr. Trudeau	5126
Health	
Mr. Blanchet	5126

Mr. Trudeau	5126
Canadian Heritage	
Mr. Blanchet	5126
Mr. Trudeau	5126
National Defence	
Mr. Singh	5126
Mr. Trudeau	5126
Health	
Mr. Singh	5126
Mr. Trudeau	5127
Ms. Bergen	5127
Ms. Hajdu	5127
Ms. Bergen	5127
Ms. Hajdu	5127
The Economy	
Mr. Cumming	5127
Ms. Freeland	5127
Mr. Cumming	5127
Ms. Freeland	5128
Health	
Ms. Rempel Garner	5128
Ms. Hajdu	5128
Ms. Rempel Garner	5128
Ms. Hajdu	5128
Mr. Bergeron	5128
Ms. Hajdu	5128
Mr. Bergeron	5128
Mr. Rodriguez	5128
Ethics	
Mr. Poilievre	5129
Ms. Chagger	5129
Ms. Chagger	5129
Mr. Poilievre	5129
Mr. Rodriguez	5129
National Defence	
Mr. Paul-Hus	5129
Mr. Sajjan	5129
Mr. Paul-Hus	5129
Mr. Sajjan	5129
Public Safety	
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	5130
Mr. Blair	5130
Indigenous Affairs	
Mr. Angus	5130
Ms. Bennett	5130
The Budget	
Mr. Gerretsen	5130
Ms. Freeland	5130
Agriculture and Agri-Food	
Ms. Rood	5130
Ms. Bibeau	5131

International Development

Mr. Genuis	5131
Ms. Gould	5131

Health

Mr. Gourde	5131
Ms. Hajdu	5131
Mr. Soroka	5131
Mr. Mendicino	5131

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	5131
Mr. Mendicino	5131
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	5131
Mr. Mendicino	5132

Small Business

Mr. Kelly	5132
Ms. Freeland	5132
Mr. Kelly	5132
Ms. Freeland	5132

Canada Revenue Agency

Mr. Lawrence	5132
Mrs. Lebouthillier	5132

Foreign Affairs

Mr. Fonseca	5132
Mr. Garneau	5133

The Economy

Mr. Motz	5133
Ms. Hajdu	5133

Health

Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	5133
Ms. Hajdu	5133

The Economy

Mr. Mazier	5133
Ms. Monsef	5133

The Budget

Mrs. Bessette	5133
Ms. Freeland	5134

Child Care

Ms. Mathysen	5134
Mr. Hussen	5134

Health

Mr. Sangha	5134
Mr. Champagne	5134

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Mr. Singh	5134
Motion	5134
(Motion agreed to)	5134

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**Business of Supply**

Opposition Motion—Long-Term Care	
Motion	5134
Motion negated	5136

Points of Order

Canada Elections Act—Speaker's Ruling	
The Speaker	5136

Business of Supply

Opposition Motion—Plan for Reopening the Economy	
Motion	5137
Ms. O'Connell	5137
Ms. Alleslev	5137
Mr. Lemire	5138
Ms. Collins	5138
Mr. Moore	5138
Mr. Thériault	5140
Mr. Davies	5140
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5140
Mr. Godin	5140
Ms. Pausé	5142
Mr. Melillo	5142
Mr. Thériault	5142
Mrs. Lalonde	5143
Mr. McLean	5144
Mrs. Desbiens	5144
Mr. Johns	5145
Mr. Bagnell	5145
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	5146
Mr. Thériault	5146
Mr. Johns	5147
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	5147
Mr. Steinley	5147
Mr. Gerretsen	5149
Mrs. Vignola	5149
Mr. Johns	5149
Mr. Berthold	5149
Mr. Longfield	5151
Ms. Michaud	5151
Mr. Sloan	5152
Mr. Paul-Hus	5152
Mr. Gerretsen	5154
Mrs. Vignola	5154
Mr. Kitchen	5154

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**National Strategy to Redress Environmental Racism Act**

Bill C-230. Second reading	5155
Mr. Melillo	5155
Ms. Michaud	5156
Ms. Kwan	5158

Mr. Lemire.....	5160
Mr. Weiler.....	5162
Mr. Duguid.....	5163
Ms. Zann.....	5164
Division on motion deferred.....	5165

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Veterans Affairs

Mrs. Atwin.....	5165
-----------------	------

Mr. Samson.....	5166
-----------------	------

Finance

Mr. Berthold.....	5167
Mr. Bittle.....	5167

The Environment

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands).....	5168
Mr. Bittle.....	5169

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>