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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 29, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Prayer

* * *

[*Translation*]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

• (1005)

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-291, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to introduce an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

I would like to thank my colleague, the honourable deputy leader of the NDP, for seconding this proposed legislation and for his tireless advocacy for families longing to reunite with their loved ones.

This NDP bill stipulates that loved ones with family sponsorship applications awaiting processing may not be refused entry into Canada as a temporary resident solely on the grounds that they may not have established that they will leave Canada by the end of their authorized stay, unless there is evidence of a history of non-compliance with requirements to leave Canada or any other country. It would further ensure that a foreign national who is the subject of a family sponsorship application may remain in Canada as a temporary resident until a final determination on their sponsorship application is made.

Far too many Canadians have been suffering silently and alone, and they face lengthy delays in the processing of their family sponsorship application. What is worse is that they cannot even have their loved ones visit, even before COVID-19. Their loved ones are regularly met with denials of the TRV application under section 179(b) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations, because immigration officers routinely deem having strong ties to Canada would result in an overstay. My office has dealt with countless cases where people are still rejected even if they have a previous history of travelling without incident.

I am tabling my private member's bill so that we can restore fairness and humanity to the process. I call on all parliamentarians to support this bill.

ORAL HEALTH

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition on oral health on behalf of Denyse Bouvier, an engaged citizen from Hochelaga. This petition has been duly certified and is signed by 6,835 people.

We know that the high cost of oral health services in Quebec and Canada put low-income individuals and families, people experiencing homelessness and our seniors at a disadvantage. Dental health problems can also have an impact on the personal and social lives of Quebecers and Canadians.

This petition calls on the government to implement a policy of providing free dental health care of all types.

[*English*]

CROSS-BORDER COMMERCE

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to table a petition today signed by local business owners and their workers.

The petitioners wish to bring to the attention of the House the urgent need for clarity and consistency at our borders. In 2020, this industry was deemed essential by the Ontario government, yet at the border they face many obstacles resulting in lost contracts and jobs. The petitioners are asking to be allowed entry into the U.S. and Canada with the same exemptions from quarantines and fines that apply to all essential workers engaged in cross-border commerce.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition, e-petition 3031, that I would like to present.

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It is signed by almost 1,400 residents who note that Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory are unlawful under international law, that Israeli occupation authorities have issued a decision to forcibly evict hundreds of Palestinians from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem and that forces have demolished many Palestinian homes in occupied Jerusalem since the beginning of this year.

They call upon the Government of Canada to call on Israel to stop its eviction of the Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah and its carrying out of the announced land settlement of title and registration policy in occupied East Jerusalem, which will result in the permanent appropriation of Palestinian land by the State of Israel.

* * *

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 ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1010)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ACCESS TO COVID-19 VACCINES

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC) moved:

That, given that,

- (i) only 2.7% of Canadians are fully vaccinated against COVID-19,
- (ii) the federal government did not deliver adequate vaccine supply in January and February 2021,
- (iii) the government extended the recommended interval for the second vaccine dose to four months against the recommendations of vaccine manufacturers,
- (iv) Canadians are facing increased restrictions and lockdowns in multiple provinces from British Columbia to Nova Scotia,

the House call on the government to ensure that every Canadian adult has access to a vaccine by the May long weekend.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be dividing my time with the member for Calgary Nose Hill.

All Canadians know that we are in the grips of the third wave of COVID-19. Cases are rising, hospitalization rates are up, younger people are tragically filling ICUs. Provinces are implementing new lockdowns and are so overwhelmed that they are calling again for the help of our brave men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces, the Red Cross, and even other provinces like Newfoundland and Labrador to help with a third wave that could have been avoided.

Yet, despite all of this, during the most challenging wave of this pandemic, the Prime Minister a few weeks ago said that he had no

regrets about his management leadership throughout the pandemic. That is astonishing: No regrets for the closure of the world-renowned early warning pandemic system that had been world-class before the government shut it down a few months before it could have helped more than ever in its existence; no regrets for relying on Communist China for a vaccine for Canadians, which of course fell apart, causing further delays and now is a part of the reason we are in such a severe third wave. The Prime Minister has no regrets for failing to deliver a national system of rapid screening and testing with standards, which was one of the first promises he made over a year ago when he shut down Parliament; and no regrets for his portfolio of vaccines. Of course, the government will not release any of the contracts to show us the portfolio. The Prime Minister has no regrets for having us further behind many other developed countries in terms of total vaccinations and access to vaccination.

Perhaps it is easy for the Prime Minister to have no regrets when he has a parliamentary career and perhaps a lifetime of having other people clean up his mess for him. It is a hallmark of the Prime Minister. For Canadians watching, he is now on his third investigation of personal ethical misconduct. He told the Ethics Commissioner during the first ethics investigation that he views his role as prime minister as being “ceremonial in nature”. In a crisis, we do not need ceremony. We need action. We need leadership and that is what has been absent from the government.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister has no regrets about the millions of Canadians affected by the third wave of COVID-19, his inability to procure a sufficient number of vaccines or his slow approach. That is arrogance.

While the Prime Minister is patting himself on the back, Canadians are losing hope because the virus and dangerous variants are spreading.

[English]

For more than a year, we have been calling for greater border measures to protect against COVID-19. For a year, we have been calling for a national system of rapid screening, testing and national standards. We have been calling for a vaccine procurement and distribution plan with domestic capacity. However, here we are in the third wave of a pandemic waiting for the Prime Minister to deliver on commitments he made to Canadians in the first wave.

The Liberal government has categorically failed to keep COVID-19 variants, dangerous ones, out of Canada; failed to secure our border properly for over a year; failed to secure vaccines in January and February to have vaccination rates at a level that would have prevented community spread of dangerous variants, letting us down when it was most critical that he step up.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister did not succeed in stopping variants from entering Canada. Under the Liberals, our borders are out of control.

It has been a year and the Prime Minister has still not managed to protect the country.

[English]

Now doctors are seeing patients arrive in the ICU, who have had their first shot in some cases, and are well into the extended wait period for the second shot that the Prime Minister has approved to cover up his inability to deliver vaccines earlier, a four-month wait time between doses that is longer than any other country in the world and contrary to the advice of the developer and manufacturer of the vaccine. The Liberal government has forced an off-label usage of this vaccine only because there was insufficient supply. Its NACI board has acknowledged it would not be recommending a four-month delay if there was supply. This is leading to erosion of public confidence.

• (1015)

[Translation]

Front-line health care workers were left to fend for themselves. Meanwhile, public health directives were controlled or blocked. The Liberals let the virus spread. That made people more fearful and anxious. It also led to lockdowns and the tragic death of thousands of Canadians.

[English]

Canadians are beyond frustrated. Other countries are reopening. Our neighbours to the south are filling stadiums. Others are being spared from this serious risk of variants and this third wave.

Last spring, when it was clear that vaccines would be the key tool to turn the page in this crisis, the Prime Minister dropped the ball completely. While we have citizens in prison in China, disruption of trade, gross human rights violations, including genocide against Uighurs, the Prime Minister of Canada picked Communist China to partner for a vaccine to protect Canadians. I believe that in the future will be looked as one of the most negligent decisions by a Canadian prime minister in our history.

[Translation]

This situation is unacceptable, particularly for a G7 country like Canada. Things should not have happened this way. We are at this point because the Liberals were slow to respond every step of the way.

[English]

We are here because the response of the Liberal government throughout this pandemic has been confused and slow at every step. We are always scrambling to catch up and keep up. Because the federal government did not deliver adequate vaccine supply to the provinces in January and February, and because over the last few months we have been operating only at 50% or so of the delivery capacity the country has ready and we just do not have supply, that is why we have only 2.7% of Canadians fully vaccinated. That is why we are slower and having more lockdowns than other countries.

The government's own modelling said we would need 20% full vaccination and 75% first dose vaccination before it recommends a safe and effective reopening. The supplies we are receiving are so

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insufficient that it means more lockdowns, more small businesses in crisis and a slower reopening of our economy. We are going to miss summer because the government missed the mark in January and February, especially given the situation in the U.S., where we see how better management of that vaccine supply led to a faster reopening.

Canadians deserve better. They deserve better than a government that is always several steps behind, a government that is always refusing to explain its decisions, whether it is about partnering with CanSino or how many of its contracts are options or timelines to buy over many years, refusing to release contractual information, refusing to answer questions, and taking vaccine supply from the developing world through COVAX.

The only way the government made its objectives was from some charity from the United States, some extra supply, and by taking from the developing world. We are the only G7 country to do that, a recognition that the only G7 country that failed to deliver adequate vaccines was Canada. Canadians deserve better, and that is why we are bringing this debate to the House today.

[Translation]

Canadians deserve better, particularly in the midst of a pandemic. We need a sufficient supply of vaccines and a national testing approach to be able to reopen safely.

[English]

We need a national system of standards and screening for rapid tests so we can reopen safely and swiftly, because insufficient vaccine levels and variants mean we will need these tools.

I will review the tape for Canadians. A year ago, at one of the press conferences, the Prime Minister stood on his front step and said he would deliver rapid tests and tracing. All of these things he promised early he still has not delivered. We do not hear him talking about the app anymore, which was never fully adopted nationally. He has never rolled out a national system of screening and testing, and we now have a patchwork popping up. There is no consistency where we need it.

Last night, the President of the United States said the country had “an arsenal of vaccines” in storage to help others. Let us get them here. Let us get people vaccinated by May. Let us save our summer and let us have a safe, data-driven and effective reopening. Canadians deserve better.

• (1020)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have certainly come a long way since the member for Calgary Nose Hill stood right over there and said that we would not be getting vaccines until 2030.

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The reality here is that the Conservatives are just out of touch. They do not understand, or at least are choosing not to understand, the reality of the situation. We are currently third in the G7 and the G20 in delivering vaccines into arms, per capita. Our plan is exceeding the targets that were given to provinces when developing the administration plans back in the fall.

The Leader of the Opposition referenced rapid tests. Millions of rapid tests have been delivered to provinces in this country. This government has been performing better than what was promised and vaccines are getting into people's arms.

The reality of the situation is that if this motion could make a difference, I do not see why anybody would vote against it.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the chief spokesperson of the Liberal Party for his question. I would like to address this argument that we are third in the G7 and we are doing well. It is an absolute farce.

The only reason we have the level of vaccination at the first level we have is that the government actually violated the directions of the pharmaceutical developer of the vaccines. We are the only country in the world stretching four months between doses. I know the Liberals will change that when they finally get sufficient doses here. They will change it because they know there is a risk to it. They are willing to take risks with Canadians to cover up their incompetence. I would rather just see competence.

The other reason the Liberals say they exceeded their objectives is that they stole from the third world. That is shameful. They took from COVAX, a fund that Canada, as a G7 country, should have never been pulling from, and they have. We deserve better.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his intervention. It was an excellent way to start our Thursday morning. He spoke about the embarrassment of Canada taking vaccines from developing countries, from low- and middle-income countries. I have a lot of concerns. I have stood in this House many times and spoken about my concern about what will happen if we do not deal with COVID-19 as the global pandemic it is and ensure that people around the world are vaccinated and that we get to COVID zero.

From his perspective, would the member be supportive of waiving intellectual property rights so that countries like India and South Africa could access the vaccines and make sure their citizens are vaccinated, to protect Canadians and our global economy?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, the member's question is an important one. In fact, part of the reason COVAX was established by the G7 and other developed countries was to make sure that there could be an approach that respected global intellectual property but used the wealth of the developed world to provide sufficient quantities of vaccines for countries that would likely have trouble accessing them because of cost restrictions and lack of domestic capacity. That is why Canada, as a global player and as a leader, traditionally, should participate in COVAX. The fact that we are the only G7 country drawing from it is a sad testament to the Prime Minister's failure. We need as many vaccines as possible at home quickly, and then we should play our role internationally.

The President of the United States talked about the "arsenal of vaccines" that the U.S. will deploy. When he includes countries like Canada and Central America, we should be with the United States helping Central America, not having to rely on other countries, whether it is China or even our allies. Canadians deserve better. That is why we are bringing the debate today. That is why we have a plan to secure our country as part of the Canada recovery plan.

● (1025)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am looking at the calendar. It is April 29 today. It has been over a year since the start of the pandemic, and we are watching countries around the world have benchmarks and advice for reopening. We are watching them emerge from the pandemic. On April 29, 2021 in Canada, no Canadian has a line of sight on when restrictions will be safely and permanently lifted. Not a single person in this country has a line of sight on that. That lack of understanding of when things are going to be back to some level of hope has precipitated a third wave. Instead of having vaccines in January and February of this year, we are sitting in a third wave. That is the reality. If we had received more vaccines in January and February, we would not be sitting in a third wave that is this severe. That is a fact.

Every week, somebody from the federal government is standing up saying that the government is not getting the Moderna shipments this week, or something has changed with AstraZeneca, or it is not sure about Pfizer. Every week there is another announcement that has some level of uncertainty about vaccines. It has to stop. We need some hope going forward. We need certainty.

We have raised motions in this House asking the government to start looking at benchmarks for a safe reopening. Looking back, I think the reason why the government is so reticent to do this is that it does not have a line of sight on the vaccination status. It keeps reiterating these talking points, but fewer than 3% of Canadians are fully vaccinated. That is a remarkable failure.

Papers and academic journals have emerged showing that, particularly with the Pfizer vaccine, immunity may wane significantly if the second dose is delayed beyond the recommended 21 days. Will we be having another opposition day motion or debate in a month or a month and a half on a fourth wave because we are seeing that immunity is waning in people who had the first Pfizer shot, some of the most vulnerable in our country, such as frontline workers, long-term care residents and others, and COVID is spreading among them? That is a question the government cannot answer. It has not received enough supply to deal with this question. This is why it is so imperative for the government to get us more vaccines.

Let us talk about something I have tried to raise in question period, which is the ethics of how the government is getting us vaccines. Rather than scouring the country and doing everything possible to build up manufacturing capacity over the last year, we still do not have a line of sight on when the first dose of a Canadian-manufactured COVID vaccine will be administered in Canada. We do not have an answer to that. Instead of doing that, we are completely reliant on other countries.

Let us look at a country like India, which has supplied vaccines to the world and is one of the world's largest producers of vaccines, and it is going through an enormous third wave right now. We are a G7 country. Why have the Liberals not done more to address this in the last year? Why do we not have the answer to the question of when the first dose of Canadian-produced vaccine is going to be administered in Canada? Why are we guessing about when immunity might wane with Pfizer when people who have had their first dose do not know when they will get their second dose? This is a real problem.

Canadians, regardless of political stripe, are tired of this guessing game. They are tired of the uncertainty. How can provincial governments plan their vaccine strategies when the targets move every week? We have to start setting aspirational targets. Every party in the House, except for the Liberals, is doing that. Why can we not have enough vaccine that every Canadian can have an available dose by the end of May? Why is that not possible? Our peer countries, like the U.S. and the U.K., have been able to do that. If the government has the most efficient, effective portfolio of vaccines, why is this an issue?

• (1030)

I could reiterate for colleagues in the House things that everybody knows. We know that the government paid a higher amount for the AstraZeneca vaccine than other countries did. However, I do not think we have received a single dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine from our contract with AstraZeneca. We have only received the AstraZeneca vaccine from the COVAX fund and on loan from the United States. We paid double for something we have not even received, yet other countries have received it. How did that happen?

What recourse do we have with these manufacturers? What is in those contracts? The EU is considering litigating AstraZeneca over this issue. Why are we not? We need to set a target. We need certainty going forward, and that is why this motion is in front of the House today. We cannot just keep moving the goal post for Canadians who need to reopen their business, who are worried about getting sick, for ICU employees and front-line workers who do not

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know how they will manage. We cannot keep doing this. We have to set firm targets. We have to move hell and high water in the bureaucracy to get those targets met. We need to have a plan to get out of this.

This morning, I saw an advertisement, and I think it was in a British newspaper, essentially saying that the UK was moving out of the pandemic. Citizens in the United Kingdom have a line of sight on when they will move out of this, because of its ability to produce vaccines and because it has been able to set benchmarks. The Liberal government cannot do that. It will not even talk about these types of benchmarks because it does not have supply.

When an inquiry happens on this in a future Parliament, people are going to ask about the ethical decision of the Liberal government to delay dosing significantly beyond what manufacturers are recommending. It is because we have a shortage of vaccines. The Liberal talking points keep trying to muddy the waters on where Canada is on vaccination.

Less than 3% of Canadians are fully vaccinated. What happens in two or three months if further data emerges that shows there is actually a significant immunity problem or that immunity has waned so much, especially with the Pfizer vaccine, that people catch COVID again even though they have had their shot. This is a serious problem. We need that supply and we need it now.

The other thing this motion calls upon the government to do is to figure out the border. The government could have done so many things with regard to border restrictions. For colleagues who are listening and who might not realize this, the Indian double variant was identified in October of last year. How did that not get flagged by the Canadian government? How did that not translate into some level of action? Why are we not rapid testing even domestic passengers at airports? Why are we not prioritizing vaccination for essential workers going across the border, like truck drivers? Why is it that some people who travel across the border are exempted? There is a very spurious definition of essential worker.

These are things the government could be doing in the short term, while it is sorting out the vaccination issue, but it is not. The horses are out of the barn and every single time the government closes the gate behind them. It has been over a year. I think it is fair to call it gross incompetence at this point.

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That is why these types of motions are needed. It is for the House to give the government direction when it refuses to give that direction to itself. That is what Parliament is for. We need firm targets, firm benchmarks that the government can be held to account for by the Canadian public, both on vaccine acquisition and administration as well as on reopening. Anything less than that just will not do.

Less than 3% of the country is fully vaccinated. We are stealing vaccines from third world countries, because the government has not been able to figure this out. It has not taken recourse with these manufacturers. It is beyond the pale at this point.

• (1035)

I hope colleagues from other parties and the Liberal backbench will agree that this is something for which they should be holding the government to account. It is a firm timeline on vaccines so then there is direction to the executive to say that it will have to litigate these companies, that it will have to get written confirmation from other countries to ensure there will not be export restrictions. This is the type of political will that is needed to get out of this crisis. If it is going to take the Conservative Party putting motion after motion in the House of Commons to get the government to do this, then so be it.

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 am very disappointed, but not surprised. I am disappointed in the sense that the Conservatives, whether it is the leader of the Conservative Party or the health critic of the party, continue to spread statistical information to their political advantage. The absolute reality that needs to sink into the minds of the Conservatives, and they need to start focusing on it, is that Canadians from day one have been served in every capacity, with the need, of course, of making some changes.

The reality is that we will have over 40 million doses of vaccine before the end of June. We are number three in the G20 with respect to that single dose. The member will take steps—

The Deputy Speaker: We will have to leave it there. There is quite a list of people who want to ask questions.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that many Canadians are asking when are they getting their second dose or when they are getting their first dose to begin with. I am disappointed that front-line ICU workers are facing a third wave and shortage of staff because we did not have vaccines in January and February. I am disappointed that small businesses, that employees across the country have no line of sight on reopening. I am disappointed that people who have been separated from loved ones for over a year cannot see each other because they do not have a line of sight on vaccines.

I am disappointed in the government. Actually, that does not go far enough. I am ashamed of the government. I am ashamed that the Liberals do not have the courage to set stronger benchmarks and to give Canadians a path forward. They deflect, but they do not take actions, and that is what is disappointing.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Calgary Nose Hill.

She expressed her demands, but I want to point out that vaccination is going well in Quebec. We are sorry to see that it is proceeding more slowly in the rest of Canada.

Given the vaccine shortage, does she believe we need to maintain social distancing measures to stop the spread of this epidemic?

We need even stricter border measures. The numbers do not lie. What are her thoughts on that?

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, the way out of this pandemic is the amazing tools that have been developed by the world in a very short period of time, tools such as vaccines, rapid testing, therapeutics and data around transmission rates. On the blunt instrument of restrictions, of course, we need to abide by them now, but why? Because we do not have those tools deployed across the country. That is just the reality.

Over a year into the pandemic, when the CDC is releasing guidelines on what fully vaccinated persons can do or is talking about how lockdowns are going to be permanently restricted, we are having to enact more because we have not deployed those tools. We need to shift the narrative. People need to know that when they are complying with these blunt instruments of lockdowns, there is an end in sight to get that more durable solution. The narrative needs to be focused on that.

• (1040)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we are in this probably most brutal of all the waves because of the virulent new strains, yet the Liberal government was the only G7 country to raid the COVAX fund that was supposed to be helping in the third world. The Liberal government is refusing the WTO waiver to allow third world countries to get their vaccines up to par.

How does Canada even imagine that we are going to get through this in the long term if new virulent strains are happening because Canada is blocking at the WTO the ability of third world countries to get vaccines?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, the situation is dire. I agree with my colleague. We need to look at every innovative solution on the table to address this crisis, and we do need to look at vaccine equity. The Prime Minister is going to some sort of charity rock star concert. Of course he is. He is going to get his photo op while he is raiding the COVAX fund.

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I hope the organizers of that concert, if they are listening today, give a hard think about allowing the Prime Minister of Canada to speak on vaccine equity. We do not even have vaccine equity at home and he is talking about it internationally, virtue signalling to get some sort of photo op. It is like rubbing salt in the wound. It is disgusting.

Yes, of course, we need to be doing everything possible as a country to ensure there is vaccine equity around the world, but we also need to be getting it at home. The Prime Minister has failed on both fronts, and that is very disappointing.

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by acknowledging that I am speaking from the territory of many first nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wyandot peoples.

I will be splitting my time today with my parliamentary secretary.

I will address the motion before the House today point by point, as I believe, and I am sure everyone agrees, that we have to remain factual and clear when debating such important matters as Canada's vaccine strategy. Unfortunately the motion before us contains significant areas of incomplete and incorrect information before it reaches a disingenuous and misleading conclusion.

[Translation]

First, the motion's preamble states that 2.7% of Canadians are fully vaccinated, which means they have received two doses of one of the vaccines that is currently approved for use in this country.

I am not disputing that figure, but it ignores the fact that 31% of all Canadians have received at least one dose of the vaccine, which puts us in third place in the G20.

[English]

I will speak more to the overall picture of where Canada stands in our vaccine efforts in a moment.

Next, the opposition would have us believe that our entire vaccine campaign should be defined by a three-week period during which suppliers were retooling and ramping up production in the early part of this year. It is true that Canada experienced disruptions in the early days relating to supply chain issues, which I communicated to Canadians immediately upon receiving the information from one of our suppliers.

[Translation]

However, even as the opposition kept saying that Canada would never recover from that temporary delay, my team and I continued to apply pressure and work hard every day to make our suppliers honour their contracts. Let us take some time to look at where that hard work has gotten us.

At the time, we said we were on track to meet our quarterly objective of six million doses. We actually exceeded that objective by over 50% and received 9.5 million doses during the first part of this year.

• (1045)

[English]

To date, nearly 15 million doses of vaccines have been delivered to Canada, and nearly 13 million of those have been administered by provinces and territories. Through our relationships with vaccine suppliers, we have advanced the delivery dates of 28 million doses. Canada is solidly in the top three among G20 nations for total number of doses administered per capita, average daily doses administered and percentage of our population with at least one dose. This is despite the opposition's continued claims that we would not have any doses until 2030.

From our solid base of procurements, we will continue to build. Starting next week, Pfizer alone will be delivering two million doses a week for every week in May before moving to 2.4 million doses a week for all of June. Those are benchmarks. In total, Canada will receive between 48 million and 50 million doses by the end of June, with tens of millions more coming before the end of September.

The next point of the motion I would like to address is one concerning the timing of administration of doses. The Conservatives, while in government, muzzled scientists. Now, in opposition, they seem to have gone a step further by trying to deny that scientists exist.

Let us be very clear about the misinformation included in the motion we are debating. The federal government does not decide to whom vaccine doses are administered or when they are administered. Qualified doctors and immunologists, acting on the best scientific data available, make recommendations on how to achieve the best public health outcomes possible, and even with that, the guidance provided by the independent National Advisory Committee on Immunization is exactly that: guidance.

Each province and each territory is responsible for making its own decisions in terms of the rollout and the administration of vaccines. That is part of our constitutional framework. Most public health experts say it is far better to have two people with 80% protection than it is to have one person with 90% protection and another with absolutely no protection at all. It is similar to the approach that was followed in the U.K., among other countries. Personally, I find that argument compelling.

However, to put it bluntly, my opinion on the matter of dosing intervals is irrelevant. This is not a political decision. This is medical advice provided by medical professionals and experts in the field of immunization and public health, and it is based in fact and in science. Our government did not order doctors to draw any conclusions, and we most certainly did not order them to change their advice for political reasons. Frankly, I find it troubling, given everything we have seen during this pandemic, that the opposition would suggest that doctors had been ignored and overruled for partisan reasons.

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[Translation]

The opposition does not appear to understand how our country works. On the advice of the vaccine task force and Health Canada, Public Services and Procurement Canada has pursued an aggressive procurement strategy to ensure that we have a diverse portfolio of vaccines, as well as the syringes, needles and other products that are also needed, all with the goal of ensuring that Canada is very well positioned to fight COVID-19.

Health Canada confirms that vaccines are properly tested to ensure their safety and effectiveness. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization reviews the actual data, in Canada and elsewhere, and provides advice on best practices and uses for the various vaccines. Major-General Dany Fortin and his team at the national operations centre continue to ensure the timely distribution of vaccines and immunization supplies to the provinces and territories.

• (1050)

[English]

Once those doses are delivered, it is then up to the provinces and territories to make their own decisions concerning the administration of vaccines and to make decisions when it comes to prioritizing populations, administration locations and timing. It is my understanding that the Conservatives are close with some of these premiers, so I would respectfully suggest, if they disagree with the way the vaccines are being administered, to perhaps take it up with the premiers themselves.

Point (iv) of the motion, and the final point in the preamble, states that Canadians from British Columbia to my home province of Nova Scotia are facing increasing restrictions due to the third wave. On this point, I do agree. It is factual and relevant. We must all remember that, at the end of the day, the decisions governments make, the promises we make and the messages we send have real impacts on real people, which is why we must remain factual, realistic and forthright. Sadly, the conclusion of the motion does not live up to that test.

Given its demonstrated misunderstanding of the current global situation around vaccine production, supply chains, the science guiding the administration of doses, and federal and provincial roles, it comes as no surprise that the opposition concludes this motion by saying that the government should complete the largest mass-vaccination program in Canadian history by its arbitrarily set deadline of the May long weekend.

Let us take a moment to think about the real-world implications of what is being proposed. At a time when COVID vaccines are the single most sought after commodity in the world, and Canada is among the leading nations in the procurement of these vaccines, and with no suggestions on how to accomplish this goal, the Conservatives are proposing that Canada complete the procurement portion of the largest mass-immunization campaign in Canadian history in the next three weeks.

I have worked on procuring vaccines for Canadians and accelerating the delivery of doses every single day since last spring without exception. I have spoken with the top executives of nearly every major vaccine supplier in the world. Our team across govern-

ment has reached out to international and domestic partners in search of vaccines.

To say that this motion is nothing more than political theatre is an understatement. It is detached from reality and, frankly, irresponsible.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister engaging in debate.

In British Columbia, we have the highest recorded number of people with COVID-19 in our hospitals. People in Kelowna in long-term care, seniors who have received their first shot, are getting sick. Outbreaks are continuing.

By the way, there is a big difference between a benchmark and a target. This government has set targets that it is attempting to make. A benchmark is when we actually compare our targets with someone else's. I think that my constituents would say that the U.S., the U.K. and Israel have much different benchmarks than what this government considers.

At our borders we are seeing the transmission of variants from other countries. Once they have entered the country, community transmission becomes exponential. My point is this: Does this minister understand that, when she fails to get Canadians the supplies they need to fight this virus, she will not be able to catch up to the variants her government allowed into this country? Will she be accountable for that?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the question from the member opposite, but I will say that the word “fails” is an exaggeration.

We have received 14.7 million doses in this country, and 12.8 million doses have been administered. The percentage of the Canadian population vaccinated with at least one dose is 31%, and we are third in the G20 for cumulative doses administered. Two million doses of Pfizer alone are coming for the next four weeks in May, and we will be receiving 2.5 million doses for five weeks in June.

These are numbers that are going to continue to drive the number of Canadians with access to vaccines increasingly higher, and 48 million to 50 million doses will be here prior to the end of June.

We are working—

• (1055)

The Deputy Speaker: We will continue with questions and comments.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I think she will agree that this motion is typical of the Conservatives. It is ideological, partisan and unrealistic. Still, it does spark debate.

My colleague must admit that the government has failed miserably. The vaccine could have been created here in Canada. I do agree with my friends in the Conservative Party that this has been an abject failure.

Will my hon. colleague admit that the vaccine could have been created in Canada?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

I agree with my colleague on the fact that this is a very political and ideological motion. The narrative leaves out important facts about vaccine production, which was ramping up in January and February and is now opening new possibilities here in Canada.

We surpassed our goals in the first quarter and Canada has already received 14.7 million doses. Our goal is to have vaccines for—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We have time for a brief question.

The hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the race to get vaccines and administer them is obviously critical. I am proud to have joined my colleague, the MP for Vancouver Kingsway, back in December to push for early vaccinations for first nations and northern communities. Many were involved in this critical advocacy.

I want to acknowledge that the government responded to our calls. We have seen significant levels of vaccinations, particularly in first nations, and that is now opening up across the north in our province.

It is clear that the national level of vaccinations is not where it needs to be. Canada lacks vaccines. We did not have to be here. We had Connaught Laboratories, and the Conservatives and Liberals killed the lab. Canada is one of the wealthiest countries in the world. We have all the resources and human power to be able to produce what we need to deal with crises like this one.

What is the Liberal government doing to ensure that, going forward, Canada has the capacity to produce the life-saving vaccines we will need in the future?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for acknowledging that vaccinations in indigenous communities has been a priority for this government. It will continue to be so.

In terms of her question relating to domestic production, our procurement has proceeded along two tracks. The first track has been under my purview, which is to ensure that we have vaccines coming into the country from international suppliers. On the second track, relating to domestic production, we have put \$126 million into the NCR facility in Montreal for the production of vaccines domestically. We have signed an MOU with Moderna for the production of vaccines at that facility.

In addition, we have signed an APA with Medicigo in Quebec. That company is in the third phase of clinical trials. We will continue to enhance and invest in the domestic production of vaccines,

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but it is a two-track approach. We need to make sure that we have vaccines here as soon as possible. That is why we are going to be seeing millions and millions of doses coming into the country, 48 million to 50 million doses prior to the end of June, and Pfizer is delivering two million doses or more—

• (1100)

The Deputy Speaker: We are a little over time, and we will now go to resuming debate.

[*Translation*]

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this debate sponsored by the member for Calgary Nose Hill.

[*English*]

I would like to take a moment to consider the effects of this motion, which calls on the government to ensure that every Canadian adult has access to a vaccine by the May long weekend.

The member for Calgary Nose Hill has been politicizing the vaccine rollout since day one, which has only created concern and fear at a time when we should be working together. Last November, November 25 to be precise, when the Prime Minister stood in this chamber and explained our government's approach to procuring a diverse portfolio of vaccines, the member for Calgary Nose Hill was of the opinion that Canada was not going to receive any vaccines until 2030. The member was wrong then, and the motion that stands in her name today shows that she is wrong now. This disregard for evidence and science that has guided and continues to guide the Conservative opposition with respect to one of the largest, if not the largest, inoculation campaigns in Canadian history is disturbing indeed, and it has dashed our hopes that we could have a non-partisan approach to such a massive undertaking.

[*Translation*]

I will talk about the government's vaccine diversification strategy, but first I want to address Canadian citizens who have endured pain and suffering because of this awful virus.

This has been a very difficult period in our lives. Canadians have been torn apart, living in isolation and uncertainty for over a year now. I know that here in Gatineau my constituents have expressed their frustration. They are fed up at not being able to visit their family or friends, or leave their house after curfew. We have all done our part and we cannot wait for this pandemic to be over.

I want to express my sincere gratitude for our health care workers, especially in the Outaouais, where the system is stretched thin, but also in the rest of Canada. These workers are our heroes on the front line of this battle and they have been since day one.

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We are finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. Our vaccination strategy is ramping up week after week, month after month, thanks to the hard work of the minister and the public servants at Public Services and Procurement, whom I have the honour to work with.

[*English*]

While on this side of the House we are working to protect Canadians at every turn, the Conservatives and the member opposite continue to spread misinformation. This motion is not based on fact. It seeks to discredit the hard-working public servants and the massive infrastructure of inoculation and vaccination across the country. They are working together to ensure that Canadians receive vaccines as early as possible.

The motion states there were not enough vaccines being delivered in January and February, when in the first quarter of this year, from January to March, we managed to surpass our goal of six million doses delivered by a full 3.5 million doses, for a total of close to 10 million doses. Admittedly, production delays disturbed our work for a couple of weeks early in the quarter, but we recovered extremely well and in fact surpassed our objectives. When we take into account that those doses were delivered not even a year from the start of the pandemic, this is a miracle of modern science.

[*Translation*]

In fact, our government initiated negotiations with vaccine manufacturers last spring. When we learned that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines would be approved in Canada, we made sure we would receive doses from them starting in December.

That is proof that the government is working hard for Canadians and acting with urgency. As soon as we were able to, we made sure that we would get vaccines. That is the support Canadians expect at this time. They do not need partisan rhetoric that only seeks to spread misinformation.

Our effective strategy on behalf of Canadians ensured that our government had access to more than 400 million doses of potential vaccines from seven different manufacturers.

• (1105)

[*English*]

As we know, manufacturers have encountered challenges scaling up their production to meet the unprecedented demand all around the world for their safe and effective vaccines. In this reality, it is not surprising that vaccine supply chains have been volatile and unstable. However, this is precisely why we pursued a diversified strategy, and we are now reaping the benefits of that strategy.

To date, more than 15 million doses of the approved vaccines have been delivered to the provinces and territories, with more than 12 million doses administered. This is significant progress. We are now among the top three in the G20 for vaccines administered, and are usually at or close to the top for daily vaccinations in the world. However, we will not stop there.

[*Translation*]

I know that the minister and public officials continued to work day in and day out with suppliers to ensure they met their contrac-

tual obligations and also to find ways to expedite deliveries to Canada.

These efforts bore fruit. By June, Canada will receive 18 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine rather than the eight million originally expected. Pfizer will ship two million doses per week by the end of May and 2.5 million doses per week in June. What is more, doses of the Moderna vaccine continue to arrive in the country and we are working with the manufacturer on an ongoing basis to fine-tune the delivery schedule. Good news. Yesterday we received more than 300,000 Johnson & Johnson vaccine doses.

[*English*]

All together, we have accelerated 22 million doses to earlier quarters, which is 22 million doses earlier than what was otherwise targeted. This means that by the end of June, Canada will receive between 48 million and 50 million doses of vaccines, as compared with our previous target of 29 million doses. It is a considerable achievement by any measure. It also means that the government will have more than enough doses by the end of September to fully vaccinate every eligible person in Canada.

With that in mind, I wonder what the Conservatives hope to accomplish with this motion. We are already accelerating doses as soon as we are able, and our negotiations with the suppliers are not solely focused on vaccines coming in this year to protect Canadians. We are also looking forward to what comes next. That is why the government has recently entered into an agreement with Pfizer to secure 65 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines of various formulations in 2022 and 2023, with options of up to 120 million more in 2024, if all options are exercised.

[*Translation*]

The agreement with Pfizer will give us the necessary flexibility to obtain boosters, new formulations of the vaccine to protect against the variants of concern and vaccines tailored for younger populations. The government's efforts continue to be guided by science and the advice of experts.

Getting back to today's debate, I am simply disappointed by this motion. Establishing an arbitrary deadline for the vaccination of Canadians without any justification is, at best, imprudent. Instead, I invite members to work together so we can emerge from this pandemic as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am online from rural Manitoba, and there is no one around me for miles. We are in a lockdown in Manitoba right now. We can have one person in our houses and no one in our backyards, so members can imagine that we are feeling the lockdown rather greatly here.

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I have had lots of questions about the contracts that were signed with the pharmaceutical companies, especially for rapid testing. I am wondering why the government is not sharing those details with Canadians and the opposition, as is being done in the U.S. and the U.K., our trading partners.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, my thoughts are with the people in the member's riding and everywhere in Manitoba who are coping, as we all are, with the effects of the pandemic.

No country in the world has shared the entire details of vaccination contracts. That is precisely because all countries in the world are in a race to vaccinate their citizens.

Canada has been very successful in its procurement strategy precisely because we have good relationships with pharmaceutical companies and vaccine suppliers and precisely because we honour the stipulations of our contracts with them to the letter. We will continue to do so, and that is in the interest of securing vaccines quickly, safely and efficiently for all Canadians, including those who live in Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

• (1110)

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last two Liberal speakers have told us different numbers for how many doses have been brought in to date. I have heard 14 million and I have heard 14.7 million. Now it is more than 15 million. What is the actual number?

The motion calls for every Canadian to have access to a vaccine by the May long weekend. If the government is saying that this is not reasonable, what is the number that it feels it can do by the long weekend?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague will have to respect the fact that vaccines are literally flooding into this country, so the numbers contained in speeches may fluctuate a bit from day to day.

We are approaching 15 million vaccines, which have been distributed to the provinces and territories, and that number will rise to close to 50 million vaccines by the end of June. I know the member can do the math as easily as I can, but that covers the entire population of Canada, every man, woman and child. That obviously goes significantly deep into the second dosing regime as well, and I know the member will be able to calculate that. At a rate of two million Pfizer doses alone being received in May and 2.5 million a week being received in June, that number will go up very, very rapidly.

We are very proud of the progress that is being made in vaccinating Canadians.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as luck would have it, today is the day that I get my first vaccination. I am 66 years old. I have been waiting my turn, and I am being very careful.

I regret this kind of debate because of the level of partisanship in it. I suspect that if the constitutional responsibilities were different so that it was up to the provinces to order the vaccines and up to the feds to do other aspects, the Conservatives would want to debate

how terrible it is that the vaccine rollout is bad and what a great job the provinces are doing in ordering vaccines.

I do not think that is the right approach. I think we run a risk. Number one, I wish we were doing better in getting our vaccines rolled out, and I agree with much of what the member for Calgary Nose Hill has said. However, I also think we are at a real risk with the variants, as many have warned, including the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.K. and Israel. They are all looking at the situation and saying that people should not reduce their level of caution because they have gotten the first vaccine. We could run a risk with variants that are resistant to vaccines. The longer the variants move in our population, the more we will get.

In a holistic approach, does my hon. colleague agree with me that we need to do more to protect ourselves from the variants, as they move as aerosols, not as droplets?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am very glad to hear that the hon. member will be getting her jab. I know she will feel, as millions of Canadians have, the relief that comes with it. I certainly wish her good luck, and hope, of course, that she continues to be cautious when it comes to looking after her health.

Indeed, we want to follow the most up-to-date science in making sure that Canadians protect themselves against all possible permutations of this virus. We want to make sure that Canadians continue to follow all of the public health prescriptions for masks, distancing and washing hands, and do that right through to when we achieve herd immunity. I know we are all looking forward to that day.

We will continue, on our part, bringing in vaccines as quickly as possible so that Canadians can get the two doses that are needed in most cases, except with the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The two-dose regime will bring a lot of relief, and it will bring a lot of hope to Canadians that the pandemic will soon be behind us.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

Before I comment on the Conservatives' vaccination motion, I must offer my condolences to the family of Francine Boyer, who died of adverse effects from the vaccine. Her family has shown incredible resilience and a sense of duty. In spite of their grief, they continue to assume full responsibility for the risk-benefit assessment that factored into their decision to get vaccinated, and they encourage people to continue getting vaccinated. I pay my respects to them.

I am struggling with the Conservatives' motion. Somewhere between 2015 and 2019, I started noticing that the Conservatives seemed to like doing opposition days on which they were alone in voting for their motion at the end of the day. The same thing is happening today, but the stakes are much higher.

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It is true that the numbers of people who have received both doses in Canada and Quebec are low, but this is because Quebec and Canada chose to delay the second dose. This decision was made to reduce the risk of hospitalization, since it has been proven that a single dose can protect against the serious complications of the virus. All along, this has been about our capacity to best care for COVID-19 patients who develop serious complications and the concern that our networks and hospitals would not be able to provide life-saving care and prevent serious long-term effects.

I did not hear the manufacturer speak out against Quebec, which was the first to extend the interval between the two doses. At that time, Quebec had the highest infection rate. It put that practice into effect in order to adjust to what was happening on the ground. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization then assessed Quebec's approach. Under the circumstances, it was determined that that was the right thing to do. Delaying the second dose was a necessary and appropriate strategy, since we were not receiving sufficient quantities of the vaccines. Obviously, any country that does not have manufacturing capacity could have ended up in the same situation as we did.

I clearly remember that, on March 3, Health Canada issued a statement indicating that it approved delaying the administration of the second dose. In that scientific advisory, and I think we need to rely on science, Health Canada recognized the lack of data beyond two months but indicated that the protection offered by one dose, combined with the limited vaccine supply and the risk of outbreak, justified extending the interval between doses. Health Canada also indicated that, even in situations where protection would be weakened over time, modelling showed that delaying the second dose was justified in order to stop the pandemic.

The Institut national de santé publique du Québec, which advised the Government of Quebec on its vaccination strategy, was vindicated by the reality on the ground, and it is worth pointing out that other countries have followed suit with their vaccination strategies.

The Conservatives claim to be ardent champions of decentralization, so I would like to gently remind them that the federal government's responsibility is to supply vaccines. It is up to Quebec and the provinces to develop their vaccination strategy as dictated by the reality of their own situations.

• (1120)

My grandmother used to say, "Too much is just as bad as not enough". The pandemic demands that we be rigorous. Because we, as elected members, are central to the decision-making process and to questioning those decisions, our approach must be credible. Why? Because getting to the end of this crisis depends on vaccination, as well as on people's compliance with the guidance put forward by public health and scientists and on maintaining and respecting public health measures.

As members know, Quebec implemented a curfew. That has turned out to be a very effective way to counter the effects of the third wave and potential variants.

In my opinion, the motion the Conservatives moved this morning is like playing with fire. It is wrong to take advantage of people's exhaustion and the mental load associated with all these measures.

This is hard for everyone. Mental health-wise, these are very trying times. That is why I use the word exhaustion in every sense of the word. It is wrong to do that and reduce our actions to partisan politicking.

During a pandemic, we must not allow our sense of duty to override our critical thinking. We must question decisions, of course, and we can demand accountability in a cross-party way when necessary. However, the motion we will be discussing all day asks the House to call on the government to ensure that every Canadian adult has access to a vaccine by the May long weekend.

Vaccinating everyone is unrealistic on every level. Neither the federal government, nor the provinces, Quebec or any G7 country or state would be able to vaccinate 97.3% of its population in less than a month. The motion is sadly unrealistic in terms of both delivery and inoculation. We have to make that distinction.

Due to a global shortage of vaccines, it is impossible for Canada to obtain enough doses to pull this off. Quebec and the provinces would need to administer more than three million doses a day, 24 hours a day, starting tomorrow. We will therefore be discussing a completely unrealistic scenario. What is more, we do not know what impact the situation in India, the pharmacy of the world, will have on vaccination worldwide and in Canada.

I want to send a clear message this morning that I denounce the Conservatives' counterproductive attitude. They are creating fake debates, which could derail people's willingness to comply with social distancing measures. We also need to consider their consistency. As recently as March 23, right before the third wave, the Conservatives moved a motion calling for a reopening plan. Everyone knows what is happening right now in Ontario, for example, and elsewhere.

With today's motion, the Conservatives appear out of touch with the reality on the ground. I have no idea what information they are relying on to determine what public health measures should be taken, but they certainly are not relying on the science. The Conservative motion is clearly partisan and unrealistic, as we have heard many times today.

It is true that many people are facing restrictions and lockdowns, but for good reason, because we are in the midst of the third wave, and the variants continue to spread. If there is any criticism to be made, it is in the area of border management and the need to enhance screening measures. A very insightful article on this subject was published this morning.

I think it is fair to say that our borders are still basically a sieve. The government will repeat the same old lines and tell us that it has put in place some of the most restrictive measures on the planet. The fact remains that border measures are not being enforced, and the variants continue to enter Canada.

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• (1125)

When it comes to vaccination, the Liberals and Conservatives share responsibility for this failure. The fact that Canada cannot produce any vaccines here did not start with the first wave. The vaccine manufacturing capacity that once existed in this country was gradually dismantled due to a lack of support. Now Canada is no longer independent in that area.

Obviously in Quebec—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member's speaking time has expired.

The member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Some days the Bloc Québécois is on our side, and other days it supports the Liberals. Today, the Bloc Québécois has decided that the Liberals took the right approach.

Will my colleague admit that if the Liberals had not initially negotiated with China and CanSinoBIO, there would not have been a three-month delay and all Canadians would have had at least one dose by May 17? Does he agree?

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, the very premise of the member's question is partisan.

Since I unfortunately was not able to finish my speech, I did not get a chance to point out the problems with the government's approach. It is clear that both the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party share responsibility for our inability to manufacture a vaccine and our dependence on other countries for vaccines. Neither of these parties did anything to protect the infrastructure that would have been needed.

The episode that the member mentioned probably did cause a delay, but it is not the sole reason we are where we are in the vaccination process. However, I do agree with the member that it contributed to our dependence with regard to vaccine manufacturing.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would agree with my hon. colleague that this started with the Conservatives gutting our ability to produce our own vaccines. Now we find ourselves in this situation.

In my riding of Winnipeg Centre, we have a number of individuals who are not sheltered. As we know in Ontario, if we do not look after everybody in the circle, we are all at risk.

I have been really concerned about the lack of focus on the populations that are more at risk of getting the virus because they do not have human rights such as housing and the ability to wash their hands frequently. I feel that the federal government has failed with respect to ensuring human rights, which has placed all of us at risk.

I wonder if he would like to comment on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the reality is different from one territory or province to the next. To be honest, I do not know what the member is referring to exactly.

The vaccination strategies, especially in Quebec, prioritized vulnerable people and groups with a higher mortality rate. I recall that these strategies led to the establishment of criteria and that this categorization was not questioned in Quebec, which started by vaccinating the most vulnerable people based on their age.

I know that we cannot delve too deeply into this issue in our exchanges, but perhaps another colleague will. For now, my response is that the strategy of vaccinating vulnerable people based on their age was supported by everyone in Quebec.

• (1130)

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Montcalm for his presentation.

I would like him to tell us more about the impact that the lack of health transfers has had on our ability to distribute vaccines and implement a more comprehensive strategy.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is giving me the opportunity to recognize the efforts of frontline health care workers and to thank them for doing such a great job of taking care of us. It is thanks to their hard work that Quebec is currently quite well positioned and ranked eighth in the world for its inoculation capacity.

The connection that I am making with health transfers is that it would be nice if health care workers could continue doing their job and not leave the profession. We are seeing a staff exodus in some frontline sectors.

An immediate increase in health transfers could improve the situation. It would also enable the Government of Quebec to immediately plan and announce measures to improve the working conditions of frontline workers in the short, medium, and long terms. Not only would such an increase improve the health of workers and patients, but it would also help us get through the pandemic, which is not over yet, I might add.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Gosh darn it, Mr. Speaker, I have had enough of this pandemic. I am completely fed up, I want no truck with it, and I grew up in Vermont, where we like our trucks, so that is saying something.

Like everyone here, in February, I asked some questions of the government, specifically the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. When doing so, I told them that I hoped that they would succeed in meeting their vaccine procurement objectives, but I also told them that I was worried about the fact that Canada was so highly dependent on foreign countries.

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That has nothing to do with the ability of the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to negotiate. She lives up to her reputation as an organized, determined and hard-working woman. The current results regarding the procurement of vaccines lend support to that reputation, despite the delays.

Today we are debating a motion moved by a woman who is just as organized, just as determined and just as hard-working. That is why this motion surprises me.

I would like to explain my surprise by commenting on each aspect of the motion. Let us keep in mind that the motion is calling on the government to ensure that every Canadian has access to a vaccine by the May long weekend, which is when Quebec celebrates National Patriots Day and the rest of Canada celebrates Victoria Day.

The first paragraph of the motion states that 2.7% of Canadians are fully vaccinated. However, 33.7% of Quebecers have received their first dose, as have 29.9% of Canadians, which places them 8th and 13th in global rankings, respectively.

When the Conservative Party calls on the government to ensure that every Canadian has access to a vaccine, does it mean access to two doses, given that the percentage referenced is for fully vaccinated Canadians? If so, that would mean the Conservative Party wants almost 74 million doses to arrive and be administered by May 20. That would mean receiving and administering over 3.5 million doses per day.

In Quebec alone, that is almost 775,000 doses to receive and administer each day. Since Canada is not a vaccine producer, I do not see how it would be humanly possible to do that. We have to be realistic.

After doing a few calculations, I was sure I had made a mistake. Maybe the motion is asking for one dose per person by May 20. That involves the receipt and administration of 26 million doses by May 20, or 1.2 million doses received and administered each day across the country. That means more than 271,000 doses received and administered each day in Quebec alone. That is a lot.

I reread the motion, and thought that not every Canadian wants to be vaccinated. Maybe the Conservative Party wants to achieve herd immunity, or about an 80% vaccination rate? I crunched the numbers again: herd immunity at 80% means 20.8 million doses received by May 20, one dose per person, so more than 990,000 doses received and administered each day, and more than 217,000 doses received and administered each day in Quebec alone.

Then I thought that maybe 80% of Canadians do not want to be vaccinated. We cannot force people to get the vaccine. Only those who want it will get it. How can you calculate the desire to be vaccinated? How do you calculate the number of people? It is impossible to calculate the number of doses we need.

In short, how many vaccines will the Conservative Party force the government to receive, and Quebec and the other provinces to administer, each day?

With respect to the second point in the motion, the federal government failed to ensure a sufficient and constant supply in January and February. We all agree on that.

• (1135)

That being said, I would like to point out that past policies and decisions made by both the Liberal and the Conservative parties created a situation in which pharmaceutical companies packed up and left Canada, making us extremely vulnerable not only to what happens in this country, but to our relations with other countries. We are dependent. That is the problem we must work to resolve, both in legislation and on the ground.

For example, India's doses of AstraZeneca are staying in India, which is seeing 200,000 deaths a day. India wants to protect its own people. Is the motion asking, between the lines, that Canada oblige countries to supply us with vaccines despite their own situation, putting the lives of their own people and the health of their own economy at risk to save ours?

Knowing how generous and kind my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill is, I know that that is not the case. Nevertheless, the result is the same: We are dependent on what we can get from other countries. That is what we need to work on. We have the specialists, the knowledge and the workers we need not to be dependent. That is what we must focus on. We must make sure that we never find ourselves so dependent again.

The third point in the motion establishes that the government extended the recommended interval for the second vaccine dose to four months against the recommendations of vaccine manufacturers.

I remember that, in January, the Liberal government said in a press conference that it was irresponsible of Quebec to give as many people as possible their first shot and to give them their second three to four months later.

Only fools never change their minds. Canada has now adopted Quebec's strategy. The United Kingdom also successfully adopted the strategy, authorities in France and Belgium have announced similar measures, and other countries in the European Union are considering following their lead. The aim is to ensure that as many people as possible get at least one shot. The first dose is 75% effective. That slows the spread of the virus.

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No one enjoys living under these restrictions. As I said at the beginning of my speech, I am eager for a return to normalcy. A grandmother wrote to tell me that she has not hugged her grandchildren in more than a year. She was angry, and I understand. A friend of mine closed her hair salon and made a career change. She had been considering it, but the repeated closure of non-essential services hastened her decision. My own mother has not seen her grandchildren in months. That being said, what would have happened if we had not imposed any measures at all? We saw what happened in countries around the world. Let us rather focus on the refusal to take swift action, particularly when it came to closing the border.

I would like to return to the first point, that is, the number of vaccines needed. Today's motion does not take into account the ability of Quebec and the provinces to administer the vaccine. It represents an unknown number of vaccines, perhaps as many as 775,000 doses per day in Quebec alone. Do Quebec and the provinces have the necessary infrastructure and personnel? Health care workers are exhausted, and we would be asking them to work 24/7 in addition to hiring new personnel.

The motion's vagueness on the number of doses required and the fact that it does not take into account the capacity to administer the vaccine, both in Quebec and in the Canadian provinces, mean that I cannot support the motion, with all due respect to my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill. Let us focus on ways to ensure that Canada will never again have to depend on other countries to survive future disasters and crises.

Of course, mistakes have been made. There is still room for improvement, even today, but let us look toward the future. Let us make sure these mistakes are never repeated, so we can move forward, restart our economy, hug our loved ones and have a beer on a patio with friends. Vaccination is how we get there.

Demanding an excessive number of vaccines, given the capacity of Quebec and the Canadian provinces to administer the doses, is pointless. This debate is not helpful. Let us get the first round of vaccines into arms quickly. We need to be specific, fair and equitable.

• (1140)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I serve with her on the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

From the beginning, we have been asking many questions in committee about contracts and everything related to procurement. We have met with the minister a few of times.

Would my colleague agree that if the Canadian government had not wasted so much time with China in May 2020 and had negotiated in advance, all Canadians would have received a vaccine by May 15, and there would have been sufficient capacity in the provinces to administer the vaccines at a normal pace?

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, we could debate all the strategies, starting with putting all our eggs in one basket, providing researchers and knowledge, and having some sort of partnership.

The partner turned out to be unreliable and cut us loose. Canada then turned to a strategy of having as many partners as possible to ensure that we would not have a shortage of vaccines in the event of unforeseen circumstances.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is refreshing, quite frankly, to see a member in the House stand up and just analyze the facts of a motion. Looking at the numbers, she went through the math on this. It leads one to believe that the motion is for nothing other than partisan gain. The reality is that the opposition has the opportunity to bring forward motions on a daily basis. It could have brought forward a motion on how we combat vaccine hesitancy in our country and the development of a strategy for that.

Why does the member think the Conservatives brought forward this motion, which does not serve any practical purpose, instead of something that could genuinely have advanced the need to develop strategies around vaccine distribution?

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Doing politics differently is being able to set aside partisanship to focus on the needs of the people, whether they voted for us or not.

Why was this motion moved today?

Only the Conservatives can answer that. Are they looking to get sound bites so that every party but theirs drops in the ratings?

I do not know. However, knowing the member for Calgary Nose Hill, I hope that it was moved out of heartfelt concern and generosity and not partisanship.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hopefully in the future my colleague and I will be able to sit on that patio together and talk about some of these issues in a face-to-face manner.

I want to touch upon the member's discussion about vaccine production and the ability for us to have domestic production. Her and other colleagues have noted that this is not just a Liberal issue. This happened under the Conservatives and the Liberals. We have lost our ability to have national vaccine production. We know this is probably not going to be the last pandemic.

What would she propose we do to build up our national vaccine production so we are not stuck in this situation when future pandemics occur?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, vaccine manufacturing is not the only failure on the pharmaceutical side.

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I am not a big fan of pharma companies, but I recognize that there are often 10, 15 or 20 years of research in all areas before a vaccine or a drug goes to market.

We must put in place a research and development system that is horizontal and not vertical, or a silo. It is impossible for one company to do everything. It is not cost-effective.

We also have to look at reforms. Will they truly benefit us or will we continue to be dependent on others?

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

The Deputy Speaker: I would just interrupt the hon. member there. He might have been about to explain something about his headset. I do notice that it is not one that was authorized by the House. Does he have a comment on that?

Mr. Don Davies: I do indeed, Mr. Speaker. You anticipated where I was going. Unfortunately, my Surface Pro is acting up and I cannot connect. The only way I can connect to give my speech is through my phone, and this is the only microphone I have.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member. At this point, it does look like we are getting sufficient quality of sound since interpretation, which is our biggest concern, matters. It is acceptable, so we will go ahead with the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway. I appreciate his efforts to get through these kinds of technical challenges.

The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay.

Former NDP leader Jack Layton left a big mark in the House and also in the country. One of his famous phrases, which I have taken to heart, was that it was part of an opposition's job not just to oppose but to propose.

From the outset, the New Democratic caucus, led by our leader, has taken that to heart, and we have worked very hard and diligently to not only hold the government accountable, but also to provide positive constructive policies that will help Canadians in this great time of need.

Of course, I think it goes without saying that Canadians have not faced such serious economic and health challenges and dangers in very many decades. Our number one goal, as the New Democratic caucus, has always been to place the needs of Canadians first to ensure they have the economic and health supports they need to get them through what is a once-in-a-century global pandemic.

I will itemize some of the accomplishments we have achieved in this regard.

We are responsible for over 15 separate improvements to the economic supports Canadians have obtained through this crisis, whether it is the \$2,000 CERB, ensuring it was extended when needed; or ensuring small businesses had their wage subsidy go from the original 10% to 75%; or proposing paid sick days and leading the charge for those days. It was the New Democrats who

put that on the national agenda. We have proposed national standards for long-term care to address what all Canadians realize is a shameful letdown of the seniors who built our country.

We were the first party to raise the efficacy of masks. We were the first party to raise the issue of community and asymptomatic transmission at the health committee. We were the first party to have proposed, concretely, a real measure that would address Canada's shameful inability to have domestic vaccine production in our own country by proposing a public drug manufacturer through a Crown corporation modelled on the very successful Connaught Laboratories experiment our country pioneered. We have called for stronger border controls. Now we are advocating a zero-COVID strategy.

Also, equally our responsibility is to hold the government accountable. That is an important role of an opposition party in our democratic system and, frankly, there is much to critique. There have been years of neglect by governments to ensure that Canada is emergency prepared. The classic example of this is a very short-sighted decision in 2018 to weaken Canada's global public health information network, which was Canada's nerve centre, its eyes and ears on the world to keep Canadians alerted, at the earliest point possible, to outbreaks of disease. That was seriously weakened by the Liberal government.

The government minimized the risk of COVID-19 at the very beginning, and this had a colossal consequence of losing precious time at the beginning of this pandemic. The government was slow to close borders. In fact, the current Minister of Health said that to do so would be harmful. That was the position of the Minister of Health back in the spring of 2020.

Of course, I have mentioned that we have no domestic vaccine production manufacturing capacity. This is the result of decades of poor pharmaceutical policy decisions by successive Liberal and Conservative governments. A G7 country like Canada should never have left Canadians in the position where we were vulnerable to multinational corporations or foreign governments for vaccines and essential medicines.

The current government, frankly, bungled the opportunity to manufacture AstraZeneca in our country, which was offered by AstraZeneca to any country that wanted to do so and which some 15 other countries took up the offer to do that, including countries like Mexico and Argentina.

● (1150)

The government refused to use its full powers as a federal government and still refuses to do so to this day, content to let provinces struggle and in some cases get seriously overwhelmed for political reasons.

Despite its spin and rhetoric, the government has failed to procure vaccines as quickly or as effectively as it could have. Frankly, that is not a question of political opinion, the numbers bear that out. As we sit approaching May 2021, only 2.8% of Canadians are fully vaccinated and 27.8% of Canadians, fewer than one-third, have received one jab. This puts us 33rd globally for doses per 100 people. By the way, I know that the government is fond of saying that we are third in the OECD for administering vaccines, but what it does not say is that we are 33rd globally. We are 74th in the world for the percentage of population fully vaccinated.

The result of this, of course, is that provinces across this country have been forced to ration doses. Let us be honest. This is the only reason that we are stretching second jabs of vaccines to four months over the objections of the manufacturers themselves, which had their drugs clinically approved based on jabs three weeks apart.

Globally, Canada's reputation has been damaged. We all know that the COVAX system in our world is meant for one overarching objective and that is to ensure that poor and developing countries have access to vaccines. However, the government has put in an order for 1.8 million doses from AstraZeneca, which we have not received yet. This move is entirely perplexing, given that the Prime Minister has repeatedly said to Canadians that we have sufficient doses from Pfizer and Moderna alone to vaccinate every single Canadian.

I want to pause for a moment and mention what is being noticed by world leaders. The Director-General of the World Health Organization said this:

I need to be blunt: the world is on the brink of catastrophic moral failure—and the price of this failure will be paid with lives and livelihoods in the world's poorest countries. Not only does this me-first approach leave the world's poorest and most vulnerable people at risk, it's also self-defeating. Ultimately, these actions will only prolong the pandemic [prolong our pain], the restrictions needed to contain it, and human and economic suffering.

The Secretary-General of the OECD said this:

The global economy stands to lose as much as \$9.2 trillion if governments fail to ensure developing countries access to COVID-19 vaccines, as much as half of which would fall on advanced economies.

Finally, Oxfam Canada said this:

Canada should not be taking the COVAX vaccine from poor nations to alleviate political pressures at home. Receiving one or two million doses isn't going to solve Canada's vaccination challenges and it is going to cause harm elsewhere in the world for the poorest and most marginalized people.

We see what is happening in India today, a global hot spot that affects us here at home in Canada because we have to put in travel bans. They cannot even vaccinate their own people and yet we want to draw vaccines from them.

I support every word of the preamble of this motion, but I cannot support the motion because it plays politics. It calls for the government to vaccinate every adult Canadian by the May long weekend. We have vaccinated approximately 12 million Canadians. There are about 30 million Canadian adults. That means we need another 18 million doses to meet the objective of this motion. That means we would have to vaccinate six million Canadians every week for the next three weeks. Canada's capacity is 3.1 million doses per week.

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The motion would call on us to vaccinate at twice the capacity that we have in this country. In addition, we are receiving between two million and three million doses per week, God willing. That means that we would have to procure two to three times the vaccine doses. Where do those doses come from?

• (1155)

We would love to be able to vaccinate every Canadian by this Sunday. That is not realistic. Instead of playing politics and putting forth completely unrealistic and unreasonable motions like this, the NDP will continue to fight for practical, pragmatic, concrete and positive proposals that can be implemented, that will keep Canadians safe and will position our country to deal with the next national emergency, so we are never again placed in such a vulnerable position as successive Conservative and Liberal governments have left us.

• (1200)

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a list of names of countries I want to read and I am hoping the member from the NDP might guess what they have in common. I will start at the top of the list: Seychelles, Israel, Chile, Bahrain, Monaco, United States, San Marino, Malta, U.K., Serbia, Maldives, Uruguay, Singapore, Morocco, Switzerland, Denmark, Turkey, Liechtenstein, Romania, Czech Republic, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Austria, Spain, France, Slovenia, Slovakia, Greece, Mongolia, Portugal, Ireland, Luxembourg, Estonia, Germany, Poland, Belgium, Andorra, Brazil, Norway, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Cambodia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Mexico, Panama, Croatia, Montenegro, Colombia and Finland. I will give a hint—

The Deputy Speaker: We do have other questions to get to. The hon. member gets the general picture. We will let him give his response.

The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, my educated guess would be that those are all countries that have vaccinated higher percentages of their populations than Canada has. He is quite right. That points out that despite the rhetoric of the Liberal government, it has not done a good job procuring vaccines and it has, frankly, failed the provinces and Canadians in doing so.

If I can get back to this motion, that will not be repaired or addressed by putting forward fanciful, completely unrealistic and unobtainable targets of vaccination. My hon. colleague would do better to support the NDP's call for the support of a Crown corporation to manufacture vaccines in this country. Then we would be world leaders next time a pandemic occurs in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and for his involvement in this issue.

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Since this is a global crisis and we will not be safe until all other countries are safe, does the member think that, under these circumstances, the intellectual property rules could be waived so that the vaccines could be considered a global public good?

[English]

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, that question gives me a chance to talk about Canada's completely unexplainable and, frankly, shameful position taken at the WTO where countries are asking for the World Trade Organization to temporarily relax intellectual property rules so that countries could be free to have access to the technology and intellectual property to manufacture vaccines on their own and Canada is not supporting that measure.

This is a global pandemic. We all have an interest in making sure that every human gets access to a vaccine. It is in our self-interest, as well as for social justice reasons. More importantly, most money that went into developing vaccines was done with public money. This is not a case where drug companies invested their own capital, did their own risk and ought to have had a good case for reward. This is the case of public money going into research and these vaccines should be unleashed so that every country can be producing vaccines, if they can, without restrictions.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the motion says that the government is going against the recommendations of vaccine manufacturers by extending the recommended interval for the second dose to four months. I am sure that the manufacturers' recommendations are important, but this motion portrays those recommendations as gospel.

Public health authorities said that the second dose can be administered up to four months after the first. Why does the motion ignore this public health recommendation as though it were simply not scientifically valid?

• (1205)

[English]

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, that gives me a chance to talk about the approach of the government. It is fair to say that the government has been incredibly secretive and has exhibited an unacceptable lack of transparency in the way it communicates. For instance, it refused to reveal a single word of a single paragraph of a single contract it has signed with vaccine manufacturers, despite the fact that other countries are doing so. The U.S. has revealed every vaccine contract, albeit redacted to some degree, as have the EU and other countries.

Secrecy and lack of transparency are not the way to build confidence in the public. We need the advice of organizations like NACI in order to make intelligent, research and science-based decisions about vaccines in this country and we need the public to have confidence in that advice. I am going to again give the government a failing grade for its lack of transparency in dealing with this crisis.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak on behalf of the people of Timmins—James Bay. People are very tired. People have come through really difficult times and this third wave is hitting us the hardest of all. People's emotions are stretched, and small businesses are hang-

ing by a thread. We should never have been in this situation where these new variants are causing such havoc, destruction and heartache.

The people of Canada have inspired me so incredibly with their determination and stepping up. People are carrying heavy loads and are not giving in to conspiracy; that is a small, small margin. The average person is doing their part, but COVID is a very hard teacher. COVID is teaching us just how unequal our society is and exposing the hypocrisy of governments that are refusing to step up and show leadership. If we are frustrated at anything, it is the complete lack of a national vision and an international vision to respond to a pandemic that is worse than anything we could have ever imagined.

In this motion today, the Leader of the Opposition has decided he is going to demand that we have everyone vaccinated by the May long weekend, when the Conservatives know it is not possible. What are they doing here? They want a gotcha moment. We do not gotcha moments, and Canadians do not need gotcha moments. We need a plan.

However, we do not see a plan from the Liberal government. At the beginning of the pandemic, our Prime Minister really rallied Canadians. It was going to be a team Canada approach. That is what people wanted. People were willing to do their part. Then Mr. Team Canada started missing game after game, shrugging it off, refusing to deal with the issue of the border closures and refusing to deal with the fact that we do not have vaccine capacity in Canada. While other countries were investing in vaccines, he believed that we could trust the international market and it would look after us. He is the last of the Davos believers, and we are suffering for it today.

When CERB ended, that is when the workers began to die. We pushed the government to put in place a national sick benefits program, which the Liberals laughed at but agreed to. However, it is cumbersome and difficult to use. There are workers and racialized workers dying in horrific numbers while we see the absolute negligence in Ontario of the Doug Ford government.

This is another failure of the Liberals. They do not mind that Doug Ford is looking like a complete buffoon in his negligence, and they are more than willing to say that it is a provincial jurisdiction. There is no national vision. There is no desire to stand up and fight and say that we need to work together.

The enormous capacity of the federal government to offer help and bring together an emergency plan, which the New Democrats asked for, could have addressed the crisis happening in places like Vaughan, Peel and Scarborough. To see hundreds and hundreds of people lining up in the cold to try to get a vaccine in Scarborough shocked me. I never thought I would see something like that in this country.

What we are learning now from the first wave of the pandemic is that 3,700 senior citizens died in long-term care homes in Ontario. The negligence and indifference to their suffering was known, it was documented, and nobody bothered to go in and enforce the rules, and people died. Finally the army had to go in, and it found senior citizens left in diapers. It found senior citizens who were not sick left in rooms with COVID patients.

There was negligence and people died. People died in numbers that are of wartime totals: 3,700 of our parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts died from that negligence. We should have learned a lesson, but we did not. There was a belief that we would just carry on and hope we would get through, that maybe all the vaccines would come and maybe we could end the lockdowns more quickly.

Now we are into this third wave, where the people who are dying are the young, the racialized, the indigenous and those in urban centres because they have to go to work. They have no choice. Doug Ford's solution was that he was going to call the cops, stop them on their way to work and make sure the kids could not play in the playgrounds.

We never heard the Prime Minister once step up about what is happening in Peel and Brampton in those factories and the Amazon warehouse, which is a partner of the Liberal government and where 900 people became sick, and say that we have to deal with this as a national disaster. Let us face it, Canada, it is because they are considered disposable people, and the disposable people are the indigenous, racialized people working in these factories.

• (1210)

We lost 13-year-old Emily Victoria Viegas. She should not have died, but her parents had to go to work because Doug Ford and the Prime Minister are arguing about something everybody knows we need, which is a proper sick day benefit. Why are they saving money with this? What it is doing is extending the length of this crisis.

I received my first vaccine the other day, and I was very proud, but I am told I will not get my second dose until August. That is a long time in the life of a pandemic. Canada had the opportunity to produce the AstraZeneca vaccine here and we turned it down. The government opted for the international market. We are falling further and further behind. We are now 33rd globally for doses per 100 people. We are 74th globally for the number of people who are fully vaccinated. When I see the Liberals come into the House and pat themselves on the back about what a great job they are doing, I find that to be an absolute shameful disgrace because it is about the Liberal Party brand, not about the fact that as a federal government they could have been bringing the people together and that we needed an emergency response to an unprecedented catastrophe. That is what this is, a catastrophe.

We also see Canada on the global stage stealing vaccines from the third world because the Liberals blew it here. They took from the COVAX vaccine program. The fact is that Canada has been called out by third world countries for blocking the WTO waiver for them to produce their own vaccines. I would ask the Prime Minister if he, Mr. Davos, Mr. Trust the Global Markets, thinks this pandemic will not come and hit us even harder, with more virulent strains, if the third world is not able to be vaccinated. We are in this crisis right now because of the new strains coming out of places

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like Brazil. As it stands now, even if we get vaccinated by the end of the year, we will not have worldwide vaccine immunity until 2023. The potential we have seen from this disastrous virus is that it is mutating fast and getting more virulent. The fact that the Prime Minister is using Canada on the international stage to stop the ability of third world countries to produce their own vaccines because he wants to protect the intellectual patent rights of big pharma shows that the Prime Minister is more than willing to put corporate interests ahead of the lives of people, and that will come back to bite Canada in a very concerning and deep way.

What COVID has taught us is this. We hit this catastrophe last March and realized very quickly that within three weeks millions of Canadians would not have enough financial savings to pay their rent. We learned that our trust in global free trade meant that we did not even have the capacity to create PPE and workers were having to go into very dangerous situations on the front lines because Canada could not make its own PPE. When the decision could have been made a year ago to start investing in vaccines, like the company in Calgary that is trying to get Canadian vaccines on the market, we opted to trust international capital to look after us, and it is not looking after us.

We need to bring people together at this time. This third wave could easily become a much more dangerous fourth wave. We need to start putting the needs of Canadians first and respect the incredible suffering and vigilance that Canadians are showing. We need to rise to where the average Canadian is, stop playing these games and get a plan to save lives, particularly now, when we are seeing so many young people die in the factories and warehouses in the GTA.

• (1215)

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member for his intervention and his passion. He mentioned a couple of things. He said that the government should have brought people together to deal with this emergency response. He also mentioned that Canada has been taking vaccines from third world countries through COVAX, which I agree is shameful. How does he feel the government has come together during this time? It keeps championing that it is doing this team Canada approach. Being in opposition, does he feel there has been any kind of a team Canada approach to get everyone together to really battle this crisis we are in?

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Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, last March I was very hopeful. I really took the Prime Minister at his word about the team Canada approach, that we are all in this together. We stopped everything every day to listen to the Prime Minister's updates, because we wanted to know, we wanted to be able to reassure people that everybody at Parliament had their back, and that is what Canadians were expecting.

However, I see more and more that we are dealing now with spin, with classic government misinformation, rather than this opportunity that we had to set up a national emergency response, to bring in military experts, health experts, representatives from across the country to say, "What do we need to do and how do we need to do it?" I think that is what Canadians were looking for. Instead, we see a Prime Minister who has a total laissez-faire attitude: "Hey, it's not our jurisdiction. It's the provinces. If they ask us, maybe we'll do something."

That is not good enough. People are dying. Canadians need to know that their government has their backs, and Canadians do not have that assurance right now.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. I think he raised some good points.

He took a lot of shots at the Liberal government, and rightly so, but we are here to debate a motion that essentially says the government must "ensure that every Canadian adult has access to a vaccine by the May long weekend". That is the motion we are debating today.

I understand that we can talk about other things, about the situation, about vaccination and about the rollout, but I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on whether this motion is realistic or partisan.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I would love it if every Canadian is vaccinated by the May long weekend, but I am not going to go back to the people in my region and tell them the Conservatives said, "Poof, make it happen" and it will happen. Canadians know better.

We do not have the capacity right now to get us to the May long weekend. What the motion should be asking is how we are going to make sure it happens by the summer, what we are going to do and what plans are in place. The idea that we are going to suddenly declare that it is going to happen will not make it thus, and this is my concern here. We need to tell Canadians that we are taking this seriously.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, anti-lockdown, anti-mask and anti-vaccine activists across the country have been reported to have direct and indirect ties to the far right. This issue is not just about access to vaccine. This is also about vaccine hesitancy that is being caused by these far-right groups. Entire communities are choosing not to be vaccinated, in part due to the efforts of these movements in promoting misinformation and conspiracy theories, which is something the member mentioned.

In fact, last week in Manitoba, there were 400 people with no masks gathered at The Forks, while yesterday two 20-year-old first nations men, youth, died of COVID-19.

What does the hon. member have to say when it comes to the harm and violence that these far-right groups are causing?

• (1220)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I think this is something we need to be talking about in the House. The rise of this anti-vax movement is deeply tied with the extreme right, and that we have idiots like Randy Hillier, a well-known Conservative, and his friend from Hastings—Lennox and Addington, a man who I believe is disgracing the role of a public official, and the fact that they are getting away with it.

Canadians are fed up with this. Canadians know that the extreme right is trying to undermine our health responses for its own needs, and we have to stand up to that. We have to say that it is wrong, and that it is about hate.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

It is my pleasure to stand and speak for a few moments today, not only about the situation here in Nova Scotia, but also to the motion we have before us from my hon. colleague from Calgary Nose Hill and, of course, the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada.

It is hard to figure out where to start with this one. Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada has been put up as the poster child of what should be done because of our relatively low numbers, yet it seems that all the provinces are experiencing their third waves of COVID-19.

Looking back, we have a year of data now to see when and how COVID entered our communities. Our first wave had its maximum number of COVID instances back on April 23 of last year, when Nova Scotia had 55 citizens with COVID-19. I know that does not sound like a whole lot, but that is a big number for the folks here in Nova Scotia.

Our second wave happened close to six months later. On November 24, 2020, there were 37 cases here in Nova Scotia, which pales in consideration to what we are seeing during our third wave, which hit 96 cases on April 27. I think there were 75 cases yesterday, and there are 70 cases today.

This may be an indication of cases starting to wane a little bit, but we do not know what will happen over the next number of days. We have a maximum right now of 489 active cases here in Nova Scotia, with 2,290 total cases since the beginning of COVID-19 and, unfortunately, 80 deaths, and we all offer our condolences to those families that have been affected by it.

In comparison, the issue of vaccinations here in Nova Scotia has been average compared to what we have seen across Canada, although maybe not to the level of what we see in Quebec. Ultimately, 3.7% of Nova Scotians have received the second dose, so only 3.7% of Nova Scotians are actually fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Just to give colleagues an idea, we have 345,000 vaccines received, and 293,000 administered, which comes into that false number the government tends to provide to us, where it looks as though 22%, or a quarter, of our population has received some kind of a vaccine.

I think the real number that is important to us is that of the fully vaccinated, which is only 3.7%. We need to make sure that we are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to stop the variants or, at least, the production of variants in our province. We really need to do a better job of getting vaccines to Nova Scotians and to Canadians, so we can at least stop these extra waves.

Quite honestly, I am very worried. I am sure other Nova Scotians are worried as well. We are worried that we are going to see a fourth and a fifth wave as we are waiting for vaccines to totally roll out here in this province. I know our premier has said that hopefully by July we will have everybody done, but quite honestly, does that mean one vaccination or two? I know that my mum and dad had their first Pfizer vaccinations, and it looks like it will be toward the end of July, maybe into August, before they will be able to get their second doses.

As far as being a sort of poster child, we do have concerns here in Atlantic Canada with this third wave of COVID-19. We need to do better. The government has to do better in its procurement. It could have done better in its production here in Canada, yet it did not.

● (1225)

We had a number of presentations at the health committee, and what concerned me the most were the researchers who came to us and said they have a process that, had the government truly invested in a Canadian vaccine, we would have had in production by now. We would not have needed to go to all these other companies to receive vaccines.

It goes counter to what the government continues to say. It says we have the largest portfolio of any country, with 10 or 15 contracts with different producers of vaccine, yet we are still working on three, with Johnson & Johnson coming. We have very little local production of vaccine. In fact, there is no production of vaccine happening here in Canada. We do have researchers right across the country who have had great success in coming up with technologies to be able to provide vaccines to Canadians, but there is little to no interest from the government in trying to come up with a Canadian solution to this.

I would like to speak to something the previous couple of speakers spoke to as well, and it is the hands-off way of providing vaccines to Canadians. The Minister of Public Services and Procurement said in her presentation earlier today that, if we do not like the vaccination plan, to take it up with the premiers. Yes, okay, but she is responsible for providing vaccines to all Canadians. As much as

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the premiers have cried and talked and tried to get a reasonable response from the government, they continue to wane and are unable to provide vaccines to their populations. They are trying to find methods.

Quite honestly, when it comes to travel, from one end of Canada to the other, this third wave here in Atlantic Canada is happening because of differing and varying responsibilities or regulations in different provinces. I do not know if this is substantiated or not, but the story here is that people have been moving here from different provinces. People from Ontario and Quebec are buying properties here in Atlantic Canada, in Nova Scotia, and, by the sound of it, they brought this third wave when we had extremely low numbers. I believe it is mostly the U.K. variant being found here.

That is coupled with the whole reversal of having an Atlantic bubble. One minute we had it, then premiers were talking together, and the next minute our premier decided that people from New Brunswick and P.E.I. could visit, even though we could not go there. There was a whole bunch of miscommunications and messes because there is no leadership from the federal government on how any of this should be rolling down.

There are definitely politics involved in this. The Prime Minister and the current government really want, if it does go south and things do not work out, to be able to just hold up their hands and say, "Well, that is the province's problem and responsibility. It is not ours."

Ultimately, it is always the leadership of the federal government, with the partnership of the provinces, that gets things done here in Canada. The Liberals need to take a leadership role in this to make sure that we get through this third wave, beyond the third wave and do not have a fourth wave.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion. Let us hope that everybody, sooner than later, can get a vaccine in their arm.

● (1230)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am curious whether the member can explain the rationale of this motion to the House.

I encourage the member to not just take it from the Liberals, but to listen to what the NDP and Bloc members have been saying. They are saying that the Conservatives literally cannot accomplish what they have set out to accomplish with this motion.

Can the member provide some kind of rationale as to why the Conservatives chose to bring forward this motion instead of hitting on something meaningful, such as encouraging the government to develop a vaccine-hesitation strategy? Why put forward this motion, which is practically not possible? The Conservatives are being told this not just by Liberals but also by the NDP and the Bloc.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Speaker, quite honestly, we need a plan. There is no plan.

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We continually hear the government talking about its portfolio. It is not talking about a real vaccination plan, saying that is the problem of the provinces. How can we truly judge whether the Liberal government is doing a good job when it does not let us know what it is actually going to do? It needs to provide us with a date and let us know when that is actually going to be.

If it fails, we will oppose. If the government does it right, I will congratulate it. My constituents want the vaccine.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want my colleague from West Nova to know that I really enjoy working with him. He is a man of integrity who works very hard for his constituents.

Let us come back to the motion. Even the Liberals are saying to go ahead and criticize them, but to be real about it. We just heard a member across the way say that.

Unfortunately, I agree with the Liberals that this motion does not get the job done, and there is certainly plenty of work to do. There are plenty of reasons to look at the Liberals' record on vaccine administration. The Liberals have failed on many levels.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about this. Does he think the wording of the motion is realistic? Does he think it is realistic for the Conservative Party to demand that every Canadian citizen be vaccinated by the May long weekend?

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

We need to be optimistic about what we can do for Canadians. The government has to set dates and decide on amounts. The motion may be optimistic, but at the same time, it is necessary to inform the people of Canada and Quebec.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have listened to the speeches today, and everybody is saying that it is not realistic or feasible to have every Canadian adult vaccinated by the May long weekend.

Obviously, we do not know how to do this, but the Conservatives do. Otherwise they would not have put it in their motion. Maybe the member could share with us how this could be done and what the plan is for this, since the Conservatives feel they have enough evidence to put it in a motion.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Speaker, the government has failed on every corner it has taken on this issue. It has not provided Canadians with a plan for how we are going to be able to solve it. They have not told us how we are solving the first wave, let alone the third wave we find ourselves in today.

We need to be able to get vaccines into the arms of Canadians. The government needs to give us something inspirational to tell our constituents. My constituents continually go online to find there are no spots available for them to get vaccines. This is because the federal government is not providing the vaccines required. It has to stop. The government has to tell us what it is actually going to do.

• (1235)

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I stand in this place today to highlight the federal government's failure to stop the current third wave of COVID-19, and to press it to secure faster access to much-needed vaccines.

While we see the EU and the United States took swift action to secure life-saving vaccines for their citizens, the government here is standing idle as our vaccine shipments get delayed and cut amidst this deadly third wave. Canadians need vaccines, and they need them swiftly, but the national rollout has been defined by delays, denials and disappointment.

Without the details of the vaccine contracts that the Liberals refuse to make public, we are left guessing how to improve our vaccine rollout. The information from the contracts could help provinces plan and provide Canadians with what to expect going forward.

The Liberal government must act immediately, come clean and disclose the details of their vaccine contracts. The lack of transparency from the Trudeau Liberals has left Canadians confused—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member cannot use names.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I apologize.

The lack of transparency from the Liberals has left Canadians confused and anxiously waiting for their turn. In the midst of the third wave, Canadians are struggling to cope with the rise of COVID-19 cases, COVID-19 variants and increasing ICU admissions, never mind the ripple effect of these circumstances, including job losses, reduced hours, travel restrictions, charter infringements, a mental health crisis and an ever-expanding taxpayer-funded deficit. The third wave is a direct result of the Liberal government's abject failure at addressing COVID-19 in general and the vaccine procurement in particular.

Those on the other side of the House love to ask what the Conservatives would have done better. We have been providing them solutions this entire time, and I can say for certain that we would not have partnered on vaccine development with the biggest totalitarian government in the world, which is currently holding our citizens hostage.

The government's first move should have been to ramp up domestic production immediately. However, now all we hear in the news is that shipments have been delayed, shipments have been reduced and there is a small number of doses coming from a partnership. We literally took vaccines away from developing nations. We are that desperate.

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I receive literally hundreds of pieces of individual correspondence each week, and I can tell members that constituents in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon are frustrated. They are tired and are at their wits' end. I never thought that in 2021 I would have so many constituents furious about the ongoing infringement of their personal liberties, which is due to the government's incompetence.

It has been two Easters and two Vaisakhis. My constituents want to go to church. They want to go pray at a gurdwara. They desire fellowship and community.

I am constantly asked questions. “When can my kid play soccer?” “When will band trips get going again?” “Why has my high schooler had to miss out on two years of senior rugby?” I have heard from hunters that they have been banned by the Government of B.C. from going to rural and remote regions in my province, where they are only likely to see bears and deer, because they are unvaccinated.

Enough is enough. Canadians want to know when they are going to get a vaccine in their arm.

Let me say a few words about my riding.

Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon is 22,000 square kilometres of ruggedness. We are surrounded by the Cascade Range and the South Chilcotin Mountains. My constituents are diverse and they are fiercely independent people. They love the outdoors and the wild nature. They live in this area because they love their independence, they love their freedom and they love being connected to the river and the mountains. They are also law-abiding, and they want the very best for their country.

However, their patience is wearing thin. We are not getting straight answers from the government. People have received inconsistent messaging from the outset, and they cannot take much more. It is not acceptable for the government to demand that Canadians continuously give up their charter rights without being more transparent and providing a real plan.

I have some stories from over the last year.

In my riding, when a veteran named Mr. Anderson died, his family was not able to attend his funeral on account of public health restrictions. I attended it as his MP, as a representative of Canada, to honour his life and his service to Canada in the liberation of the Netherlands during World War II. It should not have been that way.

A few weeks ago, a mother who home-schools her kids reached out to me. She has an autistic child. Over the last year, this child has been cut off from family members, community support groups, home-schooling peers and trusted community educators on account of public health restrictions. They cannot get their lives back. That kid cannot get his education back until he is vaccinated.

At the day care my kids go to, many parents are front-line health workers, correctional officers, doctors and nurses. I know for a fact that many of them often have to make decisions about whether they can go to work to support other Canadians or take care of their own kids. Canadians deserve better.

• (1240)

I can go on about border closures. A constituent reached out to me the other day. He is a Canada Border Services Agency officer, and he asked why he has not been vaccinated. Every day he is putting his life on the line to protect our border and serve our country and he cannot get a vaccination. I have heard the same thing from corrections officers. They are frustrated.

I have heard from families about the quarantine hotels. They are rightfully putting up \$2,000 and waiting for their tests, only to watch on the news that the program has been less than consistent with some flights from other countries. These constituents say they are following all the rules, but it does not seem like everyone is. They ask what is going on. Why do they continue to sacrifice when what the government is doing has not been consistent?

A sibling of one of my constituents died in Washington state and my constituent was not able to attend the funeral. In the meantime, that person sees Americans in Washington state already getting their second doses. Indeed, on Facebook I saw my young niece, who is her twenties and going to Western Washington University, get the second jab in her arm. Life is good there. We want the same here in Canada and it is not happening soon enough. Canadians deserve the best because we are the best, but we are not getting the best.

My constituents want their lives back. They want to go to church and embrace their friends and neighbours in their communities again. They want their lives to go back to normal. We have demanded so much from Canadians and they are complying because they want the best for their country. However, when they see their government botch the process time and time again, they begin to ask whether they should follow the rules, whether it is really worth it. That does not sit well with them because, frankly, that is not the Canadian way. Canadians are polite. We have a rule-abiding society. Indeed, it is embedded in our Constitution: peace, order and good government.

My constituents want good government and they are not getting it. That is why they are questioning why they have to give up their right to worship in person, or why they cannot at least worship under the same rules that have applied to the pubs and bars throughout most of the pandemic. They are not allowed that in B.C., and it is not fair, frankly.

Enough is enough. Let us get the vaccinations done. Let us get the shots in their arms. Canadians have had enough, and we need to move forward.

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• (1245)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate listening to the member speak. He speaks with a lot of passion about his community and the area he represents, and that is always extremely encouraging. However, he only spoke about why this needs to get done. I do not think anybody would disagree with him on that. As a matter of fact, I can pretty much assure him that every member would vote in favour of this motion if it was a reality. Going back to the NDP question that was asked of the previous Conservative member, can the Conservatives explain to us how it is possible to do this?

NDP and Bloc members have talked about the numbers. They have plainly laid out that it is not possible to accomplish what the Conservatives put in their motion. I do not need to hear about the why; I need to hear about the how.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, we are in the House today because it is incumbent upon the opposition to continue to push and fight for the government to give us a plan on how it is going to move forward. To the NDP and Bloc Québécois members of the House, it is not just the Conservatives saying this. The Minister of Health in British Columbia said that the Liberal delivery of vaccines has been unpredictable. The Auditor General found that the Liberal government failed to test the pandemic response plan with the provinces.

The government is responsible for the sacrifices that Canadians are making, and all they are asking for in return is a plan, a way to move forward, a way to get their rights back.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, obviously, like my colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, I would like life to go back to normal. Vaccination is the solution, and we agree that mistakes have been made.

However, the Conservatives' motion is unclear. How many doses do they want each person to receive by the May long weekend, one or two? Do they expect 100% or 80% of the population to receive the vaccine by then, or just those who want it? How many doses of vaccine does the Conservative Party want to receive in the next 21 days?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from the Bloc Québécois for her question.

In my province of British Columbia, I think that less than 2% of the population have received both doses. That is simply not enough.

[*English*]

Yesterday, in British Columbia, the CBC covered the vaccine pop-up clinic in Surrey—Newton. Hundreds of people waited all day long because they were promised a vaccine. However, hundreds of people were turned away when they ran out.

Hope is waning thin. People are frustrated. My young constituents want to play rugby and soccer and get outside and play lacrosse. They want their lives back.

The government needs to be clear with its contracts. It needs to be open and transparent. It also needs to work with our provincial counterparts on a proper plan to get people vaccinated now.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague speaks with great passion about his riding, and it was a pleasure to hear his intervention.

Of course, like many of my colleagues in the House, I have concerns about the realistic nature of the motion that the Conservative Party has brought forward. However, I want to ask him about something else. He touched on getting vaccines for essential workers and getting vaccines into the arms of those who are most at risk and most vulnerable.

Does he feel the federal government has a role to play here? Should it step in when provinces, like my province of Alberta, have not done a good job of making sure that front-line health workers, teachers, firefighters and first responders are getting vaccinated? Does the federal government have a role to step in at that point?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, the federal government has a responsibility to indigenous Canadians and to federal front-line health care workers. The federal government should focus on getting those people vaccinated first.

The reality is that if we talk to any provincial leader, they will say, as they have said consistently, that they have not received enough vaccines. I believe the provincial governments, irrespective of where they are in Canada, want to get vaccines in people's arms as quickly as possible. I believe the federal government wants to do that too. However, they are not moving fast enough.

We can look at how much money we have spent over the last year and at what we have done. We got the emergency benefits done quickly—

• (1250)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Central Nova.

[*Translation*]

I would like to begin by thanking all the residents of Orléans for the support, strength and community spirit they have shown in the past year.

I know that the pandemic has been difficult. Our lives have been affected at many levels. We have been unable to get together, it is difficult to work, and our friends and family are too far away, not to mention that some of us have tragically lost a loved one.

Normalcy still seems difficult and too far off, but I want people to know that we are there for them.

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[English]

I stand here today conflicted. On the one hand, I am pleased to have the opportunity to set the record straight and reassure my constituents, and indeed all Canadians, that not only is there a robust vaccination procurement plan in place, but it has proven itself effective time and again, from initial negotiation to first deliveries to ongoing relationship building to accelerating doses to, just recently, an announced future deal to continue protecting Canadians. On the other hand, I am disappointed that this oddly partisan attempt at distracting and muddying the waters is the debate the opposition Conservative Party has chosen to engage in.

As a mother, I can tell members that I remember being disappointed when I knew my daughter was testing me, as all children do, when she presented facts to suit her stories, rather than just being honest when she was wrong. I feel much the same way today.

[Translation]

In order to help Canadians better understand the situation and to make sure that the opposition is on board, I think it is important to remind the hon. member and her colleagues of certain key facts. These facts are far too often ignored because they do not reflect in any way the nonsensical idea put forward in this motion.

Here is the first fact: When the Conservatives said that Canada would need a decade to get the vaccine, they were wrong. Here is a second fact: When the Conservatives said that Canada was at the end of a vaccination queue of 2.5 billion people, they were wrong.

Facts matter. It is our duty as members of Parliament to come together, to unite and to contribute to the collective effort needed to put this pandemic behind us.

I do not believe that anyone here is deliberately trying to make the situation worse, and I think that saying so today is dangerous and extreme. Too many of us were unable to say goodbye to family, neighbours, friends and colleagues. In my pre-politics career and every day since then, I have seen countless ways of fulfilling our duty toward our communities and Canadians in general. This motion does not fulfill that duty.

[English]

As we have said time and again, fighting this pandemic is, was and will remain our top priority until every Canadian who wants a vaccine has one. This is why the member's flawed timeline is so concerning, as she proposes a motion that does not appear to support the facts.

As part of our vaccine procurement plan, the plan opposition members have so frequently questioned even existing, we have not only delivered doses on time but have in fact exceeded timelines and expectations through constructive relationship-building with our vaccine suppliers. We are aggressively negotiating to continue accelerating doses. These are steps the member's proposal seems to miss.

The fact is that we have accelerated 3.5 million doses into Q1, an increase of more than 58%, and are accelerating 20 million doses by the end of Q2, an increase of 68%.

The fact is that beginning in December, and as of today, over 15 million doses have been delivered to Canada, over 30% of Canadians have received at least one dose and by the end of June, Canada will have received a minimum of 48 million doses total.

It is for these reasons that I challenge the member's choice of date. It is not based on science. I suspect it is not based on knowledge of the global supply chain. Nor would it be founded in knowledge of the scientists and production realities. It may be attention-grabbing, because it is not based on reality or facts and is designed to fail. That kind of partisan ploy is not going to help us meet the challenges of overcoming the pandemic together any faster.

The constituents of the member from Calgary, and indeed all Canadians, deserve better.

● (1255)

[Translation]

More than ever, it is time for us in team Canada to put our nose to the grindstone and focus on the enormous responsibility of ensuring that all Canadians who want to be vaccinated get their shots as soon as possible; to make sure that, in the future, we have protective measures in place against variants of concern; and to consider the recovery not only of Canada's economy, but also of all the communities that make up each of our ridings.

We owe it to the people who voted for us to present a clear plan that works, not a plan doomed to failure from the start, designed to advance a political agenda.

I would like to help my colleagues make sure they understand the scientific basis of our plan, the facts that led to our decisions and the realities of this unprecedented situation.

By proposing a plan that has little hope of succeeding, the hon. member is undermining the extraordinary work that has been done to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic. As soon as the first new coronavirus genome sequence was identified in January of last year, scientists in universities and the industry went to work. Governments around the world joined forces to collaborate on an unprecedented scale to develop safe and effective vaccines.

As of today, more than 12 million doses of vaccine have been administered to Canadians across the country. This number will continue to rise rapidly thanks to our approach involving a diverse portfolio of vaccines from seven suppliers, allowing us to provide Canadians with different options and millions of doses of effective vaccines.

Our plan was based on science. Our work was guided by our COVID-19 vaccine task force, made up of experts and industry leaders, which provided scientific and technical advice to make sure that our plan was as robust and flexible as possible to meet the challenges we are facing.

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As of today, we have received over 15 million doses to, and more are coming in each week. We are continuing to ask our public servants to go above and beyond for Canadians.

[*English*]

I am very happy to be in the House to debate this, because, simply put, we are more than on track. We will continue the work of getting ahead of the virus. Vaccines are arriving and we are seeing our way through to the other side of the pandemic.

[*Translation*]

Canadians are co-operating and making sure they follow the public health guidelines in order to slow the spread of the virus during this critical period.

The hon. member across the aisle and her colleagues in the Conservative caucus have chosen to play partisan games, but our government is focusing on fighting the virus and protecting Canadians' safety and welfare.

• (1300)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. It sounded wonderful, but in reality, we have a real problem.

When they attack the motion and say that the plan or option we requested is unrealistic, that is open to discussion. However, the fact is that all the Liberal government has achieved so far is a series of failures.

Think about last year, when the government decided to go into business with China, through CanSino. That was the first mistake. The second mistake was not being transparent about the contracts.

Why did my colleague's government do business with CanSino?

Why are the contracts not more accessible, so that Canadians can see what is happening?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I am proud to be able to answer my colleague because this is yet another demonstration of the partisan plays we are dealing with.

From the outset, we have done whatever it took for Canadians. Let us remember what we were hearing in our ridings. Canadians were faced with an unprecedented pandemic. We offered financial support, and as soon as the vaccines became available, we made them available to Canadians.

As of today, over 15 million vaccines have been delivered to Canada, and over 30% of Canadians have received their first dose.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to salute my colleague and fellow member of the all-party juvenile diabetes caucus.

The vaccination rollout did not get off to a good start, but we do believe that the government will meet its goal of vaccinating the entire population by the end of September. I also agree with my colleague that the Conservative motion is unrealistic. It really seems to me that we could have spent the day talking about something else. The Bloc makes its own choices.

The fact remains that we are in the middle of a third wave. What is the reason for this? Yes, there have been delays in the delivery of vaccines, there were three months of dithering, and the number of variants has grown, but there have also been flaws in the management of the borders.

My colleague talked about the good parts of the Liberal plan, but there are also shortcomings in this plan, and I would like her to comment on that.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I salute my dear colleague. We are both members of this all-party caucus, and it is always a pleasure.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, our actions have prioritized the health and safety of Canadians. Our border measures are among the safest for people, and we have added or enhanced a number of measures in recent months in response to these variants from overseas.

The government wants to protect Canadians. We also need to ensure that Canadians who wish to return to Canada can do so, because that is of the utmost importance. I think that the actions we take together as parliamentarians are important.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

The health and safety of all Quebeckers and Canadians depends on the percentage of our population that is vaccinated. We all have to work together to make that happen as soon as possible.

Our collective safety also depends on vaccination rates in other countries because we are fighting a global pandemic. To make sure the world's poorest countries have access to vaccines, would my colleague be prepared to waive or lift the intellectual property rules that apply to these vaccines?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I have mixed feelings about my colleague's question and his proposed solution.

I am proud that our country, Canada, has contributed over \$220 million to the COVAX program to honour its commitment to help other countries. I know that Minister Gould and our government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the hon. parliamentary secretary not to use other parliamentarians' names.

Resuming debate. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

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• (1305)

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure, as always, to participate in debate in the chamber, albeit virtually. Of course, the reason I am here virtually is a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has recently thrown my home province of Nova Scotia into a lockdown that will last at least a couple of weeks.

The past year and a half or so has been immensely challenging. Families have struggled to find child care when their workplaces shut down. Folks have lost loved ones who have passed, unfortunately and tragically, as a result of this pandemic. Young people have had years of sporting events, graduations and social relationships interrupted and it has cast, frankly, bleak prospects on their potential for short-term economic opportunities.

We know that all these challenges, and this pandemic more broadly, will end with a vaccine, and the vaccine strategy of the Government of Canada is what this motion today purports to be all about. Unfortunately the motion on the floor today seems as much about an attempt to score partisan points than it does to actually advance public health.

The motion seems to rely on misinformation, either in word or in spirit. It further ignores the very important need of supplementary public health measures to complement a vaccine procurement strategy if we are to bring an end to the COVID-19 pandemic with minimal impact on human health, on economic outcomes and on civil liberties for the people who are living through months-long lockdowns in other parts of Canada.

Over the course of my remarks, I hope to touch on the current status of the vaccine deployment in Canada, comment on the rollout of the strategy from the beginning and then discuss a bit of the importance of those other public health measures.

When it comes to the current status, despite claims throughout the course of this pandemic from my Conservatives colleagues and friends, including the leader who said that Canada was at the back of the line or their health critic who predicted Canada would not have vaccines until the year 2030, Canada currently sits third in the G20 in terms of the number of doses that have been delivered to our country per population.

To date, more than 30% of Canadians have received a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. I am very pleased to share that just recently my mom and dad were two of those Canadians who did receive their first dose. About 15.7 million Canadians so far have received a dose and we predict that by the end of June, we will be in the ballpark of 50 million doses administered across Canada.

Is this perfect? No. However, when I look at the international comparators, it is actually quite good. The reality is that we are on track to have everyone in Canada, who would like one to receive their first dose, vaccinated by the end of June and have everyone be fully vaccinated by the end of September. With any luck, we could potentially be slightly ahead of that schedule.

In particular, regarding the Pfizer vaccine, which has in some ways become the workhorse of the government's portfolio of products, we anticipate that through the month of May we will have about two million doses per week, and more as we head into June.

That gives a snapshot of where we exist today, but to get to where we are today was not by coincidence; it took a lot of work. To see the Conservative motion on the floor, arbitrarily saying that within about three and a half weeks everybody should be vaccinated, without explaining how to get there, says to me that the motion was never intended to be taken seriously but instead was intended to grab headlines. Therefore, let me walk members through what took place to get us here.

The motion accuses the government of delaying the procurement of vaccines, which is ironic to me when the Conservative leader did not even mention vaccine procurement in the House of Commons until the very end of October. By that time, we had already been well under way. I remember speaking to some of my colleagues, from different parties in fact, as far back as March 2020 about the importance of investing in research to discover a vaccine for an illness that did not exist much more than a year and a half ago.

I think it was March 11, 2020, when the Prime Minister made the first announcement of a billion dollars toward combatting COVID-19, which included public health supports for the provincial governments, the purchase of PPE and \$275 million toward research, including the development of vaccines.

By April, the Prime Minister had announced a further billion dollars, the "Plan to mobilize science to fight COVID-19", I believe it was called. Similarly, in that fund, significant funding was dedicated toward the development of vaccines.

• (1310)

At the same time, we were working to develop as many contracts with pharmaceutical providers from around the world to hedge our bets as to whether we could produce a vaccine domestically, given we started out without the biomanufacturing capacity to do so within Canadian borders. We wanted to ensure we gave ourselves every opportunity to have access to the very first vaccines that Health Canada could approve. That is precisely what we have done.

By July and August, we had signed deals with Pfizer and Moderna to deliver tens of millions of doses to Canada. It was shortly after that when the opposition leader started to say that we would be at the back of the line, which actually provoked the corporate head of Moderna, I believe, to state publicly that Canada was near the front of the line for 20 million doses of their product. We were blessed to have the talent at Health Canada to consider these very quickly and approve them. In fact, by December, Canada was among the very first countries in the world to receive any doses.

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I will not deny there was a slight delay at the beginning of this year in the delivery of vaccines. However, I should point out that there was a very good reason for that slight delay. The Pfizer plant in Belgium, which has been manufacturing the tens of millions of doses being delivered to Canadians, shut down temporarily so it could ramp up production to deliver a greater number of doses in a shorter period of time going forward. That is exactly what we are seeing today. Now we are receiving millions of doses by the week, and we are funding the provinces directly, including the \$1 billion that was included in the recent budget, for the administration of vaccines within communities and provinces across Canada.

It is important to recognize that we cannot rely solely on vaccines to fight this pandemic. This disease did not exist in human populations anywhere a year and a half ago. We need to implement other public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 while vaccines are being deployed.

We know there is a light at the end of the tunnel, but if I can leave the audience that may be tuned in today with one message, it is to listen to the public health advice in their communities to protect themselves, their neighbours and their public health system.

From the beginning, we have been focused on some of these other measures, including support for PPE delivered to front-line workers and communities, rapid testing, which is being deployed in my home province of Nova Scotia faster than anywhere in Canada, and the safe reopening of communities part way through the pandemic in between the first and second waves so people could find an opportunity to go back to work and earn a paycheque without putting their health at risk. Of course, we put in serious income supports for households and businesses to ensure they could afford to do the right thing and stay home when that was what was necessary to protect the health of their communities.

In the jurisdictions that have adopted a zero-COVID strategy, which I am the biggest advocate for, we have seen the greatest public health and economic outcomes. Before the spike with the recent third wave in Nova Scotia, I will note that we had seen the return of 100% of the jobs that went missing during this pandemic. Our communities were able to enjoy a quality of life that had become rare across Canada and, in fact, the entire world. Importantly, the jurisdictions that have adopted a zero-COVID approach have also seen the fewest restrictions on their civil liberties. If we do the tough but smart thing right off the bat, we have the best outcome and we can enjoy the most freedom in our communities compared to those that do half measures and have terrible outcomes.

This motion seems to lament the use of lockdowns in particular. I am blessed to live in Nova Scotia. Until recently, I could take my daughter to swimming lessons. I could go to a restaurant with friends. We would be careful. We would space ourselves out. We would wear masks, except when we were seated at the table. We could go to a gym if we wanted to. Because we have seen an uptake in cases over just a couple of days, the premier has, in my view, made the right decision to lock things down again, and the public response has been beautiful. People are following the rules, wearing masks, staying home and we are already starting to see a downward trend in the number of cases. I sincerely hope this trend continues. I hope everyone continues to follow public health advice so

my home province of Nova Scotia can continue to set an example for the world.

The light at the end of the tunnel is within view. If we dig in now to protect our health and the health of our neighbours, we can get through this and come out at the back end of this pandemic stronger than we were before.

• (1315)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague gives a much different perspective being from the province of Nova Scotia. He chimed in on something with which I will agree. First, we should be listening to public health authorities. He also said that if we did what was hard first, then we could get better results and it would make it easier.

New Zealand, Australia, Taiwan and South Korea all instituted very similar policies to his own province to try to keep COVID outside, but his own government has failed. It failed at the border. If we look at British Columbia, we have the highest rates of people hospitalized today because of the COVID-19 variants, which Dr. Henry has said have caused that.

Will the member stand in his place and admit that his government failed to keep COVID out of our country, that those variants that are spreading exponentially are causing the problems and that his government does not have enough vaccine to stem it?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I will agree with the hon. member that the variants present an immense risk to populations and communities across Canada, but I would urge him to tone down the soaring rhetoric to try to score political points.

I will point out that the vast majority of spread in Canada is the result of community spread. I will point out that we restricted non-essential travel from the beginning of the pandemic and have bumped up those efforts since, including mandatory quarantine for those re-entering.

I would also point out that there is a misunderstanding of what was actually done in Atlantic Canada. We have not prohibited entry into the Atlantic provinces throughout this pandemic. We simply have put severe restrictions on what people can do once they get here.

I would urge provinces right across Canada and in jurisdictions around the world to adopt an approach where people, if they are travelling, are required to stay home once they arrive or to avoid non-essential travel altogether. That has been the advice from the beginning of this pandemic, which both my home province—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's speech.

I would like to clarify something that is of particular interest to me. In our national capital, Quebec City, there is a pharmaceutical laboratory called Medicago. We met with the people in charge last spring. They are absolutely fantastic people. They were very worried because the federal funding they were supposed to get was not coming. The feds were funding other pharmaceutical enterprises around the world, but not Medicago.

If the government had been quicker to invest in Medicago, all Canadians would probably be getting a Quebec-made vaccine.

I would like my colleague to comment on how long it took the government to support Medicago.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, before I begin, I want to thank my colleague for her question. I hope that she will not mind if I answer in English.

[English]

It is essential that we listen to experts over the course of the development of our pandemic response, including on the deployment of vaccines. The federal government has put funding in place to support the development of vaccines and, indeed, the procurement of vaccines internationally.

I would love to see Canadian and Quebec-produced vaccines in the arms of Canadians to protect our health and to capitalize on the economic opportunity that represents. Indeed, similar investments have been made in the recent budget. However, I am not an expert in examining which vaccine candidate is most likely to come forward, but as a member of the government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to give an opportunity for other questions.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am really glad my hon. colleague went to the gym, went to swimming lessons and went to restaurants. Meanwhile, racialized workers are dying in the hundreds in the GTA, and they are dying from the new variant strains that are coming out of places like Brazil.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague why, last month, his government was called out at the WTO by South Africa and other third world nations for actively blocking their capacity to build vaccines. The Liberals have this “I'm all right, Jack” attitude to protect the interests of big pharma, while we have new virulent strains that are much more deadly.

Does the member believe that Nova Scotia and its bubble will be protected or that racialized workers will be protected when we do not have vaccine equity? People will continue to die? Why are the Liberals blocking third world—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

• (1320)

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I used the example of Nova Scotia not to gloat about the quality of life we have enjoyed, but to show folks that there is a different path should they choose the responsible course of action. By the way, I would point out that my sister lives in the member's constituency and—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Is he saying people in Brampton did not take the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member has to allow the hon. parliamentary secretary to answer.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I will point out that my sister actually lives in his—

Mr. Charlie Angus: That is—

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I cannot hear. I think the member continues to interrupt. Can I continue?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay, please allow the hon. parliamentary secretary to answer.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands has a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for Timmins—James Bay spends a lot of time when he is in the House criticizing in particular the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his interruptions like this through the video feed.

I would strongly encourage that you suggest to the member for Timmins—James Bay that he respect the rules of this House and not engage like that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Absolutely, and that is exactly what I have just asked the hon. member to do.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has 15 seconds for an answer.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, long story short, vaccine equity is actually very important. Ensuring that we limit the outbreaks in hot spots around the world and across our country will prevent further mutations from happening that could be vaccine resistant. I am going to work to ensure that racialized communities and front-line workers have access to vaccines, so that we do not just protect their health, but we protect the public health from a population point of view as well.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, to be candid, these are very challenging times for all Canadians. Almost every province, including my own, is currently undergoing various types of lockdowns and trying to implement various types of interprovincial travel restrictions. We see more “for lease” signs going up in our downtown cores as many small businesses can no longer hang on. People are frustrated. They are upset. People are not united. We have some calling for total lockdowns and others protesting openly in defiance.

Business of Supply

I am sure we all receive a diverse range of comments from our own constituents. If there is any one thing that we can all agree upon, it is that unless we can get more Canadians vaccinated, the situation will only get worse, not better.

We have heard many premiers tell us that they are losing the battle against the variants, that they simply do not have enough vaccine to go around. At the other end of the spectrum, we have a Prime Minister telling us all what an awesome job he has done to respond to this pandemic. Just ask him. We have a public safety minister trying to downplay his failure to properly secure our borders as contaminated flights continue to land at our airports. We have a health minister who actually tried to tell us at the beginning of this pandemic that travel restrictions would cause more harm than good. I mean seriously, we all know she said that to Canadians.

Now the greatest threat that faces Canadians right now is the variants of this virus, variants that came here because we did not have travel restrictions that actually worked because our public safety minister did not do his job to secure our airports. That is how these variants got here, by the inaction of ministers of the Crown from the Liberal government. People are dying today because of this incompetence.

To be clear, that is not the fault of the government caucus. There are good and capable people on the government's side of the House. The problem remains that they continue to sit on the backbench, while the underachievers continue to sit at the cabinet table. Why this particular Prime Minister is so rewarding of those who have failed to deliver the results that Canadians need and deserve is a question that remains unanswered, but here we are, in desperate need of more vaccines. This is the Prime Minister who decided that his first response to this vaccine crisis would be to hammer out a deal with CanSino Biologics out of China. We all know how that turned out. When that deal fell apart, let us not forget that the Prime Minister hid that from Canadians for almost three months. We are literally three months behind today.

The notion that Canadians might have to give up a summer because of the Prime Minister's incompetence and negligence is not acceptable to me. It should not be acceptable to any member of this place. This is a prime minister who told us that better was always possible. That is what this motion is about today. It is to say enough is enough. It is time for the Prime Minister to deliver.

I just want to interrupt the proceeding for one second to let the House know that I will be followed by a much better MP. The MP for Edmonton Centre will, I am sure, act as the chaser.

Earlier this week, Blacklock's Reporter reported that 8.8 million pieces of PPE were thrown away by the Liberal government before the pandemic began and were not replaced. What is worse is that for a year this information was withheld. Canadians did not know that the Liberal government had done that because it had hidden it under national security. Unbelievable; national security. That is unacceptable. The list of failures is a long one.

We are now in a situation where we are only giving a single dose of vaccine and not a second dose of vaccine within the manufactur-

ers' scientifically proven time frame because we lack supply. Literally, it is the lack of vaccine supply driving our response.

• (1325)

We have no idea how dragging out the second dose will impact the overall effectiveness of these vaccines, but because the Prime Minister failed to secure enough supply, we are forced into this situation. It is unacceptable. The Prime Minister likes to say that everyone who wants a shot will have a shot by the end of September, but that is just not acceptable.

The Prime Minister is the one who promised better is always possible. Ultimately, that is what this motion is all about. We are telling the Prime Minister that he does need to do better. Canadians' mental health, our economic health and our physical health all depend on the Prime Minister delivering more vaccines and every day of delay means more Canadians will die of COVID-19. It means more ICUs can be overwhelmed. It means more stress and demands on our health care professionals and hospitals.

I have said a number of times today that B.C. has more people in hospital due to COVID-19 today than it has throughout this crisis. Why? It is because the Prime Minister and the budget were totally silent on health care transfers at a time when our hospitals, health care system and frontline workers need the most support. Why is that? It is because there were no photo ops. At a time of our greatest need during a pandemic, the Prime Minister thinks the status quo for health care funding will do. It just will not. We are in a time when we need leadership from our Prime Minister like never before. We need "better is always possible" to become a reality and not just another broken promise. That is all this motion is asking the Prime Minister to do.

For those who say there is nothing more the Prime Minister can do, I disagree. Many Canadians right now hold dual citizenship. They can cross the border into the United States where they can immediately receive a vaccine. This not only helps them, but it means there are more vaccines to go around for Canadians who are not dual citizens. However, the problem, of course, is they cannot easily get back into Canada because there is no easy way for them to get back home. They have to wait around in the United States for a few days waiting for test results. That creates prohibitive costs for them and exposes them to more situations. Where there could be a common-sense solution, there is none.

Business of Supply

Two provinces have made arrangements so that their truckers can get vaccinated in the United States. There is no federal leadership on that idea. We have situations where many border states have excess capacity, but again the Prime Minister has been silent on it. We also know there is a situation where Canadians have received both shots while in the United States. They are wondering when the Prime Minister will give them an easier path in coming home. Once again, the Prime Minister is silent on that. Virtually every question that arises on how we move forward is ignored by the Prime Minister. There is no plan whatsoever. Again, this is not good enough. We see the United States and the European Union figuring out plans going forward. Once again, there is silence from the Prime Minister.

This is why I first pointed out in my speech that Canadians are growing increasingly frustrated. The bottom line is Canadians deserve to see better from their Prime Minister. They deserve better. This motion asks that we do our part, as Canadians' democratically elected representatives, to send a message to the Prime Minister that he needs to deliver for Canadians, that he needs to up his game and that he needs to provide leadership that produces real results.

I will be voting in favour of this motion and ask that other members do so as well. As Canadians, we must always believe that better is truly possible. Let us vote for this motion and work to make it so.

• (1330)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, nothing demonstrates more how tone deaf the Conservatives are than the last speech we just heard. The member suggested that Canadians who hold dual citizenship cross the border, get vaccinated and then come back. He is advocating that the Prime Minister encourage that strategy.

Can he explain to this House how he is in favour of such a wild idea as that, as though that is somehow a solution? Is that how the Conservatives plan to meet this? At least it is finally a strategy. Is their strategy to get people to cross the border?

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I would simply point out to the member that two provinces have already made deals with states for essential workers such as truckers to become protected.

The Prime Minister, right now, allows critical essential workers to go back and forth between Canada and the United States every day. It happens every day, and they are not vaccinated. When someone tries to bring up a suggestion, and perhaps it is because I have the big "C" on my chest, he suddenly says that is not the way to do it.

What is the way then? Is it to take from COVAX? Is it to act contrary to all of our allies?

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, this time, I will salute my colleague from the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

We share some of the criticisms of the government, particularly when it comes to the late delivery of vaccines after three months of

hesitation and the growing number of variants due to poor border control.

However, I wonder what the point is of moving a motion that is completely unrealistic. No country would be able to meet such a demand.

Still, there are real scandals. We need only think of the mismanagement of borders, health transfers or the local production of vaccines. I think that it would have been interesting to debate an actual scandal.

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, the motion is to talk about COVID-19 and the government's response to it. I have raised the question of vaccinations. I have raised the question of borders. I have actually raised the suggestion that the government does not seem to be paying attention to the variants that have come up. These are all things we can bring into the debate.

Let us bear in mind that every timeline the government has given, it has set themselves. The government has not given us enough information, and it has not given the public any sense of clarity. That is why we keep coming back, to drive the Liberal government to do better.

I appreciate the interaction from my colleague from Quebec. I really do hope she will support this motion because we need to put pressure on the government to perform.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member shares my thoughts on this. For a year and a half we have not seen a real concrete plan from the Liberal government, and that is why we are here today, having this discussion and pushing for a real plan to get people vaccinated in a timely manner.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, we have policies right now at our border that have allowed, and I would argue continue to allow, the variants in. When the variants come in and there is community spread, it is an exponential threat. People need to have two vaccine shots to be fully vaccinated, but even the best vaccines only have 95% efficacy.

The Liberal government and the Prime Minister need to do better. These variants do not care about his talking points. My constituents do not care about his talking points. We need to have action that makes my constituents safer from those variants, results in fewer people in ICUs and gets more people back to their regular lives.

• (1335)

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak about this third wave and the response to COVID-19. I really wish I did not have to rise today to speak about this because I have seen the plight this pandemic has hit people with.

Business of Supply

People are at home, and people are frustrated. Businesses are closing, and people want to get back to work. They are absolutely frustrated with the lack of strategy. Dozens of countries have recently announced opening up their borders to the United States. It is a country that, early on in this, the Prime Minister criticized for its response to this pandemic.

I am speaking to this motion today, while last week Australia hosted its largest sporting event since the beginning of the pandemic last March. What is going on in Canada? In parts of the country we still cannot have even more than five people at an outdoor gathering. This is just not acceptable. Canada has fully vaccinated just under 3% of its population. It is a low figure.

It has also been explained that we have been spreading out the shots, going off label. Only 30%, a figure the government has been bragging about, has had one shot, so we are certainly behind when we try to measure against other countries. We should be doing better.

In the United States, we see cases and hospitalizations are dropping. We see businesses opening up and restaurants getting busy. Fans are returning to watch their favourite sports. Canadians are seeing this happen. They are also seeing the lack of response in our country and how we are falling behind.

The U.S. is able to do this because its population is getting vaccinated, so this is a sorry state of affairs. I often think about what the rest of the world is saying to itself. What on earth happened to Canada? We used to be known for, if nothing else, our kindness, our love of hockey and our great health care system. Those are things that we should be proud of and that we are known for.

Now we have positioned ourselves so people are looking at us to ask what happened to Canada, why we are so far behind and why we are continuing to add to lockdowns as the variants come. It is because of a lack of vaccines.

The exodus of small businesses breaks my heart. When we talk about who is essential to the economy, we think about the ma-and-pa operators whose businesses very much define who they are. It is essential to them. Since January this year, 220,000 have closed. Another ugly stat is that we hold the highest unemployment rate in the G7. This just should not be happening in Canada.

The worst part of all this is, rather than showing us there is a light at the end of the tunnel, which I guess is September, or showing us how we can get our lives back to normal like the rest of the world, the government is providing measures to help people, but unfortunately those measures are to keep them inside because we cannot get enough vaccines or enough testing in this country to get people back to work.

That is what it is all about, after all. I think it is a question of when there will be another global pandemic and whether the government, the next go-around, will call for lockdowns, saying that is what we have to do. Could we not be better prepared? Could governments not give Canadians better confidence that we are better prepared?

We should have learned from SARS and other pandemics and been better prepared. Certainly, we had some of that. We had PPE

that was sitting in warehouses that was actually sent to a dump. We sent PPE to another country early on, and we had a shortfall. That is not planning. That is not being ready, and that is not having a strategy.

The reality of this situation is that investment in health care and manufacturing capacity cannot just be a one-time deal. We can look at AstraZeneca. It has been reported that we are paying significantly more than other countries, and we do not have the manufacturing capacity here in Canada to produce it. I would not really care about the dollar value of what we are paying if we were getting delivery, if we were ahead of the game, and if we could demonstrate we were getting better results because of paying more.

● (1340)

When we measure ourselves against other countries, that is not the case. The evidence is there. Look at Israel and what it was able to do without manufacturing capacity. Where is our government, and where was it early on in negotiations?

We have demonstrated as a country, particularly within North America, that when we work with our partners, we overcome extraordinary issues. I think of NORAD and how that was established with great co-operation between our two great countries. Where were we early on to not be with our American partners, determining how to protect North America and creating a strategy that worked for both of us? Where were we?

Even if we can get our manufacturing squared up in Canada, we cannot just rely on ourselves. We have to be part of a strategic initiative with other countries and industry. After a slow start, Pfizer, its partner BioNTech and Moderna raised the game and raised their output, gaining experience, scaling up production and taking steps to produce certain raw material on their own. The U.S.A. got in front of this and leveraged businesses and the public sector to step in.

We have enormous talent in this country. We should have reached out. We should have, as the U.S. and U.K. did, looked for solutions early on. We have the talent in this country to do it, and it was sadly missed by the government, either by ignoring it or being slow to recognize it.

The U.S. government gave vaccine makers access to supplies under the Defense Production Act, which provided \$105 million in funding to help Merck make doses of the J&J COVID-19 vaccine and expedite materials to be used in its production. They got in front of it.

There will be no economic recovery in its entirety without a health recovery. We need a line of sight. We need some measurables, and we need to understand where we are going and what the plan is. That is what this motion is about.

Business of Supply

One can criticize whether we can get there by May, but one of the frustrations of Canadians is there is no plan. We need to see the government move forward and set targets, measure them against other jurisdictions and demonstrate to Canadians it is on top of this.

We needed leadership on rapid procurement. We did not see leadership on it. Saying that POs have been written, that we have the biggest procurement strategy and the most POs out there, has not resulted in vaccines in the arms of Canadians. We should be ashamed that we have not been able to execute that better.

There is a lack of leadership on manufacturing. I recognize the government is now showing interest in this and is starting to put some time, money and effort into this area, which has been needed. I send my congratulations on that, albeit late.

I mentioned collaboration with the U.S. There is no reason we should not be able to work with our partners because we are such an integrated economy. We need to bring experts together to make sure we could get this right. If we did not know it before, this is something we should know now. I encourage the government to bring those experts together and make sure we are reacting to this better and properly preparing for the future.

It has been a year. We are still behind in testing. While the rest of the world has sped ahead, there is virtually no talk about the border reopening at this point. It does not even hit the headlines when the border closure between the U.S. and Canada is extended.

Overall, there has been a gross lack of leadership. At the end of the day, people are frustrated. They want to get back to work. They do not want to operate in bubbles anymore. Enough is enough. Let us show some leadership. The people I represent in the great riding of Edmonton Centre demand more of us. Let us get a plan and get people back to work.

• (1345)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member asks where we were early on with our North American partners. While my parents were stranded on a cruise ship off the coast of California, this government was encouraging Canadians to come home. This government was looking for ways to protect Canadians.

While the former president of the United States was saying this disease was going to magically disappear by the end of Easter weekend, we were developing plans on how to support Canadians throughout this pandemic. While the U.S. saw an explosion in cases, with a death rate three or four times that of Canada, we were taking care of Canadians. That is what we were doing.

Is this member suggesting that we should have followed along the same path as our counterparts in North America, namely the United States?

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Speaker, certainly, what I am suggesting is the government should have a strategy to try and make sure we could get vaccines in this country. The strategy they had was CanSino. That was the initial strategy. How did that work out? If, by any measure, the member across would take a look at where the U.S. is now compared to where we are, he must realize there is an opportunity to get something done with them. A lot of

the vaccines that are available are being developed in that country and are being made available to us.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague: There are several flaws in the Liberal plan. We have known this from the beginning.

The Conservatives wanted to implement a plan. However, I would remind the House that they tabled a motion calling for a reopening plan as recently as March 23, right before the start of the third wave. In terms of having a vision, we have to watch out for the Conservatives.

So far today, not one Conservative has been able to answer my question. Is the wording of the motion realistic?

Quebeckers are tired of empty Liberal promises; they do not need empty Conservative ones.

[English]

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Speaker, the wording of the motion is that “the House call on the government to ensure that every Canadian adult has access to a vaccine by the May long weekend”. It says “access”. What we are encouraging the government to do is see if it can accelerate the delivery of vaccines into this country and get them to the provinces. I know for a fact the provinces are prepared to do the job. In my city of Edmonton, there are facilities available that are under-utilized because we do not have the vaccines. This encourages the government to get busy and get some vaccines in this country.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, my neighbour, from Edmonton Centre for his intervention today. We have worked together on many things. I enjoy collaborating with him and working with him on issues that are important to Albertans.

I have to say I am deeply disappointed that he did not bring up the challenges that are facing Alberta right now. He knows that in Alberta, we are facing some of the highest numbers in the country. In Northern Alberta, in Wood Buffalo, there is a real risk that populations will die, that people will get sicker, and that our hospitalizations will increase to the point where we cannot manage the capacity. However, I did not hear him call for the federal government to step in and help because our provincial government has failed the people of Wood Buffalo.

Will he join me to call on the federal government to help the people of Wood Buffalo?

Business of Supply

Mr. James Cumming: Madam Speaker, the situation in Alberta is drastic. I always look at the root issue. My call on the government is to get some vaccines into my province so that we can deal with those hot spots, deal with those people who have become infected and so we can ensure that there are second doses, particularly for those who are compromised. I agree with her wholeheartedly that we have an issue in Alberta, but the problem lies directly on the Prime Minister of this country.

• (1350)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to this opposition motion and I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

There is a lot of talk today about failing Canadians. I would like to submit that it is actually the Conservatives who are failing Canadians. I will tell members why I say that, because 338 of us come from different parts of this country to represent our ridings. We come here to form Parliament. We come here to make policy. We come here to make policy and government programs better and all the Conservatives have a role to play. The role of the opposition is to push the government to do better, to come up with better ideas, to improve upon what the government is proposing, but they are failing to do that. Instead they bring forward this motion today that clearly, as pointed out by the NDP and the Bloc Québécois, just makes no sense.

We are all partisan in here and I do not run short on being partisan, but we know if there was an opportunity for the NDP and the Bloc to support a motion that would be partisan in nature but still somewhat meaningful, they would support it. However, they have indicated today they are not going to support it because it just does not make sense.

I say that the Conservatives are failing because they are not doing their job. They are not trying to make better policy. If they came here with a motion telling the government to work harder at reducing vaccine hesitancy that is out there, that would be meaningful. That would actually be contributing to the process here, but they have come forward with a motion that is so arbitrary in nature it is absolutely ridiculous. I will get to why I think they are doing that shortly.

First, I would like to draw attention some of the comments I have heard in the House today. When the member for Calgary Nose Hill was speaking, she said that the government keeps moving its goal posts. I am sorry, it has been the same goal posts since the beginning. Since the beginning, the government has said that everybody will be vaccinated by September. If the goal posts are being moved, they are only being moved closer. They are only increasing the speed at which people will be getting vaccinated. The goal posts have never changed.

I remember the member for Calgary Nose Hill asking me a couple of months ago about timelines and I asked, when should we expect people to be prepared? September. That has never changed. If it has changed, it is only because it looks like it will be done sooner than that. One of the Bloc members admitted that today, that the government is going to meet its target. It is quite clear and I think

the Conservatives know it too and I will get to that in a second and why I believe they are presenting this motion today.

Here is the reality. The Conservatives are critical and they keep going back to the January and February mix-up and temporary slowdown because it is the only thing they have to grasp onto now. They want to make Canadians believe that we are so incredibly behind in vaccine delivery, when the reality is that the provinces were told in late fall that this is the timeline for which they will receive their vaccines. If we measure the first quarter, we were well ahead of that. We exceeded the timelines in that first quarter.

The reality is that the government has now committed in the schedule that there would be 29 million doses of vaccine in Canada for the provinces to administer by the end of June, but now, realizing the numbers, it looks like it is going to be closer to 50 million.

Breaking news today, the Government of Ontario is now saying by May 24, anybody 18 years of age and older can get a vaccine. Why is it saying that? Because it is expecting a massive increase in supply.

• (1355)

The Government of Ontario officials know the supply is coming down the pipe; they are getting ready for it and they are telling people. It is in Quebec too. I believe Quebec is saying a week earlier, if I am not mistaken.

What are the Conservatives trying to do with this motion? They are trying to capitalize off the success of the government. All they are doing is trying to bring in this ridiculously crafted motion so that they can tell everybody later on that they did it, that they told the government to do it; that they passed this motion and what happened was everybody got vaccinated, because the Conservatives know that we are going to exceed the targets. They know that, in the coming weeks, vaccines are going to come into this country at a rate so incredibly quick that this whole narrative that they have now is going to be gone. It will not mean anything and the Conservatives will lose their entire credibility on this whole issue.

What they are doing is they are trying to take credit for it now. They are trying to lay the groundwork so that later on they can say they did it, that they went into Parliament and passed this motion. Unfortunately, they will not pass it because the two opposing parties see through it. They want to say that they passed this motion and that as a result of this incredibly worded, arbitrary-in-nature motion they have successfully gotten Canadians the vaccines that they needed.

It is absolutely crazy when we take the time to look at this motion and consider what the Conservatives are actually asking for in it. I always like to take motions and strip away the preamble because a motion should be able to stand on its own without the preamble. It is just the resolve clause that gives direction. The motion says that, “the House call on the government to ensure that every Canadian adult has access to a vaccine by the May long weekend.” That is it. That is the only part of this motion that gives direction, and it is the resolve clause in this motion.

Who would not vote for this if they actually thought they could do this? Nobody would not vote for this if they did not realize that it was possible. It is as if they are saying the government has the ability to deliver on this but is refusing to do it. Who would not vote for this? Everybody would vote for it, if it were a reality and they could actually do it.

It is fascinating how the Conservatives play these games. In my opinion, it shows weakness. It shows that they do not realize what their role is in this House, and I go back to where I started. The Conservatives' role here is to challenge the government to do better, not to make up arbitrary motions so that they can somehow try to claim victory later. The Conservatives need to push this government to do better. That is their job. That is what they have been elected to do and they are not doing it. What the Conservatives need to do is come here with something meaningful, not these ridiculous motions.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the member indicated earlier, with 140 members I am sure there are 20 members from the Liberal Party who would be happy to be on this side rather than with the top-down government, but we will wait for that.

The Liberal government has categorically failed to keep the COVID variants out of Canada, failed to keep our border under control and failed to secure vaccines in January and February. In fact, Canada is now so far behind the rest of the developed world in its vaccination rollout that it is generating international headlines. Canada is now behind more than 40 countries in terms of COVID-19 vaccines. What other countries have advocated for the four-month delay between the first two shots?

• (1400)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the United Kingdom is doing the same thing. However, let us just put that aside for a second; I really want to go back to the member's first comment. I can assure this member that when 54% of the membership of the Conservative Party of Canada does not believe in climate change, there is not a member on this side of the House who wants—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have four minutes to answer questions after Oral Questions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

TAMIL COMMUNITY

Ms. Marci Ien (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Tamil community in my riding of Toronto Centre and across Canada is excited to acknowledge the historic accomplishment of reaching \$3 million in fundraising to establish a chair in Tamil studies at the University of Toronto Scarborough. It is a first in Canada.

Generously supported by the SJV and EJ Chelvanayakam Charitable Foundation and more than 3,800 supporters from right around the world, including community organizations, private corpora-

tions, artists, village and alumni associations, the dream has become reality.

With more than 300,000 Tamils in Canada, we are home to the largest diaspora outside of the Indian subcontinent. It is a rich and storied culture.

I send special congratulations to the Canadian Tamil Congress, Tamil Chair Inc. and U of T Scarborough, which worked so hard on this. What a tremendous example of a grassroots effort and the power of what people can do when they work together.

* * *

VOLUNTEERISM

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, volunteers are the backbone of our communities. Earlier this month was National Volunteer Week, when we pay tribute to the important work of volunteers.

From church groups to service clubs to individuals looking to make a difference, I am always impressed by the volunteers in Wellington—Halton Hills. Especially this year, during a pandemic, their work does not go unnoticed.

I would like to highlight one volunteer, Marilyn Serjeantson, who was named Georgetown Lions Citizen of the Year.

Over the years, Marilyn has contributed so much to our community. From volunteering at George Kennedy Public School to serving on various boards to being part of the Bruce Trail organization, Marilyn was also elected as the first female town councillor and mayor of Halton Hills, a groundbreaking accomplishment.

I thank Marilyn Serjeantson and all the other volunteers for their service to our local communities. They are helping to build a better Canada.

* * *

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in March, Pat Noble, a remarkable individual who I had the pleasure of working with for 12 years, retired from her position as the executive assistant to the mayor of the town of Newmarket.

Pat was a consummate professional, admired and respected by her colleagues and a tireless champion for the community. Her commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of others showed through the numerous community projects she was involved in while representing the office of the mayor of the town of Newmarket. Arts and culture, Belinda's Place, the Margaret Bahen Hospice, Oasis Bereavement, a centre for bereavement and healing, numerous golf tournaments and raising funds to benefit community projects are just a few of the initiatives that Pat helped lead.

I congratulate Pat on her retirement. I thank her on behalf of the residents of Newmarket for making our town a better place to live.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]***CLAUDE CHAPDELAINE**

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to honour Claude Chapdelaine, a trail mapper from Sainte-Adèle in the wonderful Pays-d'en-Haut RCM.

Over the past 15 years, he has mapped some 20 cross-country ski trails and six road biking routes. He began his career in Sainte-Adèle in the Pays-d'en-Haut RCM in my beautiful riding. What is more, he is one of the co-founders of the new Mont Loup-Garou park, an amazing tourism and holiday attraction designed exclusively for non-motorized sports.

I wish Mr. Chapdelaine the best of health. He is 80 years old, and his community involvement is an example to us all. As he often says, Laurentides—Labelle is his beautiful playground.

On behalf of all outdoor enthusiasts in my riding, I want to thank Mr. Chapdelaine and wish him many more years of enjoying nature.

* * *

CANADA SUMMER JOBS

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada summer jobs program provides an opportunity for our youth to get real work experience and develop job skills by working for local businesses and organizations. Our government's expansion of the program will create up to 120,000 jobs across the country this summer.

The program has always been popular in my riding, and this year is no exception. In fact, I am proud to say that over 100 employers will be participating and nearly 500 jobs will be created in Vimy. This year, the number of jobs has doubled compared to last year.

I want to thank and commend the employers who are participating in the Canada summer jobs program in order to give our youth valuable career opportunities and life experience.

* * *

● (1405)

*[English]***RECREATIONAL TRAVEL**

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Judy is a travel adviser in my riding, one of 12,000 across Canada. Today, I tell their story in her words.

“Imagine building a Travel Business for over 25 years, building relationships with your clients, year after year planning amazing trips and great memories.

Now imagine...the world shuts its doors, you are busy getting frantic clients back home, processing hundreds of cancellations, issuing travel credits and assisting with insurance claims, all the while, not qualifying for the “one size fits all” small business funding...relying on CRB as the only means of support.

How much longer can we hang on with no revenue from our businesses and no sector specific aid from our government? And

when travel reopens, who will guide our customers through all the rules of the “new normal” and help start creating new memories?”

COVID brought recreational travel to half and left travel advisers fighting for their livelihoods. They need our support.

* * *

INDIA

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the heartbreaking news we are hearing from India in its fight against the coronavirus. India has seen a critical increase in the number of coronavirus cases in the last few weeks with upward of 350,000 cases a day and around 3,000 deaths recently due to the virus.

My sincere condolences go out to everyone impacted by the virus, to those struggling for survival and all those who have lost loved ones. Canadians across the country are sending their prayers to them.

Our government has announced that we will be donating \$10 million to the Indian Red Cross as well as PPE equipment and ventilators. Canadians can also donate to the cause through the Canadian Red Cross.

For everyone in India, we are there for them, we care for them and we pray for them. Take care and stay safe.

* * *

DO MORE AG FOUNDATION

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been a difficult year for the mental health of Canadians across the country because of COVID-19, and that includes the men and women who work in our agriculture sector.

Last week, I had the opportunity to speak with Kim Keller, a canola farmer from Melfort, Saskatchewan, and Amy VanderHeide, a farmer from my riding in Kings—Hants, about the Do More Ag Foundation and its work to ensure there are mental health supports in place for Canadian farmers and their families.

The initiative began in 2017 with a conversation about the need to have specific supports in place for farmers. Ms. Keller, other co-founders and supporters have worked tirelessly to build the organization, which began in western Canada and now has 70 different partners across the country, including in my home province of Nova Scotia.

I would ask that all members in the House join me in recognizing the work of the Do More Ag Foundation, and as spring planting is happening across the country, a tip of the cap to our farmers who are working tirelessly to put food on our table. We appreciate their work, and if they need support, it is only a phone call away.

CANZUK

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, imagine a world where Canadians can more easily work in London, professional and trades credentials from B.C. are recognized in Sydney and snowbirds could choose between New Zealand's north and south islands.

Freer movement and labour mobility are part of several pillars of the visionary CANZUK initiative, a deeper geopolitical alliance between Canada and three of our most like-minded allies, Australia, New Zealand and the U.K.; a partnership that could include foreign policy coordination, pooled procurement, closer defence and security ties and expanded trade, fostering a new era of opportunity and prosperity for Canadians.

CANZUK could give our nations outsized influence on the world stage. Together, we can amplify our shared values of multiculturalism, respect for human rights and the rule of law and counter-threats posed by increasingly hostile regimes.

We have fought wars and today share high-level intelligence alongside our CANZUK sisters and brothers. Our ties are both current and historic. As we look to embrace measures that will see Canada thrive in a post-pandemic world, I would advocate that a CANZUK future is a brighter future.

* * *

• (1410)

[Translation]

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, I was thrilled to take part in a panel discussion as part of the Inspiration conference series presented by the University of Ottawa, along with my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier. The theme was “Getting Things Done on the Hill...au féminin!”.

I want to thank the entire organization for the invitation and for this great initiative. It is important for women to encourage one another and share our diverse experiences and journeys to show what is possible. We have extraordinary potential, expertise to share, and a sense of leadership to demonstrate, and nothing should stop us from achieving our dreams.

That is why the federal budget tabled on April 19 has a focus on women's entrepreneurship and gender equality. The budget proposes several investments, including funding for child care, in order to support women and affirm the government's commitment to ensuring the well-being of women in Canada.

* * *

ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that in 2018, a woman in the Canadian Armed Forces came forward with allegations of sexual misconduct against the highest-ranking officer in the military. The Prime Minister says that his office took those allegations seriously, and yet we know that the Minister of National Defence, the Clerk of the Privy Council and the Prime Minister's chief of staff were aware but did nothing. The

Statements by Members

Prime Minister is trying to claim that he did not know, but that is very hard to believe.

When a woman files a sexual harassment complaint, there should be no “wrong door” for her to knock on. She should be listened to, and she should feel safe. The Prime Minister and the Liberal government have failed women. This has been a nightmare for women.

The Prime Minister and his government keep saying, with a straight face, that sexual harassment is not tolerated, and yet they gave General Vance a pay raise after the allegations were made. It would appear that the old boys' club is alive and well with this government, despite the feminist rhetoric it spews. As a woman, I find that very disappointing.

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[English]

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Prime Minister, abuse of power at the highest levels in Canada's military continues unchecked. Former chief of the defence staff General Vance and other general officers are under investigation for sexual assault and misconduct, and more senior officers are complicit through their actions or their silence.

For three years, the defence minister knew of serious allegations against General Vance. Key officials in the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office knew and they all did nothing.

Rather than standing for women, the Prime Minister has re-enforced and entrenched a toxic military culture. His inaction has emboldened the “old boys club” and denied women the opportunity to be believed.

Lasting change will come when those who have failed are held accountable. Women in the military have earned the right to serve equally and with respect. Why will the Prime Minister not stand with them?

* * *

IAN WADDELL

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to mark the passing of a great parliamentarian and outstanding Canadian, Ian Waddell.

Ian was an MP, MLA and cabinet minister, a lawyer, author, film producer, social democrat and an indefatigable proponent of a more prosperous and just Canada. He served 14 years in this place, elected three times by the people of Vancouver Kingsway, and once in Port Moody—Coquitlam. After he was elected to the British Columbia legislature, representing Vancouver-Fraserview.

Oral Questions

Ian had a storied career. He was particularly proud of his work on the Berger Commission and the key role he played to include indigenous rights in our Constitution. He was the lead minister responsible for the 2010 winter Olympics winning bid and was instrumental in fostering B.C.'s film industry. He even chatted with the Queen.

Ian had a rare ability to work across party lines and seek practical outcomes, always with good humour.

On behalf of my colleagues and the people of Vancouver Kingsway, we express our deepest appreciation for his public service and admiration for a life well live.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

SHEFFORD

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I too have something to boast about, if I may. I am particularly proud to be able to tell the House today that the municipality of Shefford, in my riding of the same name, was awarded the prestigious title of happiest city. Shefford's green spaces, proximity to major cities and slow pace of living earned it the top spot on Leger marketing's happiness index of the 100 happiest cities in Quebec. Drum roll, please: Shefford scored an 81.88 in its first headline-making and noteworthy year on the list.

Nestled in between peaks and valleys, Shefford has started to attract many artists. Everyone there has a great energy, from residents to elected officials. As the member of Parliament for Shefford, I am delighted to proclaim that the town of Shefford is the perfect example of the superlative quality of life and happiness found throughout the riding.

* * *

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, systemic misogyny grows when people with power use their privilege to protect those who perpetuate it.

The member for Pickering—Uxbridge was silent when the Prime Minister's groping allegations came to light and she was silent when the Prime Minister expelled the member for Vancouver Granville from cabinet and caucus for speaking truth to power. She was silent on revelations that the Prime Minister allowed the member for Kitchener South—Hespeler to run as a Liberal, while knowing he was the subject of substantiated harassment allegations. Today, she is silent about those from her own party who have turned a blind eye to gross sexual misconduct in Canada's military.

Nothing will change for women if men of privilege are allowed to get away with misogyny through silence or deflected blame. Jane Philpott had the courage to publicly call out misogyny in her tent and I have done the same. Today, I call upon the member for Pickering—Uxbridge and all Liberal MPs to find some courage, do the same and stand up for the women in the Canadian Armed Forces.

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April is Sikh Heritage Month, a time to recognize and highlight the important contributions that Sikh communities have made, and continue to make, to our country's cultural, economic, political and social life.

The first Sikh immigrants arrived in Canada in the late 19th century, and today our country is home to more than 500,000 Sikh Canadians, making it one of the largest Sikh diasporas in the world.

During these unprecedented times, we thank Sikh communities for the many contributions to our country since the pandemic began, from the Rexdale Sikh Spiritual Centre providing food to the community to our seniors checking in on one another to people working on the health care and essential front lines. These are just a few instances of Sikhism's core principles of equality, compassion and generosity at work.

Sikh Canadians make our communities stronger. I wish everyone a very happy Sikh Heritage Month.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third wave is devastating this country. New restrictions are in place from coast to coast. The United States of America has administered 220 million doses of vaccines. Canada has administered less than 6% of that number.

The government knew that it would not have enough vaccines in place to prevent a third wave, so why did it not secure the border to keep out the dangerous variants?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide some context for the number of doses being received in this country. About 14.7 million doses were received, which means 31% of Canadians have received at least one dose, and we are third in the G20 for cumulative doses administered. We are going to see two million doses of Pfizer coming into this country per week in the month of May and 2.5 million doses per week in the month of June, and 48 million to 50 million doses will be here by the end of June.

[Translation]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third wave and the variants are devastating our country. New provincial restrictions are in place from coast to coast. The United States has administered 220 million doses. Canada has administered less than 6% of that number.

Oral Questions

The government knew that it would not receive the vaccines in time, so why did it leave the border open?

• (1420)

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these are the facts today. Vaccine manufacturing ramped up in January and February. We have now exceeded our target for the first quarter, and we are third in the G20 in terms of the number of vaccines administered.

We must work on a number of fronts to fight the virus: vaccination, procurement of PPE and health measures.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, other countries received their vaccines in January and February, but not Canada.

According to the federal government's modelling, there can be no reopening until 20% of Canadians are fully vaccinated and 75% have received their first dose.

When will the Liberal government reach those objectives?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a great vaccination story to tell. We are second in the G20 for administration of vaccines for the first dose, and many Canadians will be receiving their second dose over the months to come. May is going to be a bumper crop, and the provinces and territories are getting ready now to administer the most vaccines that we have to date. I am very much looking forward to their work and to seeing Canada through this.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the amendments the government has passed on Bill C-10 have been called a full-blown assault on free expression. In November, the Prime Minister said he would always defend freedom of expression, but now he is trying to regulate political speech that he does not like.

Why is the government attacking Canadians' free speech rights yet again?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, who just a few months ago said that Bill C-10 does not go far enough. He wanted social media networks to be regulated, but he was not the only one. The member for Lakeland said that we had to do something to “protect youth and victims of abuse”, and the member for Calgary Skyview said that these companies profit off sexual exploitation and racism.

We are acting as we have promised, and we will continue to do so.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I refer the minister to comments from the Canadian research chair in Internet law. He said the minister's amendments to Bill C-10 “speak to potential new regulation on the free speech of Canadians”, and most notably on political speech. The full force of

the federal government can now be directed at political speech that the minister and the Prime Minister simply do not like.

Why is the Liberal government the most anti-Internet government in Canadian history?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I could point to SOCAN, the Canadian Independent Music Association and the Professional Music Publishers' Association. They have all supported the amendments we proposed to Bill C-10. In fact, they have said that the characterization that this bill would affect freedom of expression is factually incorrect and dangerously misleading.

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[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, TVA reported that vacationers who have to quarantine upon their return will be entitled to EI. This is no joke. This winter, this government gave \$1,000 to vacationers who had to quarantine. We told the government that this did not make any sense, and it finally backed down. Now it is at it again, not with its own money, but with EI money. Contributors are the ones paying for it.

The government needs to understand that it cannot reward people who choose to flout the rules in the middle of a pandemic.

Why is this so hard to understand?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear: No one can access federal assistance if they have to quarantine after returning to Canada from non-essential travel. Nothing has changed.

EI sickness benefits are still only available to Canadians who cannot work because they are sick or injured, not to those who must quarantine after choosing to travel abroad.

• (1425)

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister can read and watch the TVA reports on this subject, which will show her that she is wrong when she says that.

People have been told 1,000 times not to travel. It has been drummed into their heads. Some are deciding to head south on vacation anyway, and Ottawa is telling them that their quarantine will be subsidized by the workers and employers who pay into the EI system. What a joke. Two weeks of EI will at least cover the cost of the plane ticket.

Will the government end this comedy of errors and immediately reverse this irresponsible decision?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a classic example of a question that was written before the answer was given.

With all due respect to my friend from the Bloc Québécois, my colleague made it very clear that these people would not be eligible for sickness benefits. We have been very clear about that, and nothing has changed. Sickness benefits do not apply to people who go on vacation, period.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third wave of COVID-19 is hitting hard, and it is still the most vulnerable, essential workers and frontline workers who are getting sick and who risk spreading the virus to their families and communities. The government has a responsibility to act.

Will the Prime Minister commit to ensuring that the most vulnerable are vaccinated as soon as possible?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. The Government of Canada has been an exceptionally strong partner for the provinces and territories when it comes to vaccination. Not only have we procured a diverse portfolio, but we have also paid for them entirely, alleviating the provinces and territories from the burden of vaccinating. We have also supported them with logistics and with additional support, should they need access to human resources for deployment.

We will be there for the provinces and territories, no matter what their health human resources needs or other equipment needs are.

* * *

LABOUR

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Prime Minister whether he would be willing to improve paid sick leave. Instead of responding to the question, he responded with jibber-jabber about jurisdiction.

Here is the thing. There is already a federal paid sick leave program. The problem is that it does not work. I have a crazy idea. How about we make it work? All of the experts agree that a paid sick leave program that works would save lives, so why does the Prime Minister hide behind excuses when we are saying to improve the program that is already there?

Will the Prime Minister do that and save lives?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I disagree. This program is absolutely working. From the beginning of the pandemic, our government has focused on providing assistance for Canadians. Paid sick leave has been a foundational element of our public health response. More than eight million workers accessed the CERB, close to 500,000 Canadians have claimed the Canada recovery sickness benefit and millions more continue to have access to four weeks of paid sick leave.

Beyond our emergency supports, eight million workers have access to paid sick days as a result of the EI premium reduction program, and hundreds of thousands of workers continue to access more flexible EI sickness benefits. Through budget 2021, we are extending EI sickness benefits to 26 weeks, providing yet another 169,000 Canadians with additional support—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government asked Justice Marie Deschamps to conduct a review of harassment and assault in the Canadian military.

She submitted that report in 2015. Today, six years later, the government is all proud to announce an inquiry into harassment and assault in the Canadian military, led by Justice Louise Arbour. It is exactly the same thing, but six years later.

Does that not show that nothing has changed in the Canadian military since the government has been in power? The government has done nothing, despite the report we commissioned in 2015.

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin today by acknowledging the anniversary of the crash of Stalker 22 off the coast of Greece. One year ago today, we lost six Canadian Armed Forces members in the line of duty. They were dedicated to their work, passionate about serving Canada and beloved by their crew, families and community. Our thoughts are with the families today.

When it comes to sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, we are absolutely committed to root this out, and today's announcement was another step toward that.

● (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our thoughts are with the victims the minister was talking about.

Our thoughts are also with those who have been the victims of harassment in the Canadian military and who see that this government has done nothing for six years, despite the 2015 report that we commissioned. What is more, the government continues to keep Canadians in the dark regarding the Prime Minister's behaviour.

At the beginning of the week, the Prime Minister said that no one in his cabinet knew that there were allegations of sexual harassment against General Vance. An email shows that they knew that in 2018.

When will the Prime Minister finally tell Canadians the truth?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has no tolerance for misconduct. We followed the proper process, the same one the previous government followed. The current leader of the official opposition was made aware of misconduct rumours in 2015. It was serious enough that he asked his staff to notify the Prime Minister's chief of staff, who then took it to the Privy Council Office for review. In other words, these are the same steps we are following.

Can the Leader of the Opposition seriously have his party stand here and decry that process, the same one that he took?

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a defence minister must ensure that Canada's military not only defends the values for which our nation stands, but also embodies them. Under this minister, the old boys club continues unchecked. Members of the military police feel they can safely mock victims of sexual misconduct rather than protect them from it. Senior officers believe they can make recommendations about service members' conduct without taking into consideration convictions of sexual assault.

Will the minister admit he has failed in his duty as Minister of National Defence?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we learned very troubling news yesterday, that former Prime Minister Harper appointed General Vance in 2015 even though he was under active investigation by CFNIS. Days after the Conservatives appointed him, the investigation was suddenly dropped. According to an ATIP, the commanding officer said that he was under pressure, but not from whom, at that time.

The Leader of the Opposition says he passed along the sexual misconduct allegations about General Vance in 2015, claiming those were looked into. How is this possible if General Vance was appointed at that time and the investigation was suddenly dropped?

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, justice delayed is justice denied. This defence minister failed to implement the Deschamps report, and this new review will suffer the same fate. Rather than standing for women, he has reinforced an entrenched and toxic military culture. He knew about the allegations of sexual misconduct against General Vance for three years and did nothing. His inaction has emboldened the old boys club and denied women the opportunity to be believed.

Will the minister admit he has failed in his duty as Minister of National Defence?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said from the beginning, I treat all cases of misconduct with the utmost seriousness and always followed all proper processes.

Oral Questions

We saw the same process in 2015. Let us talk about 2015. The Harper Conservatives appointed General Vance while he had an active CFNIS investigation looking into him. Right after he was appointed, that investigation was suddenly dropped. Then the Leader of the Opposition passed along rumours of sexual misconduct that were supposedly looked into.

Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition knows more than what he has said so far.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Well, that was a ridiculous answer, Mr. Speaker.

The defence minister has lost complete control of his department. Yesterday we learned that a private Facebook group for military police posted disgusting attacks on one of General Vance's alleged victims. The defence minister left General Vance in charge of Operation Honour for three years despite allegations of sexual misconduct, and now we are seeing the fallout.

Does the defence minister understand that his own inaction has inflamed the sexual misconduct and misogyny in the Canadian Armed Forces?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we are talking about 2015, when General Vance was appointed, the member opposite was parliamentary secretary of national defence at that time. We learned the troubling news yesterday that former Prime Minister Harper appointed General Vance in July 2015 even though he was under active investigation by CFNIS at that time. Now, did the member opposite also know, and what did he do at that time? Just days after the Conservatives appointed him, the investigation was suddenly dropped. According to an ATIP, the commanding officer said that he was under pressure, but by whom? Maybe it was the member opposite; we do not know.

The Leader of the Opposition said that he passed along sexual misconduct allegations about General Vance in July 2015, claiming they were looked into. How is this possible, if General Vance was appointed at the time and the investigation was suddenly—

● (1435)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the minister, who turned a blind eye and ran for the hills, Conservatives actually investigated.

Oral Questions

Canadians are shocked to learn that a senior officer wrote a glowing recommendation to the courts in support of a soldier convicted of sexually assaulting a colleague. Appallingly, numbers show that at least 216 cases of sexual assault and harassment in the military were pleaded down to administrative charges under the minister's watch, a mere slap on the wrist.

Will the defence minister admit he failed to protect our women and men in uniform and was wrong to leave General Vance in charge of Operation Honour? Will the minister answer the question, no more rhetoric?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to take strong action, and that is exactly what today's announcement was about.

As I stated before, in July 2015 when an investigation was going on, why did they appoint General Vance at that time? The member opposite was the parliamentary secretary of national defence at that time. Talk about knowing something and then still appointing somebody.

At the end of the day, we are going to be focused on survivors, and that is what our announcement was about today.

An hon. member: Bettered his contract and gave him a raise. Kept him in charge of Operation Honour.

The Speaker: Order, please.

I want to remind hon. members that when they speak in the chamber they can do it kind of anonymously because we cannot really point them out, but online they come out front and centre. I am sure nobody wants to draw attention to themselves for doing something that is incorrect in the chamber.

I will let the hon. minister finish. He has about six seconds left.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, obviously the member opposite wants to [*Technical difficulty—Editor*], but one thing I can say with absolute certainty is that our government is going to be focused on the survivors and a way ahead to make this better. This is why we have launched an external review. This is why we are [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] in place and making sure that our budget represents—

The Speaker: We seem to be having a bit of a technical issue, but the time is up.

The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Immigration promised to speed up the processing of applications to immigrate to Quebec, but the exact opposite happened in 2020.

Quebec's target was 44,000 immigrants, but the minister acknowledged that he let 17,000 fewer than that in. He also acknowledged that nearly 1,000 applications from workers already residing in Quebec could have been processed but were not. That means

10,000 people who are already here, already working, already assimilated into our language and culture and already integrated.

What steps will the minister take to get his department in order?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working closely with Quebec to make sure it gets the skilled workers it needs.

We have welcomed more than 7,000 new skilled permanent residents to Quebec, which is 56 more compared to the same period last year. Our government will continue to respect its immigration quota, thereby ensuring that Quebec gets all the skilled workers it needs.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, nearly 7,000 applications for permanent residence are waiting to be opened at Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada and have not even been acknowledged. This means 7,000 envelopes are gathering dust on a desk.

Everyone understands that an acknowledgement of receipt does not speed up the processing of files, but applicants do require an acknowledgement of receipt to access health insurance and to ensure that selection certificates do not expire. Quebec has implemented a temporary solution, but it was not up to Quebec to do the minister's job.

Can the minister guarantee that he will respond to the 7,000 families that are waiting and ensure that such a backlog never happens again?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are seeing the effects in Quebec, which is facing a significant labour shortage in several sectors.

I was pleased to see that Quebec plans to increase its immigration levels in the coming years. This will allow us to welcome even more skilled workers, which Quebec needs.

I will continue to work with my Quebec counterpart to support economic recovery in Quebec and across Canada.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I truly commend the minister on his French. We only wish that the department had improved in the same way, but instead it has had its share of failures during the pandemic.

Unacceptable delays in granting work visas and permits are piling up. Applications for permanent residence filed in Quebec remain unopened, while confirmations of permanent residence were issued to people who were then denied entry into Canada. The temporary foreign workers file was mismanaged and the department missed its own sponsorship target.

Can the minister admit that when everything is falling apart, there might be more to blame for the problem than just the pandemic?

● (1440)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for complimenting me on my French. I will keep working on it.

Throughout the pandemic, we have worked in close collaboration with the Government of Quebec on determining immigration priorities. We have also put in place several innovative measures to process current applications as quickly as possible, moving from paper copies to digital and reducing the delays caused by COVID-19.

There is still a lot of work to do, but we will continue to work collaboratively to ensure that the immigration system continues to serve Canadians and Quebecers.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for three years the Minister of National Defence knew about sexual harassment allegations involving women serving in the military against Canada's highest-ranked general, and he did nothing. He even refused to look at the evidence and he never followed up on it. This is a woman's worst nightmare, to have the courage to bring forward something like this but then to be ignored and dismissed. To add insult to injury, the defence minister gave General Vance a pay bump and extended his appointment.

Will the Minister of National Defence apologize for turning his back on women in the Canadian Armed Forces?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Armed Forces members make enormous sacrifices to protect Canadians, regardless of rank or gender. They have an undeniable right to serve with safety.

It is clear that we have not lived up to our responsibility to protect our members from misconduct. That is why we announced today that Madame Louise Arbour will lead an independent, external comprehensive review into harassment and sexual misconduct in DND-CAF. We also named Lieutenant-General Jennie Carignan as the chief of professional conduct and culture.

These are just some of the first steps that we are taking. We know we have much more work to do, and we will get it done.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we already have a report on this. Now is the time to actually act on that. The minister's announcement today, as he knows, has no timeline, no start date, no urgency.

Leah West was sexually assaulted by a senior officer while serving in our military and has said that not a single member of the Canadian Armed Forces, DND leadership or the government has reached out to her since then. She said that today's announcement "rings absolutely hollow".

I really wish that the minister would show some humility, maybe pick up the phone and apologize to Leah West and the other women who have been harassed and assaulted. Will he do that?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard from survivors. We have conducted round tables with experts. The announcement today was about taking action on what we have heard, immediate action when it comes to providing greater support and peer-to-peer support. There are the

Oral Questions

announcements that we made in budget 2021 and the actions we have taken with the external review. It is going to be much broader, to make sure that we have an independent process.

That is going to give confidence to the women in the Canadian Armed Forces to be able to come forward. We owe it to them. We need to get this right, and we will.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, generations of Canadian families have been supported by good jobs in the automotive industry, but this is all at risk because the auto sector has no plan.

The budget mentions electric vehicle battery research, but the Liberals continue to fail workers by not creating a national auto policy. Canada has fallen behind, and there is no better example than stalled production because we are dependent on foreign microchips. Furthermore, Ford and GM are creating production of batteries in the U.S., while Chrysler has brand new electric vehicle plants in Detroit, across from Windsor.

When will the government implement a national auto policy to protect and create these good jobs in Canada for Canadians and their families?

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows full well, we have partnered with various unions since the first day we were elected. We have had numerous consultations. We are very much focused on ensuring that the future of our auto sector is healthy and robust, and we are there for the workers.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the PBO and housing policy experts like Steve Pomeroy have repeatedly criticized the affordability criteria in the largest part of the Liberals' housing strategy. For instance, they announced a project in Ottawa providing 65 units at only 21% of median income. This makes the housing sound affordable, but in reality, it is \$1,900 a month, nearly 50% higher than Ottawa's average market rent.

The Liberals do not seem to have any idea what is affordable to everyday Canadians. Why is the government more concerned about programs that sound good than delivering truly affordable housing to Canadians?

Oral Questions

• (1445)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. Our long-term plan for a faster growing Canadian economy must include housing that is affordable for working Canadians. That is why in budget 2021, our government has a plan to invest \$2.5 billion and reallocate \$1.3 billion in existing funding to speed up the construction, repair or support of 35,000 affordable housing units. We will continue to remain ambitious as part of the national housing strategy.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very frustrating situation for all women to hear who have witnessed anything like this. The bottom line is that a woman came forward and the minister dismissed it. He did not take it seriously. He did not follow up in three years and now he is announcing a report. We have already had a report, yet nothing happened since then. We want to see actions.

Will the minister acknowledge his failure to act, the lack of courage he has shown to women in our armed forces and take real action and provide leadership? He was elected by the people. Where is the leadership?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing I can assure you is that we took immediate action. The complaint was immediately passed on to the Privy Council Office, as I stated before, so that the Governor in Council appointment could be looked into, exactly the same process that the previous government had taken. I also announced today that we are creating a new internal organization that will be led by Lt. Gen. Jennie Carignan as the chief of professional conduct and culture. She will be tasked with unifying, integrating and coordinating all policies, programs and activities that currently address systemic misconduct and support a culture change across National Defence. We need to make sure that everyone who wants to come forward feels comfortable coming forward.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have met the challenges of COVID head-on, but remain concerned about the future. Over the last year, countless Londoners have told me about the CERB, wage supports for businesses, and other supports and how they sustained them during the pandemic.

Budget 2021 lays out a vision where women, men, families, small businesses and communities are able to plan with greater confidence, but vaccines are key to ensuring that confidence as well. Could the minister update the House on the vaccine doses we are receiving this year and into the future?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that we have been here for Canadians at every step. I am privileged to share that Canada is once again one of the first countries to sign an agreement for COVID-19 vaccines with a blue-chip supplier like Pfizer. There

will be 35 million doses in 2022 and 30 million doses in 2023. We will also be receiving two million doses a week in May and 2.5 million doses in June, for a total of 48 million by the end of June.

To those who suggested that vaccines would not arrive until 2030, that we were not thinking of the future, that we had no plan, we do have a plan and it is working.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the heritage minister consistently tries to mislead Canadians by convincing them that Bill C-10 applies only to large online streaming companies. He even takes quotes from members of Parliament and experts and uses them out of context in order to try to prove his point. It is incredibly deceptive, sneaky, crafty and wrong.

The fact is that last week the Liberals changed their own legislation, Bill C-10, by removing the one section that would have protected ordinary Canadians from online government censorship. Why?

• (1450)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am puzzled as to who is trying to deceive whom really. I have in front of me a press release from the Canadian Coalition for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which says, regarding Bill C-10, that these “characterizations [that this bill would somehow attempt to infringe on free speech] are both factually incorrect and dangerously misleading. They represent neither the text nor the purpose of Bill C-10.”

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask for the date of that quote because the justice department itself has said otherwise.

We are seeing the current government mimic behaviour that is consistent with a basic dictatorship. It is wrong.

With their transformational edit that they just made to Bill C-10, the Liberals are trying to give themselves the power to control what Canadians can read online, what they post on social media and the videos that they watch on YouTube. Again, it is wrong. Why is the government doing this?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that press release was issued yesterday.

What we are seeing now is that these are big, powerful and, in fact some of the wealthiest corporations on the planet; clearly, the member opposite and her party are just afraid to stand up to them. Again it seems that the members of the Conservative Party are listening to the most extremist element of their party, as they have on very important issues such as climate change or women's right to choose.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just lodged a complaint with the Commissioner of Official Languages about the Liberals' lax application of the Official Languages Act within federal departments and agencies, and in particular their obligation to submit a review of their compliance with the act.

In 2019, just 47 of the 89 reviews promised were submitted and just 24 out of 55 were submitted in 2020. If the two official languages are so important to the minister, why is she not enforcing the act within our own federal departments and agencies?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. Protecting our two official languages is obviously a priority for our government.

No matter what anyone says, official languages are and will always be a priority. The minister is well informed and is working hard to promote and protect our beautiful language.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Health Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the National Research Council, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Canadian Museum of History and even the Treasury Board are some of the federal organizations and departments that are not complying with the Official Languages Act.

Add to that WE Charity, COVID Alert texts sent in English only, English-only documents at committees, and so forth, and all during the last two years of a Liberal government.

Can the minister stop talking, show leadership and simply ensure compliance with the act?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Protecting the French language, and its use in our institutions, is and continues to be a priority.

The minister is working very hard and is very present. She will continue her work on this to ensure that French is used everywhere.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we still have thousands of COVID-19 cases in Quebec and in Canada, and let me say that it is because of the federal variant. Since the beginning of the third wave alone, the federal variant has allowed more than 2,000 new positive cases into the country, including hundreds of variants of concern, without appropriate quarantines for land travellers or monitoring of travellers after their three-day quarantine.

When will the government tighten up quarantines and properly monitor travellers arriving from abroad?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that when we talk about the border we stick to the facts. The member opposite knows that in fact we have some of the strictest measures in the world. The reason he has that data is that we do test, trace and isolate travellers through a variety of different measures and they are stringent. In fact, hundreds of tickets have been issued to travellers for failing to follow the Quarantine Act. Only 1.5% of all incoming travellers have tested positive upon arrival since measures started.

We are going to continue to work hard to ensure that travellers are supported to arrive here in good health; and, when they are not, take appropriate action to ensure that they get the services they need. It is important that—

• (1455)

The Speaker: The hon. member for La Prairie.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, constantly repeating a lie does not make it true.

Between April 7 and 24, public health identified no fewer than 165 flights from 19 countries with at least one passenger testing positive for COVID-19. Radio-Canada reported that Health Canada cannot even say how many passengers tested positive after leaving hotel quarantine. There is no follow-up. They spend three days in a hotel and then it is thank you, good evening, and they are on their way. This is the federal variant that is undermining the work of Quebec and the provinces.

When will Ottawa finally get serious about managing quarantines?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that we have stopped at nothing to enforce quarantine, including working with our provincial and municipal partners, and we will continue to do that.

The reason the member has the data that he has is because we are indeed requiring travellers to submit to pre-departure tests, tests on arrival, sequence tests if they are positive, tests they get on day eight; and to remain in quarantine for 14 days. If they do not, there are penalties and we apply them.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians continue to raise concerns about the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region; Canadians like Professor Ann M. Fitzgerald, Canadians living in diaspora groups here at home and Canadian aid groups.

Oral Questions

Over a million people have been displaced, and there are reports of ethnic cleansing and gross violations of human rights. The government has committed funds to support humanitarian efforts in the region. What other measures has the government taken to defend human rights and the people of this region?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the hon. member's deep concern for the humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia.

As the member mentioned, we have committed an additional \$34 million for the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia to be used flexibly to address the crisis. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister and I have all spoken to our counterparts in Ethiopia. We are supporting the work of the UN Human Rights Commission to support the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission to investigate human rights abuses, including abuses of sexual and gender violence.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the deadline for amicus briefs in support for Line 5 is May 11, which is less than two weeks away. A unanimous report from the Canada-U.S. parliamentary committee as well as the natural resources minister has indicated that they will send a brief to support the 25,000 Canadian jobs that will be impacted.

Can the minister update the House as to when in the next two weeks it will be submitted?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Line 5 is non-negotiable. People will not be left out in the cold.

I would like to thank the members of the Canada-U.S. special committee for their hard work on studying Line 5. We have received the report and will be reviewing it, but it is clear that there is no daylight between parties, between Canadians, on this issue.

Line 5 is essential to Canada's energy security. Line 5 is not just vital for Canada, not just vital for the United States, but it is also vital for North America. We will do all we can to make sure that this does not get shut down.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Enbridge Line 5 has two weeks left in Michigan. If oil stops flowing, Canadians, particularly in Ontario and Quebec, will face fuel shortages and job losses.

A while ago, the Minister of Natural Resources said that he is "very confident" that this pipeline will keep running, but this week, reports are calling the government's diplomatic approach "frustrated". With so much at stake and little time left, Canadians are beyond frustrated.

Can the minister be absolutely clear that this threatened shut-down will be averted by May 13?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the House that we are looking at all options. We will leave no stone unturned in defending Canada's energy security. We are working at all politi-

cal levels, the diplomatic level and the legal level. We are ready to intervene precisely at the right moment.

Line 5 is non-negotiable. We are standing up for energy workers and for Canada's energy security. People will not be left out in the cold.

* * *

● (1500)

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year, our crops are planted, nurtured and harvested by thousands of temporary foreign workers. They are essential to our food supply.

The government is providing dedicated testing support for temporary foreign workers arriving by air, including those arriving in my region. How will the government respond to the increased demand for testing in the coming months when many temporary foreign workers are expected to arrive in Canada?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform by colleague from Châteauguay—Lacolle and farmers that Dynacare has recently taken over all COVID-19 testing for temporary foreign workers arriving in Quebec.

Dynacare is well-established in many regions of Quebec, and we are optimistic that the company will be able to respond to the demand in French, English and even Spanish via video conference and in person when necessary to administer day eight tests.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Safety Power is a great Canadian company that creates world-class clean tech to remove nitrous oxide from generators. We should be celebrating this homegrown technology, yet the government is about to put in new regulations, gazetted on March 9, 2019, that will literally shutter its operations here in Canada, driving away the very clean tech the Liberals like to say they support.

Why is the government refusing to listen to companies like Safety Power and stop these job-killing regulations?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly Canadian clean tech is an important part of a broad approach to addressing the climate issue, and Canada is very fortunate that the investments that have been made over the course of the past five years have resulted in Canadian clean tech leading the world. Over the last couple of years, Canada has had between 11 and 12 companies listed in the top 100 clean-tech companies in the world. We are very committed to working with the clean-tech sector to ensure that it can grow and thrive.

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HEALTH

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government awarded a \$100-million contract to Switch Health to manage COVID testing for Canadians and travellers returning to our country. What has followed has often been chaos, with a completely unreliable testing system. No one answers the phones for days. Testing kits are being sent for analysis without supervision. There has been no accountability.

How many cases of COVID were allowed into the country thanks to this faulty testing process by a company that was approved by the Liberal government?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet again we see members of the opposition torquing the truth for their own benefit. In fact, none of the cases that came used Switch Health. It is not the provider that provides the day three testing. In fact, it provides the day 10 testing.

Indeed, we are working Switch Health, and we have added additional providers to make sure people can get the day 10 test back on time.

I would like to thank all Canadians for complying with our quarantine and testing requirements.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Switch Health, a small start-up company the government hand-picked to manage COVID tests at the U.S. border, is severely overwhelmed, resulting in huge wait times and extremely slow service. Canadians are doing their best to comply with mandatory COVID testing rules, yet in one case my constituents waited 12 hours just to get a nurse on the line, and they are not alone.

Why is the government giving almost \$100 million to a company that is unable to provide the services it is being paid for, or are we just looking at another WE scandal?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet again we see the opposition casting aspersions without any evidence.

I will say this. We have some of the strongest border measures in the world, including the requirement for a predeparture test, a postarrival test and, yes, a day eight test to ensure that people are not sick later on in their quarantine.

We will continue to add services and providers in this space to make sure that Canadians get the quality service they deserve.

• (1505)

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Brampton is one of the communities hit hardest by the pandemic. We have been a COVID hot spot, with the highest test positivity rate in Ontario, where one in five people is testing positive. I have heard many questions from my constituents about vaccine supply, how many doses have arrived in Canada and when they will get their vaccines. These are important questions. Unfortunately, the facts often get lost in misleading partisan spins from the opposition.

Can the minister please set the record straight and provide clarity on our procurement plan from day one and for the future?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the House and all Canadians that we are managing the vaccine supply chain in an incredibly competitive environment, leading to the procurement of 14.7 million doses in Canada. About 31% of Canadians have received at least one dose, and we are third in the G20. In fact, the provinces are so confident in our supply that both Ontario and Quebec have announced that they will start booking vaccine appointments for all adults before the end of May. Before the end of June, we will have 48 million to 50 million vaccines in this country, and before the end of the summer, all Canadians who want to be vaccinated will be.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government promised that its infrastructure bank would get projects built and create tens of thousands of jobs for Canadians, but yesterday the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that the bank is failing Canadians. Projects are not getting built and jobs are not being created. The bank is actually a barrier to getting projects done, but the government keeps pouring more money into it, doubling down on helping private investors profit through the bank.

Will the minister scrap her privatization experiment and refocus on building projects that communities need?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am always delighted to talk about our infrastructure plan, which is building projects across the country and creating jobs.

Oral Questions

There has been very positive progress over the past year at the Canada Infrastructure Bank. We brought in new leadership and established a new mandate, and it is implementing its new growth plan and moving forward with projects, from the REM in Montreal to the Oneida battery project in Ontario to the southern Manitoba fibre project to the Lake Erie connector. It is leveraging private and institutional capital, creating good jobs and getting more infrastructure built for Canadians.

In just over three years, the CIB has achieved more progress at a lower cost than its predecessor P3 Canada, and it is in a strong position to build the infrastructure needed to increase Canada's growth and competitiveness and accelerate our transition to a low-carbon economy.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order.

The interpreters do a wonderful job, but unfortunately, they were unable to properly interpret what the minister was saying because she was not wearing her headset with microphone. Would it be possible to remedy that situation, please?

The Speaker: I would ask the minister to repeat what she just said, while wearing her headset, if she has it.

[English]

Does the hon. minister have her headset with her?

While that is being taken care of, I want to remind all members that, in order to facilitate the work for our interpreters and everybody else who is listening, it is obligatory to have the headset that is commissioned by the government. A lot of thought went into this, and I want to make sure everything runs smoothly.

The hon. minister.

[Translation]

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Speaker, I am so sorry. I just forgot. I will repeat what I said in French.

There has been very positive progress over the past year at the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

We brought in new leadership and established a new mandate. The bank is implementing its new plan for growth and moving forward with projects ranging from the REM in Montreal to the Oneida battery project in Ontario to the southern Manitoba fibre optic project to the Lake Erie connector.

By leveraging private and institutional capital, creating good jobs and getting more infrastructure built for Canada—

The Speaker: Order. That is all the time we have for oral questions today.

Actually, I am being told it is not over. I am sorry. Some days are like that.

The hon. member for Fredericton.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources said that affordable, safe nuclear power was key to reaching Canada's climate goals. It is the nuclear industry that carefully designed and continues to perpetuate that green-washed illusion.

The reality is that competitive technologies like solar, wind and geothermal are operational today. Even when facing these indisputable facts, the government allocated millions of dollars to develop SMNRs, a hypothetical industry that relies strictly on massive federal subsidies and does nothing to resolve the problem of radioactive waste production. The risks are being ignored and the dangers trivialized.

In New Brunswick, nuclear is not a success story. After emerging from a \$2.4-billion refurbishment, Point Lepreau is still losing \$50,000 every hour on planned downtime—

• (1510)

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly in the context of the move to a lower carbon future, greening of the grid and reducing emissions associated with electricity generation are obviously a critical component, as is greening of the transportation network and a whole range of other things.

In that context, it is important that we are looking at the most cost-effective ways to do this, but also the most reliable. In that context, solar, wind, geothermal and a whole range of other technologies have a role to play. Small modular reactors may, in the future, have a role to play. In the context of looking at a climate crisis, we are looking at all non-emitting technologies.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot on a point of order.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties, and I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That the House recognize that U.S. economic policy, specifically with respect to the trade embargo against the Republic of Cuba, must in no way restrict the right of Canadian and Quebec companies operating in accordance with Canadian law to do business with their international partners.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

Business of Supply

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

USE OF HEADSETS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, moments ago, during one of the last questions, you indicated it was, to use your words, “obligatory” that members use a proper headset. I am assuming you mean a House of Commons approved headset.

Earlier today during debate, your deputy allowed a member who was using earbuds to proceed. The rationale at the time was that it seemed to be acceptable for the translators. Could you, Mr. Speaker, confirm to the House if it is an absolute requirement to use that headset or if the requirement is that as long as it is sufficiently heard by the translators?

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add to this as well.

It did in fact happen earlier today, and the chair occupant at the time ruled on this. The member for Vancouver Kingsway had technical challenges with his equipment and therefore he used his iPhone, or it was a phone anyway, along with the appropriate earbuds and microphone that went along with that phone. It was on the understanding that the technicians and the interpreters could be heard and understood, and it was allowed.

I certainly would suggest that circumstances like that can arise, and I think when members can be heard and that can be confirmed, they should in fact be allowed to speak. I hope this will be the ruling you will find, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: That particular case was brought to my attention earlier and that is exactly what happened. The hon. member had to make a statement and the person in the chair at the time used his judgment. I have three amazing people who are taking those places and I put my faith in their judgment.

I believe it was the right thing to do, and it was done in coordination with the technicians to ensure the interpreters heard everything that was said. Again, everyone has to have their headsets. If there is something wrong, please make a case and hopefully we can work it out so everyone can be on the record.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during question period, the member for Lethbridge said that the Department of Justice was against an amendment that was brought forward in the heritage committee on Bill C-10.

This is factually incorrect. It is a former employee of the justice department. I am convinced my hon. colleague did not intend to mislead the House and Canadians and I would like to offer her the opportunity to set the record straight.

• (1515)

The Speaker: We are moving into the area of debate, but I want to thank the member for bringing that up.

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, per our Thursday tradition, I am pleased to ask my counterpart on the government side and colleague from Honoré-Mercier what parliamentarians can look forward to in the coming days.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Louis-Saint-Laurent.

This afternoon, we will continue the debate on the opposition motion moved by the Conservative Party.

Tomorrow we will start with the vote on the ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 19. We will then move on to second reading consideration of Bill S-3, an act to amend the Offshore Health and Safety Act.

On Monday, we will return to the second reading debate on Bill C-12, an act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050.

[English]

Tuesday will be an allotted day.

Finally, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of next week will be dedicated for debate on the budget bill.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ACCESS TO COVID-19 VACCINES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: There are four minutes remaining for questions and comments for the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, of course, I think everybody in the chamber and every Canadian would like to see every Canadian vaccinated as soon as possible, but with certain practical realities. This motion would call for us to administer 18 million doses in the next three weeks, which is six million per week. That is double what Major-General Dany Fortin has said is Canada's capacity, which is 3.1 million. We are not hitting that even at this point. Of course, it is about triple the number of doses we are getting a week.

Where does my hon. colleague think we would get the vaccine doses and how could we ramp up the capacity to actually meet the objective of the Conservative motion?

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Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member answered the question in the preamble. The capacity is not there, according to the information we have. In my opinion, the better question is why the Conservative Party is bringing forward this motion. It is because the Conservatives know the vaccine ramp-up is going to take off. We see that Ontario is now saying that if people are over 18 by May 24, they can start getting the vaccine too. They are fully bracing for this massive influx of vaccines. The Conservatives are bringing forward this motion today so they can hopefully get it passed and then five weeks from now say that everybody is getting the vaccine so incredibly quickly now because they brought forward the motion. That is the only reason they are doing this today.

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 am wondering if my colleague can provide his thoughts on how, through this process, the government has been listening to health experts and so many others to ensure it is done in a safe manner as well as to ensure all Canadians will in fact be provided a vaccine for free and at no cost.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, this government has been very clear from the beginning. If people want to be vaccinated by the end of September, they will be. It has said that these are the plans of what the government will do to support Canadians, that this is what they can expect in terms of safety, that this is what the professionals have told it and that this is what those who specialize in the field of medicine have said is the best course of action to move forward. This is unlike the Conservatives, who are bringing forward these motions that are based not on science but on politics alone.

The approach the government has taken from day one has been based on the best information it is getting from the professionals. Of course, the Conservatives will come in here and say that we did not tell them to wear masks in the beginning, but then in June we told them to wear them. The entire world was going through the process of learning how to deal with the pandemic. The government has been there and has been honest with Canadians, as it relates to the health aspects of this, every step of the way. As that information changed, the government ensured that Canadians got the updated and relevant information.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak on behalf of my constituents, but I am a bit disappointed in the motion moved by the member for Calgary Nose Hill. The motion is not based on science. The Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Liberal Party have made that clear.

I know that Canadians are sick of being inside. Today is my mother's birthday. I wish her a happy birthday, but I will not get to see her because I also have to stay home. She lives 75 kilometres away from me, but I have not seen her in months.

I believe that the member for Calgary Nose Hill missed a golden opportunity. I will pick up on what the member for Kingston and the Islands was saying. He mentioned the issue of vaccine hesitancy. What a great opportunity for every parliamentarian to show their constituents that vaccination is the quickest way for us to regain our freedom and that these vaccines are healthy, safe and effective.

I believe that all members of the House have a role to play in countering the misinformation that is out there in the world and in our country. However, the official opposition and the Conservatives are not helping to counter this misinformation.

On November 25, the member for Calgary Nose Hill told us that no Canadian would be able to be vaccinated until 2030. My colleague from Gatineau mentioned this earlier. The member's statement was obviously not based on science, and she clearly had not consulted the experts. She just threw out a number to scare Canadians. It was done for partisan purposes. She also said that 2.5 billion people would get the vaccine before Canadians. Again, this is not true.

There is also another issue. Some people, including the Conservative opposition leader, say that we need rapid tests. That is what the Leader of the Opposition says during every question period. However, the rapid tests have been delivered, and the provinces have them now. It is not for me to judge the strategy that the provinces want to adopt for using these tests. The provinces have not yet used all the rapid tests. I would point out that these tests were acquired by Public Services and Procurement Canada and delivered to the provinces several months ago, if not last year. This is another example of misinformation being passed on by the House.

I also think it is important to point out that last week, some members of Parliament spoke out against the lockdowns that some provinces had announced to protect residents. Even though these lockdowns are not popular, I think that politicians, our leaders, have a responsibility to keep their constituents safe.

The member for Calgary Nose Hill condemned the lockdown three weeks ago. Another Conservative member had to apologize after criticizing these measures. I think it is irresponsible for members of the House to criticize these measures when we know that they protect Canadians.

[*English*]

I want to share facts. There are facts that need to be said. We constantly hear the Conservatives say that the government of Canada wasted so much time with the Chinese to try and get the vaccine. That is simply not true.

The minister of procurement signed contracts in July and August, even before those clinical trials were completed. Normally, when drugs become available in Canada, there must be clinical trials and only when the clinical trials are done will Health Canada approve it. Then we could potentially sign a contract.

We did not do that. We took a risk. That is why we have a diversified portfolio. At that time we did not know which vaccine would be most efficient or which vaccine would work. We also knew that the supply chain may not be as stable. That is why we have a diverse vaccine portfolio.

Yes, I know that in January and February there were some issues, but the target of six million doses by end of Q1 always remained. It is true that we sometimes did not communicate the reality of the availability of vaccines to some provinces. We told them they would get six million, and they did not. They got 9.5 million vaccines. I think that is good news. It helps with planning.

• (1525)

However, we know that there may still continue to be some supply issues. Pfizer is a stable company that has been really helpful to Canada, and that is worth mentioning. Pfizer has been a partner, and I believe that is because of the working relationship that our Minister of Public Services and Procurement has built with it. Pfizer did not only deliver on its quarterly objectives, it even surpassed them. It is worthwhile to mention the great work it is doing to help Canada administer more vaccines.

The other issue I want to mention is that we know we are going to get 48 million to 50 million vaccines by the end of Q2. That is more than enough to vaccinate every Canadian who chooses to get vaccinated by the end of June, or at the least have the first dose, and administer a second dose.

There are other facts. So far we have received just over 15 million doses. We know that Canada has administered just over 13 million vaccines. We know that we are now third of the G20 countries, in terms of administration of vaccines. We know that more than 30% of Canadians have now received a vaccine in Canada. That is great news. That is a testament to the work that is being done, collaboratively, with the provinces.

However, I have issues with the motion, again, calling on all adults to have access to a vaccine by the May long weekend. This has also been brought up by the Bloc and the NDP. This is just unattainable with the rate vaccinations are being administered. Canada is administering just over 300,000 vaccines per day on good days.

It would have been fun to debate how we could help provinces administer more vaccines during the weekend because we know those numbers tend to go down slightly. How do we promote the uptake during the weekend? That could have been a good issue to debate today, but no, we are debating a partisan issue.

The other problem I have with this motion is section (iii), which says, “the government extended the recommended interval for the second vaccine dose to four months”, as though that was a political decision.

Shame on the member for Calgary Nose Hill for even putting that in the motion. That is absolutely false. That is not how the Government of Canada operates. We rely on experts. We rely on the advice of doctors.

It is true the label on most vaccines requires x number of weeks, but that is because the clinical trial said that. Now we have access

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real-world data. The real-world data, for example, shows the UK adapted a one-dose strategy. It worked well, and its economy is opening.

I know that soon, in July, if the take-up of vaccines is high, we will again have the opportunity to find our freedoms. I have high hopes for the provinces. With two million more Pfizer vaccines being delivered per week in May and 2.5 million per week in June, we will be able to reach that target. I am confident that the provinces will be able to deliver that.

Now is the time to unite. We can work together. We can work with the provinces, and if they need help, we can certainly provide some resources to augment the capacity for administering vaccines.

Finally, while not many of the opposition members are talking about planning for the future, we have a minister who is already there, who has already signed a contract. In 2022, we can expect 35 million boosters for Canadians who choose to have a booster at that time. We will have 30 million more in 2023, and an option to exercise 100 million vaccines.

The Liberal government, the minister and the Prime Minister have a plan to deliver vaccines for Canadians.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Could he explain to me why everyone is so worked up about our motion today? If we add up the number of Canadians who have already been vaccinated and the number of doses we expect to receive in the coming weeks, from Pfizer in particular, we are not far off from the late May deadline we set in our motion. We also know that negotiations are under way with the Americans to send us 50 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine that they do not need.

Would my colleague not agree that we can get the doses by our deadline? The motion talks about access to a vaccine by May 20, not about injections.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

Having access to vaccines is one thing, but being able to administer them is another. The provinces are currently administering about 300,000 doses per day. A quick calculation shows that they would have to administer more than 622,000 per day to meet the May long weekend deadline.

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It does not add up, mathematically speaking. How did my colleague come up this deadline, which experts do not seem to support? I hope that before picking this date, he and his party consulted the provinces, for example. Did they?

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, in terms of this motion, instead of playing politics, we want to make sure that we are not offering Canadians false hope. We are focused on realistic and constructive proposals to protect people because we know that every day vaccines are delayed, more people getting the virus and there are more hospitalizations. The already over-burdened health care systems are getting backed up, and we are seeing more avoidable tragedies.

Can the member opposite help Canadians understand and confirm when all Canadian adults will have their first dose and their second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine? People just want to know. They want an idea of when the government will actually meet a deadline, so they can count on it.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, we know that we will get 48 million to 50 million doses by the end of June. The date that we expect Canadians to be vaccinated fully depends on how quickly provinces can administer them.

What I hope will happen is that, if provinces need help, if they need the Red Cross or the military to ramp up capacity, those demands would come in this week. We know we are going to be getting two million vaccines per week of only Pfizer for the rest of May. After that it will ramp up to 2.4 million per week in June. If provinces need help, I hope those asks would be made now, so we can ramp it up right away.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, Canada used to be a world leader in developing and distributing vaccines. Does the hon. member think we would be better off in this pandemic if the Mulroney Conservative government had not sold off Connaught Labs, the public lab that was a world leader, and would he like to see this model return to Canada?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I cannot speak for the past. Yes, obviously that would have helped, but I know that budget 2021 proposes to build more biomanufacturing capacity in Canada with a \$2.2-billion investment. That is a serious investment that will make a difference in vaccine production in Canada.

• (1535)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with my colleague, the hon. member for Carleton.

I would first like to send my love and prayers to the family of Diana Law, the dedicated 57-year-old local Peace Arch Hospital nurse and mother who leaves behind her husband and two teenage children. Diana died on April 14 from complications of COVID-19 after months of battling it and other health issues in our community.

As a nation, we have been through an unbelievable amount of pain in the past 14 months, but none more than the families whose loved ones have suffered or were lost. Our health care workers, like Diana, who put themselves at risk to help others, are true Canadian heroes.

Earlier this week, I asked the Prime Minister in question period if he was sure he had no regrets about his pandemic response. The Minister of Health answered by saying she had no regrets about “being there for Canadians and, indeed, for provinces...every step of the way.” I was amazed that she was able to complete that sentence with a straight face.

She said every step of the way, but how are these for missed steps?

Step one was to secure vaccines. As of today, 2.7% of Canadians are fully vaccinated and 30% have received only one dose. Since public health officials are tying vaccine rates to public health restrictions, these numbers have very real consequences for Canadian families that cannot wait to reunite and businesses praying that they can tread water long enough to one day reopen. At 2.7%, Canada ranks 76th in the world and second last in the G7.

As for the vaccines we do have, the government’s confusing messaging and conflicting advice have only caused more stress and uncertainty for Canadians. My constituents are constantly asking me why Canada is the only country with a four-month wait between doses, which ignores the direction of the vaccine manufacturers and the professionals that the member for Kingston and the Islands said the government relies on. The answer is simple: It is because of the government’s failure to secure vaccines.

On Monday, we learned that the European Union has launched a lawsuit against AstraZeneca for breaching their vaccine supply contract. Meanwhile, back home, shipments have been either cancelled or delayed countless times. There is a new headline every week, yet the Liberal government sits idly by bragging about the next shipment, which might arrive, and reassuring Canadians of the government’s diverse portfolio of vaccines. This is not a retirement trading account. It is a pandemic response amidst an urgent crisis. Canadians do not want eight different vaccines a year from now. Those who want them, want two shots of one vaccine now.

Step two was to secure the border. If it cannot secure vaccines, the government should at least try to keep the virus and variants out of the country in the first place through border restrictions and testing. Instead, the Liberal government claimed border measures do not work. In fact, on March 13 of last year the Minister of Health said, “border measures are highly ineffective and, in some cases, can create harm.”

We do not need to look very far to see that this is false. Atlantic Canada took this approach, with many provinces imposing restrictions, and it has worked. PEI has had 179 cases in total. Newfoundland has had just over 1,000. We can look at Australia and New Zealand. These countries, two of Canada's closest friends and hopefully future CANZUK partners, implemented tough border measures on day one. This week, 50,000 Kiwis gathered shoulder to shoulder for a concert in Auckland's Eden Park. New Zealand has had fewer than 2,300 confirmed cases. That is not a daily total; that is the total. Australia also acted swiftly and has never had more than 1,000 new cases a day nationally. That is pretty good for a country of 25 million people.

Enhanced border measures are what my Conservative colleagues and I have called for from the beginning. As far back as January 27, 2020, the member for Cariboo—Prince George asked the Liberal government when it would institute enhanced screening at the border. On February 3, the member for Edmonton Riverbend inquired about stopping flights from China. For weeks the Liberals ignored these calls.

On March 5, 2020, the Prime Minister said “knee-jerk reactions” are not helpful, and that Canada will not limit travel. Of course, the Liberals eventually changed their minds and implemented some of the most arbitrary and difficult-to-understand border measures in the world.

● (1540)

There was an unsafe, expensive, failed hotel quarantine regime for international travellers arriving by air, but individuals at land crossings, like the ones in my riding, were not required to be part of it. Private plane companies are advertising that their international passengers are not required to quarantine, and a robust taxi business is bringing people across the border, which allows them to fly up to the border and then cross in a car.

Just last week, 14 months into the pandemic, as cases surged and we were told the third wave was testing the limits of ICUs across the country, the government was still allowing travellers from the world's biggest COVID-19 hot spots to touch down at Canada's airports. Dozens of people on COVID-positive flights arrived in Canada in April alone, bringing new variants with them.

Either this is real or it is not. Either this is urgent or it is not. The government seems incapable of making up its mind.

In B.C., travel is restricted within the province. Just last week, a traveller from a country with 300,000 new cases a day could land at YVR, but a grandmother living in Surrey could not travel alone by car to wave through a window to her grandchild in Prince George. It was not until after countless calls from the Conservatives and our leader's press conference the morning of April 22 that the Liberals finally listened and temporarily stopped international travel from these regions, but only for 30 days. The reaction from most of my constituents was that it is too little, too late.

Step three was to secure mental health. In B.C., we are facing another emergency fuelled by this poor response to COVID-19: a mental health and addiction crisis. In February alone, B.C. lost 155 people to drug overdoses, a 107% year-over-year increase. In January, the number of deaths caused by overdose was tragically even

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higher, at 174. Overdose deaths per capita in B.C. are the highest they have been in 25 years.

These are not just numbers on a spreadsheet or in a House of Commons speech. These are Canadians' sons and daughters who needed help and did not get it. This is another tragedy. The Liberals' first budget in over two years does not do enough to address the ability of those suffering from addiction to access treatment. Where is the comprehensive recovery-oriented plan to tackle this opioid epidemic?

Another notable omission from the Liberals' 700 page of red ink was the absence of any increase in health transfers to the provinces. Why is Ontario calling for military assistance? Why are businesses and lives closed down? If there ever was a time to spend more within Canada, it would be in these circumstances, and the provinces have repeatedly called for this.

The government has not been there for Canadians every step of the way. It is time for a new talking point.

I will leave members with this. This third wave can be summed up with one word: avoidable. Consider our neighbours to the south, where vaccines have now been widely available for months to those who want them and where 29% of people are fully vaccinated. New cases have been steadily dropping since January. The U.S. has avoided Canada's recent surge. American families are reuniting, safely gathering in restaurants and going to hockey games. Disneyland and small businesses from New York to Los Angeles have reopened. Last weekend, Frances McDormand accepted her third Oscar in person, the same way she did her first two.

They are living in a different world, and it is especially frustrating in border ridings like mine. We can look around the world and see pubs opening in the U.K., street musicians and social gatherings in the streets of Moscow and huge festivals being held in China. Where are Canadians? They are isolated, isolating, frustrated and depressed.

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This is particularly disheartening for the families separated by ever-changing public health restrictions that are in place provincially because of the Liberal government's avoidable failure to secure the border and vaccines for Canadians who want them. It is also frustrating for the countless businesses that are struggling and those in our community that have permanently closed, like Float House South Surrey.

Here we are, 14 months into the pandemic, with no end in sight, no road to recovery and more frustration. While our friends and allies around the world are getting back to the things and people they love, we are in the middle of a preventable deadly third wave that is taking lives, packing hospitals, causing extraordinary stress and mental health issues, leading to record overdose deaths in B.C., and causing businesses to close for good.

This was preventable. This is unacceptable. Canadians deserve more from their leaders. They deserve better.

It is time for an urgent response from the Liberal government. My Conservative colleagues and I have been calling for this for months. It is what we are calling for today, and it is what we will keep calling for until the Liberal government listens.

• (1545)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke about border restrictions, so I would like to ask her if she agrees with and supports the following tweet from the Conservative health critic, who is also the drafter of the motion before us. On March 7, she tweeted a clapping emoji and “Well done” in response to a group challenging the government's border measures and trying to eliminate mandatory quarantining.

The member spoke about the need for strong border measures. Does she condone the type of Twitter rhetoric that the Conservative health critic put online? Will she ask the health critic to remove it and support strong border measures? Maybe this is just the Conservatives talking out of both sides of their mouths on the issue.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to respond to a question from someone who I find to be one of the most partisan members of the House of Commons in all of her comments.

We have two border crossings in South Surrey—White Rock, so we are very concerned about border security. However, creating ineffective and unsafe quarantine hotels is not the way to secure our borders. We should be securing our borders, and should have months and months ago, by not allowing flights to continue coming in from places with high COVID-19 positivity rates. We continue to see this, and have seen it as recently as last month, just before the announcement last week.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I understand that the Conservative motion is asking for Canadians to be vaccinated more quickly. Naturally, that is what we would like as well.

I also understand that the federal government is responsible for vaccine procurement, but that it is up to the provinces to administer them.

On March 3, Health Canada decided to delay the second dose, which may explain why fewer people will be vaccinated by the end of May. Quebec public health also made this decision, as did the United Kingdom, France and Belgium.

Does my colleague believe in this Canadian public health strategy?

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I am a member of Parliament from British Columbia, and I do not always support the NDP provincial government there. I will say that off the top. However, I support it in its vaccine rollout. I have listened carefully to the announcements in my home province from the B.C. Minister of Health and our public health officer. They have said very clearly that they can ramp up, and are able to deliver vaccines, when they have them, within one week of delivery to British Columbia. However, they do not have them. They squarely talk about the lack of vaccines from the federal government, and they are critical of the federal distribution plan.

I find it very distressing when I hear so many members of Parliament on the government side blame the provinces. They say it is their fault that they are not ready, or say they cannot seem to get vaccines to the people, when in fact the opposite is true.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the issue is that we do not have enough vaccines for the provinces in the vaccine rollout. That is the crux of the issue. However, no matter what the Conservatives say in setting timelines, the government will not be able to meet them.

Would the member support the re-establishment of a public drug manufacturing facility here in Canada to ensure that Canada is never again caught out in this situation where we do not have the capacity to produce vaccines?

• (1550)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, we should have ramped up domestically right from the beginning. This is something the Conservatives called for. The U.K. ramped up within six to seven months. There is no reason why domestically we cannot be producing what is needed, although maybe not everything, obviously. However, we should have looked at that early on. It has only been looked at very recently, and I believe there were places in both Quebec and Alberta, at least to start, that were ready to go. They were ready to become domestic manufacturers, but we never saw it.

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Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, on my way up to the Hill today, I encountered a great young man named Matthew. He works as a landscaper. He is doing some of the landscaping around our beautiful parliamentary precinct. Matthew is a worker, and he is a member of LiUNA. He has the kind of job that built our country.

Waves after waves of immigrants came here and worked in construction to build our roads, build our facilities and, as in the case of Matthew, who is from Winchester, to beautify our communities. They had jobs that could provide them with a good life. If they got out of bed in the morning and worked hard all day, as people like Matthew always do, they could expect to have a home, put good nutritious food on the table and pay the bills for their kids, but Matthew pulled me aside to tell me about the silent attack on him and people like him that has occurred over the last year in Canada. It is the silent tax we call inflation.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: It speaks to how out of touch the members of this House of Commons are that they burst into laughter when I mention the struggles people like Matthew are having with inflation. Maybe they will not be laughing after they hear the whole story.

In Winchester where Matthew lives, he is seeing house prices skyrocket as cash is flowing into the system. Those with money have been able to bid up housing prices. Young people with less accumulated net equity cannot, therefore, make a purchase.

One family in a Riverside South community, not far from here, has been outbid nine times, most recently for a house that went \$400,000 over asking price. It was a house that was listed for \$800,000, and it went for \$1.2 million. This family is losing hope of ever owning a home.

This massive increase in housing prices has coincided with the government's decision to pay its bills with printed money. The last fiscal year, the Bank of Canada lent \$300 billion to the government, more than the government normally collects in taxes. This year, it is going to lend, at the present rate, \$156 billion. This has increased the money supply by 20%.

What has that done to inflation? This month inflation has gone above the 2% target the Bank of Canada said that it would reach. Furthermore, specific items, particularly those items that the poor spend a larger share of their budget on, such as food, have gone up even more. Meat prices are up about 6%. Bakery items are up 5%. Vegetables are up 6%. Gas prices have gone up from \$0.78 to \$1.18, and of course, housing prices are up by 38%.

This is great news if someone is rich. If they have a \$10-million mansion and their property value goes up by 38%, they have gained almost \$4 million in net worth that they did not even have to work for, but if someone is in the working class, getting up every day and trying to build up enough savings for a down payment on a house through wages that do not rise as fast as housing prices, then they are out of luck.

Not only is it more difficult for them to afford that original down payment, but it is also now more expensive to rent because land-

lords pass on the higher housing and real estate prices to their tenants. That is the surprise and sneaky attack that the government is carrying out on working class people across this country.

What is the justification for all of this money being printed? Originally, the central bankers came to the finance committee and said not to worry as they were doing this extraordinary thing of buying up government debt and pumping cash into the system, solely to ensure what they called the efficient functioning of the market. Whenever they use indiscernible words they are hiding something.

We know that the market is functioning. Both capital and credit markets are flowing. The stock market actually rose and the TSX rose in market value above the size of our entire economy, about a fifth higher, in fact. That is something that has never happened in Canada in modern financial history.

• (1555)

As for credit markets, mortgage lending is up in volume by 20% year over year, which is a massive growth, especially in a year when the economy actually went down. Clearly the market is functioning just fine.

Then the Liberals said they needed to protect the money supply. They did not want everyone to be afraid of COVID and stuff their money under their beds because they are afraid of losing everything and collapse the money supply in the process. That is not a problem either because the money supply has actually increased, according to the M2 measure, by 20%, just like the mortgage volumes.

Then the Liberals said they needed to make sure there is enough cash in the system. Households and corporations have cut \$200 billion in the bank accounts right now, so that cannot be the justification. By the way, the households that have that cash are, of course, the very wealthy. They are the ones who benefit from these schemes, so that cannot be the justification for all of this money printing, nor can their last claim that they were trying to stop deflation.

The last three governors of the Bank of Canada said that it would be a disinflationary event and that prices would drop. We now know that was not true either. I said it a year ago and I will say it again, the Liberals' money printing is raising the prices. Inflation is now above the 2% target, with the Governor of the Bank of Canada admitting that it could go higher still in the next reported monthly data, so what they are doing is not fighting deflation.

What has motivated this? Let us look at the numbers themselves. Last year, the government's deficit was \$352 billion. How much debt did the Bank of Canada buy? It bought \$302 billion. Of the new debt the government issued, 85% was bought up by the central bank, effectively turning on its printing presses.

Business of Supply

This year, on a Monday, the finance minister announced that she would have a \$154-billion deficit. On the Wednesday of the same week, two days later, the bank governor said he was going to buy \$156 billion. These guys over here are borrowing \$154 billion and the Bank of Canada of course is lending \$156 billion. Is it a total coincidence the two line up almost exactly the same and were both announced within 48 hours of one another?

Of course, the Bank of Canada is simply acting as the funding arm of the government. Because the government cannot control its spending, it is asking the bank to print the money instead, driving up the cost of living for working-class people like Matt. They deserve to own a house, to have food and clothing for their families, but they may not be able to afford it because of the inflation the government is driving.

This is an inflation tax the government is imposing. It is ultimately just like raising the GST. It applies to everything that people buy and makes life more expensive. It is time to get it under control.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member has one minute and 30 seconds remaining.

I have a point of order from the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order with respect to the relevance of the speech. Today, we are discussing a motion that relates to the opposition motion regarding a vaccine deadline for the vaccines being brought in. I do not understand the relevance. Perhaps the member could spend the last minute and a half of his speech talking about the motion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the point of order. I want to remind members that there is a bit of flexibility in the discussion on issues that are before the House. I am sure in the one minute and 30 seconds the hon. member has left, he will be able to bring it back to the opposition day motion.

I will allow him to finish off his speech. The hon. member for Carleton.

• (1600)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, there is no doubt the deficit the Bank of Canada is funding through its printing presses is in part due to the government's failure to deliver vaccines and let our economies reopen. That is obvious.

What is even more obvious about by the question is this: I talked about this working-class man, who is literally building this place around Parliament Hill, who said he wants to have a house, but his wages may not allow him to afford it because of the inflationary policies of the government. What does the member say? He yawns and says it is not relevant and that we do not need to hear stories like that around here.

This is the House of Commons, the House of the common people. We speak for people like Matthew. Not only is it relevant, but what people have to say to us is of supreme relevance. I would encourage him and other government members to walk out on the streets of this country to find out how people are struggling with the

higher prices the money printing policies of the government are causing.

If they did so, they might understand the relevance and take a different course, one that rewards hard work, protects the soundness of our money and ensures people get ahead through their merits, not through their inheritance and aristocracy.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I always really enjoy his speeches.

I am just trying to ascertain how feasible the Conservative motion is. It says that only 2.7% of Canadians have been vaccinated to date. I know that there were delays in vaccine procurement, and I believe him when he says that it was entirely the Liberal Party's fault.

However, does my colleague believe that we can really vaccinate 93% of Canadians by the end of May?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question.

Around 3% of the population has received the two doses required to protect us from the coronavirus. Canada is behind 30 other countries. We want to know why Canada was not as successful as the other countries in getting its population vaccinated. Not too long ago, Canada was one of the most advanced countries in the world and it has not been able to keep up.

That is why we moved this motion today. We want to speed up the vaccine rollout so that Canadians can have their freedoms back without risking their health.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to what the member spoke of, I wish we could have talked about this topic of inflation and the folks throughout our country who are really struggling right now. I think that would have been a great opposition day motion. The reality is that the motion that was brought forward is one that says, "That...the House call on the government to ensure that every Canadian adult has access to a vaccine by the May long weekend."

Can the member inform this House of the strategy, if this motion were to pass, the opposition has to give over to the government in order to make this happen, given that the folks who are running the vaccine rollout have said that it exceeds our capacity by more than two times?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, it exceeds the rate at which the federal government is providing the vaccines. In fact, provincial health agencies and bodies are only able to operate at half capacity now because they just do not have enough vaccines. If we do not have vaccines, we cannot administer them. We cannot administer something we do not have, and we only have about half the vaccines in Canada that the provinces are capable of administering. If the federal government were to double the rate of acquiring those vaccines, then the provinces could double the rate of their delivery into the arms of Canadians.

Business of Supply

We have a supply problem here. That is the exclusive responsibility of the federal government. The Liberals tried to blame everyone on planet earth except themselves. It is time they took a look in the mirror. Their failure has left us with this deadly third wave. That is the legacy of the Prime Minister's mismanagement, and south of the border and around the world people are opening safely and returning to life as normal, while we continue to be in lockdown and lose lives.

● (1605)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I share this member's concern that we do not have enough vaccines, and that we are only vaccinating at about half capacity. He also spoke of the soundness of money, but I want to question the soundness of the proposed policy he is speaking to. This motion means that we would have to vaccinate at the rate of six million per week for the next three weeks. We are only getting two million doses per week.

Can he tell us where he would get the other four million vaccine doses per week that would be necessary to make this motion feasible?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, we are simply talking about a rate of vaccination supply that has been common in other countries around the world. The United States rolled out, on a per capita basis, vaccines at the same rate we propose here in Canada. The United Kingdom and Israel are way ahead, even of what we proposed in this motion.

Other countries were able to acquire these vaccines, either through their own domestic production or around the world, so there is no reason Canada cannot. What is it about Canada that should prevent us from having the same success in supplying our people with vaccines that our friends around the world have been able to do?

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 will be sharing my time with the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

It is a pleasure to follow my friend in the debate on the motion. I find it somewhat surprising, as the member for Kingston and the Islands has pointed out, the issue of some relevancy to it. The member wants to be focused on the deficit and concerns related to the deficit and therein lies a significant difference between the Government of Canada and the official opposition.

We have argued from day one that we were going to have the pandemic as the number one issue and that we would have the backs of Canadians in every way humanly possible throughout this process. There are members of the Conservative Party who are wishy-washy. Some days they are sympathetic to the pandemic, other days they are concerned about the deficit. Some say we spend too much, others are saying we are not spending enough in certain areas.

The motion brought forward by the Conservative Party today is lacking any sort of inspiration. We could have done so much better in terms of an opposition day. If they wanted to talk about the vac-

ination, we could have focused the debate more on what we could be doing to encourage people to get their vaccination. That is a huge issue. All levels of government are looking at that, even school divisions are looking at that. Different stakeholders are all concerned about how we can ensure that we get the maximum number of people to take the shot. We need that as a nation. It is in our collective best interests to bring that up. I would have enjoyed having that debate. During that debate, members still could have pointed out other aspects. As we have seen, members talked about a wide variety of issues already today. However, that would have been far more productive.

Another idea we could have talked about might have been the whole issue of our environment because the Conservatives are flip-flopping all over the place on that issue. Do they believe in real climate change? It depends on who we ask. Sometimes the leader of the Conservative Party says yes and the party membership says no. Many Conservative MPs for years and years have been saying no to a price on pollution. The current leader seems to have adopted what the Liberal Party and the rest of the world have been saying, that yes, a price on pollution is a good thing.

There are all sorts of things we could have been debating. On the issue of the motion itself, the Conservatives are completely out of touch with reality. I always enjoy speeches by the member for Calgary Nose Hill. The Conservatives would have had 40 million or 50 million vaccines in September of last year. Domestic production would have been ramped up and going in July of last year.

It does not work that way. The reality is that there has been a process of consultation, working with stakeholders, ensuring Canada as a nation was doing as much as possible in order to minimize the negative impacts of the coronavirus. We have been doing that and working with stakeholders and Canadians from coast to coast from the beginning.

We have seen some very encouraging things in the last number of months. I remember toward the end of last year when we finally started to have hope that the vaccines were going to be coming out. Contrary to what Conservatives might like to tell people, it was only at the end of last year that they were starting to be approved. Canada was one of the first countries in the world to start receiving vaccines.

● (1610)

It has not been perfect. Companies like Pfizer wanted to ramp up services in January and February in order to have larger numbers, which not only benefited Canada but countries around the world. That did cause some disruption and concern, but late last year we set a target of six million doses by the end of March, the first quarter of the year. We more than exceeded that.

Business of Supply

Not that long ago I did Facebook Live and talked about how Canada as a country will now have somewhere between 45 million and 50 million doses of vaccine. Our population is 37.5 million and we are going to have 45 million to 50 million doses of vaccine before the end of June. We are a federation, meaning we have to work with provinces, and that is what we have done. Our primary responsibility was to ensure the vaccines were safe and to get them to communities, and that is what the federal government has done.

The Conservatives twist the numbers. They will say that fewer than 2% of Canadians have had the double dose. They should listen to what health care experts are saying. Why would they use 2%? The number they should be using is the number of people who have been vaccinated. It is not a political decision in terms of when people should get the second dose, at least not at the national level. We are consistently following the advice of health experts. Science matters with this government. Obviously the Conservatives do not give a damn about science, health experts or what they are saying because their comments do not reflect it. I say shame on the Conservative Party of Canada. The misleading information that comes from the Conservative Party can be found in speeches that its leader gave today in the House on the issue, and even the health critic.

The facts are there and speak for themselves. Is Canada number one of all of the countries? No. We have had some limitations that other countries have not had, i.e., domestic production. That is no fault of this government over the last four years. On that issue, we have invested tens of millions of dollars to ramp up so we do not find ourselves in this situation in the future, especially if booster shots are required and things of that nature. We are investing to ensure that we will have domestic capability in the future. It is not this government's fault that many years ago domestic manufacturing started to disappear. We have been very successful in acquiring vaccine doses.

Conservatives talk about percentages and like to play with statistics to put fear in Canadians, but we know what the facts really are. Close to 15 million Canadians have already received a vaccine, not in terms of doses in arms but Canada as a country. We will have almost 50 million doses before the end of June. Almost 13 million have been administered by provinces and territories, and that is an important point. Conservatives do not seem to want to recognize that we are in a federation, that the federal government needs to work with provinces and territories. The provinces have a lot of the controls for which we are being criticized and—

• (1615)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately the hon. member's time is up. I am sure he will have additional comments to contribute during questions and comments.

The hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy listening to the member and getting a chance to speak with him, especially with the experience he has had at the provincial level. I do remember back in the 1990s when the federal Liberal government slashed health care funding to the provinces. There were some problems that had taken place in the past, but to think it did not have the mark of a Liberal on it is something we should be thinking about.

Ever since the pandemic started, it has cost 1,800 Canadian lives per month and at least \$500 million per day. We are so far behind the rest of the developed world that it looks like we will not be achieving mass vaccination until six months after everyone in Europe and the U.S.

When we look at what has been spent, that is where we are number one. I am just wondering if the parliamentary secretary could look at the relationship of where we actually are and how much money has been spent?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member kind of proves my point. I really wish I had the time to talk about that.

Suffice to say, the member uses numbers to try to portray it as if we are doing a bad job. In reality, I would return two numbers to the member. One, out of the G20 countries, we are number three, in terms of per capita first doses. Two, another statistic for the member is 45 million-plus doses before the end of June, and our population is 37.5 million.

I believe that Canada is doing reasonably well compared to other countries in the world. We are working with provinces and others to ensure that we maximize the benefits for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for his passionate speech. Listening to him, I almost thought we were in the middle of an election period.

Canada is not doing that poorly, and I think almost all of us agree on that. Nevertheless, it could have done much better. This is not just about the number of vaccine doses coming into the country, even though that was a problem.

Does my colleague agree that Canada could have stepped up a little earlier and that it was three or four months behind everyone else?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I genuinely believe that the Government of Canada, with its portfolio, has put us in a position where we are doing exceptionally well, particularly in comparison to our G20 counterparts.

There was some difficulty at the very beginning, but that is not something the Conservatives, the Bloc, the New Democrats or the Liberals could have prevented. There was a retooling that had taken place when there were some issues with production. The Government of Canada cannot be blamed for that.

We made a commitment to get six million vaccines in the first quarter, and we exceeded that commitment. I think it was eight million or 8.5 million, something of that nature. We have been there, and we have the portfolio to ensure that every Canadian is going to be able to get a safe vaccine for free before the end of the summer.

Business of Supply

• (1620)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North would have us believe that as a federation, the federal government's only job is to ensure that the vaccines hit the shores. Yet we have, within the Emergency Act and the Public Health Act, the ability for the federal government to take national leadership on rollout.

Will he finally do everything within his power to ensure that as soon as the vaccines make it to Canada, the Liberals are playing the federal role to ensure that these are rolled out across the country, even if it means declaring the Emergency Act?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, whether it is the Canadian Forces, the Canadian Red Cross or the provincial restart program, working with school divisions on getting our kids back to schools, or working with municipalities or the most recent budget, members will find that the Prime Minister and the government have consistently taken a team Canada approach, because we believe it is in the best interests of all Canadians to try to depoliticize and focus on ensuring that we come up with the answers and the solutions to the issues.

I do believe we are on the right track, and sunnier and warmer days are ahead of us.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the number one issue for all Canadians is control over the COVID pandemic. A large part of this comes down to getting vaccines out as soon as we can.

This is not the first time that vaccines have been involved in changing the world. A lot of people forget that polio recently was occurring in epidemics. I, in almost 35 years of practising medicine, have never seen an acute case of polio. I have, however, seen cases of tetanus and measles. I have seen quite a few children die of that in developing countries. In Canada, however, we practically have no cases, again, because the vaccines.

Early on in this pandemic, vaccines, rightfully, were seen as the cure to this. There is reason for caution because of the various variants, but so far things are looking really well. It seems that pretty much all the vaccines with respect to all the variants work to some extent, and particularly they work in preventing severe disease, hospitalization and death. Vaccines really are what is going to get us out of this and get us back on the road to being normal again.

How are we doing in terms of vaccinating our population? I think we are doing really well. I know the opposition is going to look at me and say that because I am a Liberal, I am going to say the Liberals are doing really well. If people have watched the health committee over the last year, they know I have not shied away from asking my government hard questions about managing the pandemic.

Having said that, does any Canadian really watch health committee? My mother does not even watch health committee. However, if people were to watch it, I think they would realize I am someone who is prone to speaking my mind and somebody who is not going to say something I do not believe in. Our federal government has done very well in procuring vaccines and the provinces, for the

most part, have done really well in getting those vaccines into arms of people.

Right now, about 31% of eligible Canadians have had at least their first dose of the vaccine. We are third among the G7 in getting the vaccines out. In May, we are apparently getting over 10 million vaccines. Health Canada is anticipating that by June 30, we will have 36.5 million doses of vaccine. NACI thinks that 75% of eligible Canadians can get at least their first dose of the vaccine by mid-June.

We would like to do it faster and so would everyone else in the world, but obviously there is a limited supply and tremendous demand all across the world. Unfortunately we just cannot buy COVID vaccines in Canadian Tire. We, as the government, are whipping the vaccine horse as hard as we can. I have never whipped a horse, but I think the meaning of that saying is that if we keep whipping a horse, eventually we cannot get it to do anymore work. Similarly, with the vaccines, we are whipping this as hard as we can.

We would like to give all Canadians their first dose of the vaccine by the Victoria Day weekend, but I do not think it is possible. It will take a bit longer, but I do not think that much longer. We thought this was going to be a marathon. A year ago, a lot of people were predicting it was going to take two or three years to get a vaccine; it has taken a lot less. As it happens, this has turned out to be more like a 1,500-metre race than a marathon.

Let me talk about the spacing between the two doses of the vaccine as mentioned in the motion. This is not the government's policy. This is a recommendation of NACI, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization. It is an external advisory body that advises PHAC, but it is ultimately up to the provinces to decide whether they accept that advice.

It is important to note that with respect to this advice, although it recommends up to a four-month interval between the first and second dose, it also states, "as soon as all eligible groups have been offered their first dose of vaccine, second doses should be offered. The interval between first and second dose should not be extended any longer than needed to offer first doses of vaccine to all eligible individuals." Why a longer interval? Because if there is a longer interval, we can basically vaccinate twice as many people.

• (1625)

What is the evidence that this is a safe strategy?

Let us look at the efficacy first from the original trials, and these are the original trials with Moderna and Pfizer, which calculated vaccine efficacy starting two weeks after the first dose. For the first two weeks, no vaccine is going to work as it takes a while to get the immune response. An efficacy of about 92% was found. With AstraZeneca, it was about a 76% efficacy between the 22nd and 90th day after administration.

Business of Supply

What does the real world data show? It is a bit complicated because different jurisdictions have taken different approaches with the intervals between the first and the second dose. For example, Israel and the United States have basically gone according to the manufacturer's recommendation. B.C. was delaying the second dose to about five or six weeks.

The best evidence really comes from Quebec and the United Kingdom. In both those jurisdictions, pretty well from the beginning, they decided to have about a three-month interval between the first and the second dose. In addition, when we look at the data about effectiveness, there is a difference between different jurisdictions in terms of the intervals but also different groups looked at different end points in the data. We can look at total mortality rate, rates of hospitalizations, incidence of symptomatic disease, asymptomatic disease and incidence of positive tests.

With respect to incidence of symptomatic disease, asymptomatic disease and positive results, the effectiveness after one dose of the vaccine shows as somewhere in the 60% to 80% range. The more important number I think we will all agree is not how often one gets asymptomatic disease, it is the incidence of where people get more severely sick and end up hospitalized or die from it. The numbers with respect to that, after one dose, is actually pretty good. In fact, it is also pretty good with respect to the elderly, because it is known the elderly cannot mount the same kind of immune response as quickly as younger people.

The NACI site shows some of the actual evidence on the effectiveness of one dose in preventing COVID. One study from Bristol in the United Kingdom showed an effectiveness of 71% to 79% in preventing hospitalization for frail, elderly patients who had one dose of Pfizer. With AstraZeneca, it was about 80%. A study of health care workers from Scotland showed a vaccine effectiveness against hospitalization of 84% with one dose.

The largest and best study of real world data was from Public Health England, which showed that one dose of the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines were approximately 80% effective in preventing hospitalization in those over the age of 80.

How long does immunity last after the first dose? Data from AstraZeneca clinical trials show immunity does not wane for at least 90 days. Data on the RNA vaccines from the U.K. and Quebec show that immunity does not wane for about two months.

Also, the experience with other vaccines requiring two doses like the hepatitis A vaccine or the HPV vaccine is that immunity can last up to six months. Furthermore, scientists know immunity does not just drop off a cliff but slowly decreases.

What about immunity from about nine weeks to 16 weeks after the first shot of the RNA vaccines Pfizer and Moderna? We have to recognize the data is still coming in. We only started mass vaccination of people basically in January. NACI recognizes the numbers are still coming in, continues to monitor the data and evidence and is prepared to change its recommendations if the evidence suggests we ought to.

Increasing the interval between the two doses is certainly the right policy. This is what helped the United Kingdom's number of cases, at least in part, to drop precipitously, so I think we are on the

right course. I know this cannot happen fast enough. Patience is the golden virtue. However, I know it is hard to be patient with all the things that are happening around COVID. Really, this is a 1,500-metre race. We are at about 1,400 metres. The end is in sight. We have to keep going and following public health advice. It will soon be over.

• (1630)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciated having the opportunity to listen to the member. I have been on the industry committee so we have had a lot of discussions about when the vaccines would arrive, the efficacy of them and the difference as far as the time frame from 21 or 28 days up to the four months.

The member mentioned quite a bit about what took place in the United Kingdom, that being the other country where we have seen the off-label use. That debate rages on there as well.

I wonder if the member could discuss some of the other countries and why they have chosen to stay with the 21 and 28 days.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Madam Speaker, I cannot say that I know what all countries have done, but this has been the course of the United Kingdom and Quebec. To use an English expression, the proof is in the pudding. Does it work? We can look at the United Kingdom's numbers and they have dropped precipitously. Occasionally, in medicine and in life, we have to take a chance. Yes, there is a chance, but in medicine it is all about balancing risks and benefits. There is practically no medical intervention that does not have a risk.

Yes, there is a risk in expanding the interval, but, as I cited, the evidence is that it seems to be safe. NACI is continuing to monitor it. Certainly there is a benefit and that is evident in the English numbers.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He seems to be bragging about how the Liberal government did an extraordinary job of managing the vaccination program, but does he not think that Canada had a lot of catching up to do to get to where it is now?

From March to June 2020, it was complete radio silence, and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization did not hold any meetings. Perhaps that had an impact on how long it will take before Canada is able to produce its own vaccines and take care of its people.

The federal government is lagging behind when it comes to health transfers, which could also have an impact on the post-crisis period and our ability to take care of people who will be hurt by the pandemic.

• (1635)

[English]

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Madam Speaker, I am not sure of the question with respect to the delay. Canada has done comparatively pretty well. Again, I point back to the fact that we are number three among the G7 countries in the rapidity with which we have gotten the vaccines out. The United Kingdom is a bit ahead of us and so is the United States, but they have manufacturing capacity that we do not have in our country. We have to look at the size of those countries, their industrial capacity and what ability they had to make the vaccines. In the G7, those are the only countries that are ahead of us.

We are a month behind. I believe that time is of the essence and it would be better had we been a month further ahead. However, literally we are probably not even a month behind the United Kingdom and the United States. I am not bragging, but our country has done pretty well.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is very rare that we have the opportunity to have subject matter experts and have the good doctor present. His seminar was good. In his opening remarks, he talked about the experience he had with polio. I think about what the world would look like if the polio vaccine had patents on it.

Knowing that India is surpassing 350,000 new cases of COVID a day and knowing that Dr. Jonas Salk, the inventor of the polio vaccine, waived patents, does the hon. member, the good doctor, not agree that now is the time for Canada to finally support a waiver on patents internationally to allow this vaccine to be produced?

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Madam Speaker, I think the world globally has to re-examine how in the future we will respond to a pandemic. I would certainly agree with the member opposite that the free market may not be the optimal solution in terms of a global response.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. 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 Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, National Defence; the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable, Rail Transportation; the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, Fisheries and Oceans.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be taking part in the debate started today by our leader, the Leader of the Opposition. I will be sharing my time with the member for Regina—Lewvan.

We are gathered here today to take stock of the effects of the pandemic. As we speak, in my riding, shops are closed, there is a lockdown and a curfew has been imposed. All these measures were implemented by the Quebec provincial government in response to the current reality.

It is true that the third wave is hitting countries around the world, but, unfortunately, it is hitting Canada harder. That is because it is due to the Liberal government, which has been making bad decisions at the wrong time all along and, above all, has been dragging

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its feet. We are not questioning its good intentions; we are just pointing out the facts. The result is that, today, we are in catch-up mode rather than being a model and an example for the entire world.

I want to pay tribute to the government of the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien. Hon. members will recall that around the year 2000, he created a panel of Canadian experts, scientists, who were tasked with monitoring and assessing the risk of pandemics around the world. That was the right thing to do, and I commend the Chrétien government.

When we were in power, our government maintained that organization of Canadian scientists. They were doing good work that helped Canada be autonomous and not have to rely on anyone for monitoring and assessing pandemics around the globe.

However, when the current Liberal government came to power, it did exactly the opposite. This government keeps lecturing everyone and presenting itself as a government that relies purely on science, that listens to Canadian scientists and that says science is important in Canada, which is a statement we do agree with. However, without warning, this government dissolved that independent Canadian organization, whose scientists had been doing a great job of monitoring pandemics for more than 20 years. That was the government's first big mistake.

Its second big mistake was slashing the pandemic prevention and preparation budget, which dropped from \$73 million under our government to \$51 million under this government. That is still a substantial amount, but it is less, so Canada was caught with its pants down because it did not have adequate supplies.

Furthermore, we must not forget that, in the earliest days of this crisis, the government gave China hundreds of thousands of essential items to cope with the pandemic, including masks and gloves.

To sum up, well before COVID-19 hit our country, the government made three bad decisions: dissolving the panel of Canadian experts who were doing a great job of assessing pandemic risk; slashing funding for pandemic prevention; and giving away hundreds of thousands of essential items needed to fight this pandemic. That was the Liberals' game plan well before the COVID-19 pandemic started.

When COVID-19 first appeared, we took it very seriously. Here in the House, as early as January 2020, the official opposition started asking the government questions, but it looked down on us at the time and almost made it seem like we were scaremongering when there was no real danger.

I will be a good sport. We were asking questions, and it is too bad the government took that approach, but it is important to understand that, at the time, few people knew what lay ahead. We were doing our best to promote prevention by sounding the alarm and holding the government to account, but to no avail. Unfortunately, by acting as it did, the government brushed aside any fears that Canadians might have had.

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When COVID-19 arrived, the government made a big mistake. It took more than 10 days, almost two weeks, to finally do what it should have done from the beginning, like the rest of the planet: close the borders.

When the Prime Minister was announcing the measure, he looked extremely uncomfortable, like he could barely stomach it, considering his globalist view that borders must remain open. However, it was the right thing to do. When it comes to pandemics, health and safety, we need to take tough action rather than waxing lyrical. For about 10 days, the Prime Minister dragged his feet.

● (1640)

This is why we were already behind when the pandemic hit and the government had to make decisions. A crooked foundation is not a good start. It is impossible to build a solid house on that.

The government took its time on borders and rapid testing. I remind members that the United States started using Abbott Laboratories' rapid test in March, but we did not start using it until September. We lost six months there.

Access to vaccines is where the government really dropped the ball from those early days. The government first looked to China, which was a serious mistake. It signed an agreement with CanSino Biologics and we waited for months to get results. The deal ended up falling apart in July. The company did an about-face and dropped Canada. We lost four months.

We bear the scars of those decisions today, because they are why the third wave is hitting us harder. We are behind on borders, on rapid testing and on vaccines.

The government backpedalled and started knocking on the doors of all the other companies to find out whether it too could get a few vaccines, and we are paying a hefty price as a result. It recently came to light that Canada paid twice what other countries did for the AstraZeneca vaccine. Latecomers pay more. That is what happened to the government.

We are therefore way behind when it comes to vaccine production and access. The Conservatives asked 126 questions about vaccination last fall because we believe in it and we are encouraging all those who want a shot to get vaccinated. We believe in vaccination. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister dragged his feet.

However, he did think of something. Just before Christmas, he put on a big dog-and-pony show by holding a quick vaccination campaign so that everyone would be happy. His dog-and-pony show was successful, I must admit. A certain number of doses of the vaccine were administered, a few people got their shots, and he was there to get some good photo ops.

Then in January and February, there were 10 days during which no vaccine was delivered to Canada. Because of that 10-day gap in January and February, we are now behind in our vaccination rollout. Now the third wave is hitting Canada harder than other countries. Businesses and shops in my riding are closed. We have an 8 p.m. curfew because, unfortunately, the government did not procure enough vaccine for Canada. We had that gap in January and February, and now we are paying the price. It is a shame.

What did the government do then? It went and poached vaccines that were meant for poor countries. It took vaccines from COVAX, which is a great initiative that good countries, like ours, are participating in. We contributed, and the idea was that developed countries would pool vaccines so that developing countries could access them. It is the right thing to do, and it makes sense.

We are a G7 country. We are not a poor country. Canada had to take from the poor to get access to vaccines. How shameful. I love my country. I love Canada and I am proud to be Canadian, but I was not proud to see the 10-day gap and even less so when my country helped itself to vaccines that were meant for the less fortunate in the world.

What we saw was very unfortunate. The result is that we currently have a four-month wait, which is the longest delay. We are paying the price, too. The lifting of the lockdown is going very well in Great Britain. In the United States, stadiums are full of people who have been vaccinated. Barely 2.7% of Canadians are vaccinated, compared to more than 26% of Americans. We deserve better.

I want to use these last few seconds of my speech to say that, for the past two weeks, I have been a member of the vaccinated club. I am proud of how things went in L'Ancienne-Lorette. The staff were very devoted and welcoming, and they accommodated us nicely. I got my first shot, and I am very proud of that.

I urge everyone watching to get vaccinated. The decision is theirs. It is not mandatory. There is no magic wand. Vaccination is one of the best ways out of this pandemic. I urge everyone to get vaccinated.

● (1645)

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank our colleague, who once again made some very eloquent remarks. I agree with he said at the end of his speech. Indeed, all we can do is encourage people to get vaccinated. I got mine about ten days ago.

However, I would like to remind my colleague that his party, the Conservative Party, moved a motion on March 23, 2021, asking the government for a reopening plan.

Does he think that was a mistake or would he do the same thing again today?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, and I commend his contribution to the debate.

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I am sure my colleague would agree that we all want everything to reopen. However, lockdowns need to be lifted in an orderly fashion and with everyone following public health guidelines. We must therefore work with the provinces, which are on the front lines.

If we had had access to the number of doses needed to vaccinate everyone in time, in other words, back in November and December, like in other places such as Great Britain, for example, our constituents would not still be dealing with the unfortunate effects of lockdown.

We respect the fact that it is up to the provinces to manage the situation. However, we must also point out that if the government had done the right thing in ensuring access to vaccines, we would not be where we are today.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I just want to go back to the last question, because I do not think the member from the Bloc got a fair answer. The member from the Bloc specifically asked the House leader of the opposition, and I have a lot of respect for him, whether it was a mistake to bring forward a motion back in March that specifically called on the federal government to develop a plan to reopen the economy.

Does the member think that was a mistake back then?

• (1650)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I think there is a good collaboration between the Bloc and the Liberals, not because of the question, but because of the fact that the member who asked me the previous question is the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, and this member is the member for Kingston and the Islands. I am joking. I know there is a more serious issue, and this is why we have to address it correctly.

We all recognize the fact that this country is suffering so much. We need to have a plan to reopen our economy. We need to have a plan to reopen. The fact is that people would like to work, people would like to travel, people would like to have access to shops and have access to their jobs, so we need to have a plan for the recovery of the economy. This is exactly what we are asking of the government.

We have tabled a plan for that, and I welcome each and every Canadian to watch it and read it, and Canadians will appreciate that we are serious when they have the opportunity to vote in favour of us.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member correctly referred to Canada as a G7 country. Canadians were horrified to wake up at the beginning of the pandemic and realize that, as a G7 country, we do not have the capacity to make our own vaccines in this country. Of course, that is a product of decades of poor pharmaceutical policy, including the decision of the Mulroney Conservatives in 1988 to sell off Canada's public vaccine manufacturer, and of course subsequent decisions that have left Canada vulnerable.

Does my hon. colleague agree, while we are on the subject of errors, that it was a colossal error on the Conservatives' part to sell off

Canada's only public vaccine manufacturer, leading to the vulnerability we face today?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I just want to remind my hon. colleague that Great Britain had exactly the same situation when COVID exploded at the beginning of 2020. What did they do? They took control of the situation and they made all the necessary decisions to produce some vaccines in Great Britain, which is not the case that has happened with us here in Canada. The government at that time turned around and asked China to help us, and China put us away in July, so we had to get back to square one. We lost a lot of time.

I welcome the question of my colleague, because in our recovery plan we have a specific target to recreate the good conditions to be sure that we would be safe to have procurement correctly for vaccination, if by any chance we have another pandemic to address.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I join the debate on behalf of my constituents in Regina—Lewvan. The topic of the debate, however, is not something that I am happy we have to be talking about once again. The government has continued to fail Canadians month after month when it comes to procuring the vaccines we need to get back to our normal lives.

I am going to give a few examples in this presentation of what the people of Regina—Lewvan have been saying and what they are requesting not only of our office but of the federal government. I will go through the motion because I know my friend, the member for Kingston and the Islands, will be watching this speech very closely to make sure I stay on topic and talk to the motion during this 10-minute presentation. Then I will tell some stories about why we need to have the vaccination rollout go more smoothly and efficiently, because it is very much affecting people in their day-to-day lives. This is something we need to get right, not only for ourselves, but for our kids and for our grandparents so that we can get back to the lives that we know and love pre-pandemic.

The reason I am happy to speak on behalf of the constituents of Regina—Lewvan is quite factual: 2.7% of Canadians are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, but that is simply not good enough. The federal government did not deliver an adequate vaccine supply in January and February of this year. Once again, based on the evidence we see and what we have put forward is the Liberals have failed to secure those vaccines in the early part of the pandemic. They made a deal with CanSino that fell through, so it put us on our back step when trying to make deals with other vaccine manufacturing companies. There is no debate about that. That is exactly what happened and why we are in the situation that we are in today.

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The government extended the recommended interval for the second vaccine dose to four months against the recommendation of vaccine manufacturers. Once again, and I will be happy to have the debate, this has happened. We have extended the interval and the second dose of vaccines are going to be delivered to Canadians against manufacturers' directions. I know it is because they are trying to get more vaccines in the arms of Canadians, but it goes back to point 2, in needing to extend this recommendation for the second dose by months because we failed to secure enough vaccines in the early part of this pandemic.

Canadians are facing increased restrictions and lockdowns in multiple provinces from British Columbia to Nova Scotia. Once again, in my home province of Saskatchewan, we are seeing more lockdown restrictions in Regina and across the province. This is true. We are facing more lockdowns and we are facing these lockdowns because the Liberals failed Canadians and failed to make good deals to make sure we had enough vaccines in the early part of this pandemic.

The crux of the argument why the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member for Winnipeg North are doing backflips trying to turn themselves into pretzels trying to make the point of the argument is: "the House call on the government to ensure that every Canadian adult has access to a vaccine by the May long weekend." This is something that has been changing by the hour. I do not know if people are aware, but the Government of Ontario has said that every Ontarian, age 18-plus, should be eligible for the vaccine by the end of May, a week off the target here in the opposition day motion, but hey, reasonable. It is incumbent on us to show leadership and set targets.

Also, we have looked at the Government of Quebec and it says eligible 18- to 24-year-olds should be able to receive vaccines by May 14. Once again, that is a little ahead of our schedule. Two of the largest provinces in Confederation have set targets where age 18-plus Canadians, Ontarians and Quebecers, should be eligible to get their vaccine before the month of May is over. That is a reasonable time frame and it actually goes to the opposition day motion.

The members from the Liberal side can try to twist themselves in pretzels and say this is not a realistic goal, but this afternoon the provincial governments have looked at these targets and tried to make sure that we can reach these targets. I am excited to say that is an excellent show of leadership from the provincial governments. There is a lack of leadership from the federal government and from the Liberal backbenches.

• (1655)

This vaccine rollout comes down to allowing people to get back to their normal lives. I will talk about some of the things my constituents have been going through. Members on the Liberal side have said this is all about politics. It is not. It is about the lives of the people we represent.

This is about the wife who has a critical doctor's appointment about her cancer treatments and the hospital saying her husband cannot go with her. That is what this is causing. People are going through life-changing events and they have to go on their own. These are my constituents' lives. It is about a friend's neighbour having chronic back issues who needs a CT scan to see what is go-

ing on, there is no appointment available for him to get the CT scan and is told the best that can be done is to give him morphine. In Canada, in this day and age, that answer is not good enough. These delays in the health care system are being caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which have been exacerbated by the Liberals' failure to have an efficient vaccine rollout.

I read an interesting article that talked about the way some of my constituents are feeling and it really hit home. It is an article by Samantha Pope in the National Post on April 23, 2021. The title is "Not depressed, but not flourishing: How 'languishing' became the dominant feeling of 2021". It explains so well how many constituents in Regina—Lewvan are feeling. It states:

"Though we may not feel burnt out or hopeless, we sure don't feel like we're flourishing," said Dr. Corey Keyes, the sociologist who coined the term "languishing" in 2002. "It's the middle ground between being mentally healthy and mentally ill," he told the National Post. "It's not depression, but it's the absence and insufficiency of feeling good and functioning well."

That sums up so much of how people in Saskatchewan and Canada are feeling. It is the middle ground between being mentally ill and mentally healthy and not seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. It has been going on now for 14 months. Our families, friends and neighbours are not sure what is going to happen next. They are not sure if they will have a normal summer or if their kids will be able to play soccer. Summer is the most beautiful time of year in Saskatchewan and is the best place in the world to go on camping trips with friends and family or to send kids to summer camp where they have not seen their friends for two years. That is what really we are talking about.

Conservatives are not playing politics or talking about how we trumped the Liberals by saying that in this motion we have set forward a plan for recovery. We are asking for a recognition that there have been mistakes made. The Prime Minister said he would not have done anything different. Quite frankly, that is unacceptable to Canadians. There have been mistakes made and a failure in the rollout of the vaccines in Canada.

People sent me pictures of 15,000 people in a stadium for a UFC fight in Jacksonville, Florida last weekend. People were watching the Blue Jays home opener in Texas with 40,000 people in the stadium. They said there were 15,000 people in a stadium in Florida and 40,000 people in a stadium in Texas, but they cannot have their parents over for supper in some parts of Canada. I do not think that is good enough for Canadians. They deserve better. They deserve an opportunity to succeed and right now many feel they do not have the opportunity to succeed.

Many business owners in Regina and Saskatchewan feel the same way. They feel that because of what is going on now with the vaccine rollout, they do not have an opportunity to succeed. They would rather see clients and customers coming through their doors than government cheques in their mailboxes. That is what I am hearing.

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I will support and am proud to support this motion.

• (1700)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): I am disappointed, Madam Speaker, that the member for Regina—Lewvan was not listening to my speech because I mentioned the breaking news about what was going on in Ontario as it was happening.

Yes, the member is absolutely right, the Government of Ontario is going to let anybody aged 18 or older get a vaccine as of May 24 and Quebec is a week before that, but they are not arbitrarily picking those dates like this motion is. They are doing that because they know the vaccines are coming. They know that massive supply increases are going to happen within the coming weeks.

More importantly, I wrote down something the member said toward the end of his speech because I found it so interesting. He said this motion is about the recognition that mistakes have been made. I would encourage him to read the motion because it says nothing about that.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I am very happy the member is still able to stand up, because he has been twisting and backflipping back and forth on what this motion is supposed to say.

I will read section (iv) for him, which states, “Canadians are facing increased restrictions and lockdowns in multiple provinces from British Columbia to Nova Scotia”. They are facing multiple lockdowns and restrictions because of the failure of the government to have a succinct vaccine rollout. That is exactly why mistakes have been made.

The member for Kingston and the Islands likes to get on his feet a lot. He said many things today that I have written down. One is that this is all about politics. There is more politics being played at committee right now by a bunch of the Liberal backbenchers who are trying to filibuster the PROC committee. They are filibustering committee after committee to not let the truth come out. When it comes to playing politics, I will leave it to the masters, one of whom is the member for Kingston and the Islands.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Earlier, I asked one of his other colleagues if the motion they moved is truly realistic.

Given that barely 3% of Canadians have been vaccinated, is it realistic to ask the federal government to ensure that all Canadians be vaccinated by May, which is just around the corner? I find that vaccinating 97% of the population by then is an unrealistic goal, especially when we recall that the provinces are responsible for the distribution of vaccines once they receive them.

Another colleague said that it was about ensuring that people have a vaccination appointment. Once again, the provinces manage the appointment system.

I am therefore wondering what my colleague expects the federal government to do to meet that goal in the motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, my home province, as well as the member's, and other provincial governments are waiting to make sure that supplies are there. The fact that her province has said that by May 14 eligible Quebeckers above the age of 18 should have the opportunity to be vaccinated I think shows that supply may be coming and it is hopeful. It is great to set targets, because one of the reasons we become public figures and public servants is because we want to set goals and targets to make the lives of people better. I believe every time there is a crisis or something happens, we need to show leadership and show that we are trying to do the best by Canadians. Frankly, I believe the Liberals have always been trying to set targets, but just have not met any of them, so they are scared to set targets again. If we want to be in a leadership position and show Canadians that we have expectations that we are going to do the best for Canadians, because that is what they deserve, targets need to be set and met.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, speaking of mistakes, Canada once had a publicly owned pharmaceutical company that could have made a difference in the current COVID-19 crisis, except that Connaught Laboratories was sold by the Conservatives. Not only do we no longer have Connaught Labs, but Canada is relying on the private sector to provide medical innovations that the universities are funded to produce. Will the member admit that selling Connaught Labs was wrong and would he support a publicly owned drug manufacturing company to be re-established in Canada?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I will be honest with the member. I think when that lab was sold it was in 1988. I was six years old, so I will take no responsibility as a six-year-old for the selling of Connaught Labs. It was a decision that was made by a government a long time ago.

I will add that we need to make investments in our universities. The University of Saskatchewan has an amazing facility called VI-DO, which got some investment. What we should be focusing on is ensuring we have investments going to universities and manufacturing capabilities so if this happens again we can produce our own vaccines in Canada. To make sure we are there for the people of the country, we need to have independent producers and manufacturers that can produce vaccines here in Canada—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to wrap up our day of debate on the Conservative Party motion. I am taking this opportunity to broadcast my remarks on Facebook Live. This may be one of the last times I will be able to do so because there is now a bill that seeks to control what we can say online.

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Getting back to today's motion, we asked the government to give all Canadians access to at least one dose of the vaccine by the end of May. Since the beginning of the day, the Liberals have been telling us that our request does not make any sense. The Bloc Québécois and the NDP have been telling us the same thing.

I think that people read over what we are asking for too quickly. We are not asking for the moon. We know that nine million Canadians have already received one dose and that we are expecting 11 million more doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines by the end of May. That means we are short only 18 million doses to give every Canadian access to at least one dose.

Plus, even though our motion calls for access to vaccines by the end of May, we do not expect that everyone will have been vaccinated. We want Canadians to at least be able to get an appointment. I myself made an appointment two weeks ago, and I will get my jab two weeks from now. That is what we are asking for.

The reason we are asking for this is that we have clearly seen how, for the past year, the Liberal government and the Prime Minister have been unable to do their job for Canadians. Our economy is at a standstill. Over 24,000 Canadians have died. The provinces are burdened with managing the situation. Premiers, especially those of Quebec and Ontario, which have larger populations, are under enormous pressure. Canada's major cities are also locked down.

The government's management was a mess. First, there was the infamous agreement with the communist Chinese government and CanSino, as my colleagues have pointed out today. We never understood why the government's first move was to talk to the Chinese, sign an agreement with them and send them intellectual property and knowledge from Canada and Dalhousie University on vaccine development. The government sent them all of that information and, a week after the agreement was announced, was told that it would not work out. We did not find out right away, because the government was ashamed, and rightly so. It took three months before we learned that we had been swindled.

In the meantime, all of the G7 and G20 countries were negotiating with the big pharmaceutical companies in order to reach an agreement and draft clear contracts with clearly defined timelines. We can see the contracts that other countries signed, but cannot see our own.

Our allies were preparing. New York City will reopen at 100% on July 1. Everyone is vaccinated and will be able to get back to their lives. The city will be open. We can see the United States reopening on a large scale, and the same is true for other countries.

We, the Conservatives, are being blamed today for asking for 18 million doses by the end of May. I cannot understand how the members and ministers on the other side of the House can rise and insult the Conservative Party by calling it crazy for making its request.

As I stated at the beginning of my speech, we are not asking for the moon. We are asking for a bare minimum so we can tell Canadians that we are going to emerge from this pandemic. We are calling on the government to give all Canadians one dose in the next few weeks, that there be a second dose and that we can get this done.

We have figures and medical experts have explained how to do this. We know that before we can talk about reopening, at least 20% of the population must receive two doses and 75% must receive one. We are asking that everyone receive one dose by the end of next month, which represents 18 million doses. We know that some vaccines are on the way and that nine million people have already been vaccinated. It is not as though we were asking for the moon.

Today has been very insulting. I spent my day in the House listening to everyone rant on about us and treat us like we are crazy, when all we have been doing for the past year is simply asking this government to get things moving and sign clear agreements. Instead, the government has been hiding information from us. We have moved motions to ask to see the contracts or even just parts of them. The answer is no.

I can see the contracts signed by the United States, Israel and countries in the European Union. Parts of those contracts are redacted, of course. We have access to most of the information, the information that is needed to know where we are going, from other countries but not our own. That is unacceptable.

We will not allow ourselves to be treated like this by the Prime Minister who always stands up in front of Canadians and says that his government is making such a big effort, that his government is the best and that Canada has the strongest border control measures when variants are getting in. If we had the best border management system, variants would have never gotten in. There are all sorts of things that do not make any sense.

● (1710)

I do not have much time, so I will close by saying that we know where we can get 18 million vaccine doses. They are just across the border.

Right now, 50 million AstraZeneca doses are waiting in U.S. warehouses. They do not want them. They do not need them. They have already loaned us 1.5 million doses. The Prime Minister needs to ask his buddy, President Joe Biden, to send him 18 million doses so he can comply with the Conservative Party motion to ensure at least one dose will be available to each Canadian by the end of May. It is simple. He just has to ask the U.S. president to send him 18 million doses, which he will pay back in time. That is how it works.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth with every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

● (1715)

[*English*]

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.

The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Monday, May 3, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

REDUCTION OF RECIDIVISM FRAMEWORK ACT

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC) moved that Bill C-228, an act to establish a federal framework to reduce recidivism, be read the third time and passed.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to speak at third reading of my private member's bill, Bill C-228, an act to establish a federal framework to reduce recidivism. This bill is near and dear to my heart, and I cannot thank all those involved enough for their efforts in seeing it through to this point.

I will begin with my staff, who have been incredible in working tirelessly on the bill throughout the process. All of us have learned. As I am part of the class of 2019, serving my first term in the House, it has been a steep learning curve, but I have had incredible staff support. There is one young gentleman on our staff who has put in a lot of extra effort, and I want to acknowledge all of his time. He is Jesus Bondo. He has done a tremendous amount of work on this bill and has been tremendous to work with. I express my gratitude to him and to all my other staff members. They have all been a part of this and helped make it possible.

I would also like to express my appreciation for members of all parties who have contributed to this process, who have spoken to this bill and who have been encouraging in the process. It has been a deeply rewarding experience for me. It points to how Parliament can work to solve societal challenges and accomplish great things when members work together. I express my appreciation to each of the parties represented here in the House of Commons.

I want to thank the witnesses who took the time to appear before committee to speak on behalf of this bill.

I think of the Hon. Graydon Nicholas, the former lieutenant governor of New Brunswick and former provincial court judge. He is of indigenous descent, from the Wolastoqiyik people. He gave tremendous testimony at committee and has been encouraging and inspiring in this journey.

I want to thank Tina Naidoo, from the Texas Offenders Reentry Initiative. Tina has been incredible to work with. She spoke at committee about her organization and the work it has done. It has worked with over 30,000 people, who have been returning to their communities through its programs. They are finding their way back into the workplace and, obviously, finding a pathway to a successful re-entry into the community. It has been truly inspiring. I am forever grateful for the influence of Tina Naidoo, Bishop Jakes and the good folks from Dallas, who have done such great work on this.

I think of Cathy Latimer from The John Howard Society, who gave great testimony at committee, and the inspiring work that The John Howard Society does in helping those who are transitioning from the shadows, as it were, back into the communities. I express my gratitude to them.

I think of Stacey Campbell, who helped in the preparation of the bill. She is with Prison Fellowship Canada, which does great work. She was willing to appear when we first introduced the bill.

I think of Andrew Vähi of the Village of Hope, a great local organization that works with young men who are struggling with addictions and transitioning from incarceration back into the community through addictions programming and life skills development. They do great work there.

I think of Dr. Tom Beckner, who served as a chaplaincy expert and does great work. He is now retired, but he did great work with Bridges of Canada and Bridges of America, and helped train many chaplains all over North America. I thank him for his contributions.

I think of Dr. John Rook and the great work that he does in Alberta. I really appreciated his insights and his support for this initiative.

I think of Mitch MacMillan, who is a retired RCMP officer and a local community police chief in the town of Woodstock, in my riding. He is in a local police detachment. He is also a former member of the National Parole Board. He spoke in favour of the bill and helped us in our preparations.

I think of a local farmer from my region, David Coburn. He has employed young men who have been in transition and given them an opportunity to find their way afterward.

All of these voices spoke together, along with those of members from the other parties. They gave good suggestions and helped build this bill to where it is. I am deeply thankful and consider it a great privilege to see it to this point.

Private Members' Business

I know that we all recognize the recidivism rate of those who will be back in prison within two years of being released from federal prison. It is a troubling rate. In some estimates, it is over 25% of those released from federal prisons, but it is much higher for those in provincial institutions. Rates are even higher for those from minority communities, such as the indigenous community, where the rate is nearly 40%. We definitely need to do all that we can to address these things.

• (1720)

The sad reality is that children whose parents have been incarcerated are seven times more likely to enter prison themselves at some point. If we could help break that cycle and reduce recidivism, we would not only help the individuals who have been affected, but we would also see a difference in generations to come. This type of initiative where we all work together through effective partnerships to make a pathway for successful re-entry after someone has served their time will be so much better for everyone.

I am so thankful for the embrace that the House has given to this point, and I trust and hope that members will continue to support the bill through to becoming a law. We all share the aim of stopping the revolving prison door, so once people serve their time and complete their sentence, they have a successful re-entry back into the community.

We must work with the provinces and respect their areas of jurisdiction and expertise. We must work with the private sector, as it could be the key to unlock an opportunity for a second chance. We must continue to work with the non-profit and charitable sectors that are so good at stepping in when others step out, of not giving up when others simply walk away and throw their hands in the air.

Many people who are doing incredible work often get overlooked, but by doing what they do, going into places that others perhaps would not go, allows many people, families and communities to move beyond a regrettable decision a person made at some point in his or her life. Our communities, families, provinces and nation all gain when we get past a wrong that was once done and move on to a brighter and healthier future.

This is truly an opportunity for us to work together to make lasting societal change. I believe that this bill will bring together the best that the public sector, all levels of government, faith-based organizations and non-profits have to offer to collectively find a long-term solution. It is an all-hands-on-deck approach to help some of the most wounded and vulnerable among us.

I have shared many times in the previous opportunities I had to speak on this bill about my good friend Monty Lewis. He was the founder of an organization that reached back into the prisons. He knew what it was like to be incarcerated.

Monty did not have an easy upbringing. He knew what it was like to live with addictions in his life. He knew what it was like to have faced violence and to have been a perpetrator of violence. He ended up serving time in provincial jails and then in the federal penitentiary.

Monty was in the hole of a prison cell at the Kingston Penitentiary. He had pretty much given up on life and was angry at the

world. However, a Salvation Army chaplain began to faithfully visit him there, and he kept going to see him. I remember Monty telling the story of when this chaplain came to see him. He started hollering and swearing and told the chaplain to get lost, but the chaplain kept coming back. The chaplain showed Monty grace and hope. He showed him that would not give up on him.

To make a long story short, Monty had a dramatic change in his life. From the hole of a prison cell, his life started to move in a different direction. He served his time, got out and found the love of his life, Linda. They got married and he went back to work in the mines. He then felt this pull in his life that he could not escape. He said that he had to do whatever he could to help others who had taken a similar path to his. He did not want them to feel like their lives were over because of the things they had done and regretted. He started with \$7.36 and began visiting prisons, sharing good news with people and being there when they got released from prison. His life and organization have been the true inspiration behind this bill.

• (1725)

I cannot help but think that somewhere in heaven Monty has a great grin on his face tonight, thinking a bill he had inspired is on the verge of perhaps passing through the House of Commons and could have an impact on the lives of so many others. I dedicate this bill, this evening, to him, his wife and their family for the tremendous sacrifices they have made and the hope they have provided many others.

I thank each one. I appreciate this opportunity and the support I've had to get this done, for the hope of all those who have felt hopeless at one point.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think anyone watching at home or in the chamber, if their heart was a little too small, it probably grew three sizes bigger today. I just wanted to thank the member. Sometimes we forget about how difficult it is to take a piece of legislation through the whole process. I congratulate him and his team.

Now that we are at third reading, the member has been through committee study. He mentioned there were a lot of suggestions, not only from his own party, but from other parties. Could the member please share some of the experiences he had at committee? Also, what does he believe will be the next step for his bill?

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Mr. Speaker, the committee experience was a very good one. I will start by thanking the Chair. He was so good in helping us navigate this first experience of walking a private member's bill through committee. He was tremendous. I will also recognize my hon colleague from Lakeland, who was tremendous in helping guide the bill through.

I mentioned my hon. colleague and fellow Atlantic Canadian, the member for St. John's East, over in Newfoundland. He had a good amendment that we added to enrich the bill and make sure we are looking into how sometimes there are systemic things that need to be looked at. We need to address that to make sure that, if there are patterns or things that are systematically unfair, we are making sure those are being looked at, examined and addressed as well.

Private Members' Business

I cannot thank each one of the members of the committee enough for the valuable input and encouragement they have offered along the way, as well as the witnesses we heard from for providing their stories. I look forward to the day, when we are hearing further testimony to the effects of these programs being put in place, that we will hear the stories of lives that have been transformed. I think—

• (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: We will continue with the next question. The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

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 appreciate the comments from the member, and I am interested in getting his thoughts on the issue of restorative justice. I am sure he has likely given some thought to it, and I would be interested in hearing his opinions.

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Mr. Speaker, yes, I am very familiar with the principle of restorative justice. I am familiar with it from my background, and I believe those principles certainly do apply. I believe people can be restored. I believe there are so many facets that can lead to that positive restoration. I happen to be one who believes that faith can play a huge role in that.

I also believe in effective partnerships, good programming and good therapeutic counselling, and I am one of the ones who really believes that an opportunity for meaningful employment, or being able to be employed, to step back in, is one of the best ways we can help people become restored. It is about addressing the whole person and their needs, so I do believe very much in the concept of restorative justice.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I will say once again how impressed I am. I recognize the member's compassion and passion for this issue, coming out of his own experience and that of his friend, Monty Lewis, who took a great deal of interest in making sure people had an opportunity to be rehabilitated.

I have to say, though, his party in the past has done a disservice to the programming in prisons by reducing and closing, for financial reasons, many of the programs and services that were available to inmates to assist in their rehabilitation. I do not want to go through the list, because it is a very long one, and it is very disheartening, to say the least.

I wonder whether the hon. member would care to comment on that and whether he is prepared to acknowledge that cutting these programs has had a lasting impact on rehabilitation in our federal prisons.

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his input at committee and thank him for his question here this evening. I do not think any political party can say that it has it 100% right as it relates to restorative justice or to successful reintegration back in the community after time served.

All of us need to bring a certain level of humility to any of these societal challenges we are facing and realize that we have to work together to find solutions. We build on the knowledge of past expe-

riences, both good and bad, and try to build a bridge to a better tomorrow. We are on that path with this bill. We have seen a very encouraging sign with all parties coming together to work on this.

This bill provides opportunity for the public sector involvement, but also private sector involvement, non-profits and others, and I think it is at that interface that we will really find the keys to successful reintegration.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been trying to get in on the debate all day and finally at the end I get recognized. I want to congratulate my colleague on putting forward this bill and bringing it all the way through the House of Commons. As someone who has passed a private member's motion before, I know the challenges of that and I am very excited to see this go forward.

What does he have in store next around this issue?

• (1735)

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his encouragement along the way. I appreciate his kind remarks. What is next is that hopefully, if we are successful in getting this bill through here this evening, it will go directly to the Senate and have a very successful outcome there and become law.

Then I hope we can start to see pilot programs roll out across the country, working in conjunction with the provinces and other sectors that would be interested in doing a pilot, to see what models work best and hopefully start to see recidivism numbers come down. I look forward to those next steps, but right now let us get it through this vote this evening and hopefully off to the Senate.

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 like to share some thoughts with the member, who has done an admirable job in bringing this to the floor of the House of Commons, and now we are at third reading. Even though I was not at the committee stage discussions, by the sound of the presentations, I am sure it would have been of great interest. No doubt the standing committee did fine work with respect to the legislation.

When I think of Bill C-228, I think of the Speech from the Throne. In that speech, we made a commitment to introduce legislation and make investments to address certain things such as systemic inequities in all phases of the criminal justice system, from diversion to sentencing and rehabilitation to records. There is a great deal of merit in what we are debating today.

The member and so many of us talk about the issue of the revolving door of our justice system. Think of the costs to society, and I am not just talking about the dollar value costs because it far exceeds the dollar. It also impacts communities. We all want to do what we can, as legislators, so our constituents can feel safe in their communities no matter what time of the day or wherever they may be located. We want to see that safety.

Private Members' Business

For residents of Winnipeg North, the element of safety is of utmost importance. How can we deal with that issue without at least addressing and taking action where we can with respect to the revolving door?

I am pleased this debate is taking place and I have a lot of thoughts on this issue. I was the justice critic for a short time when I served in the Manitoba legislature. I have had the opportunity to take tours of places like the Headingley provincial prison, the Stony Mountain federal prison and different types of incarceration facilities in communities. I also saw other alternatives in administering justice.

It is why I was very interested when the member spoke of his interest in restorative justice. Generally speaking, I was pleased with his answer. I do believe in restorative justice. Restorative justice could not only be for the perpetrator but also for the victim, where we bring both sides together and the victim can see there is a face to his or her offender. It is not universal and it cannot necessarily be applied in every situation, but in certain situations it can be done. I used to be on a youth justice committee and saw first-hand the true value of something of that nature, not to mention the more macro approach in dealing with it.

When I think of our prison systems, having done the walk-throughs and talked to many people who were in prison, I have come to a few conclusions. The incorporation of education is absolutely critical when we talk about prison life. I am talking about basic skills and things like learning to speak English or another language. It is so very important to write, to communicate or to prepare a résumé. Some of the things we take for granted are often a significant challenge for many who are in the prison system. By ensuring they have some of those very basic skill sets, we are enhancing their chances of becoming more productive citizens within our communities.

• (1740)

There are ways in which we can deal with the issue of substance abuse and drugs, as an example. We need to do a lot more in terms of looking at ways we can have more effective policies on that front. I do believe that as a government we have been very progressive in our approach on a number of those files.

Regarding the legislation that the member has brought forward, it is important to emphasize a couple of points, as I should have done closer to the beginning. If I may, I suggest that the government interprets this bill as applying to federal offenders only. That is an important aspect as they are they only ones for whom the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is responsible. I want to highlight that because it is an important part of the debate, even though in his comments the member accurately made reference to the importance of working with other stakeholders, in particular our provinces.

For private citizens participating, such as at justice committees, I can say that in my experience it has been very positive. One becomes an honorary probation officer of sorts and it is a quasi-judicial body, whether it is an individual or a non-profit organization. There are many non-profit organizations out there that do outstanding work, assisting people who are incarcerated. I would add that they do outstanding work in assisting victims of crimes. However,

for the purpose of this bill it is recognizing the phenomenal effort of those organizations in all regions of our country, as non-profits, that are there to support real people who are trying in many ways and situations to get out of their current circumstances and to contribute more positively.

Along with the private citizens and the non-profit organizations, one could easily factor in private companies. I do not know to what degree today because I have been out of it for a little while, but often we see the private sector assisting. Whether it is participating in dispositions to reintegrate individuals who have left the system or as part of a disposition that a justice or quasi-judicial group would have given to someone who has perpetrated an offence, the private sector also has a role to play in this.

Obviously there are the provinces. That is where I should spend just a bit more time because we need to recognize that when we talk about incarcerations, I do not know the hard numbers but the member also made reference to that revolving door and I do believe that percentage is higher in provincial facilities than it is in national facilities. We always have to be careful what we talk about statistics. There are rationales that could justify why that is the case, but I know that there are systemic barriers that are real and that the government needs to focus attention on.

• (1745)

With respect to services, it is also important to point out that they already are doing good work to continuously review and improve their risk assessment instruments and procedures to ensure they remain unbiased, valid and reliable. When we talk about changes that will impact safety, these types of things actually move us forward.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we were originally supposed to debate this bill the day after the emergency debate on violence against women. I had therefore planned to focus on that topic in my speech, since femicide is a scourge that must be eradicated at all costs, and this bill could be part of the solution. I still want to take a moment to outline the sad events of the last few months, and my colleagues will understand why.

On February 5, 2021, Elisapee Angma was killed in Kuujuaq by her ex-husband. On February 21, 2021, 32-year-old Marly Edouard was shot in the head near her home in Laval. She had been a victim of domestic violence a few weeks earlier. On February 23, 2021, 44-year-old Nancy Roy was stabbed to death in her Saint-Hyacinthe home. Her ex-husband Jean-Yves Lajoie was charged with the murder. On March 1, 2021, 28-year-old Myriam Dallaire and her 60-year-old mother Sylvie Bisson were killed with an axe in Sainte-Sophie by Ms. Dallaire's ex-husband. On March 19, 2021, 40-year-old Nadège Jolicoeur was stabbed to death in her husband's taxi. On March 23, 2021, 29-year-old Rebekah Harry succumbed to her injuries after being hospitalized for several days in Montreal. Her husband was arrested at the scene of the crime.

These seven women were killed in the span of seven weeks in Quebec. Fourteen children lost their mothers and often their fathers, who took their own lives after the murders. Since then, the list has grown to 10. Ten women have been killed at the hands of people close to them.

The killers are violent partners or ex-partners. It is even worse knowing that several of these femicides were committed by men who had already gone through the court system and had a long history of domestic violence. It is quite clear that domestic abusers must be taken into custody, monitored and subjected to a rigorous risk assessment.

Therein lies the rub. According to the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee and criminologist Jane Monckton, the domestic homicide that is playing out before our eyes is due to public authorities' ongoing neglect when it comes to prevention, screening and tracking of high-risk cases. The risk factors are known, but they are ignored or downplayed.

In the case of the double femicide in Sainte-Sophie, an ex-girlfriend of the suspect said she was not taken seriously when she filed a complaint against him five years earlier. She had to stay confined at a shelter while he enjoyed total freedom. He already had a long criminal record by then.

It makes no sense that a woman who is a victim of violence must go to a shelter to be safe, while her violent partner or ex-partner is free.

The Alliance des maisons d'hébergement de 2e étape takes women who are most at risk of being killed. It says that, most of the time, the men are released within 24 to 48 hours of being arrested. Where do these men go once released, if left unsupervised? The answer is obvious.

Elisapee Angma's body showed signs of serious injuries when she was found on February 5 in Kuujuaq. Two weeks earlier, her ex-husband had been released on bail, even though he had violated court orders prohibiting him from approaching Ms. Angma. Many victims of violence who trusted the court system now believe, unfortunately, that the freedom of an accused man is more important than the safety of a woman. When citizens lose trust in their justice system, they stop filing reports and stop going to the police.

The figures confirm this. There have been a lot of media reports on femicide in recent weeks. We have all had our eyes opened to a serious problem in our society that urgently needs to be addressed. However, the statistics on attempted murder, aggravated assault, threats and assault against women are even more worrisome than people think. In 2019-20, 300 women sought refuge in women's shelters in Quebec. These 300 women were victims of attempted murder by violent men, the majority of which do not factor into police statistics.

The Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes du Québec says that these women report being strangled, drowned or thrown down a staircase. In the face of such horrific acts, we have a duty as legislators to ask what we can do to put an end to this senseless violence. What can we do to ensure that women and children feel safe in their own homes? What can we do to ensure that men filled with rage have the tools they need to channel their anger and avoid causing further femicides?

One of the solutions is definitely that we must immediately improve the way we deal with violent men. We need to implement innovative measures to help them, because arresting them is a way to affirm that domestic violence is not acceptable, yes, but prison does

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not help violent men resolve their deep-rooted issues. In 50% of cases, they reoffend. Domestic violence is a social problem, and we need to take action on several fronts. We cannot eradicate violence against women without doing something about the violent men. That would be a mistake.

● (1750)

Bill C-228 is a way to better support inmates in federal prisons to minimize recidivism. This is a subject that is very important to me and that I am studying very carefully as part of my work on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. The problems with the handling of federal inmates are well documented.

Bill C-228 seeks to do away with mandatory minimum sentences for certain Criminal Code offences. It corrects an error made by Stephen Harper's government. The mandatory nature of the sentences takes away judges' discretion to determine appropriate sentences based on their knowledge of the case and their expertise in order to maximize the chances of rehabilitation.

The rationale for mandatory minimum sentences is the belief that length of time in prison acts as a deterrent to future recidivism. However, a major study carried out over a 30-year period with more than 336,000 inmates proved otherwise.

Researchers found 325 correlations between recidivism and length of time in prison. The goal was to determine whether imprisonment was effective in suppressing criminal behaviour and recidivism. The researchers found that imposing prison sentences was not an effective way to reduce criminal behaviour. They concluded that the primary justification for imprisonment was to punish offenders for their crime and to neutralize certain offenders for reasonable periods of time.

The report of Canada's correctional investigator, Ivan Zinger, which was released on October 27 of last year, was consistent with the study results. It was a damning report for the Canadian government, because it showed that the feds are doing a very poor job of reintegrating inmates.

I had a chance to talk to Mr. Zinger during a Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security meeting. We talked about the significant number of incidents of sexual violence in federal prisons that go unreported or that, worse yet, are reported but go unpunished. When we have proof that the Correctional Service of Canada is turning a blind eye to rape, we must take urgent action.

The key takeaway from the correctional investigator's report is that Canada is falling further and further behind the rest of the industrialized world with respect to digital learning and vocational skills training behind bars. The government has taken little action to implement the dozens of recommendations made by Mr. Zinger's office to improve training for inmates, which would have a direct impact on their reintegration into the community.

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Based on these observations, is it any surprise that prisoners in federal penitentiaries are struggling to be rehabilitated? How can they re-enter the labour market without training that reflects the needs of today's workplace? How can we expect them to successfully reintegrate into the community if we neglect opportunities for them to obtain employment once their sentences are over? Without a legitimate way to earn a living, the door to delinquency and recidivism remains wide open.

Bill C-228 provides for the development and implementation of a federal framework to reduce recidivism. This is a good thing, and we had the opportunity to discuss it at committee with the sponsor of the bill. However, it provides for standardized programs, in other words, programs that are the same across Canada. Unfortunately, this approach directly interferes in Quebec and provincial jurisdictions.

Quebec already manages the reintegration of young offenders into the community, but this bill would override that with a federal framework. The problem is that Bill C-228 does not provide any details on the form that the federal framework would take. It gives the federal government free rein to create the framework itself and bypass Quebec and the provinces.

A Liberal amendment even changed the wording to ensure the framework is established in consultation with the provinces instead of in collaboration with them. To us, that suggests that the framework will be imposed on the provinces. We had hoped to amend the bill at report stage, but the law clerks deemed our changes to prevent federal interference to be out of order.

However, that was the whole reason we supported the bill at second reading. Offender reintegration is important to me and the Bloc Québécois. This bill undermines the efforts of Quebec, which is doing rather well when it comes to reintegration into the community.

In order for us to support the bill, it would have had to limit the federal role in offender reintegration. The recent case of Michel Cox, a dangerous sexual predator who tried to kidnap a teenager immediately after being released from prison, and the murder of Marylène Levesque by Eustachio Gallese show that recidivism among violent men is a problem.

We cannot stick our heads in the sand. The existing measures have often failed to protect the public.

Although the Bloc Québécois supported the bill at second reading, we are opposed to subjecting provincial jails to a federal model, especially since a number of studies have found that Quebec is doing a much better job with reintegration than other places in the world.

I do want to commend the member for Tobique—Mactaquac and thank him for his work.

• (1755)

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni. I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill C-228 today, an act—

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to interrupt the hon. member just for a moment. In private members' business, there is really no provision to share one's time, unlike other occasions when we are in committee of the whole and such. The member will have to stick to his 10 minutes.

I do note that the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni is on the list. We are coming up against an end point here, but if there does happen to be time available, certainly he is on the list and will have an opportunity to speak.

The hon. member for St. John's East.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill C-228, an act to establish a federal framework to reduce recidivism, presented by the hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

Let me first commend the member for bringing forth this bill. He is a first-time member, and it is to his credit that he has gotten his private member's bill to this stage so early in his political career. He has spoken with great passion and empathy about this issue in the House from his experience in his community and the extraordinary work done by a friend of his, Monty Lewis in assisting ex-offenders.

It is also notable that the bill is coming from a Conservative member of the House. That is because we often hear from Conservatives, who see themselves as so-called “tough on crime”, seeking stiffer punishment, mandatory minimums and lengthier sentences for crimes in hopes of protecting the public, but which have not proven to do so.

It is not very often we hear from them of the importance of rehabilitation and reintegration into the community for an offender when released from prison. This does serve to protect the public and is an important element in the improvement of society. The rehabilitation of an offender is a significant principle of sentencing and must be considered by a judge, along with other elements.

What we want to avoid is an offender reoffending. That is probably the simplest definition of recidivism, which is not a commonly used word outside the field of corrections. The bill calls for the development of a national framework to reduce recidivism to be developed within a year by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and reported to the House of Commons.

This is to be done in consultation with the provinces, with indigenous governing bodies and organizations, and other stakeholders, including NGOs, such as the John Howard and Elizabeth Fry Societies, and other organizations and groups that work with ex-offenders.

It recognizes the need for the framework to include measures to ensure that those who are released from prison have adequate and ongoing resources, as well as employment opportunities to aid their transition and reintegration back into the community, all with the goal of reducing the likelihood of reoffending but also helping the person become a productive and contributing member of society along the way.

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Employment is extremely important and basic to rehabilitation. Having a job and the opportunity to achieve self-sufficiency and the independence that comes with that is crucial and gives people some control over their life and future. A representative of the John Howard Society in my riding of St. John's East has recently stressed the need for employment skills development programs pre-release as a means to help ex-offenders get more quickly on their feet as they seek to reintegrate and build a better life.

It is hoped that consultations coming from this bill will result in productive recommendations for measures to assist in aiding rehabilitation and thereby avoiding recidivism and in helping individuals overcome the obstacles that may have contributed to their being incarcerated in the first place.

This could include helping those with a lack of access or with barriers to education and training, or those dealing with drugs and other addictions, which can be a huge factor in the lives of some of those who have been incarcerated. The bill provides an important opportunity to focus on the needs of ex-offenders and enhance the programs and resources that could be made available.

The preamble of the bill also recognizes that the purpose of the correctional system is, in part, to assist in the rehabilitation of offenders, both in the penitentiaries and in the community. One factor that is now well known is that there is a shocking over-representation of indigenous men and women, Black Canadians and persons of colour in our prisons. In 2020, according to the correctional investigator, indigenous people accounted for 30% of the prison population but only 5% of the Canadian population. Black inmates were 10% of the prison population but only 4% of the Canadian population.

What has been revealed recently is that there is also a racial bias in the tools used to assess inmates on their rehabilitation potential and their security standing when they serve in the prison itself, whether they had to serve in minimum, medium or maximum security. Black and indigenous inmates are more likely to get maximum security ratings and be assigned the worst scores on a potential for rehabilitation assessment.

The result is that they have restricted access to programs for rehabilitation within the prison, less access to parole, thereby serving a longer portion of their sentence in prison. Having fewer opportunities for programs is obviously detrimental to those incarcerated.

● (1800)

An amendment to address this now included in the bill was proposed by me and accepted, most graciously, at the committee stage by the member for Tobique—Mactaquac and supported by the committee. It is a provision that the framework must, “evaluate and improve risk assessment instruments and procedures to address racial and cultural biases and ensure that all people who are incarcerated have access to appropriate programs that will help reduce recidivism.”

I believe this will enhance the framework on recidivism and hopefully eliminate at least one element of systemic racism in our society, which has such negative consequences. I want to once again commend the member for this legislative initiative and offer my support for its adoption at third reading.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Tobique—Mactaquac and his team for this critical work to establish a federal framework to reduce recidivism through this bill, as well as for giving me the opportunity to speak this afternoon.

All of us should be deeply concerned about the well-being and status of those who have committed crimes for two reasons. Those who have committed crimes are still human beings, and unless they are reformed, criminals have the capacity to hurt us, and others, again.

On the first point, I know that the member who proposed this bill previously served as a pastor. I also know that a great deal of important work affirming the human dignity of prisoners and seeking to reduce recidivism is done by faith communities. My colleague will, therefore, be quite familiar with the text from Matthew 25, which discusses those who will and will not receive salvation. In particular it says:

...the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”

I do not doubt that for many, the last line of this famous text is the most challenging. To feed the hungry, clothe the naked and welcome the stranger are comparatively easier things to do when the hungry, naked and stranger seem to be in challenging circumstances through no fault of their own. However, to be concerned with the well-being of the guilty, of those who have harmed others, and to recognize their guilt without denying their humanity is necessarily more challenging. I acknowledge that.

In affirming the immutable human dignity of the guilty, we should not seek to dismiss their guilt or blame it abstractly on social factors beyond their control. That also seems to me to be a way of denying their human dignity. To say that someone has human dignity is to say that they have inherent value and that they have free will and must bear responsibility for their actions.

Those who have committed crimes, especially violent crimes, have likely participated in acts of dehumanization by denying the dignity of others or by using them as merely a means to their own ends. It clearly does no good then for the state or others to also participate in this process of dehumanization by seeking to deny the humanity of the perpetrator, either by pretending that they did not have agency in their situation or by seeking to treat them in a way commensurate with an animal.

Private Members' Business

Following a dehumanizing act of crime, the response from the system and from society, as a whole, should be to seek rehumanization. This should include both holding an individual accountable and calling them up to behave in accordance with their humanity. Our response to dehumanization should not be further dehumanization, but rather rehumanization. Otherwise, we will have not actually established a distinction in the underlying mentality between ourselves and the criminal.

Sir Thomas More made the following observation about how dehumanization contributes to crime. He observes in his book *Utopia*:

If you do not find a remedy to these evils it is a vain thing to boast of your severity in punishing theft, which, though it may have the appearance of justice, yet in itself is neither just nor convenient; for if you suffer your people to be ill-educated, and their manners to be corrupted from their infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded from this but that you first make thieves and then punish them?

Aside from any normative or moral arguments about dehumanization and rehumanization of criminals, there is an obvious practical advantage to seeking rehumanization. It is a fact that most criminals do end up being released. Therefore, the extent to which they have parted company with their previous modes of behaviour has consequential implications for the security of everyone else.

Theoretically, a society could seek to solve this problem by not releasing criminals ever, but aside from being unjust, this would be enormously expensive. Saving the government money is certainly the least important or compelling reason to seek to reduce recidivism, but it is a reason nonetheless.

Even criminals who are incarcerated for life can do great harm to others, such as guards, fellow prisoners or the general public. Those who think permanent incarceration is a solution should remember that Allen Legere, one of Canada's most notorious serial killers, killed most of his victims after escaping from prison. Even if someone is sentenced to spend the rest of their life behind bars, it still makes all of us safer to see their rehabilitation. As I said earlier, in practice, most of those who go into prison will come out at some point or other.

In calling for the creation of a national framework to reduce recidivism, this bill particularly highlights the importance of strong communities and not-for-profit organizations. I know this is not an accident. Meaningful human community associated with responsibilities and obligations, furnished through natural institutions like family, workplace and neighbourhood, is what helps us to learn and practice virtues that allow us to live meaningful and happy lives together.

• (1805)

Community is important for the development of character and for rehabilitation. Community can also in some sense be part of the problem, when people are plugged into communities that reward or reinforce anti-social behaviour. In such cases, people need to have new communities made available to them. However, we do not make criminals into good citizens by alienating them from their humanity. Nor do we make criminals into good citizens by alienating them from all kinds of community.

Government is many things, but its biggest weakness is that it is not a community. While governments create legal frameworks and

provide programs, they do not embody the unique characteristics or competencies of communities. Although governments can play a supportive role, a recognition of the unique competencies of voluntary communities that must receive former criminals and nurture them in the development of virtue is why this bill emphasizes the role that partnerships must play as part of a national framework on reducing recidivism.

Having quoted scripture on Sir Thomas More, I will now rely on the film *The Shawshank Redemption* to help elucidate my final point. Following the suicide of a recently released prisoner, one of the others observed, "These walls are funny. First you hate 'em, then you get used to 'em. Enough time passes, you get so you depend on them."

The adjustment to release is very challenging. The state takes responsibility for incarcerating people and then releasing them, but what is really important for combatting recidivism is the process by which released prisoners are able to integrate themselves into a new community, which will help them further develop new patterns of behaviour. The transition out, and in particular the support of communities welcoming released prisoners, is necessary for reducing recidivism. The government cannot do this work on its own, but it can help.

During the tenure of the last Parliament, I had an opportunity to visit with Cal Maskery and the team at Harvest House Atlantic in Moncton. Harvest House is a community hub for people who have recently been released from prison. It includes an emergency shelter, step-up housing, addictions recovery and skills training, and it is supported through donations and government programs.

Cal himself served time in prison, but then he turned his life around. Cal met his wife while he was in prison. She was a volunteer helping those who were incarcerated. They got married on the day of Cal's release. I was deeply inspired by Cal's story and by the work Harvest House does. This is the kind of work that needs more support through this bill.

I have also had the opportunity to visit the prison in my own riding on a couple of occasions. I encourage all members to take the opportunity to visit prisons, talk to prisoners and staff, and hear about the challenges and hopes of those who are there. I have been inspired in this context by the work of my uncle, a professional musician who runs a charity called Concerts for Hope. He brings other professional musicians with him to perform classical music concerts in prisons across the United States. Presenting convicted criminals with beautiful music promotes the rehumanization of hardened criminals and seeks to inspire in them a renewed sense of hope.

For rehumanization and reducing recidivism, it seems to me that hope is the key thing. To hope is essential for any human being. To turn their lives around, those who have committed crimes need hope: hope that something different is possible, hope that one day they can find purpose in serving others and hope, like the good thief on the cross, that even in the face of the worst imaginable punishment, there is an opportunity for grace as long as breath remains.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1810)

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all my hon. colleagues from the bottom of my heart for their tremendous remarks and thoughtful considerations on this.

The hon. colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan referenced a passage that I was going to reference at the very end, a favourite, which was when the master teacher himself said about those who inherit the Kingdom. He said, “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”

Those words ring true in my heart as we come to the conclusion of the debate on this. The difference that a compassionate heart can make, that hope can make and that coming alongside those who perhaps feel that they will be forever defined by what once was perhaps a very regrettable and hurtful decision they made at one time in their life and they live in the shadows of that feeling.

I am glad to share with the House on this occasion that I personally have witnessed and met many who have changed direction in their life and they have gone in a much better direction because there were people who came to where they were and shared a message of hope, offered a hand of friendship and provided an opportunity when probably perhaps they thought they may not get another one. This bill would go a long way in providing a framework.

The aim of the bill is to provide a structure through which the best of the best programs, both here at home and internationally, can be fostered and developed so we can all attain the shared goal of reducing recidivism among our incarcerated population and help them successfully reintegrate back into the community. We do that through these kinds of effective partnerships.

I thank everyone and I hope we can speedily get this off to the Senate and see it become law sooner rather than later.

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 ask them to rise and indicate so to the Chair.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I would ask for a recorded division, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to an order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 5, 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.

• (1815)

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for the magnificent riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, it is my privilege

to represent the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces here in Canada and serving our country abroad.

My question for the Prime Minister was about providing protection from COVID-19 for soldiers being deployed overseas to Ukraine. I asked the same question for soldiers deployed outside of Canada in Latvia.

Since the start of the pandemic, over 1,525 members of the Canadian Armed Forces have contracted the virus, an infection rate that is almost double the rate of the rest of the Canadian population. Today we were told that there are 100 active COVID cases among our soldiers. Soldiers are at a higher risk. Yesterday, the news reported a COVID outbreak at Garrison Petawawa. This follows a news report of an outbreak in the civilian population near Garrison Petawawa.

The Prime Minister's vaccine policy is putting Canadians at unnecessary risk. Leadership means giving an at-risk soldier a vaccine shot before virtue signalling in front of a camera. Once again, the Prime Minister has failed the leadership test. The Prime Minister's open-door COVID policy is needlessly exposing Canadians to the COVID-19 virus. The decision to deploy soldiers to Ukraine without first being vaccinated is another bad decision by the Prime Minister, who has a record of bad decisions.

The Prime Minister knew that Ukraine was struggling to get access to vaccines. Out of the 2.05 million COVID cases in Ukraine, 43,391 deaths have been recorded. Over 400,000 Ukrainians are sick with the virus and Ukraine's health care system is in crisis. Hospitals are overflowing. They are short-staffed, with acute equipment shortages. Ten thousand new cases were recorded in the last 24 hours, with 432 COVID-related deaths in the same time period. This is in a population slightly larger than Canada's. It was into this environment, an area suffering from a raging pandemic, that the Liberal Prime Minister sent unvaccinated soldiers.

The subsequent order from the Prime Minister to scavenge a vaccine from a country where soldiers are being deployed is beyond outrageous. Unless the Prime Minister has ordered Health Canada to approve the use of the Chinese Sinovac vaccine on Canadian soldiers, with its 50% efficacy rate, the communist vaccine is not even legal in Canada. The Prime Minister knows that the Chinese vaccine is the only vaccine available in Ukraine to inject into soldiers' arms.

Canadian soldiers cannot scavenge COVID-19 vaccines from the COVAX initiative because they are not available. The first shipment of vaccines from COVAX did not arrive in Ukraine until April 16. COVAX is the global vaccine-sharing initiative, and it is intended to provide vaccines for poor and middle-income countries. Without COVAX, many of the world's poorest countries would have no vaccines at all.

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Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the health and well-being of Canadian Armed Forces members has always been our main priority. That is why our defence policy of “Strong, Secure, Engaged” provides clear direction on our defence priorities, with a 20-year horizon. That is something no government has ever done before. In fact, chapter 1 of our policy spelled out our desire for well-supported, diverse, resilient people and families. People are at the core of everything the Canadian Armed Forces does to deliver on its mandate.

From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been taking concrete steps to ensure the safety and well-being of our members, regardless of their location. We scaled down exercises and training, we increased the number of people working from home and we adopted robust public health measures to mitigate risks.

The safety and well-being of our members is a top priority, and we continue to do everything we can to ensure their protection as we follow expert advice from the Public Health Agency of Canada. We are taking all necessary precautions, but the work of Canadian Armed Forces members at home and abroad cannot stop. They must continue their important missions to be strong at home, secure in North America and engaged in the world.

The Canadian Armed Forces is supporting Canada's response to COVID-19 and vaccine distribution efforts. At the same time, the Canadian Armed Forces must be ready to respond to natural disasters and other activities necessary for the defence of Canada and its interests. Training and recruitment have resumed, with strict measures in place to keep people safe, and the CAF continues with key operations, such as search and rescue, NORAD and support to UN and NATO efforts.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

In January, members of the Canadian Armed Forces started getting vaccinated. We started with the members who were working in high-risk clinical settings and the members with health conditions that put them at higher risk.

The Canadian Armed Forces are responsible for ensuring that their members are able to get the COVID-19 vaccine, no matter where they are posted. Although members who are deployed or stationed abroad have not all been vaccinated, efforts are well under way to develop a coordinated plan and ensure that we have the resources to reach every single member who is deployed or posted overseas.

We have started vaccinating members deployed as part of Operation Impact in the Middle East, Operation Reassurance in Latvia and Operation Unifier in Ukraine. Members of the military who are preparing for deployment as part of an operation will start getting their vaccines in the coming weeks.

[*English*]

We continue to follow pre- and post-deployment COVID-19 protocols and rigorously apply COVID-19 public health measures, and we are abiding by the rules, regulations and restrictions applicable to the locations where CAF members are deployed or stationed.

We must protect the health and well-being of our people while ensuring operational readiness, and we must continue to be a reliable ally and partner on the world stage.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the announcement about the Prime Minister getting on the speakers list next month for a celebrity-laden global concert promoting vaccine equity has to be the height of hypocrisy. What would the organizers of the Global Citizen “VAX LIVE: The Concert to Reunite the World” think if they knew the truth about Canada raiding the COVAX supplies due to the Prime Minister's incompetence? What would they think of sending soldiers to what has become a war zone without being first offered vaccines?

Canadians are embarrassed by the Prime Minister's decision to access vaccines from a program primarily designed to help pandemic-struggling countries like Ukraine. Forcing deployed military members to source medical vaccines from local supplies puts soldiers and their families at risk.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Mr. Speaker, any eligible Canadian Armed Forces member who wants a vaccine will be able to get one. The CAF COVID-19 vaccine prioritization framework provides guidance on the allocation of up to 150,000 vaccine doses. Vaccinations have begun at home and abroad, and they will continue as further allocations arrive from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

First up were frontline health care providers and those with health conditions, and now we are vaccinating those deployed on operations or employed in providing essential support to critical functions.

[*Translation*]

The Canadian Armed Forces is attempting to reduce the threat to their members and to maintain its operational capability to support Canadians, our allies and our partners, as needed. Furthermore, we continue to mitigate risks with robust public health measures.

• (1825)

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this evening, it is my turn to speak about a matter that is very important to me and that I am very concerned about.

Adjournment Proceedings

I am the MP for Mégantic—L'Érable and therefore I represent the community of Lac-Mégantic. I think I do need to say more. People know how extremely important rail safety is for us in the Lac-Mégantic area.

The Auditor General of Canada recently released a report on rail safety as a follow-up to the different reports she had already written in the past about rail safety in Canada. One of the main findings she mentioned in her opening remarks before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts was that “the department had yet to fully address our recommendations and that, in fact, there was still much to do to improve the oversight of rail safety in Canada.”

We cannot believe it when we hear things like that. It does not make any sense. However, at the same time, we also think that we need to get things moving, and that is what I decided to do. Rather than just criticizing, I am going to talk about it. I am going to talk about it as often as I can so that things change, so that we can put pressure on Transport Canada, the railways and everyone involved in rail safety to move more quickly. That is what I am doing with the rail bypass that has still not been built. We still do not have a clear and concrete time frame as to when that will be done.

Right now, in the Lac-Mégantic area, there is much debate about whether CP and Transport Canada have told the truth about when this bypass will finally be built. I am trying to contact CP. I am trying to meet with CP representatives. The meetings are put off week after week because of availability issues. That can no longer be tolerated. We cannot wait any longer. We need clear answers, whether it be from the railway or from Transport Canada.

In 2019, there were 1,245 rail accidents in Canada. That number comes from the Auditor General's report. Are my colleagues aware that, in 2019, 72 people died in rail accidents in Canada? Twenty-eight of them died at crossings, six in derailments and accidents involving employees or passengers, and 38 in accidents that occurred when people trespassed on tracks.

All the while, rail traffic has been increasing. Freight tonnage increased to more than 328 million tonnes in 2018. In terms of goods transported, fuel oils and crude petroleum recorded a significant increase by weight of more than 45% from 2017 to 2018. Those are the most recent numbers we have.

Given these findings, I think it is important for Transport Canada to do its job so that we no longer see Auditor General reports with statements like this one: overall effectiveness of oversight activities not measured. Basically, what the Auditor General meant was that, yes, there are more oversight activities, but she does not know what to do with those numbers, and she does not know whether measures introduced over the years have done a better job of protecting people.

To conclude, I invite my government colleagues, Transport Canada and CP, which is responsible for the bypass, to do whatever it takes to speed up the work so that we can finally say that our railways throughout Canada, and particularly here in Lac-Mégantic, are safe.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Transport Canada will not hesitate to take whatever action is necessary to protect

Canadians who live and work near railroads. I want to assure all Canadians that we are committed to continually improving our rail safety oversight regime, including implementing all of the Auditor General's recommendations.

I would like to share the historical context of the 2013 audit conducted by the current Auditor General's predecessor. On July 6, 2013, a train carrying crude oil derailed in the town of Lac-Mégantic. The resulting explosions devastated the community and claimed the lives of 47 people.

The tragedy brought to light significant deficiencies in Transport Canada's rail safety oversight regime. Following the tragedy, the Auditor General tabled an audit report highlighting areas that required particular attention. In response, Transport Canada took immediate and long-term action to address those deficiencies.

In 2014, we defined the requirements for establishing emergency response assistance plans when trains are transporting dangerous goods. In 2015, Transport Canada introduced new requirements for using thicker steel for tank cars transporting flammable liquids. In 2016, we established stricter regulations for accountability and compensation, requiring railway companies to hold a minimum level of insurance based on the risk posed by the type of dangerous goods they move.

We hired more inspectors. Since 2013, the number of railway safety inspectors has risen from 101 to 155. In 2013, we increased the number of manual inspections from 20,000 to an average of 35,000. Last year, we peaked at 40,581 inspections, the highest number of railway safety inspections ever conducted in Canada. In 2015, we passed the Railway Safety Management System Regulations, 2015, which laid the groundwork for a better safety culture for railway operations.

Building on that progress, in 2015 we created administrative monetary penalties to encourage higher safety performance. We also enhanced our community education, awareness and outreach activities by providing technical briefings to municipal councils.

With more inspections and better risk analysis, we began identifying the main factors contributing to accidents. We addressed these problems through a combination of targeted inspections and regulatory measures.

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For example, in October 2020, we approved the Locomotive Voice and Video Recorder Regulations, which helped us gain greater insight into safety concerns and risks. In November 2020, we approved new work/rest rules for railway operating employees, which are in keeping with the most recent scientific evidence on fatigue.

These important changes have improved the safety of rail operations. Over the past five years, the number of deaths attributable to rail explosions has decreased by 27% and the number of accidents has decreased by 12%.

As the Auditor General pointed out in her follow-up audit, Transport Canada still has much work to do. The Minister of Transport has accepted all of the follow-up audit recommendations and we are already implementing measures in that regard.

For example, we are looking for ways to strengthen our Railway Safety Management System Regulations, 2015, and we are preparing to undertake a series of audits of the effectiveness of this management system in the fall of 2021.

The steps we have taken to implement the recommendations of successive auditors general will help ensure that Canada's rail system remains among the safest in the world.

• (1830)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for her remarks.

I would remind her, however, that departments are always complying with every auditor general report and always accept the reports' recommendations. In her findings in this case, she made it clear that much more needs to be done to fully improve rail safety.

I personally invite the parliamentary secretary to join me and the Lac-Mégantic community in working together to improve rail safety. Certain things are taking far too long, including what Transport Canada has presented to us.

I think it is our responsibility as politicians to shorten these delays, to move faster and to make sure that the victims of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy did not lose their lives in vain. We need to use this example to speed things up and prevent a tragedy like the Lac-Mégantic derailment from ever happening again.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure Canadians, Quebecers and the people of Lac-Mégantic that rail safety remains our priority and will remain mine.

We are actively strengthening our rail oversight regime. In recent months, we have established new rules, such as speed restrictions for trains transporting dangerous goods. We have also required more frequent inspections and plans to reduce erosion and mitigate the risks associated with cold weather. These changes directly improve safety.

On March 5, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada tweeted, "959 railway accidents were reported to the TSB in 2020, a 12% decrease from the five-year average of 1091 & 59 rail-related fatalities reported in 2020, 13 fewer than the previous year."

I agree with my colleague that there is more work to be done. Transport Canada will follow up on all of the Auditor General's im-

portant recommendations, and this includes looking for ways to show that our inspection and oversight activities are making things better for Canadians, for the people of Lac-Mégantic and for rail workers.

• (1835)

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has never been more clear to me that there must be a culture shift within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, especially when it comes to its relationship with indigenous fishers. In fact, for months now, we have seen the government fail Mi'kmaq fishers in Nova Scotia, failing to protect Sipekne'katik fishers, despite knowing they were at immediate risk to their safety and failing to recognize their treaty and constitutional right to fish for a moderate livelihood.

In deciding to impose this year's fishing seasons on the Sipekne'katik, this minister has just failed to provide any justification that Mi'kmaq fishers cannot fish based on conservation reasons. She has not justified it. The minister has said, "Seasons ensure that stocks are harvested sustainably and they are necessary for an orderly, predictable, and well-managed fishery."

There has been no justification for this decision; no science, no data, nothing that says the small-scale fishery operated by the Sipekne'katik fishers would have a demonstrable harm on the lobster stocks. This is a court-ordered decision; the minister must provide this justification under the Badger test. The burden of proof to deny a treaty right or aboriginal right falls on the Crown, and the government cannot just say it is for conservation; it actually has to prove it.

Not only does this decision go against the Constitution, but it also goes against the minister's mandate letter to remain committed to evidence-based decision-making; and, of course, the Liberals cite their most important relationship is with Canada's indigenous people. We do not see that here.

We know that conservation is of course the most important priority. Chief Mike Sack has said that his band actually intends to undertake a conservation study with Dalhousie University's marine affairs program, to monitor impacts as they carry out their season. We understand that the minister is concerned about conservation, as am I, as are the NDP; but let us not give the impression that first nations fishers are not. In fact, if anything, first nations have been guardians of conservation for generations before ours.

To impose this decision while discussions are ongoing with Mi'kmaq fishers across Atlantic Canada and indicating that there will be an increased presence of federal government officials on the water to enforce is an inherently violent act. The minister's words and actions run in direct opposition to the government's commitment to uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Instead of instilling confidence that Mi'kmaq fishers will be able to fish safely, the government has chosen to raise tensions and threaten fishers. In fact, Chief Sack has indicated that he is willing to reach out to the United Nations for help, to bring in peacekeepers to ensure his peoples are safe.

If the current government is incapable of keeping people safe on the water, that is indeed a national shame on all of us. When indigenous fishers are able to have their boats on the water fishing, they are helping their communities, they are providing economic opportunities to their families, they are sharing tradition and culture, and they are meaningfully connecting to their territories and the land in which they live.

However, the Government of Canada would rather have indigenous fishers in the courts instead of in their boats, and indigenous people keep winning in court. In the last two weeks, the Nuu-chah-nulth won a B.C. Court of Appeal case, the third time in the upper courts, asserting their right to fish, including wild salmon, despite the government spending over \$19 million on government lawyers to suppress that right.

Once again, we call on the minister to back down from this decision, work with Mi'kmaq fishers to keep them safe, and uphold and affirm their right to a moderate livelihood instead of fighting them at every opportunity.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last fall was an extremely challenging time, but particularly so for some indigenous communities, such as the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. It was very disturbing for all of us to hear about and see on the news the events whereby indigenous people were physically attacked, had their property damaged and vandalized or destroyed, and had insults directed toward them for trying to exercise their affirmed treaty right. Let me clear. We condemn these acts.

● (1840)

[Translation]

As we move forward, we know that work is still ongoing to implement the right of first nations to fish in pursuit of a moderate livelihood.

[English]

That is why the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard recently announced a new path forward, a path that will further enable first nations to pursue their affirmed treaty right in a safe and predictable way in the short term.

[Translation]

This new approach focuses on the transparent and stable management of the fishery, which will ensure its sustainability and productivity for all fishers. It is also based on what we have heard from

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first nations and on the need for an interim solution while more long-term negotiations are under way.

[English]

To emphasize, this path is an option for interested first nations to fish this season, in season, based on the needs of their community or aggregate.

The minister continues to have negotiations with first nations on other long-term agreements, including rights reconciliation agreements. The department is working to move to a relationship with indigenous peoples that recognizes and respects indigenous rights and interests.

[Translation]

We know that awareness of indigenous realities and an understanding of their history will take time, as will education. However, that is no excuse for not taking action now. Fisheries and Oceans Canada and our government are working to do better.

[English]

One example of this is the amendments to the Fisheries Act that enable the consideration of indigenous knowledge, collaborative management, and recognition of equivalency of indigenous laws. In addition, the department has developed a reconciliation strategy, an internal culture change tool that includes concrete actions across the whole department and guidance for staff as they build relationships with indigenous partners.

[Translation]

Our government knows that we can and must do much more to help Canada's first nations communities.

[English]

This is why our government has made reconciliation and rebuilding relations with Canada's first nations people a top priority. We remain firmly committed to advancing reconciliation and working collaboratively with first nations to implement their constitutionally protected treaty right to fish in pursuit of a moderate livelihood.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, it alarms me that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence is here to answer this question. It should be concerning to the indigenous fishers, given the fact that they have not had the protection they need. Otherwise, it is the government not taking this seriously. It has not talked about how it is going to meet the Badger test. It has not delivered a mandate. The government knows that it must uphold the rights of indigenous people but chooses to fight them at every turn.

What we are seeing in Nova Scotia is no different from what Canada has been doing to indigenous fishers for over 150 years. We have heard from the minister a repeated but empty commitment to reconciliation. The government said it never stopped working to implement a solution, but the solution it has chosen is not one that follows the government's treaty and constitutional obligations.

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Despite its pretty words and promises, the government is once again denying the rights of indigenous people and doing it in front of all of our eyes to see. People across Canada are demanding and want better.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Mr. Speaker, I am here this evening in the capacity of stepping in for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

It goes without saying that last fall's events were very disturbing for all of us to hear about and see on the news, whereby indigenous peoples were attacked exercising their affirmed treaty right.

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

Like the rest of the government, Labour Canada went from a relationship with indigenous peoples founded on colonialism and, by definition, systemic racism, to a relationship that recognizes and respects the rights and interests of indigenous peoples.

[*English*]

As noted in the minister's statement of March 3, we are proposing a short-term solution that continues the implementation of the

treaty right for interested first nations to fish this season in advance of longer term agreements, but we are ever mindful of the safety of all fish harvesters and the public.

[*Translation*]

That remains an essential priority in preventing the dispute we saw last fall from repeating itself, as we move forward on this new path.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:46 p.m.)

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