



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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# House of Commons Debates

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Wednesday, November 24, 2021

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 24, 2021

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayer*

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• (1405)

[*Translation*]

**The Speaker:** It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### KANATA NORTH TECHNOLOGY PARK

**Mrs. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to have the opportunity today to celebrate the growth and contributions of the many businesses in my riding, particularly of the Kanata North technology park, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Kanata North technology park is home to over 540 companies and contributes over \$13 billion to Canada's GDP annually. The innovation, technology and hardware from these companies have been the backbone of our country's telecommunication systems.

Two weeks ago, the Kanata North Business Association opened its doors to a new community space called Hub350. With incredible partners such as Carleton University and the University of Ottawa, as well as those in industry, such as Telus, BlackBerry QNX and Wesley Clover, the future is bright.

I want to thank the Kanata North Business Association for its leadership and its commitment to bringing industry and academia together, and for launching Hub350 and the 5G innovation zone.

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### 44TH PARLIAMENT

**Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place and thank my neighbours in Parry Sound—Muskoka for once again trusting me to be their voice in this chamber.

Earlier this month, I was pleased to attend the Friends of the Muskoka Watershed's ash drive in Bracebridge. Created by Dr. Norman Yan, the Muskoka ash project seeks to fight the problem of ecological osteoporosis of the trees in Muskoka using ash recovered from residential wood stoves. This ash is then used to replenish calcium levels in the soil and water.

This is but one example of everyday Canadians of all partisan stripes coming together to tackle a problem. As we begin this 44th Parliament, I call on all my colleagues on all sides of the House to use this same approach.

Canadians are tired of the partisanship and the gridlock. They are tired of the bickering back and forth, and they are tired of the rhetoric. Each of us was sent to the House to solve the problems Canadians are facing. I challenge each of us to reach across the aisle, find common ground, and take up the people's work of ensuring that Canada's best days always lie ahead.

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• (1410)

### MANMEET SINGH BHULLAR FOUNDATION

**Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and commemorate a great man, the honourable Manmeet Singh Bhullar. His life was taken too soon in 2015 after stopping on the highway to help a motorist.

Mr. Bhullar was committed to helping those most in need, not only here in Canada, but also around the world. Through his efforts and a collaboration between the Government of Canada and the Manmeet Singh Bhullar Foundation, a great number of Afghan Sikh and Hindu minorities are now here in Canada and thriving. Children are in school, and families are working and giving back to our communities. Most importantly, because of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, they are able to freely practise their religion. They are living the Canadian dream. His legacy will live on as his work continues through the foundation in partnership with the Government of Canada.

Meeta, as many of us called him, inspired so many of us in this chamber. His passion, drive and energy were contagious, and he touched many lives while he was with us.

I thank my friend for inspiring us. He will be forever missed.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**NATHALIE LACROIX**

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when I say that I am proud to be the member for Salaberry—Suroît, it is because I have every reason to be.

I have the honour of meeting exceptional people, including the most recent winner of the Coup de coeur des Agricultrices du Québec award. Pioneering, determined and innovative: That is how best to describe Nathalie Lacroix, co-owner of Petits Fruits St-Louis in Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague.

Ms. Lacroix began producing a still little-known fruit, the organic haskap berry, in 2011. Today, thousands of fans are flocking to the Lacroix-Léger's farm to pick the berries directly in the field or buy all sorts of the family's delicious creations.

Ms. Lacroix is a truly admirable woman who knows how to share her talents and passions with her family and community.

Dear Nathalie, you are a smart woman with a huge heart. You are a worthy representative of Quebec's women farmers. I will see you soon at the store, my friend. I still have Christmas gifts to buy.

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**CITIZENS OF BOURASSA**

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as this 44th Parliament gets under way, I want to sincerely thank the people in the riding of Bourassa who placed their trust in me by electing me for the fourth consecutive time.

What a privilege it is. I am so proud to represent them.

I would like to take a moment to thank my staff for the quality of the services they provide. I also want to thank my family for their unwavering support, as well as the many volunteers who contributed to my campaigns.

The quality of people's lives has improved significantly since 2015, but much remains to be done. We must work together to continue to combat insecurity, create more affordable housing, support seniors and, most importantly, build a sports facility.

People of Bourassa, rest assured that I will always be at your side, *à vos côtés, a su lado, al vostro fianco, ana maatcom, avèwmapmaché.*

\* \* \*

[English]

**THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to thank the constituents of Niagara West for putting their trust in me for the seventh consecutive time. I am proud and honoured to be their voice in this chamber once again. I am humbled that I received more votes in this election than in the last one. I thank Niagara West for their support.

As we all know, this election was extremely divisive. This was only so because of the Prime Minister, who is leading a corrupt and secretive government. Canadians should be concerned that the

Prime Minister would try and divide us by pitting one group of Canadians against another. That is no way to lead this country.

The Prime Minister is also failing Canadians on the economy. Just look at the skyrocketing inflation and the cost-of-living crisis we are in, with higher prices for groceries, gas and other essentials such as home heating.

My constituents are worried; Canadians are worried. Thankfully, they can count on a strong, united Conservative official opposition to fight for the best interests of all Canadians, and we intend to do exactly that.

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**HOMES UNLIMITED**

**Mrs. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House for the first time to talk about an issue that is personal to me.

[Translation]

My family and I arrived in Canada as refugees with nothing but the clothes on our backs.

[English]

The first years of my life in Canada, I lived in social housing. Considering the rate of homelessness across the country, I know that we were lucky. Accessible and affordable housing is not a privilege. It should be a universal right.

Every single person in London and across Canada deserves a place to call home. That is why I want to highlight Homes Unlimited, an organization that has been working tirelessly since 1972 to help fill the housing gap for Londoners with affordable housing solutions. The Tecumseh Place development is part of Homes Unlimited and has worked to provide affordable housing for the families of London West.

I also want to highlight the need for housing across the country and thank our government for making this issue a priority in its mandate. I hope that across the aisle we can agree to make this a non-partisan and important issue we can champion in our time here.

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● (1415)

**ORLÉANS**

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans):** Mr. Speaker, Orléans is full of outstanding residents. Two Orléans residents received 2021 Order of Ottawa awards last Thursday, November 18.

Congratulations to Michael Allen, the president and CEO of United Way East Ontario, and Ian Faris, the senior vice-president of chamber network relations and advocacy at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce for this well-deserved recognition.

[Translation]

Last week I also had the privilege of attending the 2021 Soirée Saphir gala in Toronto, organized by the Foundation franco-ontarienne. Women from across Ontario were recognized for their leadership and dedication.

I congratulate all the finalists and winners, with a special shout-out to Jocelyne Legault, who won the “Entrepreneure” award for her work as executive director of Les Sittelles gymnastics club in Orléans. Congratulations to her.

[English]

I would like to give my thanks to the Orléans community for electing me and allowing me to be in this 44th Parliament.

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### ECONOMIC RECOVERY

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your re-election.

As this is my first opportunity to rise in the 44th Parliament, I want to thank the people of the Kenora riding for once again placing their trust in me to serve in this chamber. It is an honour to be in this position, and I am thankful to everyone who helped our team make it possible.

During the last campaign, I heard from countless individuals who were hoping for a robust economic recovery that includes the north. To make that happen, small businesses must be given the opportunity to thrive. Serious labour shortages must be addressed, and the government must present a real plan to deal with the current housing crisis. Canada's recovery must include all sectors and all regions.

It is my renewed pledge that I will work to ensure that the Kenora riding and all of northern Ontario is well positioned to drive the economic recovery forward.

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### THE HOLODOMOR

**Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 88th anniversary of the famine genocide in Ukraine known as the Holodomor, when Joseph Stalin closed Ukraine's borders and confiscated all food to destroy a Ukrainian population opposed to his rule. Nineteen people per minute, 1,200 per hour and 28,000 per day were dying of famine at the height of the Holodomor. The world was silent. Millions died as a result.

My grandmother Olena was a survivor of the Holodomor. She once told me that she hoped that the victims of the Holodomor would be not only remembered but also honoured. For her, honouring them meant not just remembering them or commemorating them, but making sure that crimes like this never happen again.

I hope that this week we all take the time to not only remember and commemorate the victims, but also renew and redouble our efforts to ensure that crimes like this, which are happening even today, stop and never happen again. Let us do as my grandmother

### Statements by Members

would have asked to do if she were here today. Let us remember, commemorate and honour the victims.

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### FLOODING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to thank so many members of this place and their constituents who have reached out and passed on support to the good people of Princeton and Merritt, along with the many small indigenous communities in the Similkameen and Nicola valleys, who have been devastated by flooding. While there has been some positive news that some residents can return home, the reality is that many challenges remain.

It is one thing for people to clean up their homes and remove destroyed belongings, but those belongings pile up on streets and need to be removed. Sewer systems are not working; there is no water, and in many places there is no gas or electricity and thus no heat. Each night the temperature drops further below zero, and it does not move much above zero in the day. All of these residents are in a race against time now, to rebuild their lives as much as possible before the true freeze of winter sets in.

I would like to ask all members of this House to continue to think and advocate for the people of Merritt, Princeton and those other small communities that need every bit of support and every bit of encouragement we can muster right now and in the future.

\* \* \*

● (1420)

### FLOODING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on June 29 my riding suffered one of the worst disasters in recent memory: Lytton burned to the ground. Now floods and mudslides have destroyed critical infrastructure and private property in every corner of my riding in the last few weeks. My constituents in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon are hurting. B.C. is hurting. We are resilient and we will get through this, but we need help.

The government speaks a lot about addressing climate change. Here is the opportunity to back those words with action, through resilient infrastructure and climate change adaptation and mitigation for the 21st century. I call on the government to work with partners to rebuild Lytton, to fund critical infrastructure and to empower first nations to have more control over disaster management, because the current way of doing things is failing.

We have much to do, and I am squarely focused on getting the resources British Columbia needs to build back.

*Oral Questions***WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY**

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the good people of Port Moody—Coquitlam for electing me as one of the 103 women in this House.

This pandemic has been hard on women, and the increased burden of unpaid work has caused too many to leave the workforce to take on child care and home-schooling. Their careers have been set back as they stepped forward for their families, and the women working the front lines of the care economy, many of whom are racialized and new immigrants, have faced long hours and increased incidents of abuse. They have been hailed as heroes but paid inadequate wages.

That is wrong. Their work is invaluable. This devaluation exists because of broader systems of oppression. As we recover from this pandemic, we must take the opportunity to remove barriers for women and diverse genders and finally achieve gender equality.

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[*Translation*]**ORIFLAMMES PROJECT**

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the Oriflammes project, an initiative started a few years ago by the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 79 in Richelieu, Quebec.

Every year during the Remembrance Day period, banners bearing images of the region's veterans adorn the main streets of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. They remind us of the service of our local military personnel, whose biographies are posted on the city's website

I mention this because, among other reasons, Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu was the first city in Quebec to undertake an initiative like this. Other municipalities have since followed suit, and we hope that the project will be emulated in even more cities.

It is said that all military personnel pay for their service with their lives. While some do all at once, others spread payment out over their lifetime. Initiatives like the Oriflammes project are one way to say a most deserved thank you to them.

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[*English*]**FLOODING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this past week Canadians watched in horror as disaster struck British Columbia. Torrential rains unleashed a flood that washed out highways, bridges, and water and sewer systems. Thousands of homes and businesses have been submerged. Farm animals have drowned or been euthanized.

The scene in Abbotsford is one of unimaginable destruction. Countless families have been displaced. Dikes have been breached, pump stations overwhelmed and untold property lost as the carnage swept across our city.

However, I am grateful to live in Abbotsford. In the middle of all this chaos, my community stepped up when it counted. Our mayor,

volunteers, first responders, armed forces and so many others tirelessly worked to get people to safety and protect the public against harm.

The damage will take years to assess and is in the billions of dollars, but we will overcome this monumental challenge and rebuild an even more resilient community.

May God bless Abbotsford and may God bless Canada.

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● (1425)

**NEWFOUNDLANDERS MISSING AT SEA**

**Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to speak to members of this House about two young men missing at sea off the coast of Newfoundland. Adolfo, better known as Tommy Ferreira, and Michael Gill left Lawrence Harbour to hunt turr on Saturday, November 13, and sadly, despite the best efforts of rescue crews, have not yet returned home.

To the members of the Canadian Coast Guard, the RCMP, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, boat owners and fish harvesters who have aided and who continue to aid in the search for these two men, we say “thank you” for doing what most of us can only imagine as being a heart-wrenching job.

It is incumbent on us as a government to ensure that those who go to sea are safe and will return home to their families each night. We must continue to change our rules and policies to ensure the safety of every person out on our waters.

To the families and friends of these two young boys, I want to extend thoughts and prayers from the constituents in Avalon and indeed from all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

May God be with them.

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**ORAL QUESTIONS**[*English*]**DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see you in the chair and it is great to see MPs in their seats.

For more than a week, Canadians have been watching devastating images out of British Columbia as floods ravage Abbotsford, Hope and dozens of other communities. I want to recognize that the minister has been in regular contact with the federal government's response to these tragic floods.

Could the Prime Minister please update this House on the latest federal government efforts to deal with this disaster?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for bringing this up. I know that he and I, all members of this House and all Canadians stand with British Columbians during this extraordinarily difficult time. We are, as he said, in close contact with provincial authorities to make sure we are prepared for any further aid required.

Federal resources have been on the ground since the very beginning, and we now have up to 500 CAF members on the ground, sandbagging, rescuing livestock and providing food and support to remote communities.

We will continue to be there to support people in B.C. as we get through this and as we rebuild. It is what Canadians do: We stick up for each other; we are there for each other and we will continue.

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### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Prime Minister and keep on the theme of standing up for people in British Columbia. The Coastal GasLink project has agreements with 20 indigenous communities in B.C. True reconciliation demands a plan for economic reconciliation, so that the next generation of indigenous children inherit opportunity and not trauma. This week, we have seen dog-whistle invitations to blow up projects like Coastal GasLink.

Why are Canadians waiting on the Prime Minister to release a real plan for economic reconciliation?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, from 2015 onwards we have been serious about the work of reconciliation, which absolutely does include economic reconciliation in leadership and in partnership with indigenous peoples. Whether it is on developing natural resources, ensuring parity and investments in schools or ending long-term boil water advisories, we will continue to move forward in a way that is led by and guided by the partnerships with indigenous peoples across this country.

Of course, Canadians need to work together to achieve this goal, and any remarks that advocate for or serve to instigate violence are unproductive and potentially dangerous.

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### THE ECONOMY

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadian inflation is at a 20-year high and 60% of Canadian parents are worried about putting food on the table. Monthly grocery bills have already gone up hundreds of dollars. The Speech from the Throne mentioned inflation once. It was mentioned just once.

Is the Prime Minister having trouble understanding the concerns of Canadian families, or does he just not care?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, inflation is a challenge that countries around the world are facing right now because of disrupted supply chains and because of the recovery of our economies after COVID, but we are extremely concerned about the rising costs of living brought to people by inflation.

### Oral Questions

The member opposite talked about families. That is exactly why we are moving forward with \$10-a-day child care right across the country. Indeed, even in places like Alberta, they are moving forward on that and have shown that they will cut child care costs for families in half as of January 1. That is real help that the Conservatives here in this House have stood against.

• (1430)

**The Speaker:** Before I go to the Leader of the Opposition, I am sure everybody wants to hear the responses to the questions. I just want to point that out and make sure that everybody stays quiet and listens.

[Translation]

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, inflation in Canada is higher than ever, and 60% of Canadian families are worried about not being able to put food on the table. Grocery bills have already gone up hundreds of dollars, yet the throne speech mentioned inflation just once. Is the Prime Minister aware that there is an inflation crisis in Canada?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad we are talking about the inflation challenge that many countries are facing. Let me point out that we dedicated a lot of the throne speech to talking about our solutions, such as \$10-a-day child care across the country and investments to address the housing crisis. Federal Conservatives are against those kinds of investments and initiatives. They swore they would rip up the child care agreements that will help families.

We will take action to help families bear the cost of living.

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### EMPLOYMENT

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, was there any mention of solutions for the economy? The labour shortage is real, but the Liberals are ignoring it. Quebec is full of signs that say, "we are hiring", but the Prime Minister has no plan to address this problem. He obviously has no solution, because the labour shortage was not mentioned even once in the Speech from the Throne.

How does the Prime Minister justify to entrepreneurs and small businesses that he does not recognize the labour shortage problem in Canada?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our Speech from the Throne focused on major issues facing Canadians, including the labour shortage. We know that the priorities Canadians want us to focus on are to put COVID-19 behind us, rebuild a strong and inclusive economy for everyone, make progress in the fight against climate change by creating new, innovative jobs in the green sectors, and work on reconciliation.

That is exactly what we will do. Yes, we will increase immigration levels. Yes, we will invest in training. Yes, we will help address this labour shortage, which was an issue before the pandemic and still is today.

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**HEALTH**

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is the beginning of a new Parliament, which will certainly give us the opportunity to work together. Sometimes, for the good of the people, working together might mean shaking things up a little. We will do that, if necessary.

Health is the top priority for Canadians and Quebecers. For Quebec and the provinces, that means health care funding and increasing health transfers.

The Bloc Québécois proposed replacing the traditional, secretive first ministers meetings with a public summit on health. It would be a summit on health care funding in which all of the premiers, the Prime Minister and the health ministers would participate openly and publicly, to ensure that the media and regular Canadians would understand the issues and proposals.

Did the Prime Minister consider the Bloc Québécois's proposal?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we all recognize that our health care system and our health care workers helped Canadians get through this pandemic. As a result, we have a plan to eliminate delays in the system, build better mental health and long-term care facilities, and hire up to 7,500 more doctors and nurses in partnership with the provinces.

We made sure that the provincial and territorial health care systems are able to provide care by allocating an additional \$4 billion in budget 2021. We will continue to be there to invest in the health care system, respect provincial jurisdictions and ensure the best health care for Canadians across the country.

● (1435)

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but I have concerns about the word “partnership”, which sounds a lot like “conditions”, to me. While I am at it, I also have serious concerns about the word “plan”, based on what we saw during the election campaign.

However, can the Prime Minister tell us, in all seriousness, whether he thinks that the horrific tragedies during the pandemic were the fault and responsibility of the provinces and Quebec? Does he think or is he claiming that he would have done better?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not looking to blame anyone for the horrific tragedies that befell people across the country. We all fully realize that we need to

work together to ensure that all seniors in this country get the best support. That is exactly why we are willing to work with the provinces and territories.

People just want their parents and grandparents to get the proper care. We will work in partnership with the provinces to invest and ensure the safety of seniors across the country.

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[English]

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are in a climate crisis and we need to act urgently. This climate crisis also presents an opportunity to create good jobs for workers, but not if we do not have a plan. This throne speech completely misses the opportunity to have a plan for workers.

Why did the Prime Minister abandon workers, without a plan to create good-paying jobs that would help us fight the climate crisis? Why is there no plan for workers in this throne speech to fight the climate crisis?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, just a few months ago, all parties had an opportunity to put forward their plans to fight climate change and to grow the Canadian economy. I was extremely pleased to see that the support for the Liberal plan on growing the economy and on fighting climate change was recognized by top scientists, by top environmental leaders like B.C.'s Andrew Weaver and by economists like Mark Jaccard. The kinds of investments and plan that we have put forward and have continued to build on in the throne speech were recognized as the strongest plan for the economy and to fight climate change by all experts.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are in a climate crisis, and we must act immediately.

One thing we can do is eliminate subsidies to the oil industry. The government has promised to do this, but at the moment it is investing 14 times more in fossil fuels than in renewable energy.

Will the Prime Minister commit to completely eliminating oil subsidies in order to invest the money in renewable energy to tackle the climate crisis?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a government, we have been committed for many years to eliminating subsidies to the oil industry, and we will do so even before the target date of 2025, because we know it is important.



A plan has also been put forward to put an absolute limit on emissions from the oil and gas industry and to gradually reduce emissions until we achieve net-zero emissions in 2050, following the advice of scientists.

That is the plan that the Liberal Party put forward; unfortunately for the NDP, it was much stronger than the plan they presented in the last election.

\* \* \*

[English]

### THE ECONOMY

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday's speech was just more Liberal broken promises. However, what it did not talk about was the rising cost of everything in this country: gasoline, groceries, rent and clothing. Everything that Canadians need for their basic needs is going through the roof.

My question for the Prime Minister is simple. When was the last time he went and filled up his tank with gas? When has he gone to a grocery store? When has he gone to a hardware store? Does he know what a loaf of bread costs now, or maybe a can of beans or a package of bacon?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the conversations I have had with Canadians over the past number of months, two things kept coming back as their greatest concerns. One was the rising cost of child care and how much it costs their family. Two was the concern about the housing crisis we are living in.

Well, the Conservatives, who pretend to know what Canadians are going through, promised to cut our plan on child care, to scrap it entirely, when families need the thousands of dollars that our deal for \$10 a day would bring them. Their plan on housing was to give tax breaks to wealthy landlords so they could sell their homes. That does not make sense.

● (1440)

**The Speaker:** I am trying to hear the questions, and the responses and answers. I just want to make sure that everybody wants to hear them as well. Okay. We are good to proceed.

The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me answer that question for the Prime Minister. A year ago, a pack of bacon was about five dollars. Today, to go and buy even a no-name brand, and everybody knows what a no-name brand is except maybe the Prime Minister, it is almost eight dollars.

People without children, seniors and those who have school-aged children are buying bacon, bread, eggs and clothing and pay rent, and this is costing them. It is very disappointing to have a Prime Minister who is so out of touch that the only thing he might be worried about is if the cost of surfboards goes up. I guess he will worry about that.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that there is a crisis going on with inflation in this country?

### Oral Questions

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, while the Conservatives try to score cheap political points, we are focused on Canadians.

We will continue to work hand in hand with the provinces, including Conservative provinces like Alberta, that realize moving forward on \$10-a-day child care, and indeed cutting child care costs in half for families as soon as this coming January, will make a huge difference in affordability for families. On top of that, we are moving forward to make even more investments in countering the housing crisis because we know those are two big issues that Canadians are struggling with. However, there are more that we will continue to work with them on.

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the other thing that is inflating is the Prime Minister's arrogance and disconnect. It is very disappointing to see.

The Prime Minister said he does not care about monetary policy. Well, that is clear because his monetary policy is causing massive inflation in Canada. He might try to say that it is happening everywhere, but it is worse in Canada for people without children, people with school-aged children and seniors. There are Canadians who are struggling with it.

When will the Prime Minister stop just talking about day care and talk about the fact that the cost of everything in this country is going up and he does not seem to realize it or want to address it?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately we see once again the conservative ideology of this federal party slip through as its members talk disparagingly about things, saying, "Oh, stop talking about child care; start talking about things that matter to people." I am sorry, but the investments that Canadians need, and indeed the Conservative premiers across the country recognize, are supporting families. This is not just good for moms and not just good for kids. It is good for the entire economy as we see greater workplace participation. That, unfortunately, is what Conservatives yet again do not get because of their ideology.

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[Translation]

### EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, here is the reality of the situation: Today, 200,000 jobs in Quebec remain unfilled because of the labour shortage. This has cost our businesses \$18 billion because there are not enough employees, and 70% of our businesses are turning down contracts. That is Canada's economic reality: a labour shortage.

Yesterday, in the Speech from the Throne, absolutely nothing was said about this.

Why is the Prime Minister pretending that nothing is happening when our businesses are suffering from a labour shortage right now?

### Oral Questions

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Conservative Party is very focused on problems without offering any solutions.

In the Speech from the Throne, we focused on solutions instead. For example, for the past year our borders have been closed due to the pandemic; now we are going to invest even more in immigration by working with the provinces to bring more labour into the country while investing in opportunities like day care to ensure that, in the decades to come, we have a robust labour market where there are no labour shortages.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but feel suspicious when the Prime Minister talks about the border, because if anyone has completely mismanaged the border, it is the current Prime Minister.

Familiprix's head office is in my riding. This morning, I spoke to the boss, and there are currently 212 job vacancies due to the lack of workers. In Bellechasse, my new colleague's riding, 50 jobs are available at Exceldor because of the labour shortage.

Yesterday, there was nothing at all in the Speech from the Throne.

What does the Prime Minister have to say to business owners facing the reality of a labour shortage?

• (1445)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know very well that there are huge challenges with respect to labour shortages across the country. That is why we are working with the provinces and business owners to find solutions. Whether it is immigration, skills training or investments in education and day care, we are going to create a system and make sure we have more opportunities for business owners.

The reality is that the Conservatives complained that assistance for workers was holding things up and creating the shortage. However, our assistance is now much more targeted, yet the shortage is still going, so we are going to continue to work on it.

\* \* \*

### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, another economic reality all Canadian families are facing is the rising cost of living.

The inflation rate is 4.7%. It has not been that high since 2003. In yesterday's throne speech, the Governor General made just one single mention, in dubious French, of the word "inflation". As we all know, the Prime Minister has stated that budgets balance themselves.

Does the Prime Minister think the inflation rate will lower itself?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, inflation is affecting countries all around the world, and Canada is doing better than many of its peers, including the United States. This is a big challenge for people, and that is why, in yesterday's throne speech, we focused not only on the problem, but also on solutions.

We know investments in affordable housing and the affordability of housing along with investments in child care centres, including the creation of 37,000 new child care spaces in Quebec, will help families deal with the cost of living.

We have more to do, and we will always be there with solutions for families.

\* \* \*

### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change attended COP26 with some very good intentions, and I commend them for that.

COP26 was being hailed as the last chance saloon, but we are still facing challenges related to oil and gas.

While the government claims to have ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, the oil industry is bragging that it hopes or expects to increase drilling by 25% in 2022.

Is that consistent with the government's objectives?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the plan that we presented at COP26 and in the plan that we presented to Canadians during the last election, we recognized that we need to put a hard cap on oil and gas sector emissions and reduce them until we achieve net-zero emissions.

Many major oil companies in Canada have already made that commitment.

We are going to make decisions based on science. We are going to reduce our emissions across the country. We are going to create good jobs for a better future for everyone, while fighting climate change.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to science, the new minister's previous readings were obviously more instructive than his new ones.

However, the Prime Minister is caught between western Canada, which is heavily dependent on oil, and Quebec, which is much greener.

Simple math tells us that cutting greenhouse gas emissions per barrel is actually a licence to increase production, so in the long run, nothing changes.

Does the Prime Minister not wonder whether his solution is a recipe for failure?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my hon. colleague from the Bloc Québécois, I would like to explain to him that in Canada, in a federation, we have something called provincial jurisdiction and that the provinces manage resource production—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

*Oral Questions*

**The Speaker:** I cannot hear the answer. I would ask everyone to refrain from yelling in the House.

The hon. Prime Minister.

• (1450)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** The hon. member should know full well that the federal government can pass legislation and regulate emissions, but it cannot directly control or address production, which is an area of provincial jurisdiction.

That is something he should know full well.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the cost of government is driving up the cost of living. Almost half a trillion dollars of inflationist Liberal deficits means more dollars chasing fewer goods, driving higher prices. However, the Prime Minister says he does not think much about monetary policy. That is no surprise; after all, it is “just inflation”.

Given that housing and gas prices are up by a third, has he had time since he got off the surfboard to think a bit more about monetary policy?

**The Speaker:** I know we have been gone for a while and we are back. I want to remind the hon. members that, when we are talking in the House, we cannot mention someone's name in the House. We refer to them by their title or their riding.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives play silly partisan games, we are focused on Canadians. We know that what Canadians are facing is a serious situation, and that is why we have taken real action.

First of all, in disagreement with the Conservatives, we invested to support Canadians through the pandemic. What was not just the right solution for the health crisis was also the right solution to make sure our economy would come roaring back. That is why we are moving forward on investments like child care and housing to make sure we are helping Canadians through this affordability challenge as well.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, every time he creates a new program, the cost of the said object goes up. For example, he spent \$70 billion on affordable housing to make housing prices go up by almost \$300,000. Many members of this House were not even born when Liberals first started promising to make day care affordable.

When will he realize that more dollars chasing fewer goods means higher prices and that the more he spends, the higher the cost?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Carleton and, indeed, the Conservative approach on the economy are well known by Canadians and that is why it was—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. I want to make sure we are okay to continue.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, they were soundly rejected three times in a row by Canadians.

Our focus has been on growing the middle class and supporting hard-working Canadians throughout. That is exactly what we have been doing. We put forward a plan for \$10-a-day child care that has been accepted by a number of Conservative premiers across the country. The federal Conservatives promised to rip it up.

As we choose to move forward on investing in housing, they want to give tax breaks to landlords to sell their buildings. That was the wrong approach; this is the right one.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister likes to blame his inflation on something that is happening in a faraway place around the world. Why is it then that Canadian consumers are paying higher rates of inflation than Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Singapore, India, China, Japan, Germany, Italy, France, the U.K., the eurozone? In fact every country, except the money-printing mammoth south of the border, has lower inflation than us.

Why does he not take responsibility for the higher cost of living that his out-of-control spending is piling on the backs of Canadians?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am impressed to see the high esteem in which the member for Carleton seems to hold me, that I was able to create a global inflation crisis with our initiatives to support Canadians through this pandemic, because that is exactly what he is saying.

Everywhere in the world they are seeing record-high inflation. Here in Canada, we continue to invest in ways to support Canadians with world-class child care investments, with housing, and with investments in reconciliation, in fighting climate change and in building a better future, while Conservative members choose to hide their heads in the sand.

*Oral Questions*

• (1455)

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister needs to get his facts straight. The fact is, other countries have lower inflation than Canada. France, Italy, Germany, Japan and the U.K. all have much lower inflation rates than Canada. Only the United States, which is printing money like crazy, has a higher inflation rate.

The Prime Minister wants to copy that. Everyone knows that this Prime Minister does not think about monetary policy. After all, it is “just inflation”, but will he start thinking about the real cost burden he is putting on the shoulders of Canadians?

**The Speaker:** Perhaps the member did not understand when I said this in English. Once again, I would remind him that, in the House, we refer to other members by their riding name or their title. I think that is clear now, in both languages.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think I will use a phrase that served me well when I was a teacher. If the member for Carleton spent more time doing his homework and less time playing word games, he might realize that the whole world is facing an inflation crisis, which is severe in all countries. Yes, it is even worse in the United States than in Canada.

That is why we are coming up with concrete solutions, such as investments in early childhood education and the creation of day care spaces, as well as investments in housing. We will continue to be there for Canadians, while the Conservatives continue to focus on me.

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*[English]***HOUSING**

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are in a housing crisis and people cannot find a home to call their own. It is impossible for people to find a home. They are seeing the forces of speculation driving up the cost of housing, and this federal government and previous governments have not invested enough money in building homes that people can actually afford.

Given this crisis, why is the Prime Minister not responding to the seriousness of this crisis with the response necessary to help people find a home that they can actually afford?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as outlined in the Speech from the Throne, housing is a major priority for this government, and we will deliver with programs like the housing accelerator fund, which will help municipalities build more and better, faster.

Whether it is building more units per year or increasing affordable housing, we will work with partners to get real results for Canadian families, including helping families buy their first home sooner with a more flexible first-time homebuyer incentive, a new rent-to-own program and reducing the closing costs for first-time buyers.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is a housing crisis. It is impossible to find affordable housing right now, and this government does not know what “affordable” means. It thinks that \$2,225 a month for rent in Montreal is affordable. That is crazy.

Why has the Prime Minister not taken the urgent action necessary to address the housing crisis and help Canadians?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are taking action.

As outlined in the throne speech, housing is a major priority for our government, and we will deliver with programs like the housing accelerator fund, which will help municipalities build more and better, faster.

Whether it is building more units per year or increasing affordable housing, we will work with partners to get real results for Canadian families, including helping families buy their first home sooner with a more flexible first-time homebuyer incentive, a new rent-to-own program and reducing the closing costs for first-time buyers.

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*[English]***DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

**Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my province has been devastated by natural disasters over this past year. Between wildfires, landslides and flooding, my constituents and countless British Columbians are having their property and lives threatened, or even lost.

With the ever-worsening reality of climate change, we know these weather events are going to become more frequent and severe.

Can the Prime Minister please update this House on his critical work to address this issue?

• (1500)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my thoughts, and everyone's in this House, remain with the people of British Columbia.

As a result of the recent floods, we approved a request for federal assistance, and over 500 members of the Canadian Armed Forces are on the ground and will remain there as long as needed, with reinforcements at the ready. We will do more to mitigate the damage from these natural disasters and move forward on a low-cost national flood insurance program.

We will be there with the people of British Columbia every step of the way as they clean up, as they recover and as we all rebuild together.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, yet again, there was a lot of talk, but no real action to deal with the inflation that is causing the cost of groceries, fuel and housing to skyrocket for Canadians and Quebeckers.

Can the Prime Minister, who genuinely once said that budgets balance themselves, tell Canadians when he plans to bring in tangible measures that will help address the skyrocketing cost of living that is affecting everyone?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, people who listened to the Speech from the Throne know that our speech focused on the solutions that we are proposing for families facing these challenges, particularly when it comes to housing and affordable child care. These are two examples that will have a direct impact on the cost of living and for which the Conservatives have no plan to help Canadians. Fortunately, the government will be there, together with the provinces, to help families across the country.

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the Prime Minister's policies and priorities do nothing for Canadians who are concerned about the cost of living crisis. This crisis is preventing families from buying a home, increasing the cost of necessities and crippling businesses because of the supply chain limitations and labour shortages that are affecting all of us.

I will therefore repeat my extremely simple question to the Prime Minister: When does he plan to bring in tangible measures that will help address the skyrocketing cost of living that is affecting all Canadians?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is what we proposed yesterday, along with many measures that will generate economic growth, assist families and ensure that we overcome this pandemic once and for all.

I do want to point out that none of the questions the Conservatives asked us today had to do with overcoming the pandemic. However, we all know that the best way to get the economy back on track is to put this pandemic behind us once and for all. Unfortunately, not all of the Conservatives are vaccinated, but over 95% of Canadians are, and that is a good thing.

We will continue to work on that.

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Prime Minister read the Speech from the Throne before it was read by the Governor General, because the word “inflation” came up only once in the entire speech.

Instead of laying out an economic recovery plan for families, seniors and small businesses, the Prime Minister is proposing more deficits that will lead to higher costs and higher taxes, which will increase the cost of living for Canadians. Instead of focusing on the public's priorities, the Prime Minister is doing exactly the opposite.

I will repeat my question: When are we going to see real action to address the rising cost of living for all Canadians?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it was the member opposite who did not read the Speech from the Throne. We were focused on solutions in that speech.

Canadians gave us clear directions to put COVID-19 behind us and find real solutions to build a better future for Canadians. Yesterday, we laid out our plan to finish the fight against COVID-19, take strong action on climate change, make life more affordable, move forward together on the path to reconciliation, help Canadians become homeowners, and create jobs while growing the middle class by tackling the labour shortage. Those are the solutions we are proposing to Canadians.

• (1505)

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is what we are all hearing in our constituency offices: labour problems are affecting agriculture, retail and manufacturing, Immigration Canada is having trouble processing applications from foreign workers who want to come here to help, and the cost of living, groceries, gas and housing is going through the roof.

What specific proposals did the government present yesterday to tackle these problems? None. Inflation was mentioned only once. People are tired of the Prime Minister's rhetoric. Now they want action.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, it seems that the Conservatives fail to grasp that inflation is a problem, not a solution.

Our throne speech and our plan are focused on solutions for Canadians. These solutions include finishing the fight against COVID-19, taking strong action on climate change, making life more affordable, moving forward together on the path to reconciliation, helping Canadians become homeowners, creating jobs and tackling the labour shortage. These are the solutions that Canadians want and voted for a few months ago.

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**CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I applaud the Prime Minister's “epiphany”. He recognizes the existence of provincial and Quebec jurisdictions. Hallelujah.

If natural resources fall under Alberta's jurisdiction in the case of oil, then there is no need to give it money to extract the oil, either directly or indirectly, or to pretend it is to lower greenhouse gas emissions when it would actually increase production.

Is changing this not a plan?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know that climate change is a real threat, not only to the quality of life of future generations, but also to their jobs and careers.

That is why we recognize the need to fight climate change, to cap emissions from the oil and gas sectors in order to reduce these emissions while investing to create good jobs in the future.

We are going to be there as a federal government, partnering not only with the provinces but with all Canadians to create good careers and a good quality of life in the future.

\* \* \*

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we have now established that the Prime Minister has finally discovered the notion of provincial and Quebec jurisdictions. We have also established that he has the ability to hand out money for provincial and Quebec jurisdictions, which is quite interesting.

Could the Prime Minister make his epiphany complete by doing exactly the same thing with health transfers?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am glad that the Bloc Québécois is finally beginning to understand how the Canadian federation works. It is about time.

We are here to partner with the provinces and to invest jointly with them in many areas, to ensure that Canadians across this great country called Canada can reach their full potential.

We are here as a federal government, as we have been during the pandemic and as we are for the people of British Columbia, but also for programs to grow our economy, to help businesses and to keep Canadians healthy.

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[English]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, earlier in question period, the Prime Minister used the phrase “even in places like Alberta” in a derogatory way that is frankly unbecoming of the Prime Minister of this country. For shame.

We know what the Prime Minister thinks of workers in western Canada, but at a time when fuel costs are rising out of control, he needs to stop his attack on the workers in western Canada, who provide Canada with a low-carbon, ethical and secure source of energy, while merrily cheering as tankers of Saudi oil make their way down the St. Lawrence.

Does the Prime Minister even know how much fuel has increased in cost since he last took questions in this place?

● (1510)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, allow me to say that over the past many months, we have been working closely with Albertans, whether it is family representatives

or non-profit organizations, who have been pushing their elected representatives to move forward on the \$10-a-day child care, which, indeed, places like Manitoba and Saskatchewan had even last summer. It was with great pleasure that we saw the Conservative government of Alberta move forward and sign a historic deal on \$10-a-day child care.

The challenge is that there is not one federal Conservative representative from Alberta who supports \$10-a-day child care, and that is a shame for all Albertans.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the number of day care spaces created in Alberta by the Liberal government is zero. The number of jobs lost in my province under the Prime Minister is hundreds of thousands.

The Prime Minister earlier talked about housing costs. He thinks that sending tax dollars to fancy think tanks and increasing debt, which increases inflation, is going to somehow lower the cost of basic building goods like lumber, which is out of control, and he has no plan to address this.

Does the Prime Minister even know how much a two-by-four costs these days?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear a Conservative member criticize our plan on housing, which involves initiatives like working with the municipalities to the tune of \$4 billion to invest in more housing, to give more flexible first-time homebuyer incentives, when the Conservative plan the member ran on in Calgary Nose Hill was to give tax breaks to wealthy landlords to sell their buildings easier.

The Conservatives do not understand the challenges faced by Canadians in the area of housing, because if they did, they would be proposing a real plan the way we are.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the price of everything has increased under the Prime Minister's watch, including housing, which is more unaffordable. He does not have the courage to put together a plan. He does not have the courage to stand up for Canadian workers as he sends our jobs offshore. He does not have the courage to stand here and come up with smart economic policies to drive down the cost of goods and get our economy back to work. He does not have the courage to put together a vision.

It begs this question: How much are Canadians paying for chicken these days?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as far as a rhetorical device goes, accusing an hon. member of cowardice is hardly the kind of tone that I think Canadians want to see in this more constructive House.

Canadians returned all of us with a very clear mandate to end this pandemic once and for all, which happens through vaccinations, but also to move forward on investing in things like \$10-a-day child—

**The Speaker:** The sound level is going up and I can barely hear the Prime Minister.

I will ask the Prime Minister to start over from the beginning, please.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, when Canadians sent this newly reconstituted House back to work to end the pandemic, to invest in things like \$10-a-day child care and a stronger future, fighting climate change and creating good jobs, they did not want to hear silly schoolyard insults from any members toward the government. That is why we will continue to stay focused on Canadians even as Conservatives continue to try to fling mud.

Canadians need a House that is going to work together. That is exactly what we are going to do.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Governor General read the Speech from the Throne, a speech that outlines the government's objectives and tangible ways to achieve them.

A significant part of the speech focused on climate action, the urgent need to act, and what we are doing to rebuild our economy and be a leader in the fight against climate change.

Can the Prime Minister tell the young people in my riding of Sherbrooke and Canadians how he plans to achieve these important objectives?

• (1515)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Sherbrooke for her dedication to the fight against the climate crisis.

To create jobs and grow the middle class, we must take bold climate action. That is why we are moving forward with measures such as capping and cutting oil and gas sector emissions and increasing the price on pollution. We will continue to invest in our workers and in our industry to help transition into the economy of the future while ensuring that no one is left behind.

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[English]

#### AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, how many times was agriculture mentioned in the throne speech? Not once, so it should not come as any surprise that the Prime Minister's first decision on agriculture was to end the export of our potatoes from Prince Edward Island to the United States. There was no consultation with the premier and no consultation with the farm families that will be devastated by this decision.

#### Oral Questions

Islanders are already having a tough time making ends meet because of Liberal inflation, yet the Prime Minister is intent to destroy one of their most important industries. This decision was based on politics, not based on science.

Will the Prime Minister reverse this crippling, self-imposed ban of our potato exports?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yet again, this is proof that the Conservatives did not even bother to read the throne speech. We address directly that political decision Mr. Harper made a number of years ago to cancel the PFRA, by restoring a Canadian water agency that would support prairie farmers and, indeed, people right across the country.

On the matter of potatoes, we are obviously extremely concerned. I brought it up directly with the President last week when I was in Washington, because we know—

**The Speaker:** I am going to ask the Prime Minister to stop just for a moment.

He can go ahead.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, in regard to the serious situation facing islanders, we have been working closely with islanders and with the Americans to make sure the Americans understand there is no scientific basis for the ban of table potatoes.

We are going to continue to stand up for Prince Edward islanders and look for a solution on this based on science.

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, obviously the Prime Minister has no idea what I was talking about, but maybe he should ask his members of Parliament from Prince Edward Island, who have not said a single word about this decision.

With the stroke of a pen, the Prime Minister has devastated Prince Edward Island's potato industry. This is crippling for those farm families like the Roses in Souris and the Ellis family in O'Leary.

Will the members of Parliament from Prince Edward Island stand up and tell the Prime Minister to reverse this self-imposed ban on our potato exports to the United States, yes or no?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, following the discovery of potato wart on seed potatoes in Prince Edward Island, the Americans threatened to cut off all potato exports from Prince Edward Island to the United States. We made the decision to move forward with a voluntary suspension to prevent the Americans from bringing in something that would have been much more difficult to reverse, while we work with the Americans and other partners to ensure they understand there is no scientific basis for the banning of table potatoes from Prince Edward Island to the United States or anywhere else.

**The Speaker:** I just want to remind hon. members that the masks are not muffling that much of the sound.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

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**ETHICS**

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during the election, the member for Calgary Skyview was caught on a doorbell camera and has been accused of not just removing campaign literature for Conservative candidate Jag Sahota, but replacing it with his own piece that provided wrong information about a polling location. The member is facing a \$5,000 fine and up to six months in jail during an investigation that is continuing from the Commissioner of Canada Elections.

Even with the low bar on ethics and conduct set by the Liberals and the Prime Minister over the last six years, does the Prime Minister think that this type of action from a member of his caucus is acceptable?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member has apologized and is fully co-operating with Elections Canada as it goes through its processes.

\* \* \*

• (1520)

**CHILD CARE**

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has reached nine child care agreements across all provinces and territories. I am acutely aware that access to child care will make a major difference for families in my riding and across Canada. It not only gives our children the best possible start in life, but allows parents, especially mothers, to maintain their professional careers. It also creates good, well-paying jobs for educators.

Can the Prime Minister update the House on the agreements reached, the ones we are still waiting for and how they will change the lives of Canadians?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank our outstanding member for Fredericton for this important question.

This month, Alberta joined our Canada-wide early learning and child care system, making it the ninth jurisdiction to offer \$10-a-day child care spaces for families. That means that 60% of all children across Canada under the age of six will have access to early learning and child care for \$10 a day in five years or fewer. Togeth-

er, we will finish the job and deliver \$10-a-day child care for all Canadian families, including families in New Brunswick.

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**GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, right now the government is cutting the help that vulnerable seniors and families need. By cutting the GIS and cutting the child benefit, vulnerable seniors and families are struggling to put food on the table and they are struggling to keep their homes because they cannot afford the rent.

The Prime Minister can fix this today. Will the Prime Minister commit today to ending the clawbacks of GIS and the child benefit, and stop hurting vulnerable seniors and families?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the leader of the NDP for continuing to stand up for Canadians as we endeavour to on this side of the House. I look forward to working with him on issues such as this one.

From the beginning, our government's priority has been to support the most vulnerable, which is why we worked hard to strengthen income security for seniors, including with a boost to the GIS. It is also why we stopped the Conservatives' practice of sending child benefit cheques to millionaires to send more to families who needed it with the CCB. We put CERB in place to help people at the height of the pandemic. We know it is having an impact on some of our most vulnerable. Ministers are now actively working on this issue to come to the right solution to support vulnerable Canadians because we will always be there for them.



## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1525)

[*English*]

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), and in accordance with the enhanced transparency requirement set out in the amended policy of tabling of treaties in Parliament, I am pleased to notify the House of Commons of the government's intent to initiate negotiations toward a free trade agreement between Canada and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN. The Government of Canada intends to commence negotiations by holding a first round of negotiations with ASEAN no later than 90 days from the date of this notice. In accordance with this policy, Canada is negotiating objectives for the Canada-ASEAN FTA, which will also be tabled in the House of Commons no later than 30 days before Canada holds its first round of negotiations with ASEAN.

I am also pleased to present to the House of Commons the Government of Canada's negotiating objectives for a Canada-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement. The Government of Canada intends to commence negotiations by holding a first round of negotiations with Indonesia as soon as practicable, but in accordance with this policy the first round will take place no earlier than 30 days from today.

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### AN ACT TO PROVIDE FURTHER SUPPORT IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-2, An Act to provide further support in response to COVID-19.

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

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### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

#### APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

**The Speaker:** Following my election as Speaker, I have consulted with the leaders of the recognized parties regarding nominations of the other Chair occupants. I am now prepared to propose for ratification of the House a candidate for the position of Deputy Speaker and chair of committees of the whole.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 7, I propose Mr. d'Entremont for the position of Deputy Speaker and chair of committees of the whole.

The motion is deemed moved and seconded. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

#### *Routine Proceedings*

#### APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIR

**The Speaker:** I am now prepared to propose for ratification of the House a candidate for the position of Assistant Deputy Speaker and deputy chair of committees of the whole.

[*English*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 8, I propose Mrs. Hughes for the position of Assistant Deputy Speaker and deputy chair of committees of the whole.

[*Translation*]

The motion is deemed moved and seconded. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### PETITIONS

#### ETHIOPIA

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to be presenting a petition today drawing the attention of the House of Commons to the alarming bouts of unrest and violence engulfing the Tigray Region of Ethiopia. The petitioners indicate that this conflict has led to egregious human rights abuses and a humanitarian crisis.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to take action and to engage directly and consistently with the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments on this conflict.

#### AFGHANISTAN

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your election, and it is great to be back.

I am presenting a petition regarding the dire situation of minority communities in Afghanistan. The petitioners call on the government to note the situation of the Sikh, Hindu, Hazara, Christian and other minority communities whose position was precarious prior to the Taliban takeover and is much worse now.

This petition was gathered prior to the Taliban takeover and calls on the government to create a special program to help vulnerable minorities receive direct sponsorship to come to Canada. Conservatives have been calling for this special program for over six years and Liberals have failed to act. Rather than focus on the crisis in Afghanistan, the government chose to call an unnecessary election on the very day that Kabul fell, putting its own interests ahead of its responsibility to lead. The petitioners want to see real leadership by Canada in defence of justice and human rights, standing up for the most vulnerable in Afghanistan and around the world.

*Routine Proceedings*

● (1530)

## HAZARAS

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I present a petition today on behalf of Canadians who are concerned about the past and present atrocities suffered by the Hazara community within Afghanistan.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to recognize the genocide of the Hazara people, to designate September 25 as a Hazara genocide memorial day, to ensure that all Canadian aid to Afghanistan continues to contribute to the peace and security of the region, and to fight for the rights of all Afghan minorities, including Hazaras, Christians, Sikhs and Hindus.

The petitioners want to see real leadership by Canada to defend justice and human rights, to stand up with the Hazara community and other minority communities in Afghanistan, and to recognize the genocide suffered by the Hazara people.

[Translation]

## TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition regarding the Trans Mountain pipeline.

[English]

It is of critical concern to the petitioners that the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion not take place. They point out that a diluted bitumen spill would devastate local ecosystems and economies throughout British Columbia, but particularly in the coastal zone and anywhere along the 800 water bodies, tributaries and rivers the pipeline would cross.

The petitioners call on the government to cancel any plans to put public money into, or to approve any expansion of, the Trans Mountain pipeline.

## INCOME TAX ACT

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations and welcome back.

I rise to present this petition on behalf of my constituents who live in the towns of Fox Creek and Swan Hills. These two towns are in northern Alberta, and they have some of the highest elevations in Canada.

The petitioners note that there are extended travel times, and that increased heating costs and other expenses make life more expensive in these communities. As such, these petitioners are asking to be moved from the prescribed intermediate zone in Alberta, to the northern living allowance zone so that they can get the northern residents deduction.

The petitioners are calling on the government to include Fox Creek and Swan Hills as communities within the prescribed intermediate zone, allowing the residents of these communities to claim these deductions.

## PORNOGRAPHY

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have is from Canadians across the country.

The petitioners are concerned about the accessibility of violent and degrading sexually explicit material online and its impacts on public health, especially for women and girls. The petitioners recognize that we cannot say we believe in preventing sexual violence if we continue to allow companies like Pornhub to freely expose our children to violent and explicit material every day.

The petitioners note that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires Canada to develop the means to protect children from forms of media that are injurious to their well-being. As such, the petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to require meaningful age verification.

## HAZARAS

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions from Canadians who are concerned about the past and present atrocities suffered by the Hazara community in Afghanistan.

Between 1891 and 1893, a genocidal campaign was waged against this ethnic community. Then, in 1998, thousands of men, women and children were slaughtered during the first reign of the Taliban. Since the fall of the regime, the Hazaras were often targets of violence and harassment, and things have obviously dramatically worsened.

The petition calls on the government to recognize the genocide of the Hazara people, designate September 25 as a Hazara genocide memorial day, ensure that all Canadian aid to Afghanistan contributes to the peace and security of the region, and fight for the rights of all Afghan minorities, including Hazaras, Christians, Sikhs and Hindus.

The petitioners want to see leadership by Canada in defence of justice and human rights, standing with the Hazara community and other minority communities in Afghanistan and recognizing the genocide suffered by the Hazara people.

● (1535)

**The Speaker:** I just want to remind hon. members, when presenting a petition, to be as concise and short as possible and get their point across. I think this will work out best because we only have so much time, and if we use up the time, someone else does not get the chance to present theirs.

I will not call the rubric Questions on the Order Paper because no questions are printed in today's Order Paper.

[Translation]

The questions that have been submitted in the past few days now appear on the Notice Paper and will appear in tomorrow's Order Paper.

[English]

## REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

### FLOODING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

**The Speaker:** I have a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I believe that this request for an emergency debate is widely supported on all sides of the House.

I am requesting an emergency debate on the dire impacts of the climate emergency, particularly as they are now affecting my home province of British Columbia. This started with the heat dome in the latter part of June and early July, when nearly 600 people died within four days. We went through a summer of wildfires and we now have this atmospheric river, which has decimated our infrastructure and has caused death, destruction and the loss of homes and farms, and it continues. We see the impacts now as well in the loss of infrastructure in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is very timely, and it is entirely within the rubric of our rules for emergency debate. The situation is not chronic; it is a gathering emergency, and all of us on all sides of the House from every party would appreciate a ruling that allows us to discuss, debate and, one hopes, with a spirit of collaboration and cross-party alliance, make common cause with the people of British Columbia, the first nations and the people across this country suffering in the climate emergency.

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my voice in support of the call for an emergency debate on the flooding situation in British Columbia, a critical situation.

In my time here in the House, we have had emergency debates on pipeline closures, on rail blockages and on climate action. This issue brings all of that together. A one-day rain event in British Columbia has caused untold hardship for British Columbians, but everyone in Canada has been affected by this event. I would therefore like to add my support to the call for an emergency debate.

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me begin by congratulating you on your re-election as Speaker. I believe the outcome was well deserved, and I look forward to working with you in this next Parliament.

My request, which is more specific than you have heard from my colleagues, has to do with the rain event that happened this past week in British Columbia, the atmospheric river event, and all of the destruction and mayhem it created across our province. I highlight that this massive flooding event affected communities throughout the Fraser Valley, the Fraser Canyon and the interior of British Columbia. At least four people have lost their lives. Dikes have been breached, major rail lines and highways have been badly damaged and a major evacuation of people and livestock has taken place. Communities in Merritt and Princeton have been fully evacuated.

We can imagine the displacement and anguish this has caused for thousands of families. The human and economic consequences are and will be enormous. This is arguably the worst natural disaster in the history of our country, and obviously the federal government

### Speaker's Ruling

has a significant role to play in delivering emergency support to the flood-ravaged areas and in preparing a long-term-funded plan to invest in critical infrastructure to prevent such a disaster from reoccurring.

Therefore, I would like to request an emergency debate to discuss how we can work across party lines. I sense from the comments by my colleagues in the other parties that there is a willingness to move forward with an emergency debate on this. However, it should be focused expressly on the event that has just taken place this past week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your consideration of my request.

● (1540)

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate the government's full support for an emergency debate on the devastating situation that is unfolding in British Columbia.

### SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I have two other requests, but before going on to the two other requests, I will say that I thank the hon. members for their interventions and am prepared to grant an emergency debate concerning the flooding in British Columbia. This debate will be held later today at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

We will now go to the hon. member for Vancouver East.

### SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in addition to the emergency debate about what is going on in British Columbia with the climate crisis, I would like to request that you consider granting an emergency debate on the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

As we know, the election was called on August 15, the very day on which the Afghanistan government collapsed. As a result, many people have been put at risk under the Taliban regime. We know that this is an urgent situation that has not dissipated since August. Many Afghans helped Canadians during the time when our military was abroad. They were there to support them, yet they have been left behind. Their loved ones have been left behind too.

We also know that there are Canadians who have sponsored spouses and children to come to Canada and processing has been delayed. They have not been able to bring their loved ones to Canada.

This is urgent, and we need to have this debate to talk about the government's response in the face of Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis and what other action must be taken to save lives. I hope that you will grant this request, Mr. Speaker.

### SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for Vancouver East for her intervention; however, I am not satisfied that her request meets the requirements of the Standing Orders at this time.

We will now go to the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

*Points of Order*

## SENIORS

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise for the first time in this Parliament. I want to thank the voters of Elmwood—Transcona who saw fit to return me here to represent them.

Under Standing Order 52, I want to request an emergency debate on a crisis that is developing for tens of thousands of Canada's most vulnerable seniors who have seen their guaranteed income supplement clawed back as a result of collecting pandemic benefits last year. What does this mean for those seniors? We have heard so many heart-wrenching stories from across the country of seniors who simply cannot make ends meet. They are not getting the pandemic benefits anymore. They already lived on a shoestring budget, and having their GIS benefit cut means they cannot make rent. We are hearing from folks who are being evicted. They are being escorted out of their apartments and do not know where to go.

Putting all the good moral arguments for supporting our most vulnerable seniors aside, we know that it will be more expensive to serve those seniors on the street than it would be to maintain them in their homes. I believe if more members here understood this better, we could get the government to act on it.

We did raise this at the earliest opportunity here in the House, but we also raised it at the earliest opportunity outside the House, at the beginning of August. We raised it in the election. We raised it subsequently in letters, phone calls and conversations with ministers in the government. Today is our first opportunity to raise it in the House, and we believe it would be appropriate to have an emergency debate, as these seniors are being taken out of their homes, so that we can stop this as soon as possible and help those who have already been evicted come back home.

• (1545)

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I want to thank the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona for this intervention; however, I am not satisfied that his request meets the requirements of the Standing Orders at this time.

We have a point of order from the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

\* \* \*

## POINTS OF ORDER

## QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise for the first time in the 44th Parliament. Congratulations on your election as Speaker. It is a pleasure to join all of my colleagues here in the House.

I have a point of order that I would like to raise. It is uncharacteristically short, based on my past interventions. It is with respect to the two questions of privilege raised yesterday regarding matters that were outstanding when Parliament was dissolved. This issue was of particular concern to the government House leader, so yesterday my House leader quoted page 81 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition:

The House of Commons enjoys very wide latitude in maintaining its dignity and authority through the exercise of its contempt power. In other words, the House may consider any misconduct to be contempt and may deal with it accordingly. Instances of contempt in one Parliament may even be punished during another Parliament.

This latter point was decided definitively by Mr. Speaker Jerome on November 9, 1978, at page 965 of the Debates, in relation to allegations concerning misleading information provided to the 29th Parliament being raised over four years into the 30th Parliament. The Chair cited page 161 of *Erskine May: Parliamentary Practice*, 19th edition: “[A] contempt committed against one parliament may be punished by another.” He then held, “The matter is obviously put to rest.”

This principle was reaffirmed during the 32nd Parliament by Madam Speaker Sauvé on December 16, 1980, at page 5797 of the Debates, when she ruled on a question of privilege from one of my predecessors, Tom Cossitt, concerning his Order Paper question in the 30th Parliament. Though she did not find a prima facie case for other reasons, the Chair said, “At the outset, let me assure hon. members that a contempt against one Parliament may be raised and is punishable in another Parliament.”

Finally, I want to offer a much more recent citation. On June 23, the chief opposition whip raised a point of order asking, among other things, what would happen to the questions of privileges we are now concerned with if the heavily rumoured election were to be called over the summer. Mr. Speaker, you answered him at page 9060 of the Debates:

I just want to make sure that we got everything the way it should be and that the answer is correct.

The points of privilege and the points of order will be carried over, and it will be up to the Speaker at the time to look at it and take all the information as it evolves and make a decision at that time.

I recently came across an Italian proverb, and its English rendition is, “The bird is known by his note and the man by his words.” I dare not try to offer it in Italian, Mr. Speaker.

This House has confidence in you because you, sir, are an honourable man and we know that you are a man of your word. As my predecessor from many years ago, Mr. Cossitt, raised a point with the then Speaker trusting and knowing that it would be handled appropriately, I do the same today with you.

**The Speaker:** I want to thank the hon. member, and I will take this under consideration in my deliberations.

The hon. member for Windsor West.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, this is my first time rising. I want to thank the residents of Windsor West and congratulate you. I will be brief with this point of order, but it is pertinent to at least see if you have some knowledge that you can share with this House.

Today, the Minister of International Trade tabled the intention to have a trade agreement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. However, we do not have our committees struck and there has not been any discussion of that.

I wonder whether you can share any updates about that, because we only have a few short weeks right now and then we are on break all the way through December. There is a 90-day process, so most of the time for the committee and members to engage in this is going to be taken up quite soon.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, you might be able to share some thoughts about the striking of committees. Until that time, members cannot get to their full capacities to represent their constituents and the country.

**The Speaker:** I want to remind the hon. member that it is up to the House to appoint the procedure and House affairs committee. When it is ready, I am sure it will report to the House and then we can proceed from there.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1550)

[English]

### ORDER RESPECTING THE BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE AND ITS COMMITTEES

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.)** moved:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, beginning on the day after this order is adopted until Thursday, June 23, 2022:

- (a) members may participate in proceedings of the House either in person or by videoconference, provided that members participating in person do so in accordance with the Board of Internal Economy's decision of Tuesday, October 19, 2021, regarding vaccination against COVID-19, and that reasons for medical exemptions follow the guidance from the Ontario Ministry of Health document entitled "Medical Exemptions to COVID-19 Vaccination" and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI);
- (b) members who participate remotely in a sitting of the House are counted for the purpose of quorum;
- (c) any reference in the Standing Orders to the need for members to rise or to be in their place, as well as any reference to the chair, the table or the chamber shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the virtual nature of the proceedings;
- (d) the application of Standing Order 17 shall be suspended;
- (e) the application of Standing Order 62 shall be suspended for any member participating remotely;
- (f) in Standing Orders 26(2), 53(4), 56.1(3), and 56.2(2), the reference to the number of members required to rise be replaced with the word "five";
- (g) documents may be laid before the House or presented to the House electronically, provided that:
  - (i) documents deposited pursuant to Standing Order 32(1) shall be deposited with the Clerk of the House electronically,
  - (ii) during Routine Proceedings, members who participate remotely may table documents or present petitions or reports to the House electronically, provided that the documents are transmitted to the clerk prior to their intervention,
  - (iii) any petition presented pursuant to Standing Order 36(5) may be filed with the clerk electronically,
  - (iv) responses to questions on the Order Paper deposited pursuant to Standing Order 39 may be tabled electronically;

### Government Orders

- (h) should the House resolve itself in a committee of the whole, the Chair may preside from the Speaker's chair;
- (i) when a question that could lead to a recorded division is put to the House, in lieu of calling for the yeas and nays, one representative of a recognized party can rise to request a recorded vote or to indicate that the motion is adopted on division, provided that a request for a recorded division has precedence;
- (j) when a recorded division is requested in respect of a debatable motion, or a motion to concur in a bill at report stage on a Friday, including any division arising as a consequence of the application of Standing Order 78, but excluding any division in relation to motions relating to the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, pursuant to Standing Order 50, the budget debate, pursuant to Standing Order 84, or the business of supply occurring on the last supply day of a period, other than as provided in Standing Orders 81(17) and 81(18)(b), or arising as a consequence of an order made pursuant to Standing Order 57,
  - (i) before 2:00 p.m. on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, it shall stand deferred until the conclusion of Oral Questions at that day's sitting, or
  - (ii) after 2:00 p.m. on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, or at any time on a Friday, it shall stand deferred until the conclusion of Oral Questions at the next sitting day that is not a Friday,
 provided that any extension of time pursuant to Standing Order 45(7.1) shall not exceed 90 minutes;
- (k) if a motion for the previous question under Standing Order 61 is adopted without a recorded division, the vote on the main question may be deferred under the provisions of paragraph (j), however if a recorded division is requested on the previous question, and such division is deferred and the previous question subsequently adopted, the vote on the original question shall not be deferred;
- (l) when a recorded division, which would have ordinarily been deemed deferred to immediately before the time provided for Private Members' Business on a Wednesday governed by this order, is requested, the said division is deemed to have been deferred until the conclusion of Oral Questions on the same Wednesday;
- (m) for greater certainty, this order shall not limit the application of Standing Order 45(7);
- (n) when a recorded division is to be held, the bells to call in the members shall be sounded for not more than 30 minutes, except recorded divisions deferred to the conclusion of Oral Questions, when the bells shall be sounded for not more than 15 minutes;
- (o) the House Administration be directed to begin as soon as possible the onboarding process of all members for the remote voting application used in the 43rd Parliament, that this process be completed no later than Wednesday, December 8, 2021, and that any member who has not been onboarded during this period be required to vote either by videoconference or in person;
- (p) until the onboarding process is complete, recorded divisions shall take place in the usual way for members participating in person and by roll call for members participating by videoconference, provided that members participating by videoconference must have their camera on for the duration of the vote;
- (q) after the onboarding process outlined in paragraph (o) has been completed, the Speaker shall so inform the House and, starting no later than Thursday, December 9, 2021, recorded divisions shall take place in the usual way for members participating in person or by electronic means for all other members, provided that:
  - (i) electronic votes shall be cast from within Canada through the House of Commons electronic voting application using the member's House-managed mobile device and the member's personal House of Commons account, and that each vote requires visual identity validation,
  - (ii) the period allowed for voting electronically on a motion shall be 10 minutes, to begin after the Chair has read the motion to the House, and members voting electronically may change their vote until the electronic voting period has closed,
  - (iii) in the event a member casts their vote both in person and electronically, a vote cast in person takes precedence,
  - (iv) any member unable to vote via the electronic voting system during the 10-minute period due to technical issues may connect to the virtual sitting to indicate to the Chair their voting intention by the House videoconferencing system,

### Government Orders

- (v) following any concern, identified by the electronic voting system, which is raised by a House officer of a recognized party regarding the visual identity of a member using the electronic voting system, the member in question shall respond immediately to confirm their vote, either in person or by the House videoconferencing system, failing which the vote shall not be recorded,
- (vi) the whip of each recognized party have access to a tool to confirm the visual identity of each member voting by electronic means, and that the votes of members voting by electronic means be made available to the public during the period allowed for the vote,
- (vii) the process for votes in committees of the whole take place in a manner similar to the process for votes during sittings of the House with the exception of the requirement to call in the members,
- (viii) any question to be resolved by secret ballot be excluded from this order,
- (ix) during the taking of a recorded division on a private members' business, when the sponsor of the item is the first to vote and present at the beginning of the vote, the member be called first, whether participating in person or by videoconference;
- (r) during meetings of standing, standing joint, special and legislative committees and the Liaison Committee, as well as their subcommittees, where applicable, members may participate either in person or by videoconference, provided that members participating in person do so in accordance with the Board of Internal Economy's decision of Tuesday, October 19, 2021, regarding vaccination against COVID-19, and that reasons for medical exemptions follow the guidance from the Ontario Ministry of Health document entitled "Medical Exemptions to COVID-19 Vaccination" and the NACI, and witnesses shall participate remotely, provided that priority use of House resources for meetings shall be established by an agreement of the whips and, for virtual or hybrid meetings, the following provisions shall apply:
- (i) members who participate remotely shall be counted for the purpose of quorum,
  - (ii) except for those decided unanimously or on division, all questions shall be decided by a recorded vote,
  - (iii) when more than one motion is proposed for the election of a chair or a vice-chair of a committee, any motion received after the initial one shall be taken as a notice of motion and such motions shall be put to the committee seriatim until one is adopted,
  - (iv) public proceedings shall be made available to the public via the House of Commons website,
  - (v) in camera proceedings may be conducted in a manner that takes into account the potential risks to confidentiality inherent in meetings with remote participants,
  - (vi) notices of membership substitutions pursuant to Standing Order 114(2) and requests pursuant to Standing Order 106(4) may be filed with the clerk of each committee by email;
- (s) until Friday, December 10, 2021:
- (i) Standing Order 81(5) be replaced with the following: "Supplementary estimates shall be deemed referred to a committee of the whole House immediately after they are presented in the House. A committee of the whole shall consider and shall report, or shall be deemed to have reported, the same back to the House not later than one sitting day before the final sitting or the last allotted day in the current period. On a day appointed by a minister of the Crown, consideration of the supplementary estimates shall be taken up by a committee of the whole at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment, for a period of time not exceeding four hours. During the time provided for the consideration of estimates, no member shall be recognized for more than 15 minutes at a time and the member shall not speak in debate for more than 10 minutes during that period. The 15 minutes may be used both for debate and for posing questions to the minister of the Crown or a parliamentary secretary acting on behalf of the minister. When the member is recognized, he or she shall indicate how the 15 minutes is to be apportioned. At the conclusion of the time provided for the consideration of the business pursuant to this section, the committee shall rise, the estimates shall be deemed reported and the House shall immediately adjourn to the next sitting day.",
  - (ii) Standing Order 81(14)(a) be amended by replacing the words "to restore or reinstate any item in the estimates" with the following: "twenty-four hours' written notice shall be given to restore or reinstate any item in the estimates",

(iii) Standing Order 54(1) be amended by adding the following: "Notice respecting a motion to restore or reinstate any item in the Supplementary Estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, shall be laid on the table, or filed with the clerk, within four hours after the completion of consideration of said supplementary estimates in committee of the whole and be printed in the Notice Paper of that day."

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in this House, particularly on this issue.

I harken back to March of 2020, as the pandemic became a reality for all of us and we tried to grapple with how this place was going to work. I really want to take a moment to thank the opposition House leader and the opposition whips from the Conservatives, from the NDP and from the Bloc Québécois, as we all worked very effectively. We were dealing with an extraordinarily challenging time, and we had to determine how we were going to continue to do the business of the nation.

I have to also thank the House administration for the incredible work it did as we worked and talked together to build a system that would allow us to continue as members of Parliament and to retain our privilege and be able to vote and debate and do the things we do here that are so important in service of our constituents and all Canadians.

As I stand here, of course I also have to harken back to my first time in the House as a member of Parliament. Every member of Parliament takes enormous pride in being able to stand in their place on behalf of their constituents. The first time they enter this chamber, they feel that sense of awe and humility at getting to do that on behalf of the people they live with, their home communities. It is pretty remarkable.

It is not a light thing to be away from this place, but of course we were in a global pandemic.

● (1555)

[Translation]

We created a hybrid system that worked very well, thanks to the House administration. All members were able to participate in debates and motions. Members could participate virtually during question period, and ministers could answer questions. The committees were able to sit.

We were able to do our jobs and address Canadians' top priorities. We created a new voting system and a new system for debate. We used new technology. It was a remarkable time, a time of transformation.

[English]

That is where we are today, with a system that worked and served us well, but we are not out of this pandemic. This pandemic, which has claimed 30,000 Canadian lives and affected more than five million Canadians across the country, is real. We do not know how it will end. All we know is that we continue to be within it.

*Government Orders*

We hit an incredible milestone as a nation, with 90% of eligible Canadians getting their first shot and over 86% of eligible Canadians getting their second shot. All Canadians can take great pride in that, and we in the chamber can take great pride in the way we worked with one another to advocate for vaccines being the only path out of this terrible pandemic, the only path to save lives and the only path to make sure that the most vulnerable do not end up in ICUs or, even worse, in morgues.

As we continue to push that number higher, any debate, frankly, that calls into question the efficacy or the importance of vaccines is incredibly disappointing. It is disappointing because it lends credence to the conspiracy theories and junk science that we see on the Internet that is making people fearful of doing the right thing to protect themselves and their families.

Some people have compared this place to a sports arena or a restaurant and asked why, if they can go to a sports game, members of Parliament cannot be in Parliament. Let us talk about that for a second and what the distinctions are. If I were to go to a sports game, I would not fly across the country. In fact, it would be equivalent to having a sports game where every participant viewing said sports game came from a different corner of the country.

Also, they do not spend three hours watching a game. No. They will spend 12- and 13-hour days inside that facility. The individuals who go to that sporting game would have a choice, if they were immunocompromised, on whether they would enter the facility. Members of Parliament have no such choice, because without a hybrid system they have no way to exercise their privilege and no way to represent their constituents.

Unlike a voluntary sporting match, where people can choose as vaccinated individuals whether they want to make that choice based on their own health, no such choice exists for members of Parliament. I do not think it is at all acceptable that members of Parliament should have to choose between their health and representing their constituents, particularly when we have already demonstrated a system that avoids that very problem now, in the midst of a pandemic that is continuing to claim lives.

I also do not want to relitigate this matter. With all due respect to everybody involved, we have talked about this too much. We have had to shut down the House entirely at one point in time, and at various points in time we ate up all kinds of time with the House that could have been used on other priorities, to debate having the flexibility of this system.

With all due respect to the members who are opposing this, I ask what they will do if in February or March there is a new variant or if there is a surge in cases and it is no longer possible. Do they honestly propose that we should debate this again, when we already have a system in place that is effective? I do not think that is a good use of this time, the precious time that we have as members of Parliament to answer the call of Canadians and their priorities.

The other thing that concerns me is that it would give members a terrible choice when they may be feeling a little under the weather or wondering whether they should come in. Do they miss that important vote and have to answer to their constituents? Do they skip that debate because they are feeling a little ill that day, or do they

risk it and come in? If they risk it and come in, what is the impact on others' health?

In the midst of all this debate, underscoring it is something very concerning, which is that there are a few things we do not know, even being here in the chamber today. I do not know how many members are unvaccinated within the Conservative Party. They have not provided that number. We know that a member within the Conservative Party tested positive for COVID-19 just last week. We know as well that there are one, two, three, four, five, six, seven or I do not know how many MPs in the Conservative Party who are unvaccinated and who would have been in contact with that member of Parliament.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. I am happy to talk outside the chamber if people have questions, or they are going to have a moment in a second to ask questions. We do not know whether they were in contact with that member. Let us be clear on what the public health rules are when someone is in contact with somebody with COVID-19 and they are unvaccinated. They are to go into isolation and they are to do so for the protection of those around them.

I repeat that I know for a fact that there are members of Parliament who are in immunocompromised situations. We potentially have an unvaccinated member of Parliament entering this chamber who has had direct contact with somebody with COVID-19, and we do not know if they have been in this chamber under that circumstance, in violation of public health. That is deeply concerning.

What is even more confusing about that position is that there is a solution for the member or members who are unvaccinated. There is a solution for the member who tested positive for COVID-19. It is hybrid, but in blocking hybrid, the Conservatives are effectively saying they want to remove the ability of that member to represent their constituents. They effectively want to disenfranchise their own members' ability to serve their constituents. That is not acceptable.

With respect to exemptions, because we do not know how many exemptions have been sought, this motion addresses them. Let us be very clear. The chief medical officer of health and the documents that come from the Ontario Ministry of Health, which is the jurisdiction we are in, include a clear document entitled "Medical Exemptions to COVID-19 Vaccination". It clearly lays out what is and what is not acceptable in terms of exemption. That should constitute roughly one in 100,000 individuals.

With a sample size of 119, which is the size of the Conservative caucus, if one in 100,000 results in one, those are some pretty unlucky numbers. If it is three Conservative members who have it, that is odds of one in 40. If a Canadian is in a workplace with a vaccine mandate, there is a one in 100,000 chance. For a Conservative, it is one in 40.

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• (1600)

I do not buy that math. With all due respect, it stretches the boundaries of what is mathematically possible. In fact, I tried to take a look at what would be a statistical equivalent of that kind of math, and I am simply unable to find it on this earth.

This is not only a place where we have to worry about the privileges or the health of members. As I stand here and as I look at you, Mr. Speaker, I see pages who are working for us. I see journalists, and I see people within the House administration. I know that down these corridors walk staff who are diligently trying to serve this place and serve our democracy.

When I see those people, I wonder to myself, though sometimes I do not have to wonder because they tell me, how safe they feel. Is that fair? Is it fair that people are entering their workplace and are being left with huge questions about whether basic public health practices are being carried through?

Even if we say that we put our name on a ballot, and even if we say that as a result of putting our name on that ballot we accept a greater risk, do we also say that those who would serve us in this place, whose names never went on a ballot and who never made that choice, should face this kind of risk? Can we look them in the eye and tell them that they must face a higher public safety risk simply because people do not want to use a system that worked, or people do not want to use a system that was entirely effective?

Another thing that concerns me is that I have made offers. I have asked what needs to be changed and what we need to do so we can continue to follow public health guidelines, have this flexibility and have some modicum of social distancing, and so we can take advantage of the fact that people who are in a vulnerable health situation or who are immunocompromised could work at distance. I asked for them to give me something and to work with me, but there was nothing. There was no interest. It was too bad for every single person here in the middle of a pandemic, regardless of their health situation. I do not think that is acceptable.

We have on the other side an old, outdated and, dare I say, dangerous view of what has to happen. Damn the torpedoes and damn the consequences. Forget the technology available or the public health circumstance. Let us shove everybody in here. I do not want to think about what the consequences of that kind of thinking could lead to. It is not right. It is not right in this workplace, and it is not right in any workplace.

Members could, with these hybrid provisions and this motion, represent their constituents. They could hold the government to account. They could vote, debate and participate in committee, and they could do it all safely. With this motion and the suspension of Standing Order 17, they could also speak freely in all sorts of different places in this space so we can have some kind of social distancing in here, something else that is not now allowed. The production of documents would also be allowed to be done electronically. In short, the motion allows for the safe extension of a member's full and entire privilege in a time of a pandemic. It allows us to do the business of Canadians safely.

There are many debates that we have here where the science and the evidence leave some grey areas in between. I will finish on this

note: There is no grey area of science here. There is no area of ambiguity in terms of the imperative action we need to take to protect not only members but also the people who work here.

I am saddened that this has come to debate. I wish that, like other matters that we dealt with so effectively, we could have reached unanimous consent, but here we are. Let us at least dispose of this quickly so we can get back to the business of this place.

• (1605)

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Madam Speaker, this is my first time speaking in the House.

It is a great honour, although it comes to me with a very heavy heart having stood on the front lines of fighting the COVID pandemic for the last 21 months. I find it very difficult when the hon. member across the aisle quotes chapter and verse the guidelines of public health when yesterday he made it very clear that those who were fully vaccinated and who were COVID positive could return to work.

Why can we all not return to work in person?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, I welcome the member for Cumberland—Colchester to this chamber. I look forward to engaging him in many debates, and I appreciate his comments here.

Of course, this is the point with a hybrid. If the member is comfortable and confident working here fully vaccinated, the member can do so. I would just ask him these questions: What would he say to members who have health concerns or who are immunocompromised about forcing them into this chamber shoulder to shoulder? Why is he opposed to the idea of having hybrid provisions that would allow members to make the choice to ensure they can operate safely?

Would he not agree that other workplaces with vaccine mandates have adapted and changed to allow remote work to take place, particularly during a public health crisis? Does he not think those are appropriate? Does he think all workplaces should force employees to be in their seats, regardless if there are other tools to work remotely? At what point does he think we should go back to hybrid measures? At what point would this pandemic reach a threshold of danger that he would find hybrid measures acceptable? If we have a new variant, or if the case counts double, triple or quadruple, would he have us relitigate this in March? Would he have us come back here in February and spend more House time negotiating this? This makes no sense to me.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ):** Madam Speaker, first, I would like to salute my colleague and congratulate him on his appointment as House leader.



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In a previous life, as a member of the House, I had the opportunity to work very closely with him on a non-partisan bill to lower the legal voting age to 16. I know that my colleague can work collegially with members of all political parties in the House because I had the opportunity to have that experience with him.

That said, there is one thing that I am very concerned about in the proposal that his government has put forward today. We on this side of the House all saw the Liberal government take advantage of this hybrid parliament provision and use it to literally run away and leave the House. We saw very few Liberals in the House. The ministers were in their offices here on Parliament Hill, claiming that they wanted to follow the Quebec and Ontario health guidelines and not cross regional borders. However, they were here in their offices and answering our questions virtually.

Is it still the government's plan to use this motion as a way to hide in their offices?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague. He is absolutely right; we have worked together in a spirit of co-operation, and I hope that we can continue to do so.

For me, the situation was very different then. During the worst of the pandemic, it was absolutely necessary to have more people outside the House working virtually. Without a doubt, the ministers were available and the committees continued their work. The House of Commons worked really effectively.

Now the situation is less serious. Therefore there may be more people present, but not everyone.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is a real pleasure to see you back in the chair. Congratulations on your selection as Assistant Deputy Speaker.

I appreciate the comments made by my colleague the government House leader. Certainly, in this corner of the House, the New Democrats have said all along that it is important to continue to use the hybrid tools for all the reasons the government House leader has set out.

As he well knows, the difficulty has been that in the past we have seen the government basically represented by the member for Kingston and the Islands alone. That is not acceptable for accountability and transparency. Could the government House leader be very clear, on the record, that ministers will be present in the House to answer questions as we move forward in a hybrid Parliament and that they will no longer be upstairs in this building on Zoom, but will be in the House to respond to questions from members of Parliament?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, I was remiss, because there was a changing of the Chair, to not congratulate you. I send sincere congratulations from the government. I look forward to working with you.

I thank the NDP House leader very much for his comments. Obviously, despite the incredible effort of the member for Kingston and the Islands, no one wants a situation where we only have one member here. As I said in French, and I appreciate people who tolerate my French, the reality is that this is an evolving situation.

What we had previously was a situation that was much more severe than the one we are in now. We had to adjust to that.

In the circumstance we are in right now, we have every intention of making sure that there is a full presence from cabinet and that cabinet ministers are present in this place and available to take questions so we could have that dialogue. I spent a long time in opposition. I would say I spent longer in opposition than I wanted to be there. I would also say that I do not want to return there. Having said that, it is extremely important for the opposition to have the ability to challenge the government, to be able to do that virtually when things are very dangerous and scary, and to do that in person when we are in an increased situation of security as we are today.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, before I speak for the first time in the House in this 44th Parliament, I would obviously like to thank my constituents and congratulate all the members. I also congratulate you, Madam Speaker, along with the new members. To them I say welcome, because this is the experience of a lifetime.

My question is for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. Over his career, which began in 2004, has he ever seen a situation where the members were forced to leave the House because of a health crisis? Has there ever been a situation where the tools and the means were created to allow the members to continue their work, whether it is representing their constituents in the House of Commons and in committees or asking questions to ensure that the government remains accountable to Canadians?

Why does the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons think that it is important to maintain this flexibility, should a health crisis arise again?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and friend for his excellent question.

Indeed, this is the first time in the history of Canada and the history of Parliament that we have faced a situation like this one. The pandemic has caused major upheaval, not only in the House of Commons, but across the country and around the world.

It is essential that we remain flexible in this situation and that we adopt a system that works well in a health crisis. We need to maintain such measures, as well as a hybrid system.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am delighted to see you here in the Speaker's chair and to be together again in a normal House. That is what Canadians want to see.

*Government Orders*

On Monday, all 338 members were present here in the House of Commons. On Tuesday, all of the members were in the House of Commons. Today, all of the members are in the House of Commons. We had our first question period with the Prime Minister and his members, the members of the official opposition party, the second opposition party and the third opposition party, and the independent members. We had a so-called normal day in a normal Parliament.

As long as this motion is not adopted, Parliament will run normally. That is why we seriously believe that this is not the right motion. On Monday, Tuesday, today and most probably tomorrow and later on, we proved that Parliament works in its usual form, and that is what we want.

First off, this is the sixth time in this Parliament that I have had the privilege of standing in the House. I would like to sincerely thank the people who made it possible for me to enjoy the privilege of once again being here today among my colleagues in the House as the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

This is the third time that the people in my community have put their trust in me to represent them in the House of Commons. It was the sixth time that I had the pleasure and the honour of being elected, either to the National Assembly or to the House of Commons. Being elected six times in 13 years is an honour and an extraordinary tribute that we must accept with all due humility.

Basic math tells us six elections in a little less than 13 years comes out to one election every 25 months. I admit that I am becoming pretty experienced. I can think of another adjective, but for now I will use the term “experienced”. I would like to thank the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent from the bottom of my heart for placing their trust in me again. I would like to congratulate all those who ran in every riding in Canada, especially my worthy opponents in Louis-Saint-Laurent, because the campaign lived up to all Canadians' expectations. I would like to thank them and congratulate them.

I would also like to thank and acknowledge my leader, the hon. member for Durham and leader of the official opposition, for his renewed trust in appointing me to the very important role of House leader, which comes with significant responsibility. I very humbly accepted his offer to be House leader of the official opposition for the second time. I was pleased to serve with the leader in this position last year. Since I have been again confirmed, I would again like to thank the hon. member for Durham and leader of the official opposition.

I would also like to give a shout-out to my counterparts across the aisle, because it is all of us, all the House leaders, who ensure the smooth operation of Parliament with the support and collaboration of our members. I would like to acknowledge my ministerial counterpart, whom I obviously knew by reputation. I have been here for six years, so I have seen him proudly defend his government, as we all, of course, proudly defend our political positions. I know that he was somewhat embarrassed earlier to speak in French, saying that he appreciated the people listening to him. I can assure him of one thing: his French is impeccable and inspiring. I offer my sincere congratulations. I may have less flattering things to say about him later on, but I recognize that the hon. member, who has

several years' experience, will be a tough opponent. I am sure of it, but so much the better. That is the beauty of democracy.

I would also like to give a shout-out to his predecessor, the hon. member for Honoré-Mercier, with whom I have had my fair share of discussions in the context of political debates, television debates and my first campaign in 2015, but with whom I had a good and honest working relationship when he was House leader. On behalf of all Canadians and this country, I wish him the best in the new ministerial responsibilities entrusted to him by the hon. member for his neighbouring riding of Papineau, the Prime Minister of Canada.

I would like to acknowledge my old colleague from the National Assembly, the House leader of the second opposition party, the Bloc Québécois. I apologize if I had difficulty identifying the individual in question, but I would like to say hello to my colleague, with whom we have always had a good working relationship that has benefited all of Canada and Quebec. That is how it should be. We have work to do and we do it properly.

● (1620)

I would also like to applaud my NDP counterpart, whose French is more than inspiring; it is exemplary. It is also good evidence that people can indeed learn a second language. I do not mean a true “second” language, because each official language is as important as the other. I am referring to the second language he learned later in life. I just wanted to point out that the House leader of the NDP has shown on numerous occasions just how good his French is.

We often agree to disagree. It is true that, on the political spectrum, we in the Conservative Party are very different from NDP members, but that is as it should be. That is the beauty of the parliamentary dynamic that we must all fight to preserve here in the House.

Why are we assembled here, and why are we debating the motion?

[English]

In the last two years, our country and those around the world have had to address the tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic. Let me remind members that about 20 months ago, when the first signs of the COVID pandemic arose around the world, we were very cautious. Everybody was looking at it. We were not quite sure how to address it in March when everything happened in our country.

I want to pay my respect to all civil servants who worked tirelessly, many times 24 hours a day, to ensure we could have a hybrid Parliament. Why? Because at that time, it was a real tragedy. There was a pandemic in Canada, from coast to coast, and all around the world. Yes, in a very excessive situation, we needed real, true solutions.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

That is why all the parties worked shoulder to shoulder and did their part. We closed ranks to create this hybrid parliament. If I may, I would like to salute and thank, as I did a bit earlier, the House of Commons staff, whose extraordinary work over a few days, or perhaps a few weeks, helped us create a virtual parliament and allowed Canada's parliamentary democracy to carry on despite the serious crisis.

I would also like to thank the individual—whom unfortunately I cannot name—who used to hold this position in our caucus. I can say that I humbly agreed to succeed her and am very proud to do so. She and others worked very hard to respond to the pandemic and meet health requirements by creating a virtual parliament.

Two years ago, we saw everyone working together. However, I must say that, about 11 months ago, when Parliament resumed in January, the government unfortunately decided to politicize the House of Commons and teach everyone a lesson.

I want to be very honest and sincere. We still have not seen more than one government member in the House. Here I would like to sincerely commend the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, whose perpetual presence in this chamber has ensured government authority in the House. I asked him how it was that he was the only one here, but I will let him answer the question himself because I would not want to reveal any of his secrets—I am saying this with a smile on my face.

[*English*]

I want to pay my respects to my colleague from Kingston and the Islands, who served as the only soldier of the Liberal government in the House of Commons. It is a personal achievement, but also a shameful achievement of the government. Why? Yes, we saw one member attend in the House on a daily basis, but all the others spent their time in their ridings, in their houses and also in their offices, which were not far from the House.

[*Translation*]

That is why I want to strongly condemn the attitude of the government party in the first six months of 2021.

We saw members and ministers perform their duties while strictly following the rules imposed on them by the Prime Minister and their party, namely staying at home, not crossing any borders and working from home, their department office or their constituency office. They were not to budge from there, period.

I want to point out that, indeed, ministers have acted according to these rules imposed by their own party. I want to point out, among others, the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, who headed two very important departments during that period: the Department of Transport and the Department of Foreign Affairs. I do not remember seeing the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount anywhere but in his house. I say that with a smile because we recognized the pictures behind him of his children. For several days there was even a ladder leaning on the wall behind him. A little more and I would text him to ask if he would put the ladder away at some point. I say this with a smile because we have

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all experienced similar situations. He respected the rules. Not all parliamentarians have respected the rules they have imposed on themselves.

Among others, I must unfortunately point out, the one whose supreme duty is to ensure law and order in this country, that is, the Minister of Justice, has done as he pleased. The Minister of Justice is the member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, in Quebec. We saw him here in the House, often in his ministerial office, which is in Ontario. That means that the minister was crossing the border while many members and ministers, including my colleague at the time, the member for Honoré-Mercier—

• (1630)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands on a point of order.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, I regret my first time to rise in the House is on a point of order. I do not believe it is appropriate or in order to talk about the presence of a member in the House, whether it is in the past or currently. He is a very experienced member and would know that. He has continuously been referring to the fact members were not physically in the House.

As we know by the rules that were set out during the last Parliament, whether one was virtual or physically in the House, one was considered to be present. The member is completely disregarding that rule.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I appreciate the intervention by the member.

[*Translation*]

I will remind the hon. member, who has a lot of experience, that no one should say who is or was in the House or who is not or was not here. I will leave it at that.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent may continue.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Madam Speaker, I thought I missed the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands. Now, I am not sure I miss him that much anymore.

I understand that we are treading on thin ice here with this subject. I do have grey hair and experience, and I like that, but the reality is that the intervention by my colleague from Kingston and the Islands illustrates in all its ugliness the reality of what this party has done in the first six months of 2021. That is why we are having this debate today. That is also why I will beat around the bush a little bit to say exactly what I said earlier.

The extension of the House is indeed the hybrid Parliament, regardless of where the person is, but we still have physical realities. If a minister happens to be exactly 1,009 feet from the House of Commons because he or she is in a ministerial office, that is indeed an extension of the House. I recognize that.

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However, I also acknowledge that, physically speaking, he is barely 1,000 feet from his seat here in the House. He could very well have come, especially since he comes across many people on his way to the office and back to the car, and then he crosses the border only to cross it again in the morning.

That is the exact opposite of what those who are lecturing us were hoping to achieve, but that is what was going on. Worse still, press conferences were held here in the basement of the House of Commons. They came to the building to give press conferences, but refused to come here to the House, to their parliamentary office, where their job is to answer questions.

That is why we are very suspicious of the government when it says that its members and ministers will be there to answer questions. Unfortunately, what we saw was a party that said one thing and did the opposite, and we are very suspicious of the government's approach and its desire to return to a hybrid Parliament. We have shown without a shadow of a doubt in the past three days that regular parliamentary sessions can be held properly and that things work in a regular Parliament.

What can we say about the election?

I heard my counterpart mention earlier how important it was to protect people's health and especially that of those who fly across the country.

Let us consider the facts. The Prime Minister voted in favour of a motion not to hold an election during the pandemic. One Wednesday in August, just a few short months ago, Dr. Tam, chief public health officer of Canada, declared that Canada was officially entering the fourth wave of the pandemic. The following Sunday, the Prime Minister went to Rideau Hall to dissolve Parliament and trigger an election. Despite the fact that they did this in the middle of the fourth wave of the pandemic, they have the gall to lecture us today.

What happened during the election campaign?

All of the parties ran hybrid campaigns. Twice a week, our leader held hybrid gatherings. The Bloc Québécois and the NDP did the same, and I assume the same is true of the Green Party. That is not what the Liberals did, however. On the contrary, the Prime Minister flew across the country in his plane. In a mere 50 hours, he flew across the country twice. He left Toronto for Vancouver, then flew to the Atlantic provinces and back to British Columbia.

The Prime Minister did all this in barely 50 hours. Today, the Liberals are lecturing us. They are telling us to be careful, not to fly. They mentioned that people who fly will cross the country, but that is exactly what they did for an entire month in the middle of a pandemic.

Need I remind the House that there was a rally of Liberal Party supporters in Hamilton? Hamilton is a beautiful city, by the way, and the birthplace of Tim Hortons restaurants. How many supporters were in the room again?

There were 400. I do not have a problem with partisan rallies, but I certainly have a big problem with being lectured by people who flout public health rules and then act holier-than-thou and tell us to follow the rules. The government party did not do what they were

supposed to during the election campaign when it came to health rules.

● (1635)

Earlier I greeted my opponents in Louis-Saint-Laurent. I would also like to greet my Liberal opponent in my riding, although I do want to point out that when the Prime Minister came to the Quebec City area to make announcements and play politics, which is perfectly legitimate during an election campaign—he was quite welcome in Quebec City, as everyone is—my Liberal opponent had his picture taken with his leader. This happens all the time. I did not get out a ruler to measure how far apart they were, but they were pretty close. Neither of them wore a mask. However, the rules state that when people are close together, one or both must wear a mask. Seeing people say one thing and do the opposite sometimes makes the public cynical about politics.

At the beginning of 2021, the government sought to portray itself as a paragon of virtue when it said that it would keep the number of individuals in the House to the bare minimum and that people would work from home, in the spirit of extending the House of Commons. We recognize that.

However, some senior ministers did the opposite. They attended from their ministerial suite instead of being here in the House. I recognize that their offices are an extension of the House of Commons, but let us also recognize that they were not physically present in the chamber. That goes against the principle of the thing, particularly because, in some cases, some ministers, like the Minister of Justice, barely set foot in the chamber. They crossed plenty of borders and visited plenty of government offices and buildings and could very well have come to the House. What is worse, they held meetings in the basement of the House of Commons, but they did not want to come here, 10 feet up, to answer questions. That is why we want to hold sittings in person.

This government has been disappointing us for over a year, whether it was during the early months of 2021 or during the election campaign. After the election, we had to wait 63 days before we were able to come back here. Two whole months went by when, in the end, the House looks pretty much the same as it did before. The election campaign cost over \$600 million and the only thing that came out of it was a cabinet shuffle. For \$600 million, it is likely the most costly cabinet shuffle in the history of Canada. That is typical of this government.

I found it interesting to hear what my Liberal counterpart said earlier.

[*English*]

They say that we have to use the precious time we have in the House of Commons correctly and that we should adopt this on unanimous consent. That is fine. I do understand that sometimes we can agree, obviously, on some issues, but we can also disagree on those issues. Democracy is all about that.

I think members will recognize that two parties are working hand in hand on this motion and another two parties are not supportive of the motion. Democracy is all about that. We shall preserve that democracy. We shall preserve the fact that we can say that we agree to disagree. That is part of the debate. This is why we are here. This is why our people voted for us. This is why we are here as representatives of the people in our ridings, and we shall always keep in mind that we are here for Canadians and for Canada.

If we have debate, we have to keep it that way. We have to be respectful of those who do not share our point of view and address some aspect of that with good, frank, strong arguments instead of saying something bad about the opponent.

[*Translation*]

I said earlier that I have a lot of respect for the member opposite, but I was extremely disappointed in what he said during his scrum on Monday.

I have no problem with an opponent attacking us. There are 1,000 right ways to attack an adversary. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons went about it the wrong way. That happens to us all. However, if we are waging political battle, let us keep it in the political arena and not fight that battle at the expense of other people.

The government House leader cast aspersions not only on the work of the Conservatives and anyone who is against him, but also on the work of the Sergeant-at-Arms. He explicitly cast doubt on the integrity of the Sergeant-at-Arms's judgment when the latter decreed that members could be granted exemptions in certain cases.

Neither the Liberal Party, nor the Conservative Party, nor the Bloc, nor the NDP nor the Green Party has the right to grant exemptions. Exemptions are granted and recognized by the House of Commons following consultation with medical experts. I know what I am talking about, and I will talk about what happened with us shortly.

● (1640)

However, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said during a press conference that he thought it was very curious that, mathematically speaking, so many people got exemptions. It is sad, because he was not actually attacking the Conservatives. He was attacking the Sergeant-at-Arms, whose sacred duty is to abide by the rules established by the House of Commons.

Let us talk about those rules. At first, there was no issue with exemptions. Now that a few Conservatives have an exemption, that no longer works. Need I remind colleagues that someone in the Liberal government had an exemption at one point? The Prime Minister was proud to say that the person had finally seen the light and no longer had an exemption. That is his right. I do not have a problem with that, but I do have a problem with people questioning exemptions now, when they themselves have had them in their party. At the risk of repeating myself, a person who is two-faced has twice as many cheeks to slap. That is what we are seeing right now. That is why we need to avoid any partisan debate when it comes to public health and people's health.

### *Government Orders*

Unfortunately, those people chose to engage in partisan politics, raking the Sergeant-at-Arms over the coals instead of acting with honour and dignity. I want to make a point of saying so and strongly condemning them for this attitude. Yesterday, we raised a question of privilege regarding the management of the Board of Internal Economy and the behaviour of the Clerk of the House of Commons, which is part of the public debate, as we saw in a CBC news report. I am still waiting for the French version of that report. I have not found it. Who knows if one will ever be found. If anyone finds it, please send it to me, but it seems that it was not translated. For the record, the CBC is not a rag. The report included evidence, witness accounts, documents and all that. I will not get into the details, but the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons defended an employee of the House tooth and nail. That is fine, but 24 hours earlier he was raking the Sergeant-at-Arms over the coals. They say one thing and do another when it suits them. It is a shame to see the attitude of the current government House leader. I must say that I have a great deal of respect for him, but politicizing public health in this case is quite sad.

Earlier, he was talking about how rules must be followed, and that is what we are doing. The Conservatives have always followed the rules established and managed by the House of Commons, not by political parties. That is why we are very proud to say that all of our members are double-vaccinated or obtained the exemption provided by the House of Commons, which consulted experts and not a political party. All of the measures that were implemented have been followed. I want to point out that our colleague, the member for Beauce, had COVID-19, even though he was double-vaccinated. No one is immune. Double vaccination is the best way, in combination with other methods, to significantly reduce the spread of COVID-19, but no one is immune.

In Quebec City, a member of the official opposition at the Quebec National Assembly got COVID-19, even though he was double-vaccinated. The Montreal Canadiens' general manager was double-vaccinated but still got COVID-19. No one is fully immune.

We are in favour of vaccination and double vaccination. Let us not forget the many debates in this House when we fought tooth and nail for access to vaccines. We still think they are important. Members will recall that we asked dozens of questions after we noticed that this government had put all its eggs in the same basket, that of CanSino Biologics, which ended up dropping Canada in July. Unfortunately, this resulted in a delay that had serious consequences for Canada, which eventually pursued other manufacturers.

It was around this time a year ago that we were asking dozens of questions about the importance of having access to vaccines, and we should remember what happened. After Canada received tens of thousands of doses of vaccine, the government made a big show of it, saying that vaccines were here for Canadians right before Christmas and that everything was hunky-dory.

*Government Orders*

• (1645)

I even remember a commentator in *La Presse* saying how mean we were being, because everything was fine and everything was going great. He even mocked us by saying that the only question the Conservatives did not ask was what colour the vaccine delivery person's hat was.

Unfortunately, what happened in January and February? We went through a 10-day void. For 10 days, Canada did not receive a single dose of vaccine. This made the third wave worse. It was much more severe in Canada than anywhere else because of that 10-day gap in January and February. Funnily enough, nobody was talking about the colour of the hat anymore, like we had read in *La Presse*.

We did our job and urged everyone to get fully vaccinated. Personally, I got both my shots, and each time, I put my smiling face on Twitter, Facebook and social media, as did many of my colleagues, to encourage people to get vaccinated. I received a few comments that were rather critical, to put it nicely. It was not pleasant to read those comments, but it was the right thing to do and the right thing to say.

We always follow the rules. That is why tomorrow, at eight o'clock, I will be getting a second test to find out whether I have COVID-19. One of our colleagues had COVID at a time when we were in close proximity to him, so everyone who was around him during the period defined by the public health rules had to get a first test. I will be getting my second test tomorrow, as will many of my colleagues.

We are not reinventing the wheel. All we are doing is following the rules. Just a few hours ago, I was in contact with a nurse who works for the House of Commons, not for the Conservative Party or the Liberal Party, but for the House of Commons. That is how it should be. We trust the House of Commons to act in accordance with the rules that have been set out. That is why we need to be very careful when we say that.

I would like to remind the House of the mathematical equation that my counterpart mentioned. According to science, only one in 100,000 people can get an exemption. In his opinion, it does not make sense for the Conservatives to have so many exemptions. He said that it does not fit with the mathematical equation because the odds for the Conservatives are one in 40, or something like that.

How many Liberals have been vaccinated? I ask because for months, there was one person on their side who had an exemption. I do not have a problem with that, but they seem to have a problem with people who have exemptions. Did they have a problem when their member had an exemption? No, but they do have a problem when it comes to Conservatives who have an exemption. The problem lies in politicizing a public health issue for partisan purposes.

Have we heard any Conservative members denounce, question or voice any suspicions about a Liberal with an exemption? No. Have we heard anyone from the Bloc Québécois rant and rave because someone from the Liberal Party had an exemption? No. Have we had someone from the NDP stand up and say that it did not make sense that someone from the Liberal Party had an exemption? No. Even the Green Party did not do that.

Why are the Liberals acting holier-than-thou today because Conservative members were given exemptions by the House of Commons, which consulted its experts? They were okay with it when there was only one, but not anymore. How sad. This is not the way to tackle the issue of COVID-19 and find common ground.

[*English*]

I just want to be clear, because it is very important for us to stay focused on why we are here. We have been elected by our people. We have been sitting here in this House, on Monday, Tuesday, today and we will be here tomorrow too, if this motion is not adopted, with a normally sitting House, with a full crowd in the House. Just a few hours ago, we saw a very interesting, feisty question period with a full crowd here in the House. That was quite good.

That is what politics is all about. That is what democracy is all about. That is what parliamentary life is all about. It is about being here in this House, fighting for our principles, asking the tough questions and listening to the answers. That is what politics is all about.

Now the Liberals want to see us get back to a virtual Parliament. They want to ask what we would do if we continue and there is a huge crisis. If there is a huge crisis, we would do exactly the same thing we did two years ago. We would address it correctly.

• (1650)

This is not the case now, and we have proven that conscientiously and in a very good manner over the last three days. Yes, we can have a full House sitting and achieve great things.

We have to hold the government to account. We saw, at the beginning of 2021, that so many fewer members were here in the House. Yes, they were technically in the House because we had a virtual Parliament, we know that, even if they were in their offices a few yards away from the House of Commons instead of being in the House.

This is why we need better than that.

[*Translation*]

We have proven that we are capable of having a full House sitting, with vigorous debates, as we did earlier in question period. Members aimed questions directly at the government, asking what the government is up to. The Prime Minister responded. That is democracy. We must preserve that, and that is why we oppose the motion.

I would like to table the following amendment:

That the motion be amended as follows:

(a) in subparagraph (s)(i) by replacing the words "a day" with the words "two days", by adding after the words "not exceeding four hours" the following: "each day", and by adding after the words "consideration of the business" the following: "on the second appointed day"; and

(b) in subparagraph (s)(iii) by deleting all the words after “adding the following” and substituting the following “Notices to oppose an item and respecting a motion to restore or reinstate any item in the Supplementary Estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, shall be laid on the table, or filed with the clerk, within four hours after the completion of consideration of said supplementary estimates in committee of the whole and be printed in the Notice Paper of that day, provided that no more than five opposed items shall be selected by the Speaker and that the remaining notices of opposed items in the said supplementary estimates, if any, shall be deemed withdrawn.”.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The amendment is in order.

• (1655)

[English]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the opposition House leader's comments were very kind and I enjoyed our time together as well. He kept talking about the fact that everything is back to normal. He talked about Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and everything being back to normal, but indeed everything is not back to normal.

The member for Beauce cannot be here as a result of testing positive. As a matter of fact, the member himself just admitted he is continually getting retested to make sure he has not contracted COVID-19, and if he does, presumably he will not be able to come back in this House.

Does the member not recognize that by bringing in a hybrid Parliament he, if that was to happen, and the member for Beauce would be able to continue to participate in this House and the proceedings and continue to represent their constituents? So far, the member for Beauce has not been able to do so. He has not been able to help elect a Speaker and has not been able to contribute to a reply to the Speech from the Throne.

I wonder if this member would not like that opportunity, should he test positive.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Madam Speaker, I just want to remind my colleague we are following his rules. I think the governing party has some problems when people are following the rules. That is exactly what we are doing. Yes, if there is some problem, we will address it, as we are doing correctly. This is why the *sergent d'armes* decided and identified those who can be in the House and those who cannot. We are following the rules established by the House of Commons and applied by the House of Commons, not by partisanship of some people. We saw on Monday great things in the House of Commons, but bad things just a few feet away during the press conference, when my counterpart put in jeopardy the judgment of the *sergent d'armes*. We have full confidence in the *sergent d'armes* and those he decides can be in the House and who cannot be in the House.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Quebec riding of Louis-Saint-Laurent for his remarks. This is my first intervention in the House in this new Parliament, the 44th Parliament, so I would of course like to take a moment to thank my Shefford constituents for giving me a second vote of confidence. My colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent knows the town of Granby well, and we talk about it often. I am deeply grateful to them for giving me a second term.

### Government Orders

At this point in time, some members are worried about returning to the House, and that is because of ambiguity around the vaccination status of certain members and around exemptions specifically. The National Assembly has led the way by adopting vaccine passports, and Quebec members have decided to get vaccinated in order to send a strong message.

What does he have to say about his party's ambiguous stance during the campaign on its candidates' vaccination status? We still do not know exactly how many Conservative members have received medical exemptions. Is that ambiguity not the reason some members are worried, and is it not the reason the debate over in-person versus hybrid sittings has resurfaced? If everyone were vaccinated at this point, there would not—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order. I have to make time for other questions and comments.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Shefford, and I congratulate her on her re-election. It is unfortunate, and it is not that I do not like her, but there were Conservative candidates in every riding, and we would have liked all of our candidates to win. That said, I congratulate her on her re-election. While I do not have the good fortune and privilege of being born in Granby, in the riding of Shefford, I do have a special connection with that city. We may have the opportunity to talk about that one of these days. However, that is not what we are talking about right now.

First of all, the member just said that if everyone were vaccinated, we would not be having this debate. I am not so sure about that. We would first have to ask them if they think that that is right. We heard the government House leader say in his remarks and speech that there was a risk because we were entering a building with a lot of people in it. Even if all the members are vaccinated, this does not mean that it is 100% safe. We have seen fully vaccinated individuals still get COVID-19. This happens in all kinds of settings.

I would remind my colleague that rules do apply. We are following the rules to the letter. One of the rules is that when it comes to any medical issues, privacy must be respected.

• (1700)

[English]

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, this is a really tough conversation, because I really respect my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent.

I am concerned about people coming to work with COVID or someone who might have symptoms of COVID being tempted to come to work, when they should be in quarantine and be staying at home, because they feel like their privilege will be violated and they will not have a chance to bring forward the concerns of the people who just elected them.

*Government Orders*

What we are proposing here is to have the hybrid Parliament. People are expected to show up for work, but perhaps they feel like they are showing symptoms or that they are immune-compromised. There are those who have young babies. It is so nice to see young babies here in Parliament. We talk about a family-friendly Parliament, and finally we have people who are running for election who are pregnant or having babies and feel comfortable about bringing them in here, but they cannot get vaccinated. To ensure they have a voice in this Parliament, and that their privilege is not going to be restricted, is really critical.

The other thing is that we have staff working here. It is our duty not just to protect each other, but to protect the staff. We have young pages. Many of them are afraid, right now, to come to work, because they are worried someone is going to be tempted to show up here with symptoms.

Does my colleague not believe that we should create a safe workplace here and that we should do everything we can to ensure that everybody's privilege is intact and that they have an opportunity to have their voice in a fourth wave of a COVID crisis? This crisis is not over.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and congratulate him on his re-election. I believe this is his third or fourth term, and I congratulate him.

[English]

The member raised the fact that there were some people in the House, some young mothers, who had their babies with them. All my respect to my colleague from Fort McMurray—Cold Lake who has been elected for the first time to the House of Commons. We are very pleased to welcome her. She has a great baby, and I wish her the best in the time to come.

[Translation]

As for the substance of what the member said, I thought it was interesting when he said that they expected everyone to be in the House. That is the problem.

The House shut down in June, before the Prime Minister decided, out of his own personal vanity, to call an election. This means we lost between 63 and 65 days of parliamentary work. Had it not been for the election that cost \$110 million for a cabinet shuffle, we would have been able to sit as early as September. However, because of the Prime Minister's decision, which cost taxpayers \$100 million, that did not happen.

He said that they expected to see all members on site. The problem is that from January to June, this government did not show up here in the House, and that is quite dishonourable. Perhaps things could have been different, but they demonstrated, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that they have contempt for parliamentary work, and this has shaken our confidence in terms of what we can expect going forward.

• (1705)

[English]

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Speaker, one of the things we dealt with at PROC, when we dealt with a vir-

tual Parliament, was the prospect of exactly what is happening here, and that is the Liberal Party colluding with the NDP to expand the hybrid Parliament beyond what is normal. Some of the reasons that were given was the potential in those swing ridings for electioneering to occur.

Would my colleague comment on that part of it when we should be in Ottawa in the seat of our democracy?

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Madam Speaker, I want to pay my respects to my colleague from Barrie—Innisfil. He has been re-elected for the third time thanks to the support of his constituents. He deserves that support.

My colleague raised a very serious issue. This is why we are taking this stand today. This is why we want to see a full House sitting. This is why we want to see all cabinet ministers in the House of Commons answering questions. This is what we are doing. This is what we have to do in the House of Commons, and we wish the government would understand that for once.

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands on a point of order.

\* \* \*

[English]

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, during the debate, pursuant to Standing Order 52, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

**ORDER RESPECTING THE BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE AND ITS COMMITTEES**

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.



Next, I would like to take a moment to thank my constituents for putting their continued trust in me. I am very pleased and very honoured to serve them. I want to say hello to all of them. I would also like to thank the volunteers on my team who worked hard so that the Bloc Québécois could keep the riding of La Prairie. Finally, I would like to thank my leader because I likely would not have won without his help.

After I won the first time in 2012, someone told me that it was all well and good to get elected but that, when a person gets re-elected, it is as though the voters are adopting them after trying them out the first time. I am therefore very pleased to have been re-elected. I will work extremely hard so that my constituents do not regret it.

Extraordinary circumstances call for extraordinary measures. What happened in March 2020 is undeniable proof of that. That is when COVID was spreading. The House immediately responded to this public health crisis in a coherent manner. When I say “in a coherent manner”, I mean that the House needs to remain in step with what is going on in the rest of society. It has to move in the same direction. It has to lead by example as well. The moment this threat was upon us, all parties joined in the effort to say that we were closing up shop for a month. The rest of the people were in almost total lockdown, that is what had to be done. All parties took responsibility.

Then we saw that society had decided to partly reopen some services, so we reopened Parliament in a hybrid format. It was the right thing to do, everyone agreed on that. Since then, things have changed. We need to adapt to change. We have to keep up with the reality of society. We cannot live in an ivory tower and say that we are going to react differently than the people are reacting. That makes no sense, because we represent them.

Along came the vaccine. The vaccine works well against existing variants. Generally speaking, it protects us from serious effects of the disease. It makes us less likely to transmit the disease. Being double-vaxxed means we can almost get back to normal. That is important, and that is why the Bloc Québécois supports double vaccination. Everyone here is double-vaxxed for sure. We have to lead by example. We have to reassure people, tell them it is important to get vaccinated, and prove it by doing it. That is the message we need to send. We are very happy about that.

The Board of Internal Economy has said—insisted, even—that everyone who comes here must be double-vaxxed, with few exceptions. That was the right thing to do.

Things have changed. We have a vaccine. Things have changed for everyone. People, ourselves included of course, are going back to restaurants. People are going back to the movies. I went on the weekend, and the place was packed.

People are going back to the Bell Centre. They would like a better team, of course, but they have to make do with what they have. I went. I was wearing a mask, and I wondered if I would take it off to holler if the Canadiens scored, but there is no need to go there because the team lost 6-0. People were masked. There were only about 12,00 people, not 18,000, and we were all masked.

### *Government Orders*

There are 338 members in the House, but we are being told that this no longer works and we need to have a hybrid model and not take any risks. The thing is, it is important to return to sitting in person. It is our job and it would be a sign of returning to normal. This is how Parliament has been operating since 1867 and we have to go back to that way of doing things. This will force the government to be accountable to the House because until recently, we got the impression that they were trying to run away.

● (1710)

When I do good things it makes me happy. I go out and tell everyone all about it. Were they hiding because they were not doing good things? Did they lack the courage? I would not say so. I would say that they may have been embarrassed. When I look at the Liberal record, I can understand them a bit. I too might have seen the appeal of the hybrid model.

It is easier to interact with each other in the House. All the members do it. We all have files in our ridings. We meet with members by walking across the House and they are generally and even always nice. This allows us to plan for government interventions in our riding. This allows the media to be more aware of our work, and therefore better able to inform the public about what the MPs are doing in the House. It is important to get back to that.

Yes, there will be monitoring, just as public health in Canada or Quebec are constantly monitoring the situation. The movie theatres have reopened, knowing that if anything happens we might have to take a step back. We are not aliens and we can do the same thing here in the House.

The hybrid model had its share of problems as well. Some sure did like to eat treats in the basement and vote. We know that there were some problems for the interpreters, who had some serious health issues, since House resources were stretched thin. We have to respect what these people managed to do. They got the job done.

There is no question that French was used much less often in the hybrid model. The government talks about protecting French in the House. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons speaks French very well and I commend him for that. He wants to speak French, but if they want to keep on using French, they will have to acknowledge that French was used less frequently in the hybrid model. That is important to point out.

How about the other parties? I am going to speak mostly about the government side. I do not know what happened during the last session of Parliament, but at one point there were a few of them here and then, all of a sudden, there was just one person. It was not a minister; it was the member for Kingston and the Islands and he was brave. He was always there and, as much as I hate to admit it, he was tenacious and did his job. We were happy to see him, because he was the Liberal Party. There was no one else.

*Government Orders*

My colleague from Montarville, who delivered an excellent presentation, said that the worst part was that they answered questions while they were right here in Ottawa. They hid in their offices and, oddly enough, sometimes, when they found themselves in hot water, they would suddenly have technical difficulties. It was not clear and we thought it was strange. Then we would go back to the question but no one could hear the answer. Sometimes it sounded like R2-D2 talking. They loved it, because they were not in the House. If I look at their record, they must be embarrassed, but it must have suited them. When I asked if they were going to come back to the House, they reminded me of groundhogs, as though they were waiting to see their shadow before coming out of their hole. I asked if they had seen their shadow and if they would eventually come back to the House, but no, there was only one left in the House. The situation was serious and appalling. After the lockdown ended across Canada and Quebec, there was still only one Liberal MP left.

This summer, a miracle happened: The Liberals decided to call an election. That is when they came out of hiding and met with people. There were Liberal Party videos showing a lot of people close together, waving and hugging each other. Any more and they would have been breaking out the coconut punch and giving each other noogies. It made no sense. I thought that we would finally get back to the in-person format, but no. After the election, they decided to go back into hiding, because it is not easy and they are once again getting flustered. This is a bad sign.

When someone is proud of what they are doing, they face up to it and stand by their record and accomplishments. They are not embarrassed, and they look people in the eye. It would be nice if the Liberal Party started doing that.

• (1715)

[English]

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I sat in the House yesterday and one of the member's colleagues stood and raised a question of privilege, saying that it really offended her privilege to have to be in the House, cheek by jowl, with people who might make her sick. What does he say to her?

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague for raising this interesting question about double vaccination.

The answer is quite simple: If everyone is fully vaccinated, there will not be any problem.

[English]

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the government House leader during his speech spoke about the possible risk to people who are immunocompromised, but in the last Parliament, for multiple question periods we had zero Liberal ministers ever showing up.

It seems to me that it is statistically improbable that 100% of Liberal ministers are immunocompromised. Does the member agree that it is statistically improbable that all Liberal ministers are at such a great, particular and unique risk?

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** Madam Speaker, I am being asked to explain the inexplicable. The ministers were not in the House. How do we explain that?

Explaining that is about as easy as eating an apple through a tennis racquet. In other words, it is impossible.

I hope this party will get with it, roll up its sleeves, take responsibility, have respect for the public and come to the House to answer our questions.

[English]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to add my name in congratulations of your sitting in that seat. It is an honour to see you there. I also want to take this opportunity, as it is my first time to stand in the House, to thank the North Island—Powell River constituents for allowing me a third term in the House to represent them.

I really did appreciate what I heard from the previous member when he talked about the importance of being double-vaxxed. That is something I am very concerned with as well.

I am particularly concerned for the people who work in this building and who have children 12 and under who cannot be vaccinated. We have members in the House who are travelling across the country and potentially bringing COVID here. If we have members in the House who are unvaccinated, even if they are being tested every 48 hours they are still bringing that here.

What does that mean for the people who work here? Are we not responsible in the House for the work environment of all the people in this place?

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Before I begin to talk about that, we should perhaps come back to the situation of the House employees who were pushed to the limit. Many of them had to go on sick leave. We may have abused the technical support resources. We might have to consider that as well.

We are no different than the rest of society. If we are able to go to the Bell Centre, the movie theatre or anywhere else, then we are able to get here, respect the health measures, wear a mask at all times and maintain a social distance. That way there will be no situation like the one our colleague mentions.

• (1720)

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate you. I am sure that you will make use of our speaking time fairly, as you usually do.

Earlier, my colleague from Montarville asked the leader of the government a question. He did not get an answer. He was referring to what my colleague from La Prairie had been speaking out against since earlier.

However, by way of response, the government House leader told us that the situation had changed and things were less serious. Are we to understand that the situation is less serious now because everyone, or almost everyone, is double-vaccinated?

He also spoke of immunocompromised people. Are we making the exception to the rule the new normal?

We do not want a government or Parliament that works in a hybrid format to end up becoming a virtual government or Parliament.

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** Madam Speaker, we need to remain in step with what is happening in the rest of society.

People are starting to see each other more often. Thanks to double vaccination, it is becoming easier to see each other with as little risk as possible. There will never be zero risk, but we must be realistic and respect the public by doing what we are asking them to do.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois's House leader is a tough act to follow. It is hard to improve on his use of metaphor and imagery to get his point across. Nevertheless, I will try to lighten things up and make members laugh.

First, though, I would like to thank the people of Salaberry—Suroît for re-electing me to serve a fourth term. I was fortunate to be a member of Parliament from 2006 to 2011. I ran in 2015 and lost by a slim margin. I ran again in 2019 and won, and I also won in 2021. I am proud to be representing Salaberry—Suroît once again.

I would like to thank the 200 volunteers who were so involved and engaged in the election campaign. I also want to thank my whole family, my partner and my children. You know this first hand, Madam Speaker: an election campaign is an intense time, and our families make lots of sacrifices, so I want to thank them too. I am grateful to my partner, Maurice, my three girls, and my grandson, Victor, who is almost two.

I am the whip for the Bloc Québécois in the House of Commons, as I was in the previous Parliament. It therefore has to be said that I had the privilege, in a time of crisis during the pandemic, of contributing to the creation of a hybrid Parliament that allowed us, despite the pandemic, to continue our work during an important time.

I have to say that it was an extraordinary situation, and I really want to commend the entire IT team for contributing to that build, creating what was needed and doing everything that was necessary to allow us to continue our work during the first wave, even though the situation was less than ideal.

We did that because it was the right thing to do, because we were in a crisis. We did not have very much information. It was inconceivable that we were here while so many of our constituents were sick, especially since we did not have any vaccines yet. We are evolving, and we have changed how we work in order to deal with the pandemic. I can honestly say that building the tools to allow us to vote and participate virtually was an impressive feat.

I am not questioning what was. What the Bloc Québécois is questioning today is the need to continue the hybrid Parliament from now until the end of June.

### *Government Orders*

We know that the pandemic is changing, that the fourth wave is here, but that it is being controlled across the country. We know that it is a matter of following universal precautions such as washing our hands, wearing our masks, keeping our distance. We have gone back to our normal lives. Even though we have to keep wearing a mask almost everywhere we go in our daily lives and in our social lives, we have to say that we are pleased to have resumed our quasi-normal life from before. Children are going to school, university and CEGEP classes are full, and life is back on track.

Today we are questioning the insistence on maintaining a hybrid Parliament. We could have worked together at weighing the possibility of extending the hybrid Parliament for a month or two. What we want to know is why extend it until June when the situation is evolving?

I know that we created a virtual Parliament in just a few days and that we were able to adapt to the situation in just a few days with a motion. However, the situation is evolving. What my party and I do not understand is why we have to decide today whether the hybrid Parliament will be extended until June 23. Nobody understands that, including our constituents.

We are wondering whether the two parties who support the proposal are doing this to suit themselves. One must admit that, with the hybrid sittings, members can watch or listen to question period while riding their stationary bike, which is something I have seen. They can also watch bare chested or in their pyjamas. We have seen that too. I can understand that some members like to sleep next to their spouse every night since we are not all lucky enough to live in Ottawa or Gatineau, close to Parliament. I can understand that.

● (1725)

However, that being said, when we get elected, we need to sit here in Parliament in person in order to do our job. That is part of the contract.

I think some people got a little too used to being comfortable, particularly those who live far away and who have to travel by plane or train to get here and who find it tiresome. Perhaps there is something behind this decision.

I have to say that I think my leader has been fairly clear. It is not so good for the opposition to have empty benches near the front. It is not as difficult for the ministers and it is less stressful and nerve-racking for new members. There are many reasons to explain it.

In our view, this is a way for them to shirk their responsibilities and their duty to be accountable. That is why we do not understand this at all.

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As whip, I have to say that it seems as though people are forgetting what did not work. Although the hybrid Parliament worked well overall, it was not excellent. There were a lot of issues, and it has been documented that it was the unilingual francophone members who experienced most of the issues. Take, for example, parliamentary committees, at which 86% of the witnesses speak in English. The technical glitches with the interpretation, the interruptions, the loss of speaking time for Bloc Québécois members were all documented with the hybrid Parliament, including in committee. It is not true that everything worked well.

It is disappointing to hear my NDP colleagues suddenly see a hybrid Parliament as the only option. I remember hearing them in the House condemning the ear issues that the interpreters were having because the devices and equipment used and the fact that they were interpreting remotely, via Zoom, were causing occupational illnesses. The New Democrats are supposed to care about House administration workers, but they never talk about these workers anymore.

The interpreters testified and said as much to the Standing Committee on Official Languages, which issued a report entitled “Conference Interpreters: The Cornerstone of Bilingualism in Parliament”.

If time permits, I will read an excerpt from the report:

The current technological limitations not only are compromising the health and safety of parliamentary interpreters, but also could undermine the language rights of parliamentarians. Pursuant to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Official Languages Act, parliamentarians have the right to express themselves in the official language of their choice and to be understood by their colleagues and the Canadian public. Canadians should be able to follow the proceedings of Parliament in the official language of their choice, without being put at a disadvantage.

Because I have seen it myself, I can say that francophone witnesses invited to standing committees prefer to speak English, because they can be sure that there will not be any interpretation problems, as most members of Parliament speak English.

In closing, I would like to stress the importance of the interpreters, but we must also consider the members who do not want to lose a second of speaking time. In the hybrid Parliament and in the standing committees, it has been documented that the situation was rather unjust and unfair, and we do not want to go through that again in this Parliament, because, in our opinion, it is inappropriate.

As whip, I have defended my party's position and will continue to do so. There were actually no negotiations; there were no discussions because the government agreed with the NDP to impose the hybrid Parliament on us.

In closing, the Chair can count on the Bloc Québécois members to be present, active, diligent and at work in the House of Commons.

● (1730)

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I was very interested to hear what my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît had to say. I know that she is very sincere when she talks about the situation of the interpreters. We agree with her on the importance of putting resources in place so that the interpreters have the best working conditions possible. I agree with her on that.

However, she is asking why we should continue with a hybrid Parliament when the pandemic is under control. I have to tell her that the pandemic is not under control. In Burnaby, we lost 15 people two weeks ago. Countries in Europe are starting to implement lockdown policies. Having a hybrid Parliament in place means that, whatever happens in the coming weeks, Parliament can continue to function.

Why is she denying that the pandemic is wreaking havoc in some parts of the country and some parts of the world?

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. It gives me an opportunity to clarify what I was saying.

I do not know his profession, but I do not think he is a scientist. I am not a scientist, but what I do know is that I received instructions, a directive from the Sergeant-at-Arms, who issued a policy and directives here that said that Ontario Public Health deemed it safe for the 338 MPs to be here if they were wearing masks and following the public health guidelines. I do not know whether British Columbia is off in a world of its own or not, but public health here deems that the pandemic is under control.

That does not mean that the situation cannot change. However, as we speak, it is unthinkable that we would not be here in person when we are permitted to do so under Ontario's public health guidelines.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Speaker, if we look at our hybrid Parliament, we can see that those MPs whose ridings are close by have many opportunities to speak. We are in a minority government and the other members from Quebec, the NDP and the Liberal Party have many opportunities to work in their ridings while the House is sitting and we are here, which gives them an electoral advantage.

Can you comment on the opportunities that are there and on the fact that elections are perpetually being held in the constituencies?

● (1735)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I must remind the member to address the Speaker and not speak directly to members.

The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Yes, we are aware that being at home, being in our ridings, voting remotely, being able to deliver a speech and then leave 10 minutes later to go vote gives us plenty of freedom, more so than if we came to work in the House. I agree with him that this freedom is perhaps more appreciated by the government party, whose gamble to win a majority government unfortunately did not pay off. True, I think there are some advantages to it and we certainly still believe that our primary duty is to serve, but also to represent our constituents in the House of Commons. We have some work to do in that respect.

If I may, I will briefly comment on what my colleague said. The greatest injustices and inequalities for francophones happen on the parliamentary committees. My colleagues know that all the parties were forced to cut the number of meetings for certain parliamentary committees because there was no more space available. To function properly, a hybrid Parliament requires more resources. In a way, we are restricted in what we can do and forced to limit our parliamentary work on committees in a hybrid Parliament.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not start this speech by thanking the voters of New Westminster—Burnaby. They have returned me to this chamber to speak on their behalf and to fight on their behalf to make sure that nobody is left behind in New Westminster—Burnaby and that we are building the kind of Canada my constituents want to see. I thank them for the honour of representing them again in this House of Commons.

I would also be remiss in not mentioning the many, many victims of this terrible pandemic. We have lost nearly 30,000 Canadians over the course of the past one year, eight months and two weeks. The reality is we must be thinking of those victims, the victims in Canada but of course the five million victims of COVID worldwide, when we talk about measures that are put in place to protect public health and to ensure we continue to do the work that is so important as parliamentarians.

[*Translation*]

We must pay tribute to the victims who lost their lives. COVID killed 30,000 people in Canada and five million people worldwide. We must think of the victims and do everything we can to end this terrible pandemic and prevent future pandemics. We have to implement measures that will achieve that.

[*English*]

It is simply not true. We have had a couple of speakers who said that things are okay and that things are under control when it comes to this pandemic. I can attest—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I am sorry. I am going to have to interrupt the hon. member and remind members that if they are not the ones who are standing and speaking, they must have their masks on in order to ensure the safety of the workers and their colleagues in the House.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby has the floor.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, as the Speaker, you have the right to call members out. If you see a member, and we have just seen a couple, remove their mask in the House, you certainly have the right to interrupt whoever is speaking and call on the member to put their mask back on. I would urge you to do that, Madam Speaker.

We are seeing an outbreak that is having terrible impacts. At the Willingdon Care Centre, just a couple of weeks ago, 15 people were lost. There was a terrible outbreak that killed nearly 20% of the residents of that care facility. The outbreaks we are seeing now at various care facilities are having an impact even on my own family.

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When we talk about a pandemic that is under control, we need to look to the outbreaks we are seeing in a number of different jurisdictions within Canada where there is a tragic number of rising cases, and we need to look worldwide too. Austria is now in complete lockdown and Germany is contemplating doing the same thing. There is a rising number of cases, a rising number of hospitalizations and a rising number of people in intensive care units.

This is something that should make all of us pause for a moment and think of the best measures we can put into place, as we have since March 13, 2020 when the House leaders walked out this door and held a press conference to announce we were suspending Parliament. We did it because it was the best thing to do in a public health emergency. Now that we are seeing rising cases around the world, in certain parts of the world and in certain parts of Canada, we have to have the same sense of collective responsibility.

This motion should have been adopted unanimously. It is a continuation of measures that we have already taken collectively as members of Parliament, unanimously. One of the strongest moments through this pandemic was when 338 parliamentarians rose with one voice and said they were going to continue their work as parliamentarians but were going to put in place appropriate public health measures to protect the employees of the House of Commons and on Parliament Hill, and to protect members of Parliament and their families. Many members of Parliament know of family members who are immunocompromised. People are immunocompromised in my own family. When we are protecting members of Parliament, we are also protecting our families, but above all we are protecting the public.

The reality is that 338 of us come in every week from all parts of Canada, some of us from high COVID transmission zones. We heard the member for Salaberry—Suroît say it is not a difficulty in her area, but we know that with this terrible virus, transmission can be quick. If one member of Parliament brings it into the House and other members of Parliament take it back to their ridings, there can be outbreaks. That was the design around suspending Parliament on March 13, 2020, as we knew we could not maintain the public's safety.

We knew we had to take measures that were exceptional in our history as a Parliament, but we took those measures together unanimously and then subsequently built the tools for a hybrid Parliament, first putting in place the ability of members of Parliament to speak, then the ability of members of Parliament to intervene procedurally, then the ability of members of Parliament to vote and then finally, with the voting app, we got away from the long voting sessions on Zoom that we all remember and had the ability and efficiency for each member of Parliament to intervene on behalf of their constituents and vote in the House of Commons.

All those tools were developed at great expense so we could continue the work of Parliament during the pandemic. Those were smart and thoughtful decisions that were consistently made unanimously. I should pay tribute to the many people in the House administration who made all of those actions real so that a virtual Parliament could see the day.

*Government Orders*

● (1740)

I do not doubt that there were problems. It is very true. Some members have mentioned the fact that the government did not have ministers in the House of Commons. That was a serious error, particularly when they were upstairs in their offices. The government is now committing to have ministers present for Question Period.

The impact on interpreters was considerable, and we need to continue to take steps to make sure that the virtual Parliament provides them with a safe and healthy workplace. Those are measures that, in this corner of the House, the NDP is going to continue to push for. There is no doubt. The member for Burnaby South, our leader, has been very clear, as have NDP members.

We are also aware that having 338 members of Parliament here, some coming from high COVID transmission zones, also creates a threat to employees and staff in the House administration and the House of Commons. We have to make sure we are taking protective measures.

As we know, if a member of Parliament is diagnosed or has to quarantine right now, until this motion passes they would have no ability to intervene for their constituents, fight for their constituents or speak out for their constituents. That is what I endeavour to do every day for my constituents in New Westminster—Burnaby. I know that every member of Parliament feels the same way. Without having the virtual tools in place, if a member of Parliament had to quarantine after being in contact with somebody who possibly had a COVID transmission, they would no longer be able to represent their constituents.

We support the motion. There is no doubt that we support the virtual tools. We believe we have to continue to improve the virtual Parliament. However, what I deplore is that this is not something that was adopted on the first day, unanimously, the way every other motion was. This is a public health issue. This is something that protects employees and staff. It protects the public. It protects members of Parliament and their families. That is why I would urge my colleagues in parties that seem resistant to renewing the virtual mandate to vote yes to this motion.

● (1745)

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, if I go into the lobby over here, I know all but one person has been double-vaccinated. I know the one who is not, and there is a darn good reason for it.

Does the hon. member not agree that he is playing Russian roulette every time he goes into that lobby over there? He does not know who he is mixing with or who could have something nasty, especially when the opposition House leader has indicated that a person who is unvaxxed is more likely to transmit the disease to somebody else.

I am wondering this. What kind of risk management does my colleague use to deal with this?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to remind members that if they have a difference of opinion on what is being said they have the opportunity to rise to ask questions and make comments.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, the Board of Internal Economy has set the rules, and the Board of Internal Economy will be making sure that the rules are adhered to.

However, there is a broader imperative here. We are asking Canadians to show their vaccination records when they get on a plane or go to a restaurant. There is no doubt that we have to set the example. We also have to make sure that members of Parliament can fully participate.

In the case of any exposure whatsoever, the virtual Parliament allows those members of Parliament to continue to represent their constituents. That is why I find the position of the Conservative Party so baffling. The Conservatives should be the first ones to say we should renew the virtual parliamentary mandate. They certainly supported it in the past. It is inconceivable to me that they are refusing to continue something that is an appropriate public health measure and would protect everybody: employees, staff, members of Parliament and their families.

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have a very simple question for the member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Our opposition House leader, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, introduced a very reasonable amendment that would increase the length of time we would have for accountability through the Committee of the Whole to provide an additional four hours. It was a very reasonable amendment.

I was wondering if the NDP House leader is going to support our Conservative amendment, or is he still waiting for permission from the Liberal House leader?

● (1750)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, that petty insult is just an example of why Conservatives should not be taking such a lack of seriousness in this debate.

If the members of the Conservative Party are saying that with those amendments they are prepared to vote for this motion, rather than have debate, we can do what we have done every single time, which is pass unanimously these public health measures to ensure a hybrid Parliament. If the Conservatives are saying that these amendments are what would make a difference for them, and we could move on and get back to the business of the country, that would be a wonderful thing.

Could the next Conservative who gets up please clarify whether these are amendments that would actually mean, as far as the Conservatives are concerned, that they would be willing to immediately vote yes and continue with the hybrid Parliament?

[Translation]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I too would like to congratulate you on being elected Deputy Speaker. I would also like to congratulate the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, whom I understand is to be my counterpart at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. It will be my pleasure to work with him to move forward on cultural matters and the important bills awaiting our attention.

I heard the member's arguments for why we can do our work just as well in hybrid mode. However, as my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît demonstrated earlier, that approach has some serious shortcomings ranging from the interpreters' health and numerous health problems to fair allocation of speaking time. Our job is to hold the government to account and ensure that government business is properly managed, but a hybrid system is not really conducive to that, because there are issues with technology, interpretation and so on.

Does my colleague not think we would all be better off behaving like grown-ups, getting double-vaccinated, being responsible, respecting the rules and remaining vigilant, so that if there is an outbreak, we can pivot back to hybrid sittings, which would always be an option? Then—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I forgot to mention that we had time for only a brief question. I would therefore ask the member for New Westminster—Burnaby to give a brief answer.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, I too look forward to working with my colleague at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

I do not understand the Bloc's contradiction. They say we might need this tool, but not now. As we have seen, Austria and Germany are going into full lockdown once again. The number of cases has increased markedly in some parts of Canada. I therefore do not understand why the Bloc Québécois is resisting something that is common sense, namely, continuing with a hybrid Parliament so we can continue our work no matter what happens with the virus over the next few weeks.

[English]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** We have a point of order.

The hon. Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

#### NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I give notice that with respect to consideration of Government Business No. 1, at the next sitting of the House a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that debate be not further adjourned.

#### RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE ORDER RESPECTING THE BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE AND ITS COMMITTEES

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House, as much as it was to speak virtually from my home. I appreciate both opportunities, because it is such a privilege to add thoughts to important public debates.

Today we have yet another very important public debate. I suspect a number of Canadians are tuning in and looking for leadership coming from the House of Commons. I want to spend a bit of time on that, but because this is the first time I have had the opportunity to address the House, I would like to give a very special

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thanks to the residents of Winnipeg North. This is my fifth time back as a member of Parliament, but a certain part of Winnipeg North has elected me as a parliamentarian 10 times: first in the Manitoba legislature, and now here in Ottawa. I genuinely appreciate and value the support of the community and commit to work the hardest I can to serve them every day.

When I think of the issues before us, the potatoes in Prince Edward Island come to my mind right away, as do the drought in the Prairies, health care for the residents and seniors of Winnipeg North and the floods taking place in B.C. There are so many issues. I want to ensure that all members have the opportunity to participate in the debates we are going to have on the issues that are critically important to Canadians from coast to coast to coast. That is what this motion is all about. I agree with the NDP House leader that it would have been nice if this motion had passed unanimously on day one. That is the way it should have been. I truly believe that.

I listened to the Conservatives and their cozy cousins from the Bloc saying they do not want a hybrid system. I am concerned that they do not really see the true value of it. I hope to talk about the importance of leadership and why members should give consideration to how they will vote on this motion. I believe there is a great deal of room for support of this motion.

Let us not forget why we are at this point, as the opposition House leader referred to in his remarks on the motion. Not that long ago, 18 months or so ago, Canada found itself facing a worldwide pandemic. It was so encouraging to see parliamentarians from all sides of the House come together. The former government House leader knows that full well. We saw the merit in closing down the House of Commons. He worked with the opposition members to ensure that it was a priority. For those who were not here back then, we literally closed the House of Commons. That was the consensus from all political entities inside the chamber.

However, there was a consensus that we would not let a pandemic prevent us from fulfilling something that Canadians hold dear to their hearts, which is our democracy and freedom. The Parliament of Canada is so valuable that we had to make sure it was able to continue on. It was important to the Prime Minister, to cabinet and to the leader of the official opposition. I believe every member of the House recognized that back then.

● (1755)

There was a much higher sense of co-operation because people realized that Canadians were dying, Canadians were getting sick and the pandemic was hitting us hard. We all as parliamentarians, not as partisan parliamentarians, but as parliamentarians, had to take action to protect the interests of our nation. One of those actions is what we are talking about today. Even though some downplay the significance, I ask members to remember the important leadership role we all play here in Canada and the expectations Canadians have of each and every one of us.

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Hopefully the worst of the pandemic is behind us. I believe it is, but there are still waves out there. There is no reason I have heard that could not be negotiated to enable us to continue on with a hybrid system. I have read the news, followed the media and I have listened to the stories and arguments being presented by some members from the opposition parties.

I would suggest that we revisit the attitudes we had 18 months ago. I know I felt good when I was able to go back to my community and say that we were working collectively not only in the House of Commons, but also with stakeholders, science and health experts, provinces, territories and indigenous communities in order to take on the pandemic.

However, our democracy, our Parliament and the issue of accountability are so important that we had to come up with a mechanism that would enable us to continue our democracy, and we did that with the hybrid system. This system enabled everyone the opportunity to participate in debate, in votes, at committees and with interjections, whether they were matters of privileges, points of order, members' statements or in question period. It enabled us to continue on. There was even the opportunity for the former House leader to ensure there was a mixture of ministers answering on the floor and virtually. I remember that well. It was a process that worked, and it was very effective.

We are asking opposition members to recognize the value of a hybrid system. To say that there is no value to it, or that we do not need it today, goes against the type of leadership Canadians are looking for. Yesterday Manitoba had its throne speech, like Ottawa did. Personally I thought ours was better, but that is a side point.

I called my daughter, as she is an MLA, and asked her how her day went. She said she does not get to go into the chamber until next week. I asked if they were still on the hybrid system, and she said they were. She will be in the chamber next week, but they still have a hybrid system.

That is a Progressive Conservative government in the province of Manitoba saying that there is a need. Heather Stefanson, the newly elected premier, is right because people are watching. People understand the seriousness of the pandemic. We understand it has changed all of our lives in a significant way, but at the end of the day, what we are trying to do is not far off from that hybrid system.

● (1800)

Yes, there are some differences and some unique aspects of us compared to Manitoba's, but the bottom line is that it appears that all the parties recognize the need to continue with it. I believe that it is not too late for members opposite here to recognize the value of it.

We do not have to think very hard on this because we all know the member for Beauce. He is not going to be able to vote on the motion we are debating right now. He was not even allowed to vote for the Speaker. Although, it might have been a bit of a challenge to get the hybrid system passed before we had the Speaker in place, but the point is that the member for Beauce cannot participate. If there were some sort of significant tragedy in his riding or something wonderful that he wanted to report on, he is not allowed in the

chamber to do so. It is not possible for him to participate because of COVID and the pandemic.

The opposition House leader made reference to the fact that tomorrow he is going for his second test because he is following the rules, which is the way to go, but I trust it is because of the member for Beauce. There are a number of members in the Conservative caucus who, because of their proximity to the member for Beauce, had to get some testing done. I do not know about other members, but I believe that the opposition House leader, if he tests positive tomorrow, should be able to continue here, and he would be able to do that with a hybrid system.

I would argue that to believe that none of our colleagues, out of 338 of us, will not have COVID over the next number of months might be considered as being irresponsible. In Manitoba, there were two MLAs infected with COVID, and I believe both had been fully vaccinated. One is the leader of the New Democratic Party and another was just discovered recently. Maybe that is one of the reasons they factored in the benefits of having the hybrid system.

Why is it that some members would want to prevent other members from being able to participate in these debates? This is what I do not understand. That is what my colleagues in the Liberal caucus do not understand. This is not some way of escaping accountability. This is all about ensuring that members have the ability to hold the government to account. Whether it is one member or multiple members who are unable to be here for whatever reason, they would still be able to perform their responsibilities.

When we talk about accountability and transparency, yesterday and earlier today someone from across the floor heckled something to the effect that the Liberals have one member who is not vaccinated. Well, that is news to me. To my understanding, every member of the Liberal caucus is fully vaccinated. If those members do not believe that to be the case, please let me know which member it is, because I believe that every member of the Liberal caucus is fully vaccinated. I also understand that members of the Bloc and members of the New Democrats are fully vaccinated.

Now, I would suggest that there is an issue of transparency. Do Canadians have the right to know which members or how many members of the Conservative caucus are not vaccinated? The government House leader made reference to some statistics regarding the likelihood of someone getting a medical exemption, which is one in 100,000. We honestly do not know if there are 20 Conservatives or two Conservatives. We just know that there are some. We do not know the actual number. The likelihood is one out of 100,000 and there are only 119 Conservative members of Parliament. Statistically, what could that number be? That is hard for us.

● (1805)

One of my colleagues came up to me yesterday and he was genuinely concerned about his health. His primary concern was that some members are not fully vaccinated. I indicated that he should share his concerns with the government House leader. There are members in this House who are genuinely concerned for themselves, let alone having concerns about the people who operate this wonderful institution.



There are many people who make this Parliament work, whether it is security where we first walk in, or the people who make us our hamburger, fries and much more at the cafeteria. There are the translators, the clerks and the people who work on Hansard and have to listen to the speeches. There are so many people. At the end of the day we need to be thinking about the health and safety of all the people who are inside this building.

I would suggest that we, as parliamentarians at a national level, have an important leadership role to play. I know this has affected all of us and how we represent our constituents. Two years ago I did not even know that Zoom existed. Nowadays, I spend a lot of time on Zoom. I used to go to the local restaurant every Saturday for four hours. That is why I would be flying back to Winnipeg every weekend from Ottawa. It was to meet with constituents.

Many of the ways we serve our constituents have changed. With those changes we have to do some things differently. That is one of the reasons I now have Zoom town hall meetings. It is another way I can meet with constituents. Until it is safe, I will not return to the weekly meetings, which I had been doing for 30 years. I will wait until it is safe. In the interim, I am going to have my virtual town hall meetings. I had one just the other day.

Along with those changes, we need to recognize that our role is about more than just serving our constituents in our ridings. It is our role as parliamentarians to participate in votes and a spectrum of other things, but they do not physically have to be done here. A number of years back I asked the then clerk if there was any chance I could be sworn in as a member of Parliament in my own city of Winnipeg. He said that we could not do that. This time I was able to do that. I thought it was a wonderful thing to be sworn in as a member of Parliament there. Things have changed. We need to accommodate that.

I ask all members of the House to go back to the day when there was that high sense of co-operation and a recognition that in Parliament we need to work together to make sure that members of Parliament have the opportunity to be fully engaged. This will not be for forever. We are only talking about having this until June. One of the ways we can ensure that the member for Beauce and other members going forward will be able to fully participate is by passing this motion.

• (1810)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague must understand that there is big difference between being in the House to experience the intensity of the debates and being in front of a screen where you can mute it and wait for it to end. Seeing my colleagues in person is quite different, and I enjoy it a lot more.

My question is simple. If all members of the House of Commons could have been vaccinated, would we be debating this motion today? If all the members who do not have medical issues were vaccinated, would we be considering the possibility of returning to a hybrid format, yes or no?

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[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the short answer would be yes. Even if people are fully vaccinated, they still can get the coronavirus. One of the things is that we, as parliamentarians, come from every region of the country. We all fly into Ottawa and then we fly out to our communities. More and more communities are going back to their different types of events. We have to be extra careful.

This would provide an option. I love to speak in the chamber. There is no doubt I love the atmosphere of the chamber, but I also enjoy speaking virtually, because I still am able to get my point across. I hope the member would reconsider that if I do end up speaking virtual, he would not turn the TV off.

• (1815)

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your re-election to the Chair, and I thank all my constituents in La Pointe-de-l'Île for putting their trust in me.

My question is this: Given that we can now go to a gym, to a restaurant, to the movies, and even to a hockey game, is the role of Parliament not important enough for us to sit here?

Let us remember that there are not always 338 members in attendance. Most of the time, there are a lot fewer of us.

Also, they want to have a hybrid Parliament in place until June 23. Personally, I think that this is overkill. If a member catches COVID-19 and must be tested, remote voting is an acceptable compromise.

I fail to see why we cannot sit in Parliament, when we can attend a hockey game with thousands of others in the same space.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, because of the fine work of so many people, Canada is in a fantastic position; with over 86% of our population now fully vaccinated. I attribute that to everyone from our health care professionals, individuals at different levels of government and that sense of commitment to get Canada in a good space so we can lead the world in getting out of the pandemic. I think we are well positioned.

However, I still believe that having the hybrid Parliament today is a good thing. As I said, there is a sunset clause that would end it in June. We can ensure that every member of the House will be allowed to be fully engaged, whether it is voting or participating in debates, by allowing this motion to pass.

If I understood him correctly, the member seemed a little sympathetic to ensuring that all members be allowed to participate fully. A good way of doing that is by voting in favour of the motion.

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as a newly elected member of Parliament and my first time rising in the chamber, I would like to thank the constituents of Nanaimo—Ladysmith for putting their trust in me.

I am hearing from colleagues that they are fearful while doing their jobs in Parliament, fearful while wanting to do the work of representing the constituents of their ridings. This issue is not about partisanship; it is about supporting elected members of Parliament to represent their ridings, to have a voice, and to provide the tools to keep MPs safe while doing so.

Does my colleague agree that a tool for MPs to do their work safely is in all our best interests, regardless of party affiliation?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member 100%, and I congratulate her on taking her seat. As she was speaking, I thought of our health care workers and those who have been confronted by fairly hostile people. There is important legislation that we will have to go over in the next few weeks. One of the ways in which we can ensure and enable every member of Parliament to vote on this important legislation is to pass this motion.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, as this is our first opportunity for either of the members of the Green Party to speak to this motion, I want to make it clear that we will be supporting it. We very much support a hybrid Parliament.

I just came back from being at COP26 in Glasgow, where no one could enter the hall who was not double vaccinated. The health rules were that we should also keep masked, maintain physical distancing, maintain all public health measures and get tested daily to ensure we were not COVID-positive.

I do not feel safe in this place, even if every member is double vaccinated, because we are too close. We cannot speak if we are not at our very own desks. We cannot vote if we are not at our very own desks. The situation here is not compliant with public health rules across Canada, and I am very grateful that this motion is being put forward.

I deeply regret what happened from March 13 of last year and into the spring. However, we finally had hybrid sessions and we were able to vote remotely. We should follow that practice for our safety and the safety of our communities.

Shame on anyone who does not see the importance of protecting public health.

• (1820)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately it has gone in this direction. It would have been far better if we would have had a non-partisan approach to ensure we would have the hybrid in place. That would have been our preferred route. Let there be no doubt on that. Our first priority was to ensure that all members had the ability to be fully engaged, with the importance of health and safety being at the forefront.

Our preference would have been to have the unanimous support of the House to pass it yesterday. That was not possible. Hopefully members of the Conservative Party and the Bloc will reconsider the value of having a hybrid system and come onside, so we can see it

passed unanimously. It is the right thing to do. It would be demonstrating strong leadership for the rest of the country.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will begin by congratulating you on your re-election and by thanking my constituents in Honoré-Mercier for placing their trust in me a sixth time.

I would also like to thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his passionate speech, and I must say that it was an honour and a privilege to have had him as my parliamentary secretary throughout the previous Parliament. If there is anyone who cares about and stands up for our democracy, it is him, especially when it comes to the role of parliamentarians.

Our concern here is that a parliamentarian could catch COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone and not be able to appear in the House to carry out their role, debate, discuss, or vote. Is it not true that the hybrid format would allow that member to continue to carry out their role despite not being able to be in the House?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the kind words from my former boss.

It is somewhat ironic that I am standing in my place and actually advocating for the member for Beauce. The member for Beauce, under this system, would be able to fully participate and if anyone, including the opposition House leader, came back with a positive test tomorrow, they would not be able to participate, unless we pass this motion.

The motion would enable all parliamentarians on all sides of the House the ability to be fully engaged between now and June. As a parliamentarian, this is the best thing we can do. It also would demonstrate strong leadership to the rest of Canada, that we take this pandemic very seriously. We believe all political entities in the House recognize that.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House. I appreciate being given the opportunity to give my speech today and again tomorrow. I will look at the glass half full in being able to be here in person after the nearly two years that this place was a shadow of what it should be for Canadians.

The work of the House administration and the Speaker's staff was Herculean. They changed centuries of tradition to allow us to participate during times that we had never seen before and could not have foreseen. Through all of that, we were able to work as parliamentarians and serve our constituents and Canadians as we worked to bring life back to normal.

Our health care workers have done incredible work. I am so proud to be from a riding in which the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit has the highest vaccination rate in the province of Ontario, reporting last week that more than 99% of residents had received their first dose and more than 96% had received two doses. Why did my neighbours and those in the community encourage and support each other to get vaccinated? So we could get life back to the way it was before.

Of course, not everything can return to the way it was right away. We are still wearing our masks when we are close to each other indoors, we have to practise outstanding hand hygiene and we try to keep our distance. However, we have slowly seen the return, because of the steps that folks have taken to slow and stop the spread of COVID-19, of things starting to get back to normal. Public events, sporting events and team sports for our children have come back, and we are doing it safely.

What we have done over the last couple of days here is represent Canadians in a safe and effective way. This is what we are looking to do. Folks in my community are struggling. They are struggling with the runaway cost of the living increases they are facing. They cannot afford a full tank of gas. They have to get half a tank, hoping that will get them through to payday. They cannot afford the regular food that they buy for their families because their dollars are just not going as far.

They are very concerned about the price of propane. In rural areas where people are not heating with natural gas, propane prices are out of control. People are worried and they want to see their representatives ensuring that the government is doing everything in its power to get inflation under control, that the Government of Canada is being an outstanding steward of taxpayer dollars. We really need all hands on deck, all eyes on the prize to ensure that happens.

I was so proud, as a Canadian and as a parliamentarian, to participate in the unanimous decision to take some of the steps that we took so we could continue to meet during this once-in-a-century pandemic that we were facing. However, the situation on the ground has changed. We now have followed the best medical advice, we are following the science and we are able to gather safely. What is regrettable to have seen as a parliamentarian and a Canadian is that the government has taken opportunity to use this pandemic to hide itself from scrutiny of the opposition, from the media and from Canadians.

When members were not in the House, they were not facing the media on their way in or their way out. Ministers would be on the Hill, but not appearing in their seats in the chamber. The tools that we had to bring witnesses and ministers before parliamentary committees were interrupted too many times to count by technical difficulties. Now we do not need to subject ourselves to those interruptions, with rare exception.

• (1825)

Should one of our colleagues, heaven forbid, contract COVID-19 or any other illness, we should return to the time-tested practice our system has used and pair. We talk about collaboration across the aisle, so let us pair with another member. When folks are recovering from an illness, we should not be asking them to dial in and

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vote from home. No. They should take the time to get well for themselves, their families and their constituents. The pairing mechanism would achieve exactly what the government has proposed.

I look forward to having the opportunity to continue my remarks on this. I appreciate having had a few minutes to speak to it today. I will have more to say tomorrow, and I should note that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill when I resume.

• (1830)

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for finishing right on time. It was perfect. He has four minutes coming to him when the debate returns.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In a way that would not put any of my colleagues on the spot, I ask, as a gentle reminder to members on both sides of the House, that when they are not speaking, perhaps they could follow the best public health advice and wear their masks while they are seated.

**The Speaker:** To all members who are here for the evening and for the duration of COVID-19, if you are sitting in your place, please make sure that your mask is on, unless you are speaking. Then you can remove it during your talk.

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## EMERGENCY DEBATE

[*English*]

### FLOODING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the consideration of a motion to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the flooding in British Columbia.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP)** moved:

That this House do now adjourn.

[*Translation*]

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am truly honoured to be the first member to rise this evening to speak to such a crucial issue.

I first want to acknowledge that we are gathering today on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

To me, it is clear that we are in the midst of a climate emergency. I just participated in the 26th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Glasgow. This was my 12th time participating, and the situation is graver now than it was the first time.

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[English]

I am desperately concerned that the climate emergency is outpacing any government's actions to take control of the situation, and I want to address this issue while cognizant of the time. I take to heart the remarks from earlier today by my friend and colleague the hon. member for Abbotsford, who also wanted an emergency debate. We want to focus on what has just happened in our home province of British Columbia. However, there is a context here, and any action we take now that ignores the root causes of what just happened invites worse to come. We need to take account of root causes and we need to take appropriate actions.

With the Speaker's indulgence, my intention is to start with the global, move to the national and then focus most of my remarks on the provincial and the local and what we do now. I hope we can approach this issue tonight, all of us members of Parliament from five different parties, in a way that reflects the best of us in recognizing that we have more in common than in difference.

I am looking across the way right now to my friend from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, who referenced earlier today that it was in his riding that Lytton burned to the ground in 15 minutes earlier this summer. I do not think we can only look at the floods that just happened. A lot of events have taken place and hit the same communities, particularly the same first nations communities, over and over again within the period of time during which the House was adjourned, from the end of June until reconvening on Monday.

We have to recognize that we are in a climate emergency, as the House did on June 17, 2019. Some of us were in our seats then. Through a motion from the former minister of environment, Catherine McKenna, the House voted that we were indeed in a climate emergency and had to take account of that. However, nothing has changed. We do not act as though we are in an emergency.

• (1835)

[Translation]

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the large scientific body also known as IPCC, has released unequivocal research. It presented a report on 1.5°C in October 2018. The news was so terrible that the IPCC called for immediate action. Three years have now passed, and the situation is even worse than it was in October 2018.

[English]

We were told by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in their emergency report on 1.5°C, which is the target of the Paris Agreement, that we are at desperate risk of missing it. It is not a political target. The reason the IPCC was asked to produce the report they produced was to inform policy-makers, politicians and government leaders around the world about the difference between a 2°C global average temperature increase and 1.5°C. I will not go through all the details of the report. I cannot in the time available. However, as one of the government leaders, the Prime Minister of Barbados, just said a few days ago in Glasgow, 2°C is a death sentence for us; only at 1.5°C do we survive.

What the IPCC sketched out was not that 1.5°C makes us live in a safe world, but that it is one we can survive in. It would allow coral reefs to survive, mostly. It would protect our Arctic, mostly but not entirely. We would experience permafrost thaw, but it would not be a fatal level of permafrost thaw. Over and over again, that report, which is seminal, pointed out that 1.5°C was essential.

Then we had, this summer, the report of the first working group, the sixth assessment report of the IPCC, which was labelled by the Secretary-General of the United Nations as code red for humanity. It said that everything they had warned about in 2018 is happening faster and with greater severity than they had anticipated.

We know globally that we are now on track to shooting well past 2°C, well past the danger zone. This is not about bad weather. This is about whether human civilization can survive. That is what we are talking about. No issue could be more riveting and the stakes could not be higher. Still, on a day-to-day basis we have this ability to function as though there is still time.

Sadly and tragically, the Government of Canada chose to use only part of the IPCC advice, the part saying that if we hold to 1.5°C, by mid-century, 2050, we should be at net zero. I need to enforce this and I need to say it slowly, particularly for my Liberal colleagues, because I am not sure that the government understands the way this information is being manipulated by someone, somewhere.

The IPCC has never said the goal is net zero by 2050 and then we will get through all this and human civilization will survive. They have said very clearly that there is only one pathway to hold to 1.5°C, and it starts with at least 45% reductions globally, which is a lot, against 2010 levels by 2030. If we do not do that, net zero by 2050 is meaningless. It will be too late. We will have taken a very significant step toward the unbearable risks of unstoppable self-accelerating global warming triggered by what some people call points of no return or tipping points. The important thing to say is that we still have time.

[Translation]

Time is running out, but it is not too late. We must act immediately to reduce greenhouse gases and make changes to protect nature, and forests in particular.

[English]

We have just barely enough time, and in COP26 we did not do what needed to be done, not Canada, not anyone. As the UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, COP26 was not a failure in that 1.5°C, as a possible end point for the global warming nightmare, is possible but it is on life support. That is where we are, so by 2022, and preferably before then, this country needs to do more.

I know I risk being heckled, but at the national level, if we are serious about the climate emergency, this must be said: We cannot be serious about the climate emergency while building the Trans Mountain pipeline. We cannot be serious about the climate emergency while subsidizing fracking and LNG and all of the fossil fuels. We must bring in a just transition act. We must take care of workers. We must make this transition.

Moving from global to national, we know we have a lot of work to do, and I support many of the measures that have been put forward by the government. However, in their totality they are insufficient to ensure that my children alive today will be in a livable world when they are my age. That is something that affects all of us deeply and personally, and I am grateful that we have a chance to talk about it.

As I am talking about the personal side, let me shift to British Columbia. This climate emergency hit really close to home this summer. In British Columbia, the heat dome, as it was called, was more than a heat wave: It killed nearly 600 people in four days. One of those who were affected and did not die is my stepdaughter. She is in her thirties and happened to be at my husband's family farm in Ashcroft, British Columbia, not far from Lytton, where the temperature at the farm hit 50°C.

● (1840)

I do not think any of us here can really imagine what that is like. She said it was like having a hair dryer blowing on her face all the time, outdoors. It hurt one's skin. She nearly died and had brain edema. Another family member was a first responder, pulling people out of shacks and trailers and putting them in ambulances and knowing they would not live.

We have to do a much better job, when we talk about what do we do now and what have we learned. We need health care protocols that are radically revamped, that look at the question of what they do when they find someone whose organs are already cooking. It is not the protocol they were using in the summer in B.C.

We had wildfires from early April until the end of September. That wildfire season in British Columbia saw 1,600 wildfires destroy over 868,000 hectares. That also contributed to how bad the flooding damage was, because the ground had become hydrophobic, meaning it expelled the water that fell on the ground. The ground could not absorb water; the ground repelled it. The flooding was worse because of the fires.

Of course, the flooding was described as an atmospheric river. We learn new terms as we go through this. During the fire season, we learned that there were things called pyrocumulonimbus clouds. Those are clouds that shoot sparks. They create more fires.

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We are not in a normal climate situation. We have entered the world of a climate emergency. I should say more, of course. As people know, the flooding destroyed highways. When will Coquihalla Highway ever get repaired? There are massive amounts of damage: 18 highways and five bridges significantly impacted by the flooding; the loss of life; the terrifying experience for people caught in mudslides; the horror of losing farms. I mentioned my husband's farm in Ashcroft. We have, for the second time, taken in climate refugees. In the summer, we took in people who were on wildfire alerts. Now there are people who have lost everything in the floods.

This is unbearable, but there are things we can do. We must be serious about doing them and it is a national effort. We know, from the Speech from the Throne, that there is finally a commitment. I have heard it before, actually. I remember the previous Conservative government promised a national adaptation plan. The goal here is to act to reduce the damage of the climate emergency to the greatest extent possible by reducing our dependence on fossil fuels as quickly as possible, making transitions to renewable energy and so on.

There is an impact that is baked into our atmosphere. There are levels of climate damage that we will not be able to avoid, so we have to avoid those levels of climate impact to which we cannot adapt, such as, as I mentioned, runaway global warming that would mean that we could not really survive on this planet as a species. We have to adapt to those levels that we can no longer avoid.

Adaptation involves a lot of elements. Yes, the ministers for public safety, public security and infrastructure must be seized of this. This is a whole-of-government approach. I rarely urge the Government of Canada to consider something that a U.S. administration is doing, but the U.S. President has appointed John Kerry, who used to be secretary of state in the Obama administration, not as the head of his environment department but as a key member of the National Security Council inside the White House.

● (1845)

[Translation]

That is because the President of the United States fully understands that climate change is not and will never be an environmental issue. Rather, it is a threat to national security, kind of like a military enemy from a bygone era.

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[English]

We are faced with a national security threat that requires a whole-of-government approach. It is particularly important, as I look at the member for Nunavut, that we have to think about what is happening in our Arctic. We have to think like a circumpolar country. We have to know that we have to keep the permafrost cold enough so that it does not thaw. The permafrost contains methane, which is a powerful greenhouse gas, and if we lost the permafrost of the world we would be releasing four times more carbon than humanity has burned since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

We know that we have to keep our Arctic cold enough, as Sheila Watt-Cloutier told us years ago. To protect the human rights of the Inuit peoples, we must keep the Arctic cold, and to protect traditional hunting and culture. Also, for the sake of all species on this planet, we need to keep the Arctic cold to keep that methane in the permafrost and keep it from thawing.

There are some really significant drivers here. Let us think about what we do creatively.

In the immediate short term, we need more resources for British Columbia. We need to help rebuild key roads and railroads so that supply chains are protected and the economy recovers. We need to help individual farmers and homeowners who did not have insurance. We need to find a way to help families rebuild their lives on a very personal level. We have to think about rebuilding, retooling and adapting to the climate emergency that we now experience.

We have to think creatively about things that we do not often think about. In this emergency, we needed volunteers jumping into their boats and rescuing people. It is not comfortable for governments to think, “Well, those are uninsured people. Is that really a good idea?” If the people of Abbotsford and Merritt had not shown up and sandbagged key infrastructure, the situation would have been much worse. How do we think creatively about climate adaptation corps to respond to emergencies and create resilient communities where people are deputized to go out and save lives?

A major event happened in my community over Christmas two years ago. There was off-the-charts, climate-induced crazy weather. Large trees were blown down across the roads. It was Christmas, and everybody lost electricity. This happens in major weather events. We lose our land line and cell coverage and we cannot move around, and in this case it was because trees were across the road. People in my community are smart people and know that, when the power is out because trees are down, it is illegal to go out with chainsaws to cut up the trees and help their neighbours, but everybody did it. They took care of each other through Christmas. They are not going to leave someone in their 90s who is living on their own because it is illegal to cut trees to move them off the road.

We need to figure this out. How do we empower people who know how to react in an emergency and create trained, legal, appropriate responses that engage our volunteers? I know the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola will agree with me that there were great acts of bravery throughout the communities with individuals acting, and we need to harness that.

The bottom line is that we are looking at climate emergencies that have killed hundreds of people in the last number of months in British Columbia, with nearly 600 in the heat dome and more now through the floods. What we need to think about is that the global average temperature is now 1.1°C above what it was before the Industrial Revolution. We are trying to see if we can hang on to 1.5°C, which is not a safe zone and will be worse than what it is like right now at 1.1°C.

• (1850)

[Translation]

There is nothing more important than protecting young people, our children and grandchildren, against the major threat of climate change.

[English]

We are not doing everything we need to do yet. We still do not act on a day-to-day basis as though we understand that we are in a climate emergency. I would urge the government, since we have already bought Trans Mountain and we have all those workers and all that equipment, to just change the mandate of that Crown corporation and put those people and that equipment to work to rebuild, to repair our highways, and to help protect against the next major climate event.

We know that in the last 24 hours on Cape Breton Island, where I am from, we see roads washed out, and we see roads washed out near Corner Brook, Newfoundland, Labrador. There is no one part of this country that is safe and secure any more than there is one place on this planet safe and secure in the climate emergency.

We have to all pull together, and as the Speech from the Throne said:

[Translation]

“Now, we must go further, faster.”

[English]

I am sad to say that I do not see in the Speech from the Throne the things we must do, but we know what they are. Tonight is a good opportunity to put forward those good ideas and together say, “We work for our communities; we work for Canada and we will save the planet.”

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on what the member just made reference to, and that is pulling together.

As we look at what is taking place in British Columbia, we recognize that not only the national government but also the provincial government, municipalities and many other stakeholders all have an interest in making sure that B.C. and the people who are so dramatically affected are lifted out of this and that we help build back.

Can the member provide her thoughts in regard to just how important it is that the different levels of government continue to show that sympathy and provide the support that is so critically important to help these communities in need?

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, it is critically important. It is going to have a big price tag. I was struck when the hon. Prime Minister spoke in Glasgow, and made reference to Lytton. Lytton is still there and it needs to be rebuilt. The people of Lytton are there and it is a major first nations community as well, with scattered first nations around it.

It is important that we leave no community behind in this, but it is not going to be inexpensive. For decades, studies have shown that the costs of ignoring climate change were going to be far larger than the costs of action. We now find ourselves in the unenviable position where we need to do both harder and faster.

Fortunately, rebuilding communities does stimulate the economy, getting all the people possible who can get to work to help farms rebuild. There has been so much loss, a devastating loss, that it is hard to imagine how some families will pull everything together, but they need to know there is going to be a source of funds to get their farm back up and running. They need to know that their home can be repaired, even if the insurance companies say they are not covered for this kind of flood. We are going to have to rethink how we respond to what used to be called natural disasters which are no longer natural.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to salute my fellow British Columbian for her comments today and her sympathy for all those who have been affected by the flooding in our great province.

The hon. member talked about needing to do things differently. Tonight, I know that we are going to debate lots of different ideas and I do hope we hit some big ideas. For example, I have heard from small municipalities about the DFAA, the disaster finance assistance program, and they cannot afford the 20% that is expected, while senior levels of government are expected to do 80%. What does the member think about that?

The member also talked about empowering communities. The last time the federal government arranged with the Province of British Columbia was in the gas tax agreement of 2014. I think there is an area that we can improve upon. Tim Roberts, who is an area director for rural Keremeos, has suggested that small regional districts and municipalities should be able to use some of the left-over gas tax toward flood mitigation and fire mitigation, because many times there is interface area where there is fuel that can easily be removed if they were to hire students over the summer to do so.

Can the member comment on some of the big ideas, but also some of the small ideas that are so important to help our communities adapt to climate change?

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• (1855)

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, in the same spirit of working across party lines, I want to salute the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola for attending COP26, not just for a couple of days, but for the full two weeks. I saw his comments in the media recently that the nature-based solutions that were talked about at COP are really important.

I would suggest too that students in the summer plant trees restoring what I referred to as hydrophobic soil. On the hill that was burnt off in 2017, the Elephant Hill fire, nothing is growing back because the soil just became baked. The top surface was destroyed by the heat of the fire. We need to get trees, and not just any trees, but trees that are right for that ecosystem. That will help restore our salmon. That will help bring things back. Those jobs and that ecosystem are key parts of responding to the climate emergency.

I just say to his point about small communities, that absolutely, they do not have the money to come up with 20%. We need to be much more creative of how we are going to help particularly small, impoverished rural and remote communities cope with an increased, and I am afraid to say inevitable, level of extreme weather events that wipe out their infrastructure. We need to be really creative.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands. She knows how much I appreciate her. I tell her every chance I get. I thank her again today.

Since this is the first time I am speaking during this 44th Parliament, I want to thank the people of Lac-Saint-Jean for placing their confidence in me once again on September 20. I also thank everyone who participated in the democratic process in the riding of Lac-Saint-Jean during this federal election. I thank my partner of 24 years, Mylène Cloutier, and my grown children, Émile, Jeanne and Simone, without whom none of this would be possible.

That being said, what is happening right now in British Columbia is horrible. We know that it is a consequence of climate change. A person would have to be blind to deny this simple fact. Today, in question period, the Prime Minister suddenly announced that he knows the difference between provincial and federal jurisdictions. He told us that he could not intervene in Alberta's oil and gas industry for jurisdictional reasons.

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Is that not contradictory, when this government that promised to end oil subsidies has in fact increased them over the past few years?

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean for getting re-elected, and I thank him for his question. When he talks about his family, I of course think about his father, and I send them my best wishes.

It is obvious that we have a problem here in Canada. We say all the right things, but we take very little action. I recognize that it is difficult for the federal government to have a good relationship with Alberta. I am thinking back to the stop acid rain campaign, which sought to do away with chemicals that damage the ozone layer.

Here in Canada, we have done great things at the global level to protect life on this planet. We could never achieve our goals without extraordinary moral and political courage.

[English]

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands talked about the tragedy of losing more than 500 people in the heat dome. Most of these people were low-income people living in urban heat islands, in apartments without air conditioning. The federal government could come up with the funding to switch the natural gas furnaces in those buildings to clean heat pumps that could cool those buildings as well as heat them, so we could save hundreds of lives across this country and reduce emissions as well.

I am hoping this is one of the ideas we have to come up with in this era of adaptation.

• (1900)

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned. The impacts of the climate crisis are understood to be intersectional. Whether we are looking globally to developing countries or within Canada, it is the poor, the indigenous and people of colour who are most often victims of climate events.

In the case of the heat dome, I was horrified that Premier John Horgan said they had no way of knowing and they thought it was just going to be hotter weather. I was horrified that both the federal and provincial governments, British Columbia and Canada, continued to increase fossil fuel subsidies at the very moment they should have been cut, but I totally agree there are things we could do.

They include things like shade, more urban forests and more opportunities to let people go into parks. It was horrifying to me that Vancouver officials did not want people going into the Strathcona Park area for fear they would set up tents again, but that was life-giving shade. We need more attention to how we survive, more attention to cooling centres and more attention to social networks of resilience that get people out of their homes into safe, cool locations where they are given water and have access to ice.

It is saving lives that counts on a minute-to-minute basis, and we need to be much better prepared.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the Minister of Emergency Preparedness.

It is hard to even believe what is happening in B.C.: that after a summer of drought in Abbotsford, people's homes are now under water; that after living with the fear of wildfires months ago, Merritt now faces the devastation of flooding; that whole highways have been washed away; that farmers have lost whole herds; and that families have lost loved ones.

[Translation]

Times have been tough lately. To the people of British Columbia, I know that you have suffered a great deal. This summer, on top of the pandemic, you had to deal with record-breaking heat and devastating forest fires. I lived in British Columbia for many years, and I know what strong and resilient people you are. Today, I want to tell you again that our government will continue to be there for you.

From the start, we have taken action to help British Columbia as quickly as possible. The minister will provide more details in a moment, but we immediately convened the incident response group to bring the help that was needed to those who needed it.

[English]

Over 500 Canadian Armed Forces members are now deployed. They are delivering food and supplies to communities and putting down sandbags to protect homes while repairing infrastructure and rescuing livestock. There is also significant support with helicopters and aircraft, with Griffons, a Cyclone and a Chinook now in B.C., as well as a Hercules and two Twin Otters. Reservists have been called in, including to help in Abbotsford.

On top of that, there is a team ensuring the essentials, including fuel, keep moving. I know this is a concern for a lot of people and businesses. We are issuing interim orders to get food, fuel and supplies to communities and farms. Just today, we approved a request from the Port of Vancouver for over \$4 million to create extra capacity so that ships are not turned away while the port clears the backlog of traffic.

Our focus is getting everyone through this crisis, which includes almost \$4.5 million in immediate support to first nation communities to keep people safe and start rebuilding. There is no doubt that the scale of this disaster is staggering. What it means for people's lives and businesses is devastating. We are here to help with whatever British Columbians need, and we will work hand in hand with the government of B.C. on direct support.



On that note, I want to thank all of the first responders, the women and men in uniform who stepped up to serve. Of course, standing right behind each and every one of them is everyone across the province who has shown what British Columbians are made of. I think of the family that owns a restaurant in Hope and handed out food to folks stuck in their cars, the volunteers in Surrey gurdwaras who sent meals to those who lost their homes, and of the women and men in Abbotsford who last week passed sandbags hand to hand through the night.

● (1905)

[Translation]

People across the province have answered the call. Together, we will get British Columbia out of this crisis. Now is the time to do all we can to protect families, help farmers and get trucks back on the road. We need to do everything we can now, but we also need to act for the future because we know that this is not an isolated incident.

[English]

For British Columbians this fall it has been flooding and landslides; last summer, droughts and wildfires. For people out east it is a state of emergency and washed-out highways because of storms hitting hard right now. For the people in Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia, we will be there for them, but for tonight we ask that they please stay safe and follow local guidelines.

If the last year has shown us anything, it is that the impacts of climate change are here sooner than expected and they are devastating, so on adaptation we have to accelerate our work. I could talk about investments to weatherproof homes or the half a billion dollars we will put towards community-based firefighters and equipment. All of that is key, but when it comes to solutions it is not just about one program, one investment or one community. It is about putting the full power of government and the entire force of our commitment behind real, meaningful climate action.

[Translation]

Right now, as we rebuild our communities, we also need to take action for their future. There is no simple or easy solution, but we will continue to move forward and take real action.

[English]

These are difficult, heartbreaking days and there will be difficult days still ahead, but together we will rebuild hand in hand with the government of B.C., with first nations, with municipalities and with all British Columbians. We will help them recover from this crisis and rebuild their homes, their businesses and their lives. Together we will reach better, brighter times.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this year I requested that special funding through the Treasury Board Secretariat management reserve be delivered expeditiously for the Village of Lytton. Can the Prime Minister provide any assurances about the type of funding the Village of Lytton will receive and what funding stream will be utilized by the Government of Canada to provide the support he just assured the House would be coming to help my constituents?

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**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his advocacy, for his strong words earlier today in his S.O. 31 and, indeed, for continuing to be such a powerful voice for his community and for the people from his community who have been displaced across the province as people have welcomed them in following devastations like what happened in Lytton.

We will rebuild Lytton. We will do it in partnership with the community, with the people of the community and with the Province of British Columbia. We have been engaging closely with the province to ensure that the resources are there. In my many conversations with the mayor of Lytton and community members, but also the mayors of places like Merritt, Abbotsford, Chilliwack and others over the past weeks, it has been clear that we have a lot of work to do. This federal government will be there as a partner in rebuilding for a stronger future.

● (1910)

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of his speech, I heard the Prime Minister tell us that his government will continue to be there for British Columbians, and I wondered what “being there” means. If “being there” only means putting out fires, I think that is not enough. We also need to prevent fires.

We need to show empathy and sympathy tonight, but what we will need in the future is courage. Courage means being aware that in 2018, 2019 and 2020, the government invested \$14 billion annually to support oil and gas.

On the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, we saw \$560 million invested in the emissions reduction fund go solely toward supporting oil and gas.

If the Prime Minister is serious and he is there for Canadians, what he should do tonight is say that he will do whatever he can to end fossil fuel subsidies.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, “being there” for the people of British Columbia means being there with more than 500 Canadian Armed Forces members to help them get through this terrible time.

It means being there with investments and money to help people who have been displaced, to help them rebuild their homes and highways quickly and to help them get back to work.

Yes, we are there, and those are not just words. We are backing those words up with action right now. I also want to point out that Canadians across the country are demonstrating tremendous generosity right now by sending help to the people dealing with these challenges.

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At the same time, “being there” means being there for decades to come. That is why we launched the most ambitious plan to fight climate change this country has ever seen. We are taking concrete action by putting a hard cap on oil and gas companies' greenhouse gas emissions and reducing those emissions, by putting a price on pollution, by investing to protect our land and oceans, and much more.

We are there now, and we will be there for decades to come.

[English]

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government spends a few hundred million dollars each year on climate adaptation, mainly through the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund. It is chronically oversubscribed. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities said, basically, that it should be 10 times that size.

Where is the ambition? We need ambition here, just like we need ambition on climate mitigation.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, the ambition has been there since 2015 as we have invested record amounts in infrastructure, not only in response to disasters but in flood mitigation in and around Calgary, for example, in water controls throughout the Prairies, and in building back better after floods in central Canada and in the east. We have continued to invest in resilience and adaptation, and we will continue to.

Yes, the disaster program is oversubscribed. We will continue to increase funding as we help communities and Canadians get through these difficult times.

**Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to have the opportunity to rise in the House to contribute to the discussion with my parliamentary colleagues about the tragic flooding that has been impacting British Columbia. I would like to begin by acknowledging the friends and families of those who have lost loved ones and all those who have been impacted by these floods, landslides and extreme weather conditions in B.C., not just during the most recent floods but also through the very challenging times last summer with wildfires occurring and the extreme weather event that also impacted that province.

This is also an opportunity to extend our thanks and gratitude to the first responders, search-and-rescue volunteers, emergency managers and Canadian Armed Forces members who have been working tirelessly to keep people safe during this difficult time. I would also like to acknowledge community leaders, mayors, police chiefs, fire chiefs and ordinary citizens who demonstrated compassion, courage and extraordinary citizenship in standing up and being there for their fellow citizens.

I would like to provide the House with a brief update. The situation on the ground overall continues to improve, in terms of dropping river levels and incremental progress on damage assessment, repair and restoration and community support. River advisories and warnings continue to be downgraded as river flows return to normal. The provincial emergency order remains in effect until December 1, and as we continue to work closely with the Province of British Columbia to support its recovery, Canadians can be assured

that the federal government remains vigilant and will be ready to respond to all evolving threats related to this emergency.

Last week, I received a request from the government of the Province of British Columbia for assistance. This included a request for air support to evacuate people affected by the floods, to reach important supply routes disrupted by the floods, to help vulnerable, stranded people in distress and to provide personnel to mitigate the effects of the floods, including protecting critical infrastructure, access roads and properties. I can advise the House that over 500 members of the Canadian Armed Forces have answered that call, and are deployed on the ground providing support and services to the people of British Columbia.

We have also been working collaboratively to coordinate communications with the B.C. government and our colleagues to ensure that people are kept well informed to take actions to keep themselves safe and to recover from this very difficult experience. We remain committed to strengthening and addressing national standards for public alerts so that Canadians, regardless of where they live, will receive timely notification of any threats and have the knowledge to make informed and safe decisions.

In times of emergency such as this, I am also pleased to note that many of us have been able to set aside our partisan affiliations to come together for the residents of British Columbia. Over the past week, I have had the privilege to meet with and to brief the local members of Parliament's constituents impacted most significantly by this flood. Both Conservative and NDP members have come together to meet with me and provide information and support to ensure that I was informed. They have been extremely active in bringing forward the concerns and needs of their constituents. I want to thank them for their collaboration and working together.

I also want to advise the House that our government has initiated a whole-of-government response and has convened three meetings of the incident response group in order to respond. Each of the ministers of the government was asked to provide the steps they are taking to address the province's most pressing needs. As a small example, the Minister of Employment mentioned this past weekend that British Columbians who had lost their jobs or been displaced could and should apply for EI online as soon as possible, even without records of employment. To alleviate pressures on indigenous communities, Indigenous Services Canada's emergency management assistance program is providing \$4.4 million to the First Nations' Emergency Services Society. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is working very closely with the industry to support the humane and safe transport of animals and disposal of livestock that have died in this event. Health Canada is supporting its provincial health counterparts that have been so heavily affected by COVID, but also in their response to the recent flooding. The Canadian Coast Guard is engaged in responding to a large number of reports of drifting, sunken and beached vessels. There are many other examples.

As a direct response to a request from the B.C. government, there has also been an effort to change the exemptions for people living in the Lower Mainland to cross into the United States to obtain gas and other essential goods, such as fuel. Notwithstanding some early inconsistencies, additional guidance has been offered to both CBSA and the Public Health Agency. I am informed that this is now working very effectively and we are taking care of those cases that were mishandled in the first place.

● (1915)

Again, I would like to thank my colleagues for bringing those concerns forward and enabling us to quickly and effectively answer those questions. There are a number of other things I am happy to share with my colleagues. I would invite those who have questions or concerns, or want to bring concerns of their constituents to my attention, to reach out to me. I will respond quickly and I am grateful for their help.

I also see this debate today as an opportunity for us to reflect on how we can work together not only to reassure those who have been affected by the flooding, but to let them know we are focused on their needs by demonstrating our shared commitment to serving Canadians in some of the most difficult times they face. This also gives us an opportunity to perhaps be forward-leaning: not just reacting to what has transpired but changing the way in which we prepare for these events in the future. It allows us to acknowledge that in rebuilding from the damage that has impacted so many, we must also think about building back a more resilient Canada to ensure that critical infrastructure can withstand the impact of climate change.

This was echoed yesterday in the Speech from the Throne, in which we acknowledged the need to take action to prevent and prepare for extreme weather events brought about by climate change. We are seeing an increase in the number and severity of natural disasters. On average, Canada is warming twice as quickly as the rest of the world, and our north three times as quickly.

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The science and experience of Canadians make this point clear: We must do more and we must act now to prepare this country for climate-impacted reality. The events of the past two years, including the pandemic, have shone a light on emergency management in Canada. Since January 2020, via the Government Operations Centre, the Government of Canada has supported 147 requests for federal assistance from the provinces and territories to respond to everything from the ongoing pandemic to wildfires, floods and winter storms.

However, we cannot be solely reactive. We need to better prepare for emergencies and strengthen our infrastructure, and that is why the government has created the stand-alone Ministry of Emergency Preparedness. I want to thank the Prime Minister for his confidence in assigning me this new role. In this role, I will be reaching out to our partners across the emergency management spectrum, including all orders of government, indigenous leaders, industry, the voluntary sector, academia and partners across the federal government to advance the work in this area that is increasingly a priority. Together we will create a more resilient, sustainable approach to emergency management that will help Canada prepare to mitigate, respond to and recover from disasters and we will be undertaking an effort to build a national culture of emergency preparedness.

This partnership approach has been evident in some of our most recent work. For example, at an FPT ministers' meeting we recently released the emergency management strategy for Canada, which identifies shared priorities that will strengthen Canada's resilience by 2030. The priority area in this strategy is to improve our understanding of disaster risks in all areas of society and how we can work together to minimize these risks.

For example, in budget 2019, we funded public safety over five years to improve Canada's ability to predict and respond to hazards, developing a national risk profile in collaboration with federal, provincial and territorial partners, as well as municipal and indigenous partners. It is a strategic national disaster risk and capability assessment that uses scientific evidence and stakeholder input to create a forward-looking picture of Canada's natural disasters and risks. It is based on scientific findings from various departments, other jurisdictions and research institutes, and it is clear that we need to strengthen our readiness to respond quickly and effectively to disaster events. One example of this is the work we have been doing to fund and support the Canadian Red Cross. Through this funding, the Red Cross has been able to strengthen its capacity and bring its expertise to help Canadians in long-term care facilities, isolation sites, and testing and vaccination sites as well as to facilities to help those who have been displaced by natural disasters.

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We are also leading work on the co-development of Canada's first national adaptation strategy. This will help Canada respond to the shared reality of climate-change impacts by uniting all orders of government, indigenous people and private companies in a whole-of-society approach to climate-change adaptation.

The impact in British Columbia reminds us that flooding continues to be the most frequent and costly natural disaster in Canada, causing on average over \$1 billion in direct damage to homes, property and infrastructure annually. The events in British Columbia will significantly raise this average. An estimated \$8.5 billion has been committed to provinces through disaster financial assistance arrangements since they were created in 1970; however, 97% of these costs have been incurred over the past 25 years, and we are seeing an exponential increase in these expenses. As the member opposite mentioned, there is also the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund for disaster financial assistance.

• (1920)

All of those things will be available, but I want to assure him that, in our conversations with the provinces and territories, it is clear we have to make more significant investments to help our provincial and territorial partners build critical infrastructure that is sustainable, resilient and adaptive to the new climate reality.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, about a month ago I, together with the members for Abbotsford and Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, met with the mayor of Abbotsford. My riding of Langley—Aldergrove touches the western part of Abbotsford. The mayor summoned us to this meeting to explain some of the weaknesses in the diking system around the Sumas Prairie, for which a request for federal funding of about \$500 million had been turned down once again. In retrospect, that would have been money well spent on strengthening the diking system.

Will the minister acknowledge that we are unprepared for the immediate realities of climate change and extreme weather events?

• (1925)

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his advocacy on behalf of the community.

I know the mayor of Abbotsford well. I visited that town, and whenever I go to that town, I make a point of going to see the mayor. I know he is a strong advocate for his community.

I also want to acknowledge the event that has just transpired with an absolutely incredible amount of rainfall falling in that basin, although I am a little reluctant to use the term “unprecedented”. That water is going in and obviously almost overcoming the existing diking system. I thank God it did not, and underscore that it is the result of the incredible work of people from Chilliwack coming down and helping to sandbag it at the Barrowtown Pump Station. This managed to save that circumstance.

It is very clear that we need to make significant new investments. I can also tell members that there are approximately 120 Canadian Armed Forces members in Abbotsford today, and they are helping to restore that dike. In order to deal with that weather event, we are watching the weather very closely over the next several days. There will be up to 70 millimetres of rain falling in the Fraser Valley over

the coming 10 or 11 days, so we are making sure that the infrastructure is there in the short term. In the long term, there is much more work to do.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the minister's obvious sincerity today. In a debate like the one we are having this evening, we need to put partisanship aside and work together.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to express my deepest sympathy to our friends in British Columbia and let them know that they are in our thoughts. Some people are probably going through the worst moments of their lives today, or, at the very least, moments that they will never forget.

Members have spoken about the future. It is good that we are doing everything that is being done right now, and we have to give it our all, because the present is what is important.

We do, however, need to think about the future. I need to take the Liberal government, my esteemed friends on the other side of the House, to task for failing to follow through on the promises that it has been making for years to eliminate subsidies to oil companies. Does my colleague agree that the government needs to stop this madness?

[*English*]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the Bloc's expression of solidarity in this time of great challenge for Canadians right across the country.

We note this week, and in the past few weeks, that the problems have been centred very much in British Columbia, but we are seeing significant rain events impacting the people of Nova Scotia and now Newfoundland. Of course, the impact of floods has been even more difficult, in many aspects, in areas of Quebec, so I think there is agreement.

There is national consensus that more must be done, and I think there is a growing consensus in this country, certainly shared by the members of the House, that we must take bolder and more ambitious climate action to address what is becoming far too obvious: the impact of climate change on the everyday lives and safety of Canadians.

We are ambitious in our plans to address climate change, and we also understand that it is not just simply thinking it is necessary to build back a cleaner and greener economy for Canada. We also have to create a more resilient economy and society to ensure the safety of our communities and our citizens in their homes, and to maintain essential supply lines. All of those things are being impacted by climate events.

We share the ambition, and we are committed to working hard with members to address the real impacts we are seeing every day that climate change is having on the lives of Canadians.

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the wonderful people of Abbotsford for continuing to support my work in the House and my representation of their interests as their MP.

Notwithstanding the disaster that has befallen our community, I am confident that the people of Abbotsford are up to the enormous task of recovering and rebuilding from the calamity that has engulfed us. By now, Canadians will have heard, and indeed much of the rest of the world has taken notice, of the catastrophe that struck our peaceful Fraser Valley and other sections of southern British Columbia.

Like Noah of old, we were told that a historic weather event was on its way, and the climatologists called it an “atmospheric river”. That was a term unfamiliar to most of us. We certainly had no idea how bad and devastating that event would be.

In all of my years living in greater Vancouver and in the Fraser Valley, I have never, ever experienced so much rain. In fact, it rained so hard that the rainfall set records in 20 of our local communities. For example, Abbotsford had 173 millimetres of rain within a 24-hour period, Chilliwack had 219 millimetres and Hope had 252 millimetres all at one time, and the destruction was enormous.

Creeks and rivers cascaded down mountainsides, overflowed their banks and surged across flood plains. Waterlogged hillsides collapsed and became rock and mudslides that buried and destroyed highways and bridges, rail lines, hydro and telecommunication lines, and other critical infrastructure. Culverts, drainage pipes and ditches were all overwhelmed. Roads were closed as massive puddles and ponds formed on many roadways throughout our region. Dikes were breached in many places, especially in Abbotsford. Our Barrowtown Pump Station was overwhelmed and was on the verge of collapse. Homes, businesses and farms became submerged. Whole communities, like Merritt and Princeton, had to be evacuated.

Flooding also set off explosions and at least one fire that destroyed at least one business in Abbotsford. Manure pits were compromised and began polluting the gathering flood waters in the surrounding land. Livestock ran out of feed and thousands of animals drowned or had to be euthanized.

In some communities, entire sewer and water systems were overrun and collapsed. Vehicles, machinery and other property were swept away, and 17,000 British Columbians across our province had to be evacuated. Communities such as Hope, Lytton and Chilliwack were left completely stranded as all transportation routes were cut off, at least temporarily. Hoarding and, sadly, even isolated looting has led to empty store shelves in some of our communities.

In my hometown of Abbotsford, the situation went from bad to worse to desperate. Homes on hillsides began to flood as gutters and drainpipes could not handle the excessive rain. Then the Sumas River began to breach its dikes that had been constructed to drain

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Sumas Prairie some 100 years ago. To make matters worse, the Nooksack River in the state of Washington to the south of us also began to flood, and washed over the border into Canada and across Sumas Prairie. Riverbanks and roadbeds began to erode, compromising flood protection and the safety of travel on those very roads.

As the flooding became worse, our number one priority was human safety, then it was animal rescue and lastly it was protection of property. The call went out for help from anywhere, from anyone, and our community stepped up big time. Local city officials, led by Mayor Braun, and B.C.'s Emergency Support Services supervised the logistical response on the ground and oversaw the evacuation of hundreds of residents to drier ground. The Canadian Armed Forces also helped out with this effort, evacuating people and animals from flooded areas and transporting equipment and feed to where it was most needed. Farmers from all over began helping each other move livestock to drier ground and clean up flooded homes and outbuildings.

● (1930)

In fact, one story made it to the national news. It was about one of our residents who took his Sea-doo out on the flood waters and helped pull cattle to safety, if members can imagine that. Organizations like our local churches offered food and shelter to those needing it. Organizations like Archway, the Salvation Army, the Menonite Central Committee and the Red Cross also provided food, shelter, clothing and counselling, as did community volunteers, who offered their homes and food to stranded travellers in places like Hope.

Our trucking industry mobilized and was able to deliver hundreds and hundreds of dump truck loads of fill to the dike breach at the Number 4 Road, thereby stanching the flow of water from the Sumas River and finally allowing the prairie to begin to drain. Gratefully, our local city workers, volunteers and armed forces were able to sandbag and keep the Barrowtown Pump Station operating. Thank goodness. Even performers Rosemary Siemens and Eli Bennett entertained displaced residents at Abbotsford's Tradex building at no charge.

I was among a number of local MPs who travelled to Ottawa and met with a number of ministers from the federal government who are responsible for the federal flood response, including the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, whom I thank for taking the meeting, and the Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada. He was present as we shared thoughts with him on this immense disaster that is being borne by communities across British Columbia.

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We are deeply grateful to the thousands of Canadians who have stepped up to donate relief and to aid in recovery efforts. I send a special thanks to the University of the Fraser Valley, the Abbotsford Community Foundation and the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce for setting up the Abbotsford disaster relief fund to manage the outpouring of generosity from Canadians across our country. I want to repeat that. It is the Abbotsford disaster relief fund. Anyone who googles it will find it on the Internet. Again, I send a big thanks to Canadians across this great country of ours for stepping up, delivering, donating and helping out.

There are serious economic consequences to this disaster. Both major rail lines, CP and CN, are badly damaged and will take time to be fully repaired. The good news is that today CP began to travel on its tracks again, and I understand that tomorrow CN will be doing the same. It is always nice to have a glimmer of hope on the horizon.

I also note that Highways 1, 3, 5 and 7 have all been badly damaged by rock and mudslides and were closed for days. In fact, Highway 5, Coquihalla, will take a lot of time to restore to its former condition. It is a mess.

Then there is the Vancouver port, which is Canada's largest. It has logistically been cut off from the rest of the country. That alone has stranded much of the 550 million dollars' worth of cargo that enters and leaves our port daily. Let us think of that. Cargo worth over half a billion dollars a day is going in and out of our port and it is stranded. Right now, it is impossible to send consumer goods and food eastward across the Rockies by truck and rail.

Another thing many British Columbians forget is that 50% of all farm gate revenues in British Columbia emanate from Abbotsford. We are the heart of farming country in British Columbia, and much of that has been stranded. For example, as the flood got worse, our farmers found it increasingly difficult to buy feed for their cattle, chickens and other livestock. Dairy farmers desperately scrambled to get their cows to higher ground and ended up having to dump milk because there was no way to get it to the processors. The processors then had no way of getting their tasty products to other markets across Canada.

Schools were closed as teachers were unable to move across the flood zone to teach students in another part of our region. Businesses and stores in or close to the flood zone were shut down, at least temporarily.

• (1935)

Traffic in some parts of our region became badly snarled as key transportation quarters were shut down because of damaged roads and roadbeds, and that included the Trans-Canada Highway, Highway 1, which connects us to the rest of Canada. As the flooding recedes, it will take some time for engineers to determine the structural integrity of that major highway. Tens of thousands of cars and trucks travel that road every single day.

There are massive economic consequences, as everyday trade and commerce have been badly disrupted. In fact, the pre-existing supply chain constraints that were already creating significant inflationary pressures on our economy and on Canadians have been exacerbated by this event. It will take years to assess the economic

damage this flood will inflict upon our country. Suffice it to say that the damage and costs will be in the many billions of dollars.

What are the human consequences? These are perhaps the most important ones. Sadly, at least four people have lost their lives as a result of this atmospheric river event. The education of our children has been disrupted. Businesses have been badly damaged and in some cases lost. Families have lost their homes, including heirlooms and memorabilia, and will need to rebuild and renovate. In many cases, insurance is non-existent or is insufficient to replace lost property.

Some employees have lost their ability to work because of the flood. In other words, life in general has again, right after the COVID event, been disrupted, this time through a weather event. The emotional and mental health costs will be enormous.

Where are we now? The minister is quite right: The flood waters are beginning to recede. However, sadly, more flood events are on their way. In fact, the first one appears to be arriving tonight. That is not good news, and there are a couple of other weather events right behind it.

We are not through this yet. Again, we do not know how bad this will be, but it will put further pressure on our dike, pump and drainage systems. Farmers and displaced homeowners are now beginning to clean up their homes and barns, hoping for the best and that this is as bad as it is going to get.

There is rotting debris everywhere, as might be expected, including canisters, barrels and containers carrying unknown substances. Some of these are almost certainly toxic. We know there are pesticides floating around on Sumas Prairie, which is not good. It is estimated that some 2,000 cattle have died in this flood and will quickly have to be removed and disposed of. Oil slicks have been identified from the air and attempts are being made to identify the source of those slicks.

There is some other good news. Highway 7 is partially open and Highway 3 is open again. My hope is at least one or two lanes of the Trans-Canada Highway will soon be restored for traffic. Also, as more good news, the pumps at Barrowtown, the last defence before we are drowned by the mighty Fraser River, are still working, and the Sumas dike has been temporarily repaired and is holding.

Sadly, there are those who chose our time of need and solidarity to engage in public finger pointing. It is a very small minority but they are out there. To be sure, the time for finger pointing will come. There is more than enough blame to go around for our failure to be fully prepared for this event. However, right now, as my colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon has repeatedly said, it is time for all hands on deck and for a team Canada approach to this disaster. I appreciate the minister's remarks as well. He clearly wants to be part of this team Canada approach. We stand with him in helping the residents of the Fraser Valley and the rest of British Columbia recover from this event.

What have we learned from this massive weather event? First, time is not on our side. These kinds of events will occur with increasing regularity. The effects of a changing climate are becoming increasingly self-evident as we experience more heat domes, forest fires, droughts, massive rainstorms and other types of weather events.

● (1940)

Second, we were not prepared for this event, even though we should have seen it coming. In fact, I have in my hands a report that is less than a year old from the city council of Abbotsford. It highlights the efforts that have been made over the years to try to address the flood problem in Abbotsford. It is less than one year old. Everybody is implicated. There was even an international task force struck, which included representatives from federal, provincial and municipal governments, and the Americans, so this should have come as no surprise to us. The bottom line is that we all knew what the risks were and should have seen it coming, but nothing substantive was ever done about it.

Third, our advanced emergency warning system was not timely or rigorous enough. Had we taken warnings seriously, surely some of our residents would have been able to evacuate earlier and save their animals and property.

Fourth, we have also learned that our diking and other drainage infrastructure is much too old and insufficient to handle future events like this. Dikes will need to be raised and upgraded to modern seismic standards. Riverbanks will need to be reinforced to ensure they are able to withstand future rain events.

Fifth, we will need to re-evaluate the future flood risks of the Fraser River giving way, pouring over the banks and breaching our dikes, which providentially it did not, and the extent to which we will prohibit the dredging of that river in order to preserve fish habitat. Let me be clear. Habitat is critical to the long-term sustainability of our fisheries, but there is also human life and property to consider. The reality is that increasing numbers of sand bars in the Fraser River are redirecting the river flow against these old existing dikes, which is eroding the foundations of this aging infrastructure. Therefore, I say to the ministers of the environment, fisheries, infrastructure, public safety and emergency preparedness that the federal government must act immediately to address this problem, and it is an expensive one.

Our country will also need a comprehensive adaptation plan to address future weather-related events like this one. I noticed that yesterday's throne speech referenced the government's intention to develop a national adaptation strategy. This all sounds fine and

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dandy, but I certainly hope it is not another one of the Prime Minister's empty virtue-signalling promises.

This strategy and corresponding plan will take massive investments in infrastructure, into the billions of dollars. This strategy must also call for greater awareness to be built into our local government planning and regulatory processes to ensure we beef up resiliency. Finally, the recovery effort will require significant funding and logistical support from all levels of government.

I know we all mourn the loss of life that this flood has brought about and the massive loss and displacement that has taken place throughout southern British Columbia. Gratefully, Abbotsford has not yet seen loss of life. I know from speaking to my constituents that they have not lost hope for a brighter future yet to come, but the responsibility rests with us, their properly elected federal representatives, to secure that future and ensure future generations can live the Canadian dream.

In the coming weeks and months, we Conservatives will be calling on the Liberal government to step up and be counted in delivering the necessary support to communities such as Abbotsford that have been devastated by this flood. We will be calling upon the government to make the smart yet expensive investments that will keep our people and property safe. We will call upon the Liberal government to partner with the province and the U.S. to ensure that, in the future, more timely advance notice of such events is given to affected communities.

In closing, even though we British Columbians are grateful for the outpouring of support we have received from our Canadian family during this time of need, I know with absolute certainty that we can and probably should have done better. We should have been better in planning for such disasters, better in adapting, better in making long-term investments for public safety, and better in supporting each other through timely communications and information-sharing.

● (1945)

The devastation of this rainstorm did not have to happen, but it did. Let us learn from it. Future generations are counting on us. I look forward to my colleagues' questions.

● (1950)

**Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my prayers and my thoughts are with the people of the member's riding, just as they are with those in my riding of Sydney—Victoria, which is seeing unprecedented rain. In some places it is 200 millimetres of rain. They are seeing bridges coming out and unprecedented flooding.

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I am glad that we are talking about lessons learned in this House. I am reminded of a lesson from Chief Seattle in that area. In 1854 he said, “Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.”

I wonder what we are learning. The member mentioned learning things about preparedness and the money we have to invest moving forward. I wonder if the member could comment on what lessons we, as the House of Commons, need to take forward on how we should be better treating our environment, or the “web of life” that we are a part of, not in charge of. The “web of life” that we belong to.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, I would respond that the “web of life” he refers to is part of a changing environment. Adaptation is absolutely critical. We are finding that out more and more.

The other lesson I draw from this terrible event is the fact that we, as a senior level of government, actually have the power and the resources to address these issues by investing in advance and upfront. For example, in my community of Abbotsford, there have been no major diking investments since early in the Harper years when I think \$6 million was given to the local community to upgrade dikes. This is not a million-dollar problem. It is a billion-dollar problem because it affects the Fraser River from Chilliwack all the way down to Richmond. If those dikes were to breach, it would be a calamity of a scale we cannot even begin to imagine.

Invest now. I implore you, as members on the government side, to impress upon the Minister of Finance to incorporate into the next budget a significant component to address improving and upgrading our existing infrastructure, and expanding it so that we will never have this kind of a calamity again.

**The Speaker:** Once again I want to remind hon. members to place their questions through the Chair and not directly across. I know we get impassioned.

[*Translation*]

Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take just a few seconds to thank the good people of Jonquière who have placed their trust in me once again, as well as my wife, Line Vachon, who is affectionately known as Staline, the dictator of love.

I would like to tell my colleague from Abbotsford that in 1996, the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region went through something similar. I want to reiterate my full support. As I recall, after 1996, there was an issue no one has mentioned yet tonight. Many people were traumatized. A research chair was established at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi to study these kinds of traumas and mental health issues. If he wishes, I would be happy to put him in contact with the right people. I would be happy to share that information. He talked about a fund in Abbotsford. It would be great if all parliamentarians could distribute that information.

[*English*]

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for those very generous remarks, and I take him up on the offer. If he wants to

send me that information, I would welcome it. I did not sense there was a question there.

I do sense that around this House there is a clear understanding that these kinds of crises can be averted. We cannot stop the weather from happening. We can certainly do our part to address the challenge of climate change. However, these events are going to continue to happen on an even more regular basis. We do have tools available to us to reduce or completely eliminate the harm to human beings and to property. Let us use those tools together. We would be serving our constituents and Canadians very well by doing so.

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is British Columbia's third state of emergency just this year. The climate crisis is here and it is hurting communities. It is displacing people, and it is costing lives. We need to spend what it takes on disaster management, adaptation and supporting the communities who have been impacted. We also need to spend what it takes on tackling the climate crisis and reducing emissions. However, when it comes to reducing emissions, Canada has the worst record of any G7 country.

Does the member agree that the government needs to take immediate, bold action to tackle the climate crisis and help prevent disasters like the ones my home province is experiencing right now?

● (1955)

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, that is our home province.

I would agree with the member that over the years the current government has set targets, has never been on a trajectory to meet those targets, and then sets higher targets. Of course, it is not on the trajectory to meet those targets, and it set a net-zero by 2050 target. The Prime Minister knows he will not be around to have to defend or justify his failure. It is easy to virtue signal and set targets that they know they are never going to meet.

I would think that we as Canadians are now prepared to be firm, to put in place a plan that sets out realistic targets and to have a firm plan to meet those targets.

I know the Prime Minister will claim that his plan is going to meet those targets. There is nothing in his past performance to show that his future performance will live up to those promises. That is the standard I look at. What has he done in the past, and what will he do in the future? His past performance does not give us much hope. I hope he is going to be better, going forward, but right now we are looking at a failed climate policy from the government.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Mr. Speaker, not having had the chance to say so earlier this week, I want to start by offering you my heartfelt congratulations on your election on behalf of the Green caucus. Your role in this 44th Parliament is a critical one, and I know you are already doing it with grace and integrity.



[*Translation*]

As I rise to speak, and since it is my first time speaking here, I am struck by the sanctity of this place, the House of Commons.

[*English*]

For however long I am given the honour to sit in this House, I hope this sense of awe is never extinguished because with it comes a sense of responsibility to discuss constructively, to disagree without being disagreeable and most of all to be respectful in this place. I would also like to publicly thank my neighbours in Kitchener Centre for placing their trust in me.

My question this evening picks up on one asked yesterday by the hon. member for Victoria. Fossil fuels are the primary contributor to the climate crisis, accounting for over 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions. As such, we must stop burning oil, gas and coal at a pace scientists, such as those at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, have called for.

In Canada, this means at least a 60% reduction by 2030, and we must be honest with ourselves. It is the combustion of fossil fuels that in turn fuels the climate emergency and the extreme weather that has led to this emergency debate, to lives lost and to infrastructure crumbling in B.C. However, in the midst of this state of emergency, our federal government continues to subsidize the domestic oil and gas sector, with an estimated \$17 billion in 2020.

Does the hon. member not agree it is time to reinvest these funds in people working in the oil and gas industry, in their future and in the communities hardest hit, which need the funds not only to recover, but also, as the member has mentioned, to adapt?

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, I am a bit disappointed with the member's question. Here we are debating perhaps the disaster of our lifetime, a historic disaster across southern British Columbia. This is not about a fight over oil and gas. This is about the people of Abbotsford, the Fraser Valley, the Fraser Canyon and the interior of British Columbia who are suffering immensely right now.

They do not want to have a fight right now about oil and gas. What they want is an assurance from the government that it will be there for them and that in the future the government will deliver the kinds of infrastructure investments that will ensure this never happens to them again.

● (2000)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your re-election to the chair.

Since this is the first time that I am rising in this 44th Parliament, I want to take the opportunity to thank the people of Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia who placed their continued trust in me. I really appreciate it.

I also want to thank my Green Party colleagues for requesting this evening's emergency debate. I really appreciate the presence of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

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On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to express my solidarity with everyone affected by the current catastrophe. I want them to know that we are prepared to work with all parliamentarians to ensure that British Columbians get the appropriate support.

As we know, torrential rains have caused flooding in the Fraser Valley region, and it has cost four people their lives. The flooding has also had a major impact on infrastructure. This atmospheric river dumped 300 millimetres of rain on the region in two days, November 14 and 15, and the region is still experiencing bad weather.

We know that the soil can no longer absorb any water. The water is running off instead of being absorbed and it is destroying everything in its path. This is a natural consequence of an imbalance in nature, which stems from the forest fires that ripped through British Columbia a few months ago. On top of that, according to Environment Canada, a new storm is set to hit the region this evening with another 40 to 80 millimetres of rainfall in the forecast.

The flooding in British Columbia could become the most expensive natural disaster in Canadian history. I want to reiterate that our hearts go out to the people of British Columbia. We are far away, but we have seen the extent of the damage and know how much it hurts. I have seen videos of farmers on personal watercraft on what is left of their fields trying to save their livestock. Thousands of animals were left behind and the huge dairy and poultry operations have been hard hit.

The highway system linking southern British Columbia to the rest of Canada has been cut off. The city of Vancouver is cut off from the rest of the country. It is absolutely incredible. A hundred or so indigenous communities have been affected and several are waiting for supplies to arrive via helicopter. I want to commend the teams who are on the ground day and night to provide humanitarian support to the communities affected.

The Deputy Prime Minister announced that the federal government will provide financial support for future reconstruction efforts, and we support that decision.

It is in times like these that we understand the importance of pulling together, of prevention, of reconstruction and of building resilience.

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This evening's debate is not about whether this disaster is directly or indirectly related to climate change. The fact is that climate change will lead to more frequent extreme climate phenomena and increase their impact on our way of life and our societies. Sadly, this particular disaster in British Columbia is just a taste of the challenges to come. To address increasingly common extreme weather events, governments have to boost the scale and speed of actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit global warming. That is the mitigation piece. The same goes for the adaptation piece, which includes things like upgrading infrastructure to withstand the effects of climate change.

We need to direct more money and more effort to mitigation and adaptation right away. We should have done it sooner. Right now, we have to focus on cleaning up the mess and standing by British Columbians, but we also need to look to the future and prepare for more situations like this one. We cannot afford not to.

As I said earlier, at this point, it is difficult to say for certain whether these events are directly related to the climate crisis. However, it is clear that the major droughts that caused the forest fires just a few months ago and the current floods are, unfortunately, probably not merely a coincidence.

That said, what should we do now? What can we do to prevent future disasters? That is the question, and the government needs to address this.

I have just returned from COP26, held in Glasgow, Scotland, where everyone was full of good intentions and acting in good faith. We even had a day when the theme was adaptation and mitigation. Although some good things did come out of it and some ambitious promises were made, there was certainly nothing to prepare us in the short term for situations like this. That is why we in the Bloc Québécois want to emphasize the importance of an energy transition.

• (2005)

We know it will cost a lot of money, but doing nothing will cost even more, from a financial and human perspective. We must take advantage of the economic recovery to seek out this more-than-necessary energy transition and build a society that is more resilient to the consequences of climate change, including the frequency of extreme weather events.

In summer 2020, the Bloc Québécois developed a green recovery plan. During the last election, we proposed creating a fund dedicated to protecting shorelines and fighting erosion. We cannot help but be frustrated when the government claims to be a leader in the fight against climate change, but does not in fact apply the changes that are needed to engage in the energy transition and move away from fossil fuels.

Yesterday, we heard the Speech from the Throne. After an election that did not seem necessary, we wondered about the urgency of opening a new Parliament that is not much different from the last Parliament and is facing the same problems it was facing before the election. In the end, we wasted time and in a climate crisis, we cannot say this enough, time is of the essence.

Island nations, developing countries, the poorest countries, those that produce the least amount of greenhouse gases but are ironically the most affected by the effects of climate change, they are all afraid that we are running out of time. The eternal optimists are afraid that we are running out of time, and scientists know that we are almost out of time. We will be out of time if we do not make changes. We will be out of time if we continue in the same direction. We are dreaming if we think that we will be able to cap greenhouse gas emissions, when the Canadian oil industry has announced that it will increase production in the coming years. We are headed straight for a wall and are not doing what needs to be done. There is so much to do, and we were expecting at least something, anything. The generic, empty rhetoric in the throne speech chapter on climate action is not reassuring in the slightest.

I would remind members that Quebec is a leader on combatting climate change. Quebec has what it takes to make the green transition and build a real and resilient green economy. The rest of Canada should take note. Continuing to invest in fossil fuels will not be good for the Canadian economy in the long term. We need to change our ways now.

We cannot talk about adaptation and mitigation without talking about infrastructure. The last few months have proven that the regions of Quebec, like everywhere else, particularly British Columbia, need help adapting to climate change. Shoreline erosion and receding shorelines are one example. Our regions are also not immune to the devastating effects of natural disasters. The fight against climate change must focus on mitigating the effects of these changes and adapting to them.

For years, the Bloc Québécois has been taking ongoing action to prevent shorelines from receding and eroding. I would like to take this opportunity to remind members that there used to be a federal program that provided funding for shoreline protection. It was abolished and never reinstated. During the last election, we proposed the creation of a fund to fight erosion with an annual funding of \$250 million. The funding must be recurrent and predictable.

In Saint-Maxime-du-Mont-Louis in the Gaspé, Highway 132 collapsed and was washed away by the ocean. That is the kind of thing that is likely to happen again.

Do not even bother trying to buy a house along the river in Sainte-Luce-sur-Mer in my riding. No insurance company on earth will insure it. They all know it is just a matter of time until the house gets completely flooded. That is what happened in 2010. In Sainte-Luce and in Saint-Flavie, which is also in my riding, dozens of houses were flooded and dozens of families displaced. That is what is going on right now in British Columbia. Thousands of people have been affected by these floods.

That is why merely fixing the damage caused by weather events is not enough. We have to prevent that damage in the first place. Unfortunately, the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund, \$3 billion over 10 years, is not up to the task of building the kind of infrastructure we need to counteract the negative effects of climate change.

The throne speech talked about investing in preventing and preparing for some of the negative impacts of climate change and about a national adaptation strategy. We need to make sure the government works with the provinces and Quebec, not against them. We have to work together.

That brings me to mitigation. People have long criticized the fact that Canada has never met its greenhouse gas reduction targets and continues to hand over massive subsidies to Canada's oil and gas industry rather than investing in renewable energy and developing the green economy.

● (2010)

Unfortunately, the great strength of this government when it comes to climate is its incredible ability to announce targets and make promises to give the appearance of doing something other than funding fossil fuels and other high-carbon industries through our taxes.

It takes more than just using the words “fight against climate change” or “green growth” or “green jobs” to have a policy and a solid action plan to truly help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make the transition. The Liberal government needs to find the courage to turn its back on oil and gas.

Announcing targets without any supporting evidence and indicating intentions does not have any real value. We need measures, action and a credible and transparent plan. We have the promises, but we are still waiting for the plan.

I feel like asking the government whether it is prepared to state that we must no longer authorize any new oil development project throughout the land and we must gradually reduce oil production, whether it believes that all of Canada should follow the lead of the Government of Quebec, which announced the real end of oil and gas.

The Liberals will probably want to respond to that question by repeating their promise to cap emissions in the oil and gas sector. However, their promise does not contain a plan to phase out coal, oil and gas. The Liberals claim that these industries can be environmentally viable by making their production less carbon-intensive. They will surely tell us that this is not within their jurisdiction, but they still bought a pipeline.

That makes me think about the outcome of the Glasgow climate pact. Ten days of negotiations resulted in a pact that does not even mention fossil fuels. Nothing. Not one word or phrase that acknowledges that fossil-fuel development is one of the main contributing factors to the climate crisis. There were, of course, protests, from civil society as well. The words were finally included in the pact, in a nice, long sentence that ultimately does not say much. At the end of the day, the countries committed to “accelerating the phaseout of...inefficient subsidies for fossil fuels”.

The phrase “accelerating efforts” does not even compel us to make an actual effort, and the word “inefficient” implies that efficient subsidies exist. That makes no sense. It is discouraging.

Quite honestly, I have to wonder where Canada was when it was time to oppose the last-minute amendments from China and India. I also wonder, as my leader so aptly put it, why the Government of

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Canada representatives did not show some backbone and stand up and oppose that kind of watered-down statement that legitimizes government aid to the most polluting industries in the midst of a climate crisis. That text essentially tells the governments of nearly 200 countries that that is okay and that we can continue to finance the climate crisis.

That is what came out of a global climate conference, whose goal was to do everything possible to limit global warming to 1.5°C. We will not achieve this if we continue to subsidize oil, gas and coal.

While we are on the subject of the government's climate action, the Liberals have finally committed to eliminating fossil fuel subsidies after giving the fossil fuel industry \$10.7 billion a year, and that does not include the staggering cost of Trans Mountain.

There is always a catch, however. Unfortunately, we have good reason to be concerned about the new forms these subsidies will take. The Office of the Auditor General asked the government back in 2019 to define what it meant by the term “inefficient subsidy”. The Department of Finance still refuses to provide a definition.

This new Liberal promise therefore gives us reason to fear that the new fossil fuel subsidies will now be camouflaged subsidies. What is worse, taxpayers will be giving their money to Canadian oil and gas companies in the name of fighting climate change. How much money will Canada waste helping polluters pollute less when it could be helping innovative companies to create the economy of the future?

Canada's grey hydrogen strategy and the dubious promises regarding carbon capture, use and storage technologies have already made it clear that the government's inaction is going to come with a hefty price tag.

We are already paying millions of dollars to develop untested technology that will be implemented years from now when it is too late to help Canada meet its 2030 greenhouse gas reduction target. All of that to produce so-called greener oil and gas rather than making the real ecological and energy transition.

If that is what fighting climate change means to this government, then we need to learn, starting today, to see these costly quick-fix proposals that the government is spending money on in the name of fighting climate change for what they really are. These investments are just new camouflaged subsidies for the Canadian oil and gas industry.

● (2015)

Are they ready to make a real energy transition? If so, can they commit, right here in the House, to ending Canada's gas, coal and oil industry for good? Are they willing to say that green oil does not exist? That is the kind of thing we would like to hear.

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As I said, we need to show solidarity with British Columbia now more than ever. The federal government hopefully knows what it needs to do to help that region in the short term, but it also needs to implement a plan now to prevent extreme weather events like this one, which will become more and more frequent in the future.

I reiterate the Bloc Québécois's willingness to work with parliamentarians to immediately provide the support needed and to come up with the solutions that must be implemented in the future.

[English]

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a certainly a pleasure to rise. I would like to thank my colleague from Quebec for her sympathy with British Columbians who are going through a very difficult time.

While the focus of this debate should be on that, she did bring in a bit of a wider scope. Before I ask my question, I want to say that I agree with her. The government, in the throne speech, talked about an adaptation strategy that would be due in 2023. This is the same government that promised in 2019 to plant two billion trees. My family has planted more trees than the government from that initiative.

The member has mentioned the Bloc does not support the use of subsidies to oil and gas developed in Canada. Does she and the Bloc believe that carbon capture utilization and storage count as a subsidy?

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I appreciate what he said. Surprisingly, we do actually agree on many points.

When the Liberal government announced its plan to plant two billion trees, it was written down somewhere. There was not much written in the throne speech, so it is a little difficult to read between the lines and see any indication of what this plan and this adaptation strategy will look like. How effective are the subsidies that help polluters pollute less? Unfortunately, they are not very effective. I think we need to invest today in green industries, renewable industries, that will help us reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. I do not think we can lower our emissions if we continue investing taxpayer dollars in these technologies. We do not yet know whether that will work or be effective. We do have some solutions. Quebec is a great example given the electricity it produces, especially with water and wind. We have solutions, and we could certainly put them to good use while supporting the workers in these industries.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I would like to make a few points.

She talked about coal. She should know that Canada now has legislation to phase out coal-fired electricity by 2030. She should also know that it took us just a few years to implement one of the planet's highest prices on pollution. Our price is higher than Quebec's, British Columbia's and California's. Next year, it will even be higher than the European Union's, whose system was introduced about 15 years ago.

I would like to know if she is aware that our government has invested a historic \$25 billion in public transit in this country. Across Canada, 300 public transit projects are currently under construction, and another 1,000 are in the approval process.

As to fossil fuel subsidies, our government has pledged to eliminate them two years earlier than all our G20 partners. The G20 target for eliminating fossil fuel subsidies is 2025. Our target is 2023. No other G20 country has committed to doing it before 2025.

• (2020)

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his question.

I am aware of all of these investments that have been made in recent months and years, and I commend them. I think that Canada has a good international reputation. It even announced that it would stop spending Canadian taxpayers' money on foreign oil and gas projects. We would like the government to do the same here, in Canada. We are worried about these hidden subsidies. It means that the government plans to continue favouring the “polluter paid” principle instead of the polluter pays principle.

We want to stop helping the polluters pollute. Our only focus should be the net-zero strategy. We need to rethink production methods and put a cap on production. That is what we must focus on, in spite of everything that was announced. We are in a climate crisis.

What the government announces is never enough. We must do more.

[English]

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your position.

As a member from Alberta, I want to share the strong sense of solidarity that people in Alberta feel with British Columbians. We obviously have a close and special relationship with B.C. Many families cross that provincial boundary and there are a lot of people who travel back and forth on a regular basis.

Since many members have spoken about the issue of climate change, and I know this is a tense time in Canada for many reasons, it is very important that all members of Parliament be committed to having these debates in a way that respects the rule of law and that opposes any form of violence. Unfortunately, we have an environment minister who has shown in his past track record that he does not have a respect for the rule of law when it comes to engaging in these conversations around the environment.

I wonder if the member from the Bloc will take this opportunity to condemn, in particular, the horrific comments made by David Suzuki, saying, “pipelines will be blown up”. Could we have a clear consensus in the House that the way forward on these issues is through peaceful dialogue and discussion rather than through law-breaking or violence?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the Bloc Québécois will always want the Liberal government to do more when it comes to climate change. Given the choice between the Conservatives and the Liberals, I think we can be optimistic about the appointment of the current Minister of Environment and Climate Change because of his past experience. He knows exactly what needs to be done to cap and cut greenhouse gas emissions.

I do not agree with everything my colleague said. I think there remains a lot to be done. David Suzuki has said a lot of things, including at COP26, about what has been done in Canada.

In 2015, after his election, the current Prime Minister said that Canada was back on the world stage to fight against climate change. A few years later, he bought a pipeline. Canada's actions on climate change are questionable. However, I think that despite the past, we can be optimistic about what is next.

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this government spends as much money every three months on oil and gas subsidies as it plans to spend on its disaster mitigation and adaptation fund for the next 10 years.

True, the government is committed to a transition, but it is a transition to fossil fuel energy. Their excuse for maintaining these subsidies is that they are effective. The Liberals should have started eliminating the subsidies from the start of their first term, but that did not happen. I would like my colleague to tell me how the \$10 billion or \$11 billion that goes to the oil and gas companies every year could be used to support a clean energy transition.

• (2025)

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mirabel, who I believe is speaking in the House for the second time. He is doing a great job and is very familiar with this issue. I want to thank him for sharing his knowledge with our caucus. We are really lucky to have him.

When I saw the word “inefficient” preceding the words “fossil fuel subsidies” in the Glasgow Climate Pact, I wondered what it was doing there. It is like saying that there are some fossil fuel subsidies that are efficient. I will repeat what I said earlier. We cannot continue to help polluters pollute. We need to invest taxpayers' money in the energy transition, renewable energy and solutions that will help us in the future.

We cannot eliminate the use of fossil fuels overnight. We are aware that we need to start by putting a declining cap on production and that we need to do it in co-operation with workers in that industry. The Bloc Québécois stands in solidarity with them and wants to help them make that transition. We will be there for them.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations to you. It is good to see you in the chair.

For the NDP, one of our biggest concerns is the fact that we see a Liberal government that says a lot of great things that people believe but it does not take the next step into action. When we look at what is happening in British Columbia, where we are seeing communities, indigenous communities, being completely isolated now

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because of this terrible weather incident, we know that it is just going to continue to grow because of climate change.

Could the member speak a little about what we need to see in terms of action?

[*Translation*]

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

We asked different stakeholders that very question at COP26, a few days ago.

A number of announcements were made during the conference, a number were made by Canada during the previous Parliament, and a number were made by the Liberal Party during the election campaign.

They made announcements, they made commitments and they promised millions of dollars. Now we are wondering where the plan is or how it will be implemented. How are we going to achieve this?

We want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we want net zero, but where and how do we start?

We need to know. The industry also wants to know. Workers' unions want to know so that they can, we hope, help workers through the potential transition.

We need a meaningful and transparent plan to help us be more resilient and launch that much-talked-about transition.

[*English*]

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Burnaby South.

I would like to open by saying that my heart goes out to all British Columbians who have suffered hardships over the past days and weeks. Some have lost their loved ones in landslides. Others have lost homes, farms and their livelihoods. Some were stuck in vehicles for hours or days, waiting through the dark and the rain, fearing that at any time another landslide might come down and engulf them.

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I thank the first responders and volunteers who have helped those on the highways, the brave members of 442 Transport and Rescue Squadron who flew Cormorant helicopters in very dangerous conditions from Comox to pluck marooned motorists off Highway 7 between Agassiz and Hope, and the workers and volunteers who have struggled to save homeowners, rescue livestock, maintain and rebuild the dikes and pumps that were essential to keeping the losses to a minimum.

I want to give a special shout-out to the gurdwaras, the Sikh temples around southern British Columbia, that got together and organized free food and aid to communities across the region.

From November 14 to 15, an atmospheric river poured rain into the mountains of the B.C. coast. This is normally a wet time of year in coastal British Columbia, but 20 rainfall records were set that day and several sites received an entire month of rain in 24 hours.

The rain fell on mountain snowpacks, on soil saturated by previous storms and, in some cases, soils and forests damaged by widespread fires the previous summer. Mudslides and debris flows roared down the steep mountain slopes to the roads and rail lines below and rivers swelled to overwhelm bridges and other infrastructure.

In a short period of time, all the highways and rail lines connecting Vancouver to the rest of Canada were damaged or destroyed. The Coldwater River flooded the town of Merritt. The Tulameen River took out homes along its path and then met the Similkameen River to flood the Town of Princeton. Over 100 first nation communities were impacted throughout the region.

The Nooksack River in northern Washington State overtopped its banks, its waters finding the low ground of Sumas Prairie in Abbotsford, flooding some of the best farmland in the country. A series of mudslides on Highway 99 west of Lillooet buried cars and trucks, killing at least four people, with a fifth still missing. Two landslides along Highway 7 between Hope and Agassiz trapped hundreds of motorists in the darkness. Some of the highways were simply buried in mud, rocks and trees, but the Coquihalla Highway, the major freeway connecting the coast to the interior of British Columbia, was simply destroyed in several places. The Nicola River, fed by the swollen Coldwater took out large sections of Highway 8. Both the CN and CP Rail lines through the Fraser Canyon were badly damaged. The Trans Mountain pipeline had to be shut down.

All the critical supply chains between the south coast of British Columbia and the rest of the country were severed. Prairie grain shipments to the Port of Vancouver stopped. Three-quarters of our grain is exported through that port and almost all the goods imported into Canada from Asia come through Vancouver as well. That came to a shuddering halt. Perishable goods, including vegetables and milk, that are usually trucked to the interior of British Columbia on a daily basis disappeared quickly from store shelves throughout my riding and the rest of the region.

This one-day rain event has laid bare many of the weaknesses in our supply chains and our transportation strategies.

What does the future hold? In the immediate future, British Columbia is bracing for two more atmospheric rivers. One is begin-

ning to hit the coast as we speak here tonight and another one is scheduled to arrive on Friday. These storms will likely not be quite as wet as last week's devastating storm, but with soil saturated and flood water still present, they could easily bring more landslides and raise the flood waters again.

We have heard about the flooding that is happening right now in Atlantic Canada.

What does the government need to do? We have heard so much about climate action, and rightly so. We have to rapidly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to limit the impact of climate change, but the global temperature increase we have seen to date is locked in. If we dropped our emissions to zero tomorrow, we would still be facing a future with increased flooding, catastrophic fires, heat domes and rising sea levels.

● (2030)

The unfortunate truth is that we will continue emitting greenhouse gases for the next three decades at least, and these climate change impacts will only get worse. Therefore, we must also greatly increase our ambition in funding climate adaptation, getting ready for the changes that are locked in.

Most climate adaptation funding from the federal government flows through the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund, which disburses a few hundred million dollars every year. It is chronically oversubscribed and therefore greatly underfunded. This disaster we are speaking of this evening will cost billions of dollars in rebuilding costs alone. The Abbotsford dikes may cost \$1 billion just by themselves. It is almost, by definition, a fund to rebuild after disasters rather than prepare communities to avoid disasters.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Insurance Bureau of Canada have reported that the annual infrastructure costs of climate change in Canada right now are \$5.7 billion every year. The Canadian Institute for Climate Choices estimates that the present annual cost of flooding impacts alone in Canada are about \$1.3 billion, and that will rise by 10 times over the rest of this century.

We need to have meaningful investments for adaptation and we need to provide adequate supports for individuals in communities that have been devastated. Federal and provincial governments have downloaded a lot onto municipal governments when it comes to infrastructure construction and maintenance. These local governments need real help to rebuild dikes, roads and other infrastructure, and they need a dedicated fund to help pay for forward-looking plans to strengthen infrastructure, so it is ready for the climate of 2050 and 2100.

The Coquihalla Highway is only 35 years old and was basically destroyed in one rainfall event.

We have heard of “build back better”, but when it comes to this infrastructure, we have to build back stronger with bigger culverts, higher bridges and better designed dikes. We need to look for nature-based solutions, planning for future flood events by allowing rivers to spill their banks in places where damage will be minimal, ensuring that mountain forests above communities and critical infrastructure are healthy enough to intercept rain and hold moisture in their soils.

We have to redesign our buildings. Over 500 people died in last summer's heat dome in British Columbia. They were almost all low-income people living in apartments without air conditioning. We will have more heat domes, and we cannot see a repeat of this carnage. We need to act now to ensure low-income people across the country can live in housing with affordable and effective heating and cooling. We could provide those buildings with heat pumps that could effectively heat and cool the homes with clean electricity. We need to FireSmart neighbourhoods that are at the forest interface to reduce the chance they will be destroyed by catastrophic wildfires.

The way forward will be difficult, and I know from experience that these climate disasters are absolutely devastating to the people who have lost their homes and livelihoods. In my riding, the city of Grand Forks flooded in 2018. The aftermath of that flood and the rebuilding process have been very painful for the community.

The citizens of Lytton are experiencing the same pain and frustration, and I know the towns of Merritt and Princeton face a similar prospect. Therefore, we must plan for this uncertain future and ensure that communities have funds necessary not only to rebuild after natural disasters, but to adapt to climate change before being impacted by future weather events.

● (2035)

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my neighbouring member of Parliament and I, as British Columbians, stand together and appreciate the fact that we have an emergency debate to discuss these issues.

At the tail end of his speech, the member did talk about the experience of Grand Forks. I was wondering if the member could please give us a little more background on exactly what happened and also how the community is doing and what things we can use as lessons learned to apply to this situation.

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola for allowing me to expand on that. Something we should be doing is learning from these

disasters. They are very painful and the least we can do is learn lessons from them.

In the case of Grand Forks, much of the downtown area and a low-lying neighbourhood on the other side of the Kettle River were flooded and the city and the surrounding regional district applied for funding. They received \$20 million from the federal government and another \$40 million or so from the provincial government to help rebuild the city.

They decided to ensure this would not happen again. They re-designed the dikes along the river to flow so that if the river flooded, and the really low areas almost certainly would flood again, there would be no homes there. They had to buy out the people who lived there. It was very divisive and painful for the community. People had to give up their homes and often, because the funding was not as adequate as a lot of people thought it should be, they did not have enough money to buy another home in the city. It was very difficult for the city council and very difficult for the people involved.

To ensure people do not have to go through that again, we have to look at designing our cities so neighbourhoods will not flood in the first place and use innovative ways to ensure we can make our communities safer in the future.

● (2040)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and I send my full support to people in the Abbotsford area. My stepson has embraced the Vancouver area and British Columbia. It is one of Canada's major agricultural areas, and I have been fortunate to visit. I come from an agricultural riding myself, so my thoughts are with the farmers who have lost so much in this disaster.

My colleague spoke a lot about the importance of investing in infrastructure to prepare for the inevitable climate storms that are sure to come.

Does he think the best way to prevent this from happening is to invest directly in combatting climate change? I am talking about investing money into infrastructure, which Quebec and the provinces have been calling for. They are in the best position to know what to do and how to respond to a climate disaster. Is the best option not, as I mentioned, to invest money directly into climate change and to get us started on a transition?

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[English]

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** Mr. Speaker, I think the question was should we spend federal monies directly or should we flow them through the province. In fact, the way it is done now is that they go through the province. The money I just talked about in rebuilding Grand Forks was a partnership between the federal government and the province, but the money went to the province and the province then co-operated with the city as to how to spend that. That is how a lot of infrastructure funding in Canada works. The money from the federal government goes to the province and the province decides how to spend that.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everybody for being here for this emergency debate. I want to thank the member who spoke previously, a colleague of mine from the New Democrats who brought this motion forward, as well as others who brought it forward.

What is happening right now in British Columbia has laid bare the reality that the climate crisis is not a problem for the future. It is another example of how the climate crisis is a reality we face today. I am certain we have seen enough examples that we no longer believe this is just a question of making sure our children inherit a future and an environment that is safe. We have seen extreme weather and the forest fires in B.C. We have seen hotter and drier summers across the country, which have left many communities ravaged by forest fires.

Now the floods in B.C. are devastating communities. We have heard some of the examples of what is going on. We are seeing communities that are entirely washed out. There are parts of the Lower Mainland that were completely disconnected from other communities. We are seeing infrastructure completely destroyed. Homes have been destroyed. People are being displaced. Farms have been destroyed. This is the devastation of the climate crisis.

Sadly, the reality is that this is not an exception. This is becoming the norm. Right now our thoughts are with the communities that are impacted, and we are pushing for as much help as possible to be delivered; communities are working to get back to a place where they can continue to be connected and they can get the roads fixed. However, we need to start looking at what we can do if this is going to be normal, if this is going to be what we expect. As my colleague said, even if we tackle the climate crisis and we limit and reduce our emissions, there is some climate change that has already been baked in. We are going to see a rise in temperature. We are already seeing it, and that means extreme weather will become more common.

What do we do about it? First, let us look at the impacts. Actually, it is not just in B.C. Right now we are talking about the incredibly horrible impacts in B.C., but as we speak there are extreme weather patterns happening in Newfoundland and Labrador. The community of Channel-Port aux Basques in Newfoundland is completely cut off as well. The roads have been washed out. Trans-Canada highways have been washed out in Newfoundland. In Nova Scotia, Cape Breton has just right now, in the past couple of hours, been hit with an incredible weather pattern. They are saying it will take days or weeks for their communities to return to normal.

The entire country, the entire world is being gripped with extreme weather, which means more rainstorms and flooding, and drier and hotter summers. What we need to do is acknowledge that we have to take on this climate crisis with the urgency it demands.

We have not seen that urgency on the part of the Liberal government. The urgency of the need to respond to dire climate crisis means we need to start acting immediately. We need dramatic and bold steps to reduce our emissions. We need to invest in renewable energy. We need to invest in these communities.

My colleague laid this out, but I want to be very clear on this. We need three things to be enhanced. First is our emergency preparedness. We need the federal government to play a stronger role in this. We need to respond more quickly to these extreme weather circumstances and these disasters. We need disaster mitigation. We need to make investments ahead of time so that we are not just responding to a crisis but instead investing in communities to make sure they are more resilient and built in a way that they can withstand what is becoming more and more common. If extreme weather is more common, if extreme rainfall and flooding are going to be more common, then we need to build the infrastructure so these communities are more resilient.

We know there is aging infrastructure, and that aging infrastructure is being directly impacted by the extreme weather. I was just in Nunavut, and Nunavut has a water crisis. Right now, the early indications are, again, that it is a direct result of the climate crisis. Warming temperatures and permafrost that is no longer frozen, that is warming, have resulted in shifts in the water supply infrastructure, which has created a contamination of hydrocarbon in Nunavut. The water is poisoned in the largest community in Nunavut. Again, this is a direct result of the climate crisis.

We are being impacted across the country. We are being impacted across the world. We need to start acting.

● (2045)

One of our biggest pushes is that we need to see the federal government take a more active role, making those investments to build more resilient communities. B.C. needs help. We need to be there in solidarity, and I appreciate some of the comments in the chamber expressing solidarity with the people of B.C. That is greatly appreciated. We need to take care of our fellow Canadians and we need to make sure we are doing everything possible to prevent this from happening in the future.

I want to take a moment to talk about some of the incredible stories of support and solidarity. My colleague mentioned some folks in the Sikh community who stepped up and provided food and relief. We see, as Canadians, in difficult times, incredible stories of courage and incredible stories of support from folks who helped out those in need.



I want to acknowledge everyone who provided those supports. I want to acknowledge neighbours who looked out for their vulnerable community members, for vulnerable seniors. I want to acknowledge and thank people in the community who provided food and shelter to those in need.

I want to acknowledge the frontline workers, the workers who provided supports to those who needed to be evacuated and the workers who provided supports to those who needed health care supports. I also want to acknowledge all the communities that are right now housing evacuees from communities that cannot go back to their homes. There are countless people across the province who have been evacuated and are being housed in neighbouring communities; the generosity, open arms and warmth of those communities have to be acknowledged. I want to thank everyone across the country and everyone across the province who has provided that support and provided that help.

Our response to this crisis is important, so I am going to encourage the Liberal government to do everything possible to provide the support to rebuild the highways, the bridges and the infrastructure that have been damaged. Again, I want to make a strong push. What we have seen from the government when it comes to the climate has often been a lot of pretty words, and I hope this horrible disaster makes clear the price of nice words and the cost of inaction.

It is not good enough to talk about the climate crisis. It is not good enough to say one cares. It is not good enough to stand up in the House and say one had the best plan in the last election. Put it into action. Let us see some concrete action. Canadians are demanding it. People across this country are demanding action. They are witnessing the impact of a climate crisis in their lives right now, and they are saying, "Do something about it."

Canadians are fed up. They are frustrated. They do not want to see more empty promises; they want to see concrete actions. We want to see the investments and a real plan so that we can tackle the climate crisis. We want to see an opportunity to use this recovery as we move forward past the pandemic, as an opportunity to create jobs in communities that need this infrastructure to be rebuilt, to create local jobs, to improve the infrastructure and to build jobs of today and of tomorrow.

While we are up against a horrible disaster, and in times of disaster we are focused on the tremendous loss, there is an opportunity here for us to do something that will build a brighter future. There is an opportunity for us to make investments in clean energy and in better infrastructure. There is an opportunity for us to take this horrible time and this disaster as motivation to do the right thing, to fight for the today and the tomorrow for our children, and to take every step possible to ensure that we protect our communities, our people and our future.

• (2050)

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is good to see you in the chair. I guess there will be no more fisheries committee for you.

We have heard an impassioned plea from the hon. member for government to step in and do things, and government can indeed do

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that. One of the things we have to be mindful of is the continuity of effort. This reminds us that governments are there at the pleasure of the people. If the people decide a government is not doing the right thing or if they disagree with it, they change governments, and anything that had been done to that point might be thrown away.

What is the hon. member's assessment of the working through process that Canadians are doing? Of course we need to adapt, and nobody will disagree, but are we also ready to do those things that in the future will not keep us adapting? Are we ready to actually address the root causes of the things that are causing the difficulties we are facing right now? Where does he see the public, Canadians, on that issue?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Speaker, what we need now is a two-pronged approach. We need to immediately invest in the infrastructure needed to make sure communities are resilient. We also need to make sure we are doing everything possible to fight the climate crisis.

We know that this is also a global problem, but if we do not do our part in Canada, if we do not end fossil fuel subsidies, if we do not invest in renewable energy and if we do not have a plan for workers, we are not in a position to then encourage countries around the world to provide support and leadership for other countries around the world to do their part. What we need to do right now is immediately invest in resilient community infrastructure that can help these communities deal with the extreme weather that is becoming more common more often. We also need to make sure we are investing in every solution possible to fight this climate crisis.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, may I add my congratulations on seeing you in the chair as the Deputy Speaker.

I would say this to my hon. colleague from Burnaby South. If we are prepared to do everything possible, and this is a politically difficult question for my hon. friend, that would require the federal NDP leader to be prepared to disappoint the Alberta NDP leader by cancelling the Trans Mountain pipeline, and the provincial premier, Mr. Horgan, by cancelling LNG pipelines and subsidies and banning fracking. Is the hon. member prepared to commit to doing that?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Speaker, we need to do everything possible while we are in this chamber to do our part as a country. We know there are billions of dollars of federal subsidies right now that continue to flow to the oil and gas sector. That is money that should go toward renewable energy. That is money that should go toward creating a plan for workers. That is money that should go toward fighting the climate crisis. We are going to do everything we can in this House and this chamber to ensure we are using all of our resources toward solving the problem, building a brighter future and protecting communities right now.

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• (2055)

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of debate and discussion tonight, and it has overwhelmingly been dominated by the theme of climate change. I agree that climate change was a significant factor at play in this disaster, but we have seen evidence and proof brought before us that this was in many ways also a man-made disaster, because of negligence and lack of investment. The most shocking thing I heard is that the Sumas Prairie dike system was created 100 years ago.

When did we as a country stop building the critical infrastructure needed to go forward as an economy with safe communities? When are we going to bring back that sense of building this nation again, so we can get this country moving?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Speaker, without a doubt this is a human-made problem. The climate crisis was created by human activity. It is going to take people coming together and the government investing in solutions to improve the infrastructure. Absolutely, we need to build more resilient communities. That is something we need to be aware of, and the federal government has to play a role in building those more resilient communities. The climate crisis has been caused by us and we have to do our part to stop it.

**Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your role in the Speaker's chair.

I will be sharing my time this evening with my neighbour and friend, the member for Surrey Centre.

This is my first speech in the House of Commons since 2019, and it is good to be back. I am proud to say that I am visiting the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation from the traditional and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the Katzie, Kwantlen, Matsqui and Semiahmoo first nations.

I would like to begin by thanking the voters of Cloverdale—Langley City for returning me to Parliament. I must thank all the volunteers who helped me over many months. I would not be sitting here if it were not for them. I would also like to thank my wife, Elaine, and children Kai, Hattie and Kalani for always supporting me.

I am pleased that you, Mr. Speaker, granted this emergency debate. I am thankful to so many of the B.C. members of Parliament for being here and being part of this important discussion, but also to colleagues from around the country.

I want to also offer my support to the members who are most affected by this recent tragedy in British Columbia. In the areas of Abbotsford, Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon and Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, I know it has been particularly devastating to communities. Anything I can do from this side of the aisle, I am here to offer that support to them.

The devastating flooding in B.C. last week was heartbreaking to watch and continues to weigh on my mind as this Parliament begins. This is especially true for the four individuals who lost their lives, two of whom were parents of a toddler they were on their way home to see, and for those who are still missing.

Considering how to avoid loss of life in the future should be the first priority as we rebuild. Henry Braun, mayor of Abbotsford, one

of the worst-hit areas, estimated that the damage caused to his city will cost at least \$1 billion. This is the cost to just one city in this region. The most recent estimate for the total damage in B.C. is over \$8 billion.

The economic impact to our infrastructure and to farmers, including half of B.C.'s dairy farmers, as well as to businesses and to personal property is distressing. The scale alone should be cause for concern regarding our economic future. We need systems to mitigate economic disruptions during extreme weather.

The loss of animal life must be considered as well. Thousands of animals, including tens of thousands of poultry, drowned from the flooding or died from being stuck in transports with no access to farms or feed. For farmers this is costly and for our domestic food security it is disruptive, but it is also a sad state of animal welfare. Farmers and farm animals need emergency procedures for protecting animal welfare during these events.

The losses to our critical infrastructure, particularly bridges and segments of railroad, are causing shortages in key household goods. Gasoline is being rationed. Some of the infrastructure will take months if not years to repair, posing challenges for our communities, provinces and country. Many of these routes move goods between Canada's biggest port, the Port of Vancouver, and the rest of the country.

For our food security and supply chains, how to withstand another event such as this needs to be central to the reconstruction of this infrastructure. I must acknowledge how my constituency managed during the flooding. While Cloverdale—Langley City is close to Abbotsford and many of the hardest-hit areas, it avoided the devastating flooding this time. However, residents faced property damage that, as we emerge from COVID-19, is another economic hurdle to overcome. Fortunately our government is already investing in climate adaptation.

In 2019, our government invested over \$76 million in Surrey, Delta and the Semiahmoo First Nation to implement a comprehensive flood adaptation strategy to increase resilience for over 125,000 residents in our region. Some parts of my riding are playing an important role in food security, including Heppell Farms. Working sandy loam soil, their crops withstood the rains and will be able to provide for the greater region as we experience losses in B.C.'s interior.

The effects of the flooding go far beyond the Lower Mainland, though. Much of B.C.'s coast was impacted by flooding last week and is again, as I speak, experiencing further downpours of rain. With the next three storm events in the coming week expected to also be atmospheric rivers, we do not know what the next round of rainstorms could bring.

Communities in the interior, including Merritt and Princeton, were also negatively affected. Extreme weather events are not restricted to B.C., either. Atlantic Canada is simultaneously being subjected to unprecedented rainfall and the Prairies have suffered terrible droughts this year. Recovering from these events will take commitments from all levels of government. Inaction will continue to cost society.

• (2100)

Insurance claims will drive up insurance costs, and in some areas, insurance is not available if property is on a flood plain. This puts pressure on governments to help homeowners rebuild following these types of catastrophic weather events.

No human life should ever be lost. Farm animals need to be protected, as does personal property. With loss of life, economic impacts, animal welfare and supply chains in mind, the catastrophic flooding last week is the most recent, and perhaps the most significant, illustration of how necessary climate adaptation, mitigation and resiliency are to Canada.

Our country is warming at twice the rate of the global average. In the Arctic, it is three times the rate. Preventing warming past 1.5°C will mean for us 3°C and in the Arctic 4.5°C. These effects are why our government is ready to move faster on climate initiatives than we have before. We demonstrated that this year with our ambitious targets of a 40% to 50% reduction in our emissions, and at COP26 by committing to end thermal coal exports by 2030, to cap and reduce the oil sector's emissions to net zero by 2050, and to cut our methane emissions by 30% no later than 2030. Without these actions, the \$8 billion cost of a single extreme weather event will be more frequent and more costly. Eight billion dollars is about 3% of my province's economy.

It is simply not sustainable to be unprepared for extreme weather and climate change. Our government is addressing this directly by including Canada's first-ever national adaptation strategy in the Speech from the Throne. Reconstruction of infrastructure will need to include funding to ensure that future infrastructure can withstand extreme weather events such as the one we recently experienced in British Columbia, and likely stronger ones. Our national strategy will need to include processes for protecting businesses and farms, including their animals. It will need to support stronger implementation of warning systems to avoid loss of life. Also, we do not fully understand the devastating impacts that this and similar weather events will have on things like the wild Pacific salmon population.

The floods last week were devastating, and indeed catastrophic. There is no other way to describe them, but they serve as a terrible reminder of the urgency and fortitude with which our government and every MP here must act to implement strong climate action and avoid such events in the future.

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Our government has committed to assisting British Columbians with recovering and preparing for future extreme weather events, but the work is not yet done. Let us work together to ensure all Canadians are protected from future weather events like the one we are seeing right now in British Columbia.

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from British Columbia on his fine speech.

I want to address the issue of the cost: Billions of dollars of infrastructure will be required to address the very real flooding dangers in the area where we both live and represent our constituents. Billions of dollars' worth of diking upgrades and new dikes will have to be built.

I would ask the member to take this question directly to the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, to the finance minister, to the infrastructure minister and to the Prime Minister himself: Are they prepared to commit, in the next budget, to include a very significant envelope to address specifically the issue of dike protection, not only in British Columbia but across the country, yes or no?

• (2105)

**Mr. John Aldag:** Mr. Speaker, absolutely. The member and I were able to sit together on the way out here and talk about the devastating effects, and I think that our government needs to invest. We have seen the impacts, and with \$8 billion for one event, the magnitude could be so much greater as we experience this across the country in other regions and perhaps again in British Columbia. We are in a low-lying area against the Fraser River through the Fraser Valley, and things such as dike protection and dike reinforcement are absolutely critical. I will be discussing with members of our government that it is absolutely critical to get ahead of this. The investment dollars will save us that much more down the road.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your new role as Chair.

I would like to again thank the constituents of Nanaimo—Ladysmith for putting their trust in me as their newly elected member of Parliament.

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The devastating flooding in B.C. has been a painful reminder that we are living with the consequences of the human-caused climate crisis. Indigenous communities across Canada continue to be at the forefront of the climate crisis. Shamefully, first nations feel the impacts all too frequently being at the back of the line for federal funding for cleanups and infrastructure. Chief Roxanne Harris and the Stz'uminus First Nation in my riding have felt these impacts from the flooding first-hand, and the delays in funding have only made matters worse.

Is my colleague ready to listen to indigenous leaders such as Chief Harris, and to work alongside indigenous communities to get them the urgent support they need to combat the worsening climate crisis?

**Mr. John Aldag:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from British Columbia for that question. We absolutely need to work with all populations and all communities. Indigenous communities often have so many disadvantages, so it is important that we are there for them.

In the latest flooding event, there was money immediately made available to a number of first nations that were affected, to help get supplies and other goods into the communities and provide any assistance that was needed. We can never forget that these populations are often at risk and in need of support, and I think we all need to work together to make sure that our indigenous communities are supported through these types of events.

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is my first time rising in the House in this term. I want to thank the constituents of Parkdale—High Park for returning me for a third time to this august chamber. I want to welcome back the member for Cloverdale—Langley City.

Why am I participating in this debate about B.C. environmental events? It is because there is a pattern that we are seeing with these mudslides and fires. What we are seeing is something that my constituents are very concerned about, which is the impact of climate change.

I know the member is a learned man who has spent a lot of time working in parks and in conservation. What has this taught him about the urgency of climate change and about where the priority must be in terms of investments by our government?

**Mr. John Aldag:** Mr. Speaker, this type of event really points out the need for urgent action on climate change, and that is why I am so proud of having run with the government on this very strong platform. In fact, it is the strongest platform of all the parties. It is a very aggressive program to deal with climate change and its effects. We are dealing with it and we will continue to push forward.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful that this emergency debate is taking place tonight to discuss the devastating flooding in my home province of British Columbia. As we anticipate more heavy rain coming this week, the actions that we take and the preparations that are made in the coming days will be very important to support those who will be impacted by future storms.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my condolences to all those affected by the destruction, particularly those in Merritt,

Abbotsford, Chilliwack or Hope, including constituents of my colleagues in Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, from Abbotsford and from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

The loss and devastation that we have seen over the past week is heartbreaking. There has been a loss of life, evacuations and people left stranded. Within just a few days, 18,000 were forced to leave their homes and critical infrastructure like highways and railroads in and out of the province were severely damaged.

I would also like to thank all of those who have been working around the clock to support the residents impacted and to those who have stepped up to help their neighbours in the face of these challenging times. British Columbians have faced a great deal of devastation caused by extreme weather and natural disasters. In its look back at the 2021 B.C. wildfire season, the CBC reported 1,600 fires across 8,700 square kilometres in the province this year alone.

This has been the third-largest area impacted in recorded history in a summer filled with drought and record-breaking heat waves. Just last month as we moved into autumn, a time when forest fire season would usually come to an end, we still had 140 fires burning in the province. The consequences of this year's wildfires could be a contributing factor to the flooding experienced in my region.

The B.C. Ministry of Forests described how after intense fire, soil can become repellent to water, causing water to run off and pool rather than be absorbed by the soil. This can lead to landslides and floods after heavy rains or quick-melting snow. This shows the ripple effects that climate change can have. The more extreme heat and natural disasters we experience, the more disasters they may trigger in the future.

If this is not a sign to climate change deniers that climate change is real and here, I do not know what else it will take. On this side of the chamber, we know that the science is clear: human activities are causing unprecedented changes to the earth's climate. Climate change poses significant risks to human health and safety of the environment. It impacts biodiversity and economic growth. Across the country each year, flooding alone leads to more than \$1 billion in direct damages to homes, businesses and infrastructure. We know that we cannot afford to not address climate change.

We must continue to take swift and decisive action to address the consequences of climate change, work to lower emissions levels, reduce our consumption and find innovative solutions to reach net zero. Our government is doing just that. In just the last year, our government has invested \$60 billion toward climate action and clean growth and an additional \$53.6 billion into Canada's green recovery. Since we formed government, we have invested \$100 billion to address climate change.

By moving forward to cap and cut oil and gas sector emissions, we are making investments in public transit and mandating the sale of zero-emission vehicles. We are increasing our price on pollution and we are protecting our lands and rivers.

To address climate change adaptation, we invested an additional \$1.4 billion toward the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund to further support projects such as wildfire mitigation activities, rehabilitation of stormwater systems and restoration of wetlands and shorelines.

In fact, in 2019, the federal Liberal government funded \$76 million, through the \$2-billion disaster mitigation and adaptation fund, for Surrey, in partnership with the Semiahmoo First Nation to upgrade 7.5 kilometres of the Nicomeki and Serpentine sea dams, the Colebrook Dike, and upgrade two pump stations and two dikes, but we must do more.

We have been working with provinces and territories to complete flood maps for higher-risk areas, supported first nations and Inuit as they managed the health impacts of climate change such as access to food, impacts of extreme weather events and mental health impacts of climate change on youth.

● (2110)

Our government will continue to invest in our workers and our industry to help bring Canada into the economy of the future while we take action to clean our air and protect Canadians from extreme weather events like the ones we are currently experiencing in B.C. As Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary May Simon said in the Speech from the Throne yesterday, “in a time of crisis, we know how Canadians respond. We step up and we are there for each other. And the government will continue to be there for the people of British Columbia.” Canadians are stepping up.

I had the opportunity to see this first-hand last week, when I joined a team of volunteers delivering food and supplies to Hope and Yale, B.C. This was made possible by the generosity of the Gurdwara Dukh Nivaran Sahib in Surrey, Richberry farms' Peter Dhillon and the Guru Nanak Food Bank. I thank those who stepped up for their communities and neighbours during the challenging times.

I saw first-hand how people felt scared, isolated and anxious, whether it was from sleeping in their cars for days or from whether they could have bread or milk as the shelves in the stores were bare. When disaster first struck in B.C., search and rescue teams from Comox helped rescue motorists who had been stranded in dangerous conditions. The Canadian Armed Forces on the ground supported relief and mitigation efforts. When remote communities were cut off by landslides and road closures, the Air Task Force members helped deliver essential food and supplies. They delivered over

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6,000 pounds of supplies to the Nooaitch and Nicomen first nations communities so far, including critical staples like fresh milk, eggs and potatoes.

Thousands of Canadian Armed Forces members are on standby and will be on their way to assist those most impacted by the tragedy, if needed. I thank the members of the Canadian military for their work, which includes everything from evacuations, rescuing livestock, sandbagging areas at risk of flooding and assisting with infrastructure repairs. We are so grateful for their commitment to keeping British Columbians safe on the ground during this difficult time.

Our government is working closely with provincial counterparts in British Columbia. We recently approved their request for federal assistance from the province for help with its emergency response to the extreme widespread flooding. Indigenous Services Canada also approved a funding request of \$4.4 million in additional funding to the First Nations' Emergency Services Society of British Columbia to support it as it assists first nations in their response to the widespread flooding caused by the recent atmospheric river event.

Our government has also been helping residents return home who have been left stranded in the flooded areas where roads have been inaccessible. A local team from my constituency of Surrey Centre, the Surrey Thunder U11 boys hockey team, was on its way to a tournament nearly 400 kilometres away from home and was left stranded with no accessible route home through Canada due to the road damage caused by the flooding. Thanks to the coordination on both sides of the border, including of our government officials, CBSA officers, U.S. immigration and many more who were involved, we were able to get them home safely.

As British Columbians brace for the expected heavy rains coming at the end of this week, our government is watching closely and will stand with the people of British Columbia and continue to work with our provincial counterparts to ensure the safety and well-being of British Columbians.

I would like to close today by acknowledging that there are colleagues from British Columbia who are represented across party lines in the House. I hope that, as we begin the 44th Parliament, we can come together and do what we must do to support all those impacted by these devastating events and the many other challenging situations Canadians are facing across this country. To everyone in B.C. impacted by the floods, please take care and stay safe.

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• (2115)

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your appointment.

I want to thank the member for Surrey Centre particularly for highlighting the work being done to enhance the diking system around the Nicomekl River and the Serpentine River running through Surrey and also through my riding of Langley—Aldergrove. However, we heard earlier in debate today that a significant cause of the flooding on the Canadian side of Sumas Prairie was the breaching of the dikes and the banks of the Nooksack River on the American side.

I wonder if the member would have any comments about how the Canadian government has to work together with the American and the Washington governments to make sure that does not happen again. That needs to be solved.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely essential. As we know, the environment does not pick borders or see boundaries and we have to work with our American and global counterparts for many things. In this particular place, we have to work with our partners to the south to make sure they make the same mitigation efforts, the same diking and restoration efforts, so that this does not happen again. Deep collaborations among the provincial and state governments and the two federal governments would have to take place. I will encourage and definitely speak to our ministers of global affairs so they can talk to their counterparts on the U.S. side.

• (2120)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Earlier, my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands did a great job explaining what happened in British Columbia. Because of the fires that happened a few months ago, the ground had a hard time absorbing water. As a result, the water flowed across the land, destroying things in its path. That is an example of the kind of self-destruct sequence that can be triggered when nature is out of balance. It is the kind of surprise we can expect once we hit the famous tipping point if we do not keep the temperature increase in check.

Does my colleague think his government has done enough to keep the temperature increase in check?

[*English*]

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of work to be done, absolutely. It is essential to control the growth of the temperature rising. As my colleague from Cloverdale—Langley City alluded to earlier, we must do more. Canada is warming faster than many other countries around the globe. We have a huge watershed in our Arctic that we have to preserve, which is kind of the coolant of the globe, and therefore we must do more. Otherwise, these disastrous events will happen.

We need support from across the aisle on this issue and it should be bipartisan or tripartisan with all parties in this matter.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is my first time rising in the House. I want to thank

the fine people of Edmonton Griesbach for the tremendous honour to represent them in this place.

I want to extend my condolences, first and foremost, to the people of British Columbia who have suffered and continue to suffer from the catastrophic flooding caused by human-made climate change. My heart and the hearts of the people of Edmonton Griesbach are with all of them.

I also want to make clear that the impact of this crisis is being felt far outside the province of British Columbia. The Alberta supply chain has been hit hard by the devastating floods in B.C. Local business owners in my district of Edmonton Griesbach are working around the clock to keep their shelves stocked, but they are finding it impossible to keep food and essential goods on the shelf.

Can the member expand on what plans the government has to ensure we build a more robust supply chain that can withstand this and future climate-caused crises, especially for those who have been hit hard by long-standing supply chain issues like indigenous communities and communities in the north?

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his election and representing the constituents of Edmonton Griesbach.

The government will do whatever it takes. This is a very essential time. As we have seen, even without natural climate disasters, due to the COVID situation globally, supply chains have been even more imperative. They have to be examined and ensured, particularly for indigenous communities, remote communities and communities in the interior, so we will do whatever it takes.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is very good to see you in the chair, the first Acadian deputy speaker. Congratulations.

Colleagues, I wish my first speech in the 44th Parliament was not on this topic. I will be splitting my time with the member of Parliament for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge. I want to thank him and our colleagues from British Columbia for bringing forward this emergency debate.

Over the last week and a half, Canadians have watched our families, our friends and our relatives in some cases fight devastating floods and landslides across British Columbia that have brought unspeakable devastation to communities in a province that was still recovering from the forest fires that took place over the course of the last year. I have been hearing some of the accounts first-hand from the British Columbian members of our caucus and of course from media reports. Families used kayaks, motorboats and canoes to reach safety. They watched their homes, farms and businesses literally become submerged by the flooding. Others spent nights in their cars on highways that were washed away or covered by trees and mud.

[*Translation*]

Supply chains connected to the Port of Vancouver are blocked. Residents are wondering how they are going to get essential goods. The destruction is heartbreaking, and that is why we are here tonight.

[*English*]

Tonight I want to speak directly to British Columbians. I can only imagine the hardship that they and their families have been facing and will continue to face in rebuilding efforts. Although with the roads and railways they may have felt cut off from Canada, they should know that they will never be cut off from their friends and family in this great country.

Our country as a whole is here to support them because that is what it means to be Canadian. In times of trouble, we all come together. When people need help, we are there to serve. From the Lower Mainland to the Interior, when the highways turned to rivers, that is when we saw British Columbians step up with heroic action for their neighbours.

These are people like Henry Chillihitzia, who used a motorboat to lead 29 horses to safety in near-freezing and fast-moving flood waters in Merritt, and a helicopter pilot from Vancouver Island who sprung into action, delivering badly needed supplies in the Mainland before rescuing six people who were stuck in Hope. Cities like Kamloops and Kelowna have opened their doors to welcome hundreds if not thousands stranded in British Columbia. Communities have stepped up with heroic resilience, a resilience that Canadians have been known for at home and around the world. However, it is time that those families know that the rest of Canada is stepping up too.

The work of our Canadian Armed Forces, our first responders on the ground and civic workers has saved lives and protected property. However, the rebuilding effort will require significant federal support and a long-term plan and commitment. British Columbians need to know that Canada will be with them for the long term as they rebuild. They need a united country behind them to help them get back on their feet, and my commitment to them is that the Conservatives here in Ottawa will be a voice for them now and every day forward as we rebuild. We will ensure that no one is left behind and that they will get the support they need.

We know that one aspect of climate change is more frequent extreme weather. While we must work to lower emissions, we must also work to protect our communities and protect our economy by building resilient communities and dedicating specific infrastructure funding to adaptation efforts. The Conservatives campaigned on a plan to better prepare communities for the impacts of a changing climate. I spoke to Mayor Henry Braun in Abbotsford a few days ago. I want to thank Mayor Braun and civic leaders like him across B.C. for their leadership in this time of crisis.

• (2125)

Mayor Braun has told me, as other mayors have told my colleagues, about dikes that need rebuilding in Abbotsford, Agassiz, Hope and Kent. These communities need to know that there is a long-term commitment to resilient infrastructure. The Conservatives promised to develop and implement a national action plan on

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floods, including a residential high-risk flood insurance program so that Canadians can rebuild.

Our plan also included developing a national climate adaptation strategy, directly incorporating mitigation and adaptation lenses into all infrastructure projects. We also ran on and committed to appointing a national disaster resilience adviser to the Privy Council Office so that expertise is just down the hall from the prime minister whenever emergencies happen. For a government that is known for lots of talk and little action, I welcome the Liberals to steal any of our ideas as we need to rebuild British Columbia.

We will advocate for these important measures, and the Conservatives will be watching to make sure the government takes concrete action to protect the lives and livelihoods of Canadians. Let us work together to protect our country.

• (2130)

[*Translation*]

Thanks to the previous Conservative government's investments in the Canadian Armed Forces, our men and women in uniform have the capacity to carry out the mass movement of troops, supplies and equipment.

[*English*]

I want to thank the Minister of Public Safety for working with Conservative MPs and all MPs in our federal response. I respect that. However, the Liberal government also needs to be crystal clear when it comes to promises it makes to Canadians who are in crisis and are worried.

This past weekend, the Liberal minister was telling B.C. residents that they could cross the U.S. border to buy essential supplies without needing a COVID-19 test, but now we are hearing reports that flood-affected Canadians were fined over \$5,000 for not taking the test before they returned home. British Columbians cannot afford this type of confusion, and I sincerely hope that the minister moves to correct this situation.

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I am incredibly proud of my colleagues in the House from British Columbia who have been actively supporting their constituents and partner levels of government, including the members for Abbotsford and Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, and all of our MPs, including the MP for Chilliwack—Hope, who has remained on the ground to help coordinate efforts with our members here in Ottawa. Our entire B.C. team is here tonight and is working day and night to help those displaced and impacted.

As I said, I know that this is not just our side of the House. Indeed, all Canadians and all British Columbians need to know that we will be working for them. I thank everyone here in this emergency debate this evening for standing up for their fellow Canadians.

Let us be united in helping those who need it most. Let us make sure we protect people now and have long-term commitments to the economic rebuilding that will be required. Let us combat emissions and get them down while also making sure that adaptation efforts are under way with dikes, with flood mitigation and with emergency preparedness. Issues such as these should not be political. We need to make sure that the Prime Minister and Privy Council Office have the ability to rapidly address the needs of the nation and address the use of the Canadian Armed Forces, including with more direct army engineering capacity on the ground in British Columbia, something the province has really been deprived of since a Liberal government in the past closed CFB Chilliwack.

Let us make sure we build that capacity, we work together and we send a clear message to British Columbians tonight: We are here with them today, tomorrow and to the last day of the rebuilding because we need a strong British Columbia for a strong Canada.

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the speech from the Leader of the Opposition. He ended by saying that we must be united and help those who need it most. I totally agree with him.

As I told the Prime Minister earlier, simply putting out fires is no longer good enough. What we are doing tonight is showing compassion and sympathy. We are trying to put out fires, but we have to start preventing them. Preventing fires means accepting what science tells us. Science tells us that our current approach to oil and gas is no longer possible in a context of global warming.

I wonder whether the leader of the official opposition would agree with me that the best short-term solution is to stop funding fossil fuels.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Jonquière for his question. Unfortunately, he is using an emergency debate to play petty political games. We are here for the well-being of Canadians.

When it comes to climate change, we need to be better prepared for the future. We need to make historic investments to respond to the effects of climate change such as flooding, as we indicated in our political platform during the election campaign. We need to be better prepared for the future in order to respond to disasters such as floods and fires, and this includes having a leader in the Privy Council Office, which was also part of our political platform. It is

time to work together and take action for Canadians in British Columbia.

• (2135)

[English]

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that the Leader of the Opposition is onside with the idea that we need to have a lot more ambition in funding climate adaptation for communities and in responding to disasters such as this.

As small communities like Princeton and Merritt are faced with tens of millions of dollars, if not much more, in rebuilding efforts, would he also be in favour of eliminating the necessity for a 20% municipal investment? It is something that small communities simply cannot manage, and they are the ones that know what to do and how to do it.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Mr. Speaker, the way the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay phrased the question in saying that we need more ambition reminds me of one of my major critiques of the Prime Minister and the Liberal government. They do not lack in ambition, nice tweets and trips abroad. What they lack is achievement. They never deliver on anything. They have long fired their person in charge of deliverology.

What we need is what the Conservatives ran on during the election: adaptation and resilient infrastructure investments. I agree with the member that for some smaller municipalities this is a very huge expense. As municipalities are a creation of the province, this is an area where I really do think the federal government and the provinces need to make sure that infrastructure funding specific to the impacts of climate change has federal and provincial leadership.

As I learned from my great discussion with Mayor Braun, the local governments can help set the priorities, but we have to be there not just to talk a good game but to deliver. The rebuilding efforts in B.C. will be some of the largest in our history. We have to show tonight that we will start and we will get the job done.

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a few questions for the opposition leader. Is he aware that we have started to implement an adaptation strategy that is already delivering results by funding tangible projects from coast to coast to coast?



Take Montreal, where a park is being built with the collaboration of the city and the federal government. These are nature-based solutions that represent tens of millions of dollars and will help limit spring flooding in the city's west end.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the question.

Perhaps he could go to British Columbia to see the effects of the flooding. He should get on a train today and go see the situation on the ground. Unfortunately, I understand the situation, and I am up to speed. The government has made a lot of announcements about climate change and investments in infrastructure, but there is no solid action. The difference between our team and the government is that we will deliver.

[*English*]

**Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your appointment. You look good in the chair.

I want to express my appreciation to all members in the House and all parties for taking the time and agreeing to have this emergency debate. This afternoon, when we heard different members speaking about the crisis and the flood in British Columbia, I was struck that we gave each other standing ovations. All of us here really do care for the people of British Columbia and the province.

British Columbia is in a really tough spot right now. It is an emergency. I think of communities like Princeton, Merritt, Abbotsford and Chilliwack, which are submerged or partially submerged, and smaller communities like Lytton, which have been stranded.

Many thousands of people have been evacuated. I think of my brother David who lives in Yarrow. The livelihoods of people have been lost. The main transportation links were or are cut off.

Most of us have seen the pictures of devastation in the media, or pictures of the Coquihalla Highway, for example, and other rail and road arteries. I do not know if members or those who are watching have travelled the Coquihalla, but it is a marvel of engineering. To see the overpasses collapse and how the changing rivers have wiped out roads in other places is quite stunning.

My wife told me this morning that she hoped to see our granddaughter Harper in Kelowna around Christmastime, as well as the parents, who we love. I told her I did not know if we would be able to see them, because it depends on the roads. It could take many months before they are restored.

Gas is being rationed in my riding of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge and throughout much of British Columbia.

I think of the entire city of Merritt, which was forced to evacuate. I think of the towns and villages of first nations, many of which are still reeling from the damage caused by the forest fire this summer, forced out at a moment's notice and living in emergency shelters once again. I think of the many people who lost their homes, businesses and livelihoods.

I think of Mirsad and Anita Hadzic, as well as two others, who lost their lives in the mudslide on Duffey Lake Road. Tragically, their two-year-old daughter was left behind without parents. Even

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in these most tragic and sad situations, some rays are shining through. The people of British Columbia have rallied for this now-orphaned child, which is an example of the old adage "It takes a [community] to raise a child." Money has poured in from everywhere, over \$131,000 so far on GoFundMe.

I think it is important to acknowledge some of the more positive stories from the past 10 days. We saw people reaching out to strangers with vulnerable health, offering to run errands for them so they did not have to put themselves at risk.

There were stories that brought out the best in humanity, stories of love, generosity and hope, from a place aptly called Hope, a small town whose businesses and people stepped up in ways that we have not seen since Gander on 9/11. One of my staff, Jay Denney, told me about his friends Mya Warren and Kris Lang. They were on their way from Kelowna to Vancouver and became trapped in Hope, along with many others, when the roads leading out were closed or destroyed. They stayed positive throughout days of living in a car.

The member for Langley—Aldergrove's son, daughter-in-law and five children lived in their vehicle under an underpass for several days until they were able to escape.

Mya and Kris talked about the amazing volunteers at the high school in Hope, who provided blankets when they mentioned how cold it was. They shared stories on social media of how Panago Pizza had a generator and the staff fed people for free until they ran out of supplies.

● (2140)

They were connected with Barb, who took them in until safe passage to Vancouver became available. Many others in Hope welcomed complete strangers. It is a testament to the fact that despite our differences, when things get tough in Canada, our strong community fabric comes through to help one another.

Kudos to the people of Hope and to the people everywhere who have lent a hand or donated to help out. This fabric includes our first responders, the Canadian military, highway and utility crews, search and rescue units and emergency services volunteers. I thank all of them and the people of British Columbia for their resiliency, and for all the generous offers of assistance from all across Canada.

I want to move onto the challenges, current and future.

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One challenge is the clarity and timeliness of information. Those same people in Hope, with all their positive stories, also raised valid complaints about accessing information. The information they received was from word of mouth. They wondered, as did I, why they received no information via emergency alerts on their cell-phones. It seems pretty simple.

A simple message with the details of which radio station or website people could get information from would have gone a long way to help locate emergency supports. If we can inform people province-wide about a missing person or about a potential tsunami, then certainly we can inform them of how they can get help in a natural disaster. This needs to be discussed further so it does not happen again.

We also have, as others have mentioned, British Columbians who have been issued severe fines for passing through Washington state without getting a COVID PCR test. These people are not on holidays. They are travelling essentially to get goods to survive, and doing what the minister said they could. The minister said that the matter was now clarified. However, what about those fines? The minister said that it was the responsibility of the Public Health Agency. That is not good enough. These people have enough to worry about. They should not be devastated financially. The minister needs to, within his statutory powers, do everything he can with respect to these fines to see them overturned.

The ongoing challenges to infrastructure, transportation, supply chain, food supply, natural resources, human displacement and employment will be significant, and they all could have net-negative economic impacts for months, if not years to come.

Infrastructure concerns me greatly across B.C., but particularly in my riding. We were relatively fortunate in Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, which is only half an hour away from Abbotsford. The Pitt and Alouette River watersheds were not as hard hit, but we did not escape totally unscathed. There was some localized flooding, but it could have been much worse.

The dike system along the Pitt River has held, but there have been calls for years to upgrade this and no money has been committed. We need to do something about this. We could have a much more serious situation in the next freshet.

The government has had six years to make significant improvements and it has not, putting the people in Pitt Meadows, Maple Ridge and the Katzie first nation at severe risk. We need to take action to deal with the issue right now. There is time to discuss climate change and mitigation. This is important. However, right now we need to get the people out of the burning fire to provide safety and to move forward. That is an immediate concern.

It is important to keep the focus on keeping B.C. safe, keeping people informed and building back B.C. as quick as possible. We need to remember the commitments that are made here when this crisis is no longer front-page news.

● (2145)

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that my colleague has a real heart for his constituents in the region.

We have had a lot of talk about climate change tonight. We know that climate change is a large factor in why this flooding happened. However, we also know that we have not been putting in the effort to ensure people are kept safe, whether it be through building infrastructure or through better emergency preparedness. I know the member was previously a member of the provincial legislature.

With the alert ready system, we have seen that the British Columbia government has not used that system. What more does the federal government need to do to work with the provinces to have a better standardized system for alert readiness in the country?

● (2150)

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** Mr. Speaker, it is the responsibility of each province. I do think there should be some basic foundations and precautions. It is hard to understand why people were not alerted. A few hours could have made a difference for many people to not be stranded. This is certainly a discussion the minister can have with provincial counterparts to ensure this is established and effective for all Canadians.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your election. You know how much I appreciate you, because we have spent time together on the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.

I thank my colleague for his passionate speech. He knows that he can count on the Bloc Québécois's support for our friends in British Columbia. I think everyone wants to rise above partisanship.

I unfortunately did not like how his leader responded to the question that my hon. colleague, the member for Jonquière, asked earlier about oil and gas. The Conservative leader accused my friend of playing petty political games. Calling for measures to combat climate change is not a petty political game. I am sure that my Conservative colleagues are aware of what is going on. Climate change exists, and British Columbia is an example of what is happening on this planet.

I would like to ask my Conservative friend whether we can count on all parliamentarians here to tackle climate change once and for all, in particular by eliminating subsidies for the oil industry.

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Bloc Québécois member for his question, which is very important to everyone.

We will certainly have the opportunity to have this discussion during this Parliament. As a member from British Columbia, my priority is helping and protecting those who are in this serious and urgent situation. I do not want to say that the member's question is not important, but it is not urgent.

[English]

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, before I ask my question, I want to recognize Port Moody firefighters, Coquitlam firefighters, Port Moody police, Coquitlam RCMP and the volunteer organization of Coquitlam Search and Rescue for their work to bring stranded people to safety in Abbotsford.

As we face more and more of these extreme weather catastrophes, I would ask the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge if the Conservatives agree that there should be more federal support for these organizations that always come together to help.

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on her election. As a neighbouring member of Parliament, I hope to be able to work with her on issues of importance such as what we are dealing with right now. Also, as she commended her emergency services and volunteers, I would do the same for those in my community who helped out. However, there is certainly more to be done, and there is a lot of room for discussion on this as we move forward.

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Surrey—Newton.

I ask my colleagues to spare a thought, or even a tiny tear, for my poor, beleaguered province of British Columbia. First there were heat waves in the summer, then there came fires, and it was only two months ago that we were able to deal with putting out those fires and repairing the damage after what went on. Now we face floods. Not only have we had the floods, but we hear that in a week there will be over 80 to 100 millimetres of rainfall with storms hitting the same province in the same area. Then two weeks after that, there is going to be another set of storms. I ask members to spare a thought for my province.

It is not only the cost of human life, misery and the displacement of families and people, but there is also the cost to dairy farmers. British Columbia, my province, is the capital of dairy farming in this part of the world. We should think about what has been happening. We have heard that 500 cows died. The Fraser Valley is facing a problem and neighbouring communities are adopting cattle, bringing them to their own farms to take care of them temporarily until things change. We are hearing this is happening even in nearby Alberta and Washington, D.C., where people are trying to help out with this problem.

We have heard about the economic cost. We have heard all about the cost of rebuilding, the cost to businesses, the cost to the dairy industry and the cost to the farming industry. We have seen supply chains cut off. We have seen gas being rationed in the province of British Columbia. We have seen that fuel and medicines cannot get to people who need them. The Port of Vancouver, which my colleague from Abbotsford mentioned, is probably the largest port in Canada, taking over \$1 billion a day in economic services. Indige-

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nous communities have been cut off from water, food and medicines, so people's health is at stake as well.

We have seen what the federal government has done. The Prime Minister immediately called Premier Horgan and the four mayors of the most affected areas and told them we are here for them with anything they need. We, as a federal government, have been responding to what we have been asked for by the municipalities, communities and, of course, the Province of British Columbia.

My colleague, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, has been speaking every single day with Minister Farnworth and the minister of transport, Minister Fleming, in British Columbia. There are talks going on and there is movement happening. The defence minister sent 500 troops to British Columbia to help with rebuilding, to help with dikes, to help move goods and services, and to help with supply chains and airlifting people and food to communities. This is about damage control. This is about taking care of the problems that are happening.

We should also talk about how the cost of rebuilding alone is going to be phenomenal. We want to make sure that when we build back, and I am going to use that hackneyed term, we will build back better. Let us make sure that the materials we use will be resilient and that they will not be damaged by water, floods or fire, and that they will be able to survive these disasters that are hitting the province so quickly, so that we can be resilient and not always having such enormous damage done.

We need to talk about the cost of rebuilding, the cost of preventing, the cost of mitigating and the cost of protecting communities from climate change. Before I talk about how the provinces have come together, I want to mention that the federal government, municipalities and every one of the governments are pulling in the same direction. We are all working together to make change, to protect and to move forward.

I want to talk a bit about the unsung heroes, the frontline workers, the firefighters, the police, the RCMP, all of the community organizations and volunteer groups helping their communities. Let us talk about the community people who have come forward.

● (2155)

We heard a story about a Sikh community suddenly bringing in food and medicine and whatever was needed. We have seen and heard about people renting, helping, adopting farm animals, helping with milking of cows. We have seen families feeding each other and taking each other into their homes. As everyone has said, that is what we do as Canadians. It shows that everyone is pulling together, not just governments but communities, industry and organizations. Anyone who can is coming out to help each other. That is not to mention the individuals across the country who have been donating money to the Red Cross.

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We talk a lot about climate change. We do not have to talk about it anymore. The debate is over. It is here. We have seen the enemy. It is climate change, and it is fossil fuels. We need to talk about it, and we need to do something about it. The time for partisan debate is over. Let us no longer stand in the House and say we do not want to be partisan, yet debate any action on climate change.

Let us come together and take this action together for the sake of our communities, as British Columbians will know. Let us do this for the sake of communities that are yet to come. We see what is happening in the Atlantic provinces right now. Let us not have to talk about this anymore. Let us do what we need to do to prevent it. Let us act in this House, as one voice, and take the steps we need to take with climate change.

I will tell everyone why it should not be partisan and why we should care. It is because we all inhabit this planet together. Let us work together to protect it.

• (2200)

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Madam Speaker, since this is the first time that I am rising in this House during this Parliament, I would like to thank my husband and son for their unwavering support and also the constituents of Kelowna—Lake Country for entrusting me to continue to be their member of Parliament. It is truly an honour.

I am really happy to see that so many members of this House came together to have this emergency debate this evening. My riding of Kelowna—Lake Country is right next to some of the most affected areas. We have taken on thousands of people who are out of their homes, and I have really seen the spirit of Kelowna—Lake Country open up with volunteers and people in the community helping.

I would like to ask the member opposite about the most immediate needs that we have for repair and for helping people, specifically with respect to adaptation, because I did not hear her speak about adaptation. The immediate need is that we need to make sure that something like this, on this scale, does not happen again.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Madam Speaker, that is an interesting question. I did speak about adaptation actually. I talked about protecting and preventing, putting back climate change to 1.5°C, and that we need to talk about it to get there. We need to therefore stop arguing about it, stop debating, and stop blocking it. Let us move forward to help it.

I also wanted to say that it is little acts of kindness that are going on in her community in Kelowna. It is little acts of kindness when people come together and move forward and help each other in times of need. This is wonderful, but we do not always want to depend on people coming together to help each other out. We need to do something. We are the legislators. We can do something about climate change.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the people first in my riding, where 100 people were displaced, many of them living in a trailer park. I want to thank the first responders, the community residents who stepped forward, the Arrowsmith Search and Rescue, the people who took risks when the Englishman River breached its bank.

There is a lot of fear for the people in our community right now. There is a forecast of an atmospheric river coming for this weekend as well. We have not remediated the impact of the storm that hit us.

We have not talked enough about wild salmon and the impact on wild salmon. We know that wild salmon have seen drought, forest fires, a warming ocean and the Big Bar landslide. We had a 3% return in the lowest salmon-bearing river in the world last year.

Will the member speak about the importance of the government urgently ensuring that there are monitors and that there is support for indigenous communities to see what we can do for habitat restoration for wild salmon, so we can preserve that iconic species, which is critical to our economy, our culture, our—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Madam Speaker, that was a question from a true British Columbian. There is an understanding of the problems that we face in British Columbia and an understanding of our culture and the iconic salmon. I think, in talking about indigenous communities, this government has stepped up and is working very closely with Minister Rankin in B.C., in getting water, food and medicines, and in protecting the indigenous communities in the region. That is all happening.

I also wanted to say that it not only the human cost of these tragedies that are concerning us. It is the cost of our wildlife. It is the cost of the salmon. It is the cost of our fisheries, and it is the cost of the fact that our oceans are undergoing a set of changes through climate change.

We need to talk once again. It all comes down to the bottom line: Let us deal with climate change, and let us deal with it now.

• (2205)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, congratulations for your position once again in the chair.

To my hon. colleague for Vancouver Centre, knowing her medical background, one of the areas of infrastructure that we have not talked about that will need massive overhauls for adaptation to the climate crisis is our hospitals and our medical infrastructure. We had a recent study done on Vancouver Island looking at the Nanaimo hospital. We realized that during wildfires surgeries were cancelled because the air quality inside the hospitals was not adequate. The air conditioning did not meet the needs of heat dome situations.

Does the hon. member have any comments on that aspect of adaptation?

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Madam Speaker, I think this is really important to the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. One of the most important things in our hospitals and our intensive care units is that the resources working in those areas were completely beleaguered by COVID and the heat waves. We now see what is happening with the floods.

The important thing, as Theresa Tam, our chief public health officer, has said when looking at this issue, is that it is about looking at the ventilation in these ancient buildings. We need to look at how we can ensure that we have ventilation that is going to prevent the spread of disease. We also need to look at how to fast forward what our government promised in this last election to bring about primary care physicians and nurses so that they can be the human resources we need to work in these hospitals in these communities.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise today as a proud member of Parliament from British Columbia to relay the impact that the recent extreme weather events have had on the lives of British Columbians.

As this is my first speech in this 44th parliamentary session, I want to begin by thanking my constituents in Surrey—Newton for placing their trust in me as their representative. I also want to acknowledge all of my supporters and volunteers for their dedication and unwavering support. Last but not least, I want to thank my family for all of their support, including my 82-year-old mother, Amarjit Kaur Dhaliwal, for all of her efforts and tireless campaigning throughout the many years I have been involved in public service.

I am fortunate to be returning as the member of Parliament for Surrey—Newton for a fifth term. As always, it is a role that I consider a true privilege and one that I will not ever take for granted.

I would like to begin by extending my deepest sympathies to those who have lost their homes and livelihoods and sharing my heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost loved ones.

Before I delve into some of the Surrey—Newton stories and accounts that I have witnessed with community members stepping up for others, let me address a few things on behalf of our government.

I am pleased to relay that, last night, Canadian Armed Forces started to hit the ground in B.C. communities. There are many points along our supply chain that were impacted, with highways broken, communities cut off and people still stranded. The immediate response units that have arrived will be critical in restoring these important supply chain routes, making sure that people and animals are safe and have access to basic necessities.

This is particularly important as we wait for the atmospheric rivers to return over the coming days. Tonight will begin a new wave of storms, which are expected over the next week. By Friday night, anywhere between 40 to 80 millimetres of rain is expected. While these storms will be less intense than those we experienced 10 days ago, it is good to know that we have the armed forces on the ground to add extra capacity to our rescue and recovery efforts.

I also want to address the recent issues with the Canada Border Services Agency, where we saw several Canadians fined and improperly given quarantine instructions that were contrary to our government's changes announced over this past weekend. I have

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heard from several Surrey residents directly, as our city is one of those border communities to where the exemptions were directed. There were constituents of mine who were impacted with financial penalties and improper instructions. However, I am pleased to report that the minister has made immediate corrections to this unfortunate set of circumstances, and I am confident that no other issues will occur.

I am also very pleased that our government is working alongside the province of British Columbia to create the Supply Chain Recovery Working Group to bring together all key transportation and supply chain stakeholders. This approach will allow our province to find collaborative solutions that will work as effectively as possible to get food, medicines and other critical supplies back in the hands of British Columbians who have been cut off or impacted by shortages.

I want to share with the House today what has happened with our local residents in Surrey—Newton who, while not nearly affected by the floods like other communities, have shown extraordinary spirit in lending support to those in distress.

● (2210)

We have seen Gurdwaras and organizations across Surrey—Newton and Sikh Canadians throughout British Columbia prepare food around the clock, collect donations and most impressively helped to organize helicopters and planes paid for by various individuals and congregations to airlift food and supplies to affected areas.

Over the past few days, I have spoken to many of the executive members and volunteers within these efforts and the response from the community has been nothing short of incredible.

I have received hundreds of calls from people wishing to donate non-perishable food items, warm blankets and clothes. Others have reached out to express their desire to lend their time and manual labour, while some have pooled money among family and friends to contribute to these efforts. Of course, these efforts are not only within the Sikh community. People of all backgrounds and means have stepped up in British Columbia and from coast to coast to coast.

Take for example, the flights that are now operating 24-7, flying back and forth between Metro Vancouver and the interior of B.C. at the cost of volunteer pilots who are transporting the overwhelming amount of supplies. It is estimated that each flight costs roughly \$300 in fuel alone. What started out as a few planes has now expanded into dozens of planes running day in and day out to get essential goods to the hundreds of people stranded across the province.

This is the kind of spirit that defines British Columbia. We are all connected no matter where people live in the province. We care about each other, offering outreach, help, support and compassion to those in distress. It makes me so proud of my province and fellow British Columbians.

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There is one takeaway that I have gained in watching and interacting with those who are in the line of fire, either as victims of flooding or as a part of the mission to help, and I want to communicate that message to the House.

I hope British Columbia serves as a final wake-up call for every Canadian about the direct impact of climate change on our daily lives. Whereas once upon a time it was easy to say that natural disasters were something that happened in other parts of the country or the globe, British Columbia is now firmly entrenched in that club.

The heat dome, the wildfires and now these floods teach us that no one, no matter geography or political belief system, is entirely immune from the consequences of our carbon-heavy way of life. It is why our government has made tangible and swift climate action a top priority as evidenced in yesterday's Speech from the Throne.

Sincerely I hope that every member of the House, no matter what political affiliation or region, can offer sincerity in pledging to work together to tackle the greatest crisis we have seen in our lifetime. Our time is now.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for giving me an opportunity and congratulations on your reappointment to the Chair.

● (2215)

**Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I rise here for the first time in the House as a gesture of support from the people of Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame to the distressed people of ravaged British Columbia.

Newfoundland and Labrador is suffering its own devastation with seven washouts on the Trans-Canada near Port aux Basques. This is a very dangerous situation as the island has food reserves for only three days.

On behalf of the people of my province tonight, will the government commit to sending aid to my province to get this highway fixed?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member on his election to this House. I assure him that our government is committed to doing everything everywhere in Canada, from coast to coast to coast, if an emergency happens, and I am certain those processes are already under way.

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's speech. He is a sensible, rational man. I would therefore like to ask him a very simple question.

This evening, I asked the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition one time whether they agreed that we cannot just put out fires and that we need to prevent them. What we are seeing today are the effects of the climate crisis.

Can my colleague tell me whether he agrees that one of the solutions would be to eliminate funding for the oil and gas industry?

[English]

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Madam Speaker, I would like to assure the member that dealing with the climate issues is the top priority of

our government, and we have done so in the past many years. We are on track to get to net-zero emissions by 2050.

With respect to avoiding the fires the member talked about, we have dedicated \$500 million to train 1,000 new community-based firefighters to ensure we are ready for future fire seasons, and will work with the provinces and territories to provide firefighters the equipment they need to fight fires and stay safe, like Canadian-made planes to increase provincial aerial firefighting capacity.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, congratulations to you.

The member said the government is on track to meeting net-zero targets. The reality is this. I will remind him that the current government has missed every single target to date. We are in fact not on track. The reason we have the climate emergency we are faced with in British Columbia today is exactly because successive governments have failed to take the climate emergency seriously.

To that end, I would ask if the member would support the NDP in pursuing this goal of getting the government to bring an end to the subsidies for the oil and gas sector and put forward a real plan for just transitions for the workers.

● (2220)

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Madam Speaker, when it comes to emissions control, the projected Canadian emissions are 36% lower for 2030 compared to 2005 levels, which shows that our government is on the right track and by 2050 there will be net-zero emissions.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today. As this is the first opportunity I have had to thank the good people of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola for their continued support, I would just thank them all. It is a big honour.

Let me begin by also congratulating all members on their election to this new Parliament. While there will undeniably be things we disagree upon, let us be mindful that Canadians sent us here to Parliament to find agreement and consensus.

I am deeply saddened that my first words in this new Parliament are in this debate while many of my constituents, in communities such as Merritt and Princeton, are facing unique and serious hardship as a result of flooding and the serious repercussions of the aftermath of that flooding. Indeed, as members shall hear from my colleagues, this devastating situation has impacted, and is impacting, other regions of British Columbia.

Let me begin by stating an old but important fact: Excrement runs downhill. I mention this because in many small rural communities, the most critical and important infrastructure works as follows: the community drinking water, be it sourced from a well or dammed lakes or rivers, is treated in whatever manner the community can afford and pumped to a community reservoir. From there it typically feeds via a gravity system down through the community to the wastewater treatment facility. The wastewater treatment facility is often located near a lake or a river, where treated effluent can be discharged safely.

The challenge of this basic design is that whenever there is flooding, it immediately runs downhill and overwhelms the river or lake. Yes, there is also some type of flood control and typically some infrastructure, be it dams, dikes or whatever, but once that infrastructure is compromised there is rarely any secondary line of defence. As the water levels rise with the flooding, it creates a situation where one of the very first pieces of community infrastructure that is compromised is the wastewater treatment plant. This is exactly what occurred in Merritt.

Once the wastewater treatment plant is compromised, the ability of a community to function is compromised. It does not end there. Once floodwaters have breached a wastewater treatment plant, those waters are now contaminated and considered toxic, and by extension unsafe. They essentially create a toxic cesspool.

The higher the waters rise, the more the contamination spreads. Once residences have been submersed and compromised, the community's water system is now also compromised and unsafe. This, of course, means the community they live in is essentially unlivable and unsafe. The reality is that next to nothing in their homes or in their civic infrastructure is designed to be submerged in toxic, contaminated, unsafe flood water.

Ultimately, this leads to evacuation orders. In British Columbia, our emergency notification system is not as capable and as ready as it could be. Evacuating thousands of citizens on very short notice is a serious logistical challenge. Where do they go? How do they get there? Seniors in care homes need to be evacuated, transported, and new care homes found. Others with mobility issues and those who lack their own transport are in serious trouble. Worse, when flooding brings mud and other debris, once-navigable streets become un-navigable to emergency vehicles and first responders.

If the storm has also taken out power lines or transmission lines and other communications infrastructure, such as has occurred in British Columbia recently, suddenly wireless communications are compromised. How do people get help? How do those emergency responders get notification about those who need help? These are all situations that people in Merritt, Princeton and elsewhere have faced.

In one local indigenous community, the bridge was washed out. It was the only way in or out of that community. There was no bridge, no power, no ability to evacuate and a compromised ability to communicate. Frankly, we are all extremely fortunate there were not more deaths as a result of this disaster.

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• (2225)

In this case there was only one variable with all these serious challenges that made the critical difference, and that variable was the people. The people who live in Princeton and Merritt were the difference. They saved their neighbours, the vulnerable, their own families, friends and pets.

These are the people who are the unsung heroes and now they need our help. Many went to communities such as Kelowna or Kamloops, where in many cases they found evacuation centres that were overwhelmed. They found there was no place to go, no immediate assistance available. In reality, the evacuation centres and the provincial response could not keep up with the sudden, intense demand.

This left many people on their own, many living in their vehicles. Some found motels, but they did not have the funds to pay for them. As others have shared, their lines of credit on their credit cards are now full and they have no idea how they will pay that bill at the end of the month. Some, we should not forget, were trapped because the roads became unpassable for them.

The challenges from our compromised transportation infrastructure were immediately felt. Within 48 hours, many grocery stores were largely empty. Imagine someone having left their hometown of Merritt with literally nothing but the clothes on their back, and when they arrive in Kamloops or Kelowna the grocery stores are empty. That was the reality for many and is still a reality for some.

In the past days, members may have heard that residents are now allowed to come home. On the surface that sounds like a positive bit of progress, and for some it certainly is. Let me explain what coming home really means. We all know in many cases there will be a serious mess. Anything immersed in water must be removed and destroyed. That is a huge job in itself, and all that contaminated material will end up on the street, where it must be moved and properly disposed of. This also creates serious challenges.

That is where Princeton is right now. The mayor begged for Canadian Armed Forces personnel to help. We know there are Canadian Armed Forces boots on the ground now in B.C. to help. Fortunately, earlier today those personnel arrived in Princeton to provide this much-needed assistance. I am thankful for their service. I am thankful they are there.

These are just some of the challenges facing these citizens as they return home. Let me explain another challenge. Aside from removing their belongings and the serious mess left behind in their home, when people return they are likely to find either a red tag or a pink tag attached to their home. What does that mean?

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If someone has a pink tag, it means there is a possibility the gas meter was submerged in flood water or that the gas appliances may have been impacted by water. If this is the case, the gas is now shut off and a licensed natural gas contractor has to be contacted to assess the natural gas system and relight the appliances.

If someone has a red tag, it means the gas meter was submerged in flood water and the gas meter is now shut off and locked. This requires a licensed gas contractor and serious work to rectify. As I am sure all members can appreciate, even in a large city it can be a challenge to obtain the services of a gas contractor. Imagine the challenges in a small community, where the demand is huge given these situations.

Who pays for these gas contractors and the expensive work required? What if someone's last dollar or line of credit was used up staying at a hotel? What does a person do? These are very real questions people in Merritt and Princeton are asking themselves right now.

While local residents are facing these challenges, let us not forget that many who call these communities home and are facing these challenges are also community leaders, such as those who work in the civic yards. The mayor in council, civic staff, first responders, highway maintenance, police and paramedics and others are under tremendous pressure right now. They not only have their own problems to deal with at home, but must get their communities up and running.

I mentioned earlier the need to get sewer waste water plants up and running to flush out city lines, and in many cases repair those lines because they are broken. Princeton has already had to authorize drilling another well.

• (2230)

This could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars not afforded for in the city budget, and here is one of the biggest problems: Currently, the disaster financial assistance arrangements program only covers 80% of the cost. At a time when a local government is facing a disaster and virtually all civic infrastructure is compromised, an 80% contribution from senior levels of government is not enough. In normal times, 80% seems great, but I spoke to Mayor Spencer Coyne today, and he says it is way above their ability to pay. It is tens of millions of dollars, that 20%.

This creates enormous stress on civic leaders who are the decision-makers, but what choice do they have? If they cannot fully pressurize a water reservoir, they cannot have fire protection at a time when they most likely have gas leaks in their communities. While local government staff tries to restart all of the basic infrastructure that we all take for granted, let us keep in mind that in many of these communities the rental stocks were already very low. In places like Merritt and Princeton they were near zero before this occurred.

For example, Collettsville, a section of Merritt, was hit the hardest by the flooding. It will be the last part to be able to have citizens return. Can members imagine a senior seeing on the television what looks like their modular home floating away, with all they had in it? How can they find shelter in a community they have called home for decades if there are no alternatives?

I have been told by Mayor Linda Brown that without some form of rapid housing from senior levels of government, some people will never return to Merritt because there is nothing for them to return to. She has expressed willingness to discuss potential municipal sites for some rapid housing, and I hope tonight's discussion will result in something concrete for these residents. Mayor Coyne in Princeton has voiced a similar willingness to connect.

I would like, at this point, to take a moment and sincerely thank all of those locally elected officials, the support staff they have, the municipal staff and most especially our first responders. They are doing tremendously remarkable and amazing work in the most challenging and demanding of circumstances. Members should keep in mind that, while all of this is going on, they are in a race against time, because every night the temperature drops farther below zero, and each day less and less back above zero. The heavy winter freeze is setting in, and there is likely a two- to three-week window of opportunity before some activities will need to be put off until the spring. Let us be mindful that the forecast is suggesting that tomorrow there could be, in some parts of British Columbia, another 80 millimetres of rainfall and storm-like conditions.

I could spend the rest of my allotted time tonight talking about the serious challenge that people in my riding, the good people of Merritt and Princeton, are facing, as well as the indigenous communities in both the Similkameen and the Nicola valleys; however, I am going to stop. I have shared some of these challenges with the House because I believe it is critically important that we, as democratically elected members of this place, have an understanding of what these communities are going through, because in this place we can be, and I submit we need to be, part of the solution.

Communities such as Merritt and Princeton are just two examples. We know that in the Fraser Valley there is another situation, as well as in Hope, Spences Bridge and elsewhere. All of these communities need to do more than just rebuild. They need to rebuild and reinforce.

Let there be no doubt: Our climate is changing. In my riding, since 2017 we have witnessed the once-in-200-years flood of Okanagan Lake not just once, but twice. We have had the worst wildfire activity and smoke that has compromised air quality to levels never previously experienced. This past summer, and this has been said by other members, we also had the heat dome with record heat levels that resulted in people dying. Now there is flooding, with more severe weather in the forecast.



• (2235)

What can we do? I do not profess to have all the answers. The need to consult in partnership with local, provincial and first nations communities is paramount.

I can pass just a few observations. In 2016, a rock slide damaged the Oliver irrigation canal. This is a critical piece of infrastructure that serves the entire South Okanagan farming community. I should say this is not in my riding, but that does not change the importance of the example, especially considering this infrastructure.

The community was prepared to invest its fair share for the repairs. The province stepped up to cover its share, but when it came to Ottawa paying its share, the answer was no. The bureaucrats said that the project did not fit into any established grant programs, and that was the end of it.

This is a serious problem. When critical agricultural infrastructure does not fit the criteria of Ottawa, it is not the fault of the residents of the South Okanagan. That is the fault of the bureaucracy and the thinking here in Ottawa. Going forward, we need grant funding programs that meet the needs of small communities as opposed to the political needs of a government in Ottawa.

Another observation is that in many small rural B.C. communities, the water services are provided by irrigation districts. Currently, these irrigation districts are not eligible for any senior government grant funding.

Let us just think about that. This is a serious problem. These small communities need funds to protect their water system from the threats of our changing climate, yet by design they are excluded from senior government grant funds, despite the fact that the users of these systems all pay taxes to provincial and federal governments. This situation has gone on for years, but I submit that we can no longer continue to ignore it.

Speaking of things we have to contend with, I spoke with the regional director from the areas around the village of Keremeos, who sent pictures of the dikes that are failing in his area and water that is leaking and flooding into largely older modular homes, largely of seniors. He told me that if they fail, the RCMP and the ambulance and fire station within the village of Keremeos would be at risk, complicating an already difficult situation.

While we are here contending with the challenges of flooded communities today, we need to acknowledge that there are other small communities that teeter without sustainable arrangements for the fixing and maintenance of the water infrastructures.

I am winding down, but I have just a few more observations. Many rural and indigenous communities still do not have high-speed broadband or wireless service. Despite the fact that Canadians living in rural communities pay their taxes to fund an infrastructure bank, it has been structured by the Liberal government in such a way that it will not be able to provide any benefit for any small community in Canada.

No matter how we try to cut all these observations I have shared, Ottawa is part of the problem and not the solution. That needs to change. I do not really want to point fingers or blame. If anything, that is part of the problem itself. We continually debate what is ulti-

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mately an “Ottawa knows best” policy that continues to adversely impact small rural communities. As our climate changes, we must ensure that Ottawa provides resources that meet the demands of these small rural communities just as much as it does for our bigger centres.

I am hopeful that in the days, weeks and months going forward, as communities like Princeton and Merritt try to rebuild, we will have a federal government in Ottawa that will find ways to be there to support these communities rather than telling them they do not fit the criteria. That is a challenge we need to be up for. Failure is not an option. For every citizen facing a loss and tough times in British Columbia right now, let this be our moment to stand with them and be there to support them.

• (2240)

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have a question on a different part of the community infrastructure, but I want to congratulate the member for his very obvious grasp of the essential elements in his communities. I think they are being well served.

Based on experience I had a long time ago when I was on the radio in Kamloops, we broadcasted to Merritt and we broadcasted to Princeton. If anything happened, people could turn on the radio and find out what was going on.

How did the broadcasters perform in your communities during this emergency?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I will not be able to answer that, but I do want to remind the member to address the questions and comments through the Chair.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Madam Speaker, I asked the question of Michael Reeve from Q101, stationed in Merritt, because he was continuing to do his job as a journalist to make sure the public was informed of the policies and guidelines that were being taken, and he was evacuated. The difficulty with dealing with these kinds of cases is that we put journalists, first responders and local officials in such difficult situations, where they are trying to support their communities as much as they can, yet they have to deal with all the challenges that I have made out in my speech.

During the summer, I had an elected official who was actually evacuated because of fires. I was receiving calls from citizens who were complaining about his lack of attention, and I said that this person was trying to evacuate his home just like they were, so they should try to work with him. It is a tremendous challenge and we need to support one another so we can help the people in our communities.

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. The information that he provides is always very precise and well thought out.

He talked about how he spoke with a mayor and about how high the costs will be. Even if the federal government covers 90% of the cost, small communities still may not be able to cover the remaining 10%.

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Should the federal government cover 100% of the costs? That is a valid question. Earlier, I was saying that it will cost a lot of money to make the transition but that it will cost more in the long run if we do not make it. Does my colleague agree that we need to start changing the way we invest and that we need to invest taxpayers' money in forward-looking solutions that work? I would like to know whether he agrees with those solutions.

[English]

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member raising the issue. Again, the mayors who requested that this be looked at really do not care if the 40% is coming from the province and the remainder is coming from Ottawa, or vice versa. They are just saying that they cannot afford this but they have to proceed with these repairs. They have to protect their communities. They have to get these things done. Quite honestly, they do not care who is doing what.

At the end of the day, we should be using some good, sound judgment. If a province is strong, has a tax base and is in a position to fund these things, then we should let it take the lead. I will also say that is why we are part of a united country, because sometimes some provinces are not going to be in a position where they can write that cheque. We need to use our best judgment, and that is where a national government would come into play.

● (2245)

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola for his speech and for bringing up the example of Oliver and the irrigation canal. It was one of the most frustrating issues of my career trying to get that project funded. The government actually fixed that problem after four years of lobbying and three infrastructure ministers. Unfortunately, it came too late for Oliver.

I would like to give the member the time to talk more about what is happening in Princeton and Merritt and what the future looks like. He painted a vivid picture of what the past weeks have been, but what does the future look like? What do they have to do?

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my fellow British Columbian for his participation here tonight and for sharing some of his knowledge and expertise. The community of Grand Forks, as he said, went through quite a process, and we are going to see the same things happen here. We are going to be running into it.

Right now, I hear from people who are saying that, if they are insured, they are being told that they do not get any support. When they go to their insurance company, they are told it is not going to cover everything. There are going to be some tremendous challenges on an individual or household basis. As I elaborated here, from a community perspective this is not easy. The Coldwater River has shifted at least a block over. Right now it is along a course over a gas line and utilities that were never designed to be underneath a river. These are large-scale challenges.

When I say how difficult it is for the municipal staff, just imagine what it is for a senior or a person with a disability to come home and find out they have to restart from scratch without assistance. Small communities need the help.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to stand for the first time on behalf of Peterborough—Kawartha. I want to give a big shout-out to my friend Arnold Taylor from Curve Lake for this beautiful piece of indigenous children for those who did not make it home from residential schools, which he sent here to the House of Commons.

I also want to say hello to my children, who waited up for this moment. Mom is actually working.

I thank my colleague so much for his work and for everything that has been done. We have heard a lot about the financial restrictions and the economic impact of trying to find hotels and all of these things. Then we heard about being charged \$5,700 for PCR tests to get necessities over the border.

Now we are hearing that it is being passed over to public health. What can we do? What are your suggestions on ensuring that these people are not held accountable for that?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to remind the member that she is to address questions directly through the Chair and not to the individual member.

The hon member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Madam Speaker, first of all, I am delighted, and I congratulate the member for her election. I am also delighted that her children get to see her in action. I feel badly that they had to see 20 minutes of me to get to that.

Most important, there are so many challenges at an individual household and community level that this is where we really need to come together. The member for Abbotsford said it more than anyone else, that there really does need to be a continued partnership and information sharing and action. We can talk all we want, but there are people who are really suffering. At the end of the day, during a public disaster that is what government is supposed to do. It is supposed to act.

There will be some mistakes made, but it can be dealt with through better communication and a willingness to work together and to get it done.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I want to focus on one aspect, which is that in disaster after disaster so many of us assume that our devices are going to work. Whether it is wildfires in the interior or wild storms on the coast, community after community discover there is no land line, no cellphone, no way to hear what is going on. I spoke at length with a deputy fire chief in Ashcroft once. I asked what they do when they are on evacuation alert and how their community know the evacuation was now on. This fire chief said, “We considered what to do for technology, and we have decided to get a really big bell for the fire station that we can ring”.

What does the hon. member think we can do to better network people in disasters for better preparedness and to get the information that they desperately need?

• (2250)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** We will have a brief answer from the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Madam Speaker, you know there is no such thing as a brief answer from me, but I will try.

The leader of the official opposition was very wise in appointing, as his shadow minister for emergency preparedness, our member from Alberta. If we hearken back to the tornado that hit Ottawa, there were concerns around the lack of cellphone coverage, part of that being because of the infrastructure that runs these things and they often have a battery life of eight to 12 hours. It depends on each operator. The member did a motion that said we should be studying this at committee, and that we need to spend a lot more time asking about these things.

This is something under the federal jurisdiction. We need to know exactly what we can expect from our devices because we are so glued to them. Imagine people not being able to reach their child who has a cellphone during a disaster. These are things that we need to have an ongoing conversation about.

I appreciate the member and her contribution here tonight.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

I am grateful to rise in the House of Commons for the first time as the member of Parliament for Vancouver Granville, which is located on the traditional unceded territory of the Coast Salish first peoples, the Musqueam, the Squamish and the Tsleil-Waututh. I am grateful to represent the residents of this incredible riding and to work hard on their behalf every single day.

I also want to thank my parents, my partner, my sister, my family, my community and my volunteers, who worked so hard every day to make this possible.

Like many British Columbians, my heart is heavy tonight and has been for the last several days, as we see the devastation, loss and hardship caused by extreme weather events, with a loss of property, of life and indeed of a sense of security.

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[*Translation*]

This evening, I would like to express my gratitude to all those who are doing what they can to support British Columbians while we are dealing with the shocking effects of the flooding, which has caused so much distress, destruction and devastation across British Columbia.

[*English*]

Our hearts and thoughts are with those who have lost loved ones and those who are still missing.

It is a great comfort to know that in times like these, to echo what the Minister of National Defence said last week, Canadians will always come together to support one another. We have seen volunteers, first responders, everyday citizens and indeed our armed forces all step up to serve and support their fellow citizens.

We have already heard my colleague speak of the extraordinary efforts of our armed forces to help B.C. residents through this nightmare, evacuating people and pets to safety, delivering food and supplies, sustaining critical supply chains, supporting provincial planning and relief efforts, protecting and rebuilding critical infrastructure, roads and properties, and so much more. We know they will keep working to stabilize the situation for as long as they are needed. It is gratifying to know that we can count on the incredible men and women of our armed forces to come to the aid of Canadians, as they are doing right now in British Columbia and indeed as they have done across the country throughout the pandemic.

It is heartwarming to hear the stories of communities across our province rallying together, across difference, in support of their fellow citizens. I think of the Jewish Federation, which has raised almost \$250,000; Islamic Relief Canada loading up vehicles with urgent supplies and providing emergency relief; the many gurdwaras across the province helping to feed thousands; and many more stories like this. This is the British Columbia of which we are so proud, and it is so good to know that at times like this we can count on one another.

It is almost eight o'clock in British Columbia tonight and there are people we all know who are not sitting down for dinner in their homes, who will not be settling in for a night in front of the television and who will not be picking up their kids from hockey or doing the normal everyday things they might have been doing. Instead, they are figuring out what comes next for them, their families and communities. I am so grateful that our government has stepped up, in partnership with the Province of British Columbia, to put in place the resources needed to support our fellow British Columbians.

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Today we all stand united, regardless of political affiliation, in our desire to help British Columbians and our province get back on their feet and rebuild. We are all united in our desire to build back quickly and to help those affected.

● (2255)

[*Translation*]

The reality we face as British Columbians and as Canadians is that the growing number of forest fires we have seen in recent years and floods like this one will become the norm.

We cannot just rebuild and pretend it might not happen again for another year or two. The truth is that it will happen again, and it will continue to happen if we do not take vigorous steps to prevent further global warming.

[*English*]

Canada is warming at twice the global average. That is why acting now, as our government has pledged to do, is so important. If recent history, whether the forest fires or these floods, has taught us anything, it is that climate change is no longer an abstract phenomenon and is no longer something we can pretend will not affect us in our lifetime. It is and it will continue to, and it will require us all to work together so that we not only build more resilient infrastructure, but also make the tough decisions needed to fight climate change.

We must build back and we will, but we must build back in a way that allows us to withstand the onslaught of climate change even as we work to stop it. We must continue to invest in innovation and technology here in Canada that allow us to be at the forefront of the battle against climate change and that allow us to lead on building a green, sustainable economy for the decades ahead.

As we plan for the future, it is gratifying that the House stands united in its desire to work together to ensure that we build resilient communities and sustainable infrastructure, and that we make long-term investments in ensuring the safety and security of British Columbia and indeed all Canadians.

Our government has been seized with this task. In 2018, the Government of Canada launched the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund, committing \$2 billion over 10 years to invest in structural and natural infrastructure projects to increase the resilience of communities that are impacted by natural disasters triggered by climate change. In budget 2021, an additional \$1.375 billion over 12 years was announced to renew this fund.

This government has been there for British Columbians and all Canadians, and we will continue to be there for British Columbians as we rebuild from this crisis and as we do all we need to do to ensure that we are ready for the next one, even as we continue in the fight against climate change.

After every disaster, particularly ones as horrific as the one we are living in British Columbia right now, it is best practice to learn and to ensure that we are better equipped for the next one and better able to respond to serve those affected. Equally, we must look to the root cause of this crisis: climate change. In this case, working together in partnership to address climate change and acting boldly without making it a partisan issue is our easiest path to success.

Tonight, as we sit thousands of miles away from British Columbia, I want to express my gratitude to all members of the House for focusing their thoughts and attention on British Columbia, and for their commitment to working together to ensure that we are able to recover quickly from this tragedy.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Vancouver Granville for his first speech in the House of Commons.

Indeed, many of the disasters we have seen since the summer and into the fall, in my riding especially, are caused by climate change. However, we cannot forget that early in the 20th century the Government of Canada drained the Sumas Lake and created a system of dikes that have artificially kept that lake from existing in the Fraser Valley. A lot of that infrastructure needs to be updated immediately so that we do not have another flood.

I would like to get a commitment from the member on whether he supports the efforts that we have heard tonight to fund that critical infrastructure to prevent Sumas Prairie in my hometown from flooding once again.

● (2300)

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Madam Speaker, when we talk about the Sumas Lake, I think of the guidance that was provided at the time to the first nations communities about what might happen in a situation like this. That said, we are where we are today, and of course the government has pledged to make sure that we are able to rebuild British Columbia and do our part by doing everything that is required to ensure that the province and the regions that are affected return. We must do the things that allow people to live the lives they need to live.

We will all work together to make sure that British Columbia and the regions that are affected are able to build back to make sure that communities are able to survive.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to make note in the House that between 2006 and 2011, floods cost Canada about \$120 million. Between 2010 and 2015, it was \$360 million. Between 2016 and 2018, it grew to \$430 million a year. Now we are at over \$1 billion. The PBO projected in 2014 that if we kept going the way we were going, floods and fires were going to cost us \$43 billion to \$50 billion a year. What a deficit to leave to future generations.

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The member talked about investing heavily and taking bold and courageous action. The Liberals are investing \$2 billion over 10 years. Bold and courageous is cancelling the Trans Mountain pipeline, which is \$17 billion, and ending oil and gas subsidies, which are \$18 billion. Let us start spending the money, the \$43 billion to \$50 billion a year that we are leaving, on my kids and most of our children and grandchildren now instead of shouldering them with the deficits.

The Conservatives talk about inflation. Just wait. Insurance rates are going to go through the roof. Let us protect future generations by investing now in the right thing.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Madam Speaker, bold and decisive action means implementing a plan that was supported by Canadians in the last election, which is what we are here to do. Bold and responsible action is making sure that we are able to meet our targets, as we have committed to doing. Bold and decisive action means ensuring that we are working with all stakeholders, provinces and indigenous communities to make sure that we are able to take on the fight against climate change and deliver results for Canadians.

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Vancouver Granville for his first intervention in the House and congratulate him on his election. I am sure that the constituents of Vancouver Granville are very happy to have as accomplished and caring a representative in this place as they do at this time.

The member, like me, campaigned on what came to be known as the strongest environmental plan on offer in the most recent election. I wonder if he would like to talk about some of the things that he heard from his constituents on what they liked the most in our plan. However, he may wish to address the remarks from the member for Courtenay—Alberni regarding the \$18 billion in fuel subsidies, the majority of which were subsidies for workers and families who had lost their wages. I will leave it to him to make the choice.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Madam Speaker, indeed the hon. member is right. In my riding of Vancouver Granville, constituents chose a plan that they knew made sense. They knew capping orphan wells was important and that not cutting funding to capping orphan wells was an irresponsible decision. They knew that making sure we transitioned away from fossil fuels was important and that investing in that appropriately was the right answer. They knew that investing in the right decisions to help our economy adapt and evolve into the greenest economy was the right answer, without compromising jobs and without compromising the economic safety and security of this country.

**Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I first want to congratulate you on your reappointment to this role.

It is a privilege to rise once more in the chamber to join the debate for the first time in the 44th Parliament. I first want to start by thanking all the volunteers, dedicated staff, friends and family who worked tirelessly to get me here. I am also deeply indebted to my partner, Nicole, for standing by my side and giving me the strength to be the best representative and the best person I can be.

I am truly honoured that the people of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country have placed their trust in me to

serve as their representative in the House. I am here to make their voices heard and be their advocate. That is why I am here today to speak about the crisis that British Columbians are currently facing.

The last Parliament, while speaking about the landmark net-zero accountability act, I rose in the House to share about the increasing toll that climate change was having on British Columbia and the people of my community. That law now binds the Government of Canada to set ambitious targets and to report regularly on our progress to ensure that we are accountable to meeting them.

Even as we and, increasingly, the world works to reduce emissions, we will be grappling with ever-worsening impacts of climate change over the coming decades at best. We cannot solely focus on mitigation. The events of the past two weeks underline that we are long overdue with actions to adapt to an already and rapidly changing climate.

The year 2021 has been a watershed moment for the climate crisis in British Columbia. This summer, we suffered an unprecedented heat wave, or heat dome, and saw the town of Lytton become one of the hottest places in the world one day before being razed to the ground the next day. Almost the entire province set record-high temperatures, some places by 5°C or more, and 595 British Columbians lost their lives due to the extreme heat. The incredible heat wave sparked wildfires across the province that burned nearly 8,700 square kilometres of land and forced thousands of people out of their homes. People across B.C. had to breathe in some of the most polluted air on the planet as the sun was blotted out by wildfire smoke.

High heat levels caused rapid melting of mountain snow caps that sent torrents of rushing water into the rivers below. When the nighttime temperatures at the top of snow-capped Mount Currie hovered in the mid-thirties, the nearby village of Pemberton was put on evacuation alert as melt waters came centimetres away from flooding the village. It was fortunate the water was able to infiltrate the soil at that time.

The entirety of the coastal areas of my riding were affected as billions of marine organisms died, leaving an unmistakable stench throughout coastal B.C.

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Less than six months later, we find ourselves in yet another unprecedented climate disaster. An atmospheric river brought more than a month's worth of rain in just two days, breaking more than 20 rainfall records. Places that just this summer were burning uncontrollably are now underwater. This time it is extreme flooding that has caused thousands of British Columbians to flee their homes. It has destroyed homes, infrastructure and businesses, including in my own riding, where flooding on the Sunshine Coast has left roads closed, shut residents off from water and put others under a boil water advisory. This is happening in the same year where these same homes were under stage four water restrictions.

While we do not have estimates on what the final cost of this disaster will be, we know that it will become the most expensive natural disaster in Canadian history. It is easy to see why. Roughly 240 billion dollars' worth of goods travel through the Port of Vancouver every year, and the Lower Mainland has been cut off from the rest of the country. Every road and rail line was severed by floods and landslides or badly damaged.

The Coquihalla Highway facilitates the transportation of billions of dollars' worth of goods, and many thousands of people have suffered multiple extensive washouts and bridge collapses. It will likely be out of commission for months to come. Some of Canada's most fertile farmland has been flooded and thousands of livestock have drowned or have been euthanized.

At this point, all orders of government are working together to respond to this crisis. We have seen heroic efforts of individuals to support those who have been impacted, by donating and transporting essential food, housing stranded people and donating generously to response efforts. The Government of Canada has revamped its EI rules to rapidly get support to impacted British Columbians, negotiated with our American friends to ease border measures and deployed the military to build up damaged infrastructure to protect us from further incidence that is looming, with projected rainfall tomorrow being up to 80 millimetres.

• (2305)

These are just some of the examples. These are the real economic costs of climate change and they are happening today. Despite being the most environmentally disastrous year in B.C.'s history, this is a harbinger of what we can expect to see in the future.

This past summer, Oxfam conducted an analysis of research by the Swiss Re Institute that concluded Canada's economy could shrink by 6.9% by 2050 without ambitious climate action. These events will increase in both frequency and severity, and unless we are better prepared to be resilient, they will enact a heavy toll.

The Government of Canada has been taking action in this space, but we need to do more and we need to do it faster. Programs like the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund provide support for large-scale infrastructure projects to help communities better manage the risks of natural disasters.

Earlier this year, I was proud to announce funding to the Resort Municipality of Whistler to build firebreaks to mitigate forest fire risk for the area. We also launched a national infrastructure fund earlier this year that will allow us to focus on natural infrastructure

solutions that are inherently more resilient to climate change for the reason Pemberton was spared from what I mentioned before.

Budget 2021 also provided billions in new money to the provinces and territories to do disaster mitigation. Earlier today the Prime Minister committed to move forward with a low-cost national flood insurance program, and we are going to work with the provinces and territories to update flood risk mapping. This is incredibly important because we know towns like Merritt were relying on flood risk mapping that was almost 40 years old.

Going forward, our government has also committed to work with first nations to mitigate wildfire risk, utilizing practices they have employed to great effect since time immemorial. It has also committed to introducing a national adaptation strategy within the next year and implementing a climate lens, including both adaptation and mitigation into all future government decision-making.

The saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is certainly true in this case, and these and other actions are urgent.

I want to end by mentioning the story of my friend Noah. Noah was driving home to Vancouver from near Merritt when he encountered a mudslide when going down the Coquihalla. He had to turn back and take an alternate route going down Duffy Lake Road. There were no warnings and no advisories on this road. Midway through his drive, he was stopped on the highway and before long he was unsuspectingly caught in a mudslide. His car flipped, rolled over multiple times and was totalled, but he and his passenger were miraculously able to make it out alive, if not bruised and very muddy.

This is in no small measure to fellow trapped drivers, including first responders who worked swiftly to pull them and others out of their cars, taking them in and keeping them warm until they could get a ride out of there. They were lucky to get out safely, but at least four people tragically were not.

We know events like this are going to be ever more commonplace, and we need to work with all orders of government to keep people safe. We need to ensure our infrastructure will be resilient to extreme weather events like these, that individuals understand the risk to themselves and to their property. We need to be adaptive to rapidly changing conditions we will see.

I hope that all members of this House will capture and nurture the urgency and drive we all feel today so we can work together to lower our emissions and reduce the risks our communities face from a rapidly changing climate.

• (2310)

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to give a shout-out to everybody tonight who really have made the debate about the people of Abbotsford, the Lower Mainland up to the Fraser Valley and in the interior. It is really about the people and getting the people to help they need. That is what we are talking about tonight.

As my colleagues from Abbotsford and Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon have mentioned so many times, it is about the people.

We used to live in Abbotsford for four years when I went to university, and it became part of our family. It is where they grew up as little children. Again, we need to focus on what the needs are. We need to focus on the emergency there now, the storm that is going to come tonight and the storm that is possibly going to come next week.

We are calling on the federal government to help now in any way we can to do that. Again, it is why we are here tonight. It is late in Ottawa, it is about a quarter after 11, but I just wanted to speak to the member and call on the government to do all we can to help the people of Abbotsford.

**Mr. Patrick Weiler:** Madam Speaker, indeed, all orders of government are working closely together, and cabinet ministers of different portfolios are working on and are seized with this issue. The army has been deployed. To my understanding, currently about 500 members of the Canadian Armed Forces have been deployed and are working to repair things like the levy and other areas that need to be repaired so that the coming rain will not put people who are already out of their homes at further risk.

I would like to also express my support for the government doing everything it can to help people in their time of need, just as our government has been there to support people through the COVID pandemic.

• (2315)

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, since it is my first time rising in the 44th Parliament, I want to take this opportunity to thank the wonderful people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for sending me here for a third term. It truly is an honour.

In my time in the House, when we have talked of climate change, we have often heard excuses about the cost of transitioning off a fossil fuel-dependent economy, which ignores what the costs will be going on into the future, how they will absolutely dwarf the investments that need to be made now.

I wonder if my colleague can answer two questions. First, we have seen what the projections are and does he think the current Liberal government's budget allocations are in any way going to be adequate to meet this challenge? Second, does he have any regret

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that the Liberal government invested all those billions of dollars in fossil fuel infrastructure, like the Trans Mountain pipeline?

**Mr. Patrick Weiler:** Madam Speaker, we need to continue to do more and we need to do it faster. We need to ensure that we are mitigating our emissions as best we can now, which is why we have committed to setting a cap on emissions from the oil and gas sector and have them steadily decline in five-year increments to ensure we can meet our greenhouse gas mitigation targets that we set and are now held accountable to with legislation passed just a few months ago.

As we are doing this, we need to be investing in the types of technologies that are going to allow us to reduce our dependence on fossil fuel energy, as well as reduce emissions in other parts of our society. Over the last four or five years, we have invested about \$100 billion in that space, but we will need to do more. We will also need to continue to invest in adaptation. We need to do even more in this space. Some of the events of the last couple of weeks, indeed of this entire year, really highlight that. Some of the things I mentioned—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to allow for a brief question and we are running out of time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, my question is one with a great deal of grief attached to it. The so-called net-zero climate change act commits us to the wrong target. It was increasingly clear at COP26 in Glasgow that the world was not looking for net zero by 2050. That is dangerous. It is looking for significant cuts this decade. I wonder if the hon. member has any comments.

**Mr. Patrick Weiler:** Madam Speaker, we need to make emissions cuts right now. It is not just about 2050. That is too far down the road. The emissions that we are able to cut now are that much more important. We have committed to an updated target of 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030. The target of 45% below is what the Paris agreement committed to and we need to ensure we do our part to do that and more.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it has been a very reassuring evening in the House of Commons.

The people in my communities in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon are in the midst of a very difficult year, which is bringing home the impacts of climate change in ways none of us thought about even a short time ago.

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On June 29, Canada's heat record was shattered as temperatures soared to 49.6°C, marking the hottest day in our nation's history, a record that was broken on three consecutive days. The following day, a fire was sparked and spread so rapidly that residents had a mere 15 minutes to vacate their properties as the town was consumed. With over 83,000 hectares destroyed, 90% of the village was levelled.

At COP26, the Prime Minister referred to the village in the past tense, saying that there was a town called Lytton. Residents who heard the speech, including Chief Patrick Michell of Kanaka Bar, were quick to point out that Lytton is far from gone. While structures were ruined, the spirit was not. Respectfully, the Prime Minister did acknowledge this evening that people are still living in Lytton, and I thank him.

The community is eager to return home and restore the neighbourhoods they know and love. Over four months later, residents remain displaced throughout the province, and they need to see some action. Compounded by the recent floods and landslides, Lytton's evacuation order has been in place since June, and there is no end in sight. Critical infrastructure, including Highway No. 1 near Jackass Summit, Tank Hill and Highway No. 8, and water and wastewater systems need to be restored to accommodate the return of residents and contractors.

Vitality, the volunteer Lytton fire department needs a new fire hall and equipment to ensure it is fully operational during the building process. Local businesses were already suffering from the adverse impacts of COVID-19 when the fire hit. Uninsured and under-insured business owners are grappling with the loss of their storefronts and inventory, and many who required pandemic supports such as CEBA will be unable to pay it back by year end.

The business community is calling for low- and zero-interest loans through Pacific Economic Development Canada to help services become operational as soon as possible. Lytton First Nation and the Village of Lytton have expressed a desire to work together and may submit joint funding proposals. Surrounding first nations, such as Siska, Nicomen, Kanaka Bar and others, are also dependent on the critical infrastructure that needs to be rebuilt, including the only surgical hospital in the region.

Being a small and remote community, Lytton does not have access to the administrative and financial resources available to larger communities able to complete onerous application processes. Furthermore, the village lost all crucial documentation and backup servers in the fire, making it near impossible to complete some of these applications.

As the destruction of this wildfire is so extensive and necessary recovery efforts exceed the usual scope, I have requested that special funding through the Treasury Board Secretariat management reserve be delivered expeditiously. The BC Wildfire Service said that this was one of the worst fires it had ever seen as it tore through critical infrastructure, downing telecommunications, BC Hydro, the RCMP detachment, the fire hall, the hospital and the village amenities. Thankfully, the school was saved.

Residents had minutes to flee, as I mentioned, with not much more than the clothes on their backs and without any warning of

which direction was safe to travel out of the rural community. Many ended up in Merritt, which has now been evacuated for a second time.

Imagine that: being evacuated from their home for one natural disaster and then being evacuated from another for another disaster. Imagine the toll that would take on anyone's mental health. I call upon the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to make mental health supports available to my constituents.

Heartbreakingly, as we all know, this grappling with the loss of property and livelihood does not stop with Lytton. On Sunday, November 14, a never-before-seen storm swept through British Columbia. While it took some in the Ottawa press gallery a little longer than it should have to catch on, the devastating impacts on B.C. and to my constituents are now widely known.

While we have seen the shocking pictures, it can be hard to grasp the impacts on regular people without a direct connection. That brings me to my cousin, Christine. She is about the same age as me. She is pregnant. She and her husband Richard were flooded out of their home. They are chicken farmers and they also own a small business doing welding work on dairy farms. They lost 20,000 birds and they lost their home, but sometimes it is the little things that really impact people. My cousin put on our family Facebook group that they had just received a bonus from one of their feed suppliers, and they had stocked up their freezer for the Christmas season. Sometimes the little things, like losing a freezer full of food, put people over the edge.

There will be a time for a full analysis of what could have been done faster or better, and I know that work is already under way. However, more rain is on the way, and additional help will be needed to rebuild the critical infrastructure connecting the Lower Mainland to the rest of Canada.



• (2320)

As it stands, our highways have been severely impacted and in some places completely destroyed. Most of these roads and their damaged sections are either within or connect through Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. The Trans-Canada Highway between Hope and Spences Bridge has been washed out. Highway 3 is open between Hope and Princeton, but as of late Tuesday, a single lane was open in each direction only for essential travel. The Coquihalla Highway, which my riding borders, is closed with severe washouts, including where a mudslide took out a large section 11 kilometres south of the Great Bear Snowshed. There are no detours, and experts say it could be weeks before crews can even begin some of these repairs. We all know as British Columbians that doing road construction on the Coquihalla in the winter is next to impossible.

Highway 99 between Lillooet and Pemberton was previously closed due to a landslide and is now open for essential travel. As some of my colleagues have mentioned tonight, sadly, this is where four people lost their lives. The search is ongoing for a fifth individual who is also presumed deceased. My prayers are with their families and friends, and especially with the little girl who lost her parents.

Highway 8, which connects Merritt to Spences Bridge, is closed. The provincial transportation minister reports that 18 segments of the highway were damaged, including four bridges. Steven Rice, the local TNRD area director, is doing yeoman's work attempting to get the word out, highlighting just how little attention rural areas such as his get. In Mr. Rice's estimation, it will be years before residents can return home, if ever.

In the Lower Mainland, only essential travel is permitted on Highway 1 between Popkum and Hope, and the highway is closed altogether through a large section in Abbotsford. Highway 7 from Mission to Hope is restricted to essential travel only, and a large section of Highway 11 between Mission and Abbotsford remains closed for the foreseeable future. Needless to say, highway repair is going to take a significant amount of time and effort.

On rail transportation and one positive note, when we review the state of the affected railways I have been so encouraged by the speed with which CN and CP have moved to repair their damaged lines and their efforts to restart the supply chain and get goods moving. They have also played a critical role in supplying otherwise cut off remote communities, including many indigenous communities, with the supplies necessary to weather this disaster. Railways have always been critical to our economy, and with the devastating washout on B.C.'s major highways, their services only increase in necessity, especially when it comes to animal feed and the food security issues we are facing in the Fraser Valley.

I have received, like many members in the House tonight, a significant amount of feedback from constituents on the ground about what needs to be addressed right now and especially before our next extreme weather event. One email from Harm Baars, a local dairy farmer who was instrumental in moving a lot of the cattle out from Sumas Prairie, has called for less push-back from regional authorities governed by liability concerns.

Farmers are going to do everything they can to save their livelihoods, and officials need to give them the space to do so. Ideally,

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authorities will work with the affected locals. Landowners are more than willing to help. Emergency crews get into areas they often do not have the equipment for or know, but that farmers do. This is a shortcoming of federal emergency preparedness that should be reviewed.

Canadian Forces equipment and personnel cannot be effective when they are stuck on the other side of the Rockies coming from Edmonton or have to fly in from Quebec to service British Columbia. The absence of CFB Chilliwack is being felt, and these events have highlighted that the federal and provincial governments must invest more in preparations for future disasters, because there will be more climate-change-related disasters in British Columbia, and we need more federal investments on this front.

There should also be an improved warning system. It would have been possible for farmers to move more cattle, but they were not able to because they did not get enough warning. This led to the forced euthanasia of many dairy cattle on farms in the eastern part of Sumas Prairie. B.C.'s Alert Ready system has not been utilized at all this year, despite a record number of natural disasters. This is a critical Canada-wide platform, and the federal government needs to work with the province of B.C. to make sure that B.C. has the tools it needs.

• (2325)

Additionally, as we saw during the wildfire season, our indigenous communities are once again being left out of the emergency communications loop. It has been reported that First Nations' Emergency Services Society was not contacted by until Tuesday, November 16. Cook's Ferry Indian Band, among many others, never received a call to evacuate. The disconnect between Emergency Management B.C. and B.C.'s first nations continues to put lives at risk and must be addressed.

This afternoon, I spoke with Lytton first nations councillor Jason Robertson, who is also a firefighter and an all around amazing guy and leader. He says that the responsibility is tossed from one table to another without resolution. They do not know where to go.

I raised this issue with the previous minister of indigenous services, and I now call on his successor to please correct this and work with emergency services in B.C. and the first nations in B.C. to improve emergency management and to give more authority to our local first nations. They often understand the land much better than we do. They know the wind patterns, and they know the river flows. They live right by it, and we do not. Let us let them do the work that we know they are capable of doing.

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Turning to infrastructure, immediately building improved and climate resilient infrastructure is vital. The upcoming federal budget must contain significant funds to address these urgent needs in British Columbia for the sake of our economy, national security and public safety. As we saw through the rapid work of Abbotsford city staff and volunteers who sandbagged the Barrowtown pump stations, seconds count when it comes to the repairs in the face of extreme weather.

Many of our dike and pump station infrastructure was built before and during the 1950s. Embarrassingly, this was before indigenous people could even vote in our country. The unacceptable outcome is that their safety and needs were and continue to be overlooked. It is a common fact discussed at a local forum I am a part of. Many of the first nation reserves do not even have the dike protection that communities like Abbotsford, Mission and Chilliwack have. That is not acceptable anymore.

A 2015 B.C. government study assessed a sample of 75 Lower Mainland dikes where they do exist and found that 71 per cent were vulnerable to failure. It rated the highest elevation of the key Sumas Lake reclamation dike in Abbotsford as “unacceptable” and stated that, “overtopping is expected during Nooksack River overflow”, which is exactly what just happened.

A 2020 report commissioned by the City of Abbotsford found that damage from a major flood could be as high as \$960 million, with proposed dike solutions coming in between \$29 million to \$339 million. Unfortunately, that damage estimate is likely lower than what we are now seeing in the real world.

Local communities have been raising the alarm bells for years. It has been mentioned in this House tonight that just three weeks ago, I met with the mayor of Abbotsford, my colleague from Langley—Aldergrove and my colleague from Abbotsford, and the mayor of Abbotsford pressed upon us to bring the issue of dike infrastructure to the Parliament of Canada, and then we faced what we just faced.

Updated flood mapping is required so that we can better plan for future events and better prepare to rebound from catastrophes. We cannot address climate change if we do not apply all the models and discussions tonight to real-world situations to the topography of our land. The ridings most affected in the Fraser Valley, Abbotsford, Chilliwack-Hope and Mission-Matsqui-Fraser Canyon, are incredibly important agricultural areas and are essential for Canada's food security.

This disaster also brings up many points about insurance. A significant amount of the damage sustained will not be covered by insurance. Whether it falls under an “act of God” clause, is unaffordable, or it simply does not exist because flood insurance is in its infancy in Canada, the federal government must provide relief for those who now face unimaginable financial hurdles.

● (2330)

The findings of the federal task force examining a national residential flood insurance program for homeowners living in high-risk areas, expected next spring, cannot come soon enough. Again, the Prime Minister addressed this today, so I will be holding the Liberal government to account on ensuring it happens.

Another unpopular reality that has been avoided by federal and provincial governments for far too long is the need to dredge our rivers, especially the Fraser and the Sumas, as these past weeks have highlighted. It is possible to do this work outside of spawning season to safeguard our salmon and our environment.

During the forum that I mentioned earlier, many of the first nations leaders in my constituency were supportive of this work and might even undertake it themselves as an economic opportunity to improve salmon habitat and reduce the risk of flood on their lands.

The Fraser Valley is known globally for our high-quality berry production, but the industry has been hard hit on multiple fronts, such as the summer heat wave and heat dome, and labour shortages. I had a meeting with the BC Blueberry Council this week and it reported that 2,500 acres of blueberry fields were flooded and 1,000 acres remained underwater. These submerged plants will not survive and must be removed and replaced. The soil must also be remediated for toxicity.

Farmers are no longer able to position themselves to secure a loan in the aftermath of this flood devastation. It is my understanding that existing agricultural insurance programs, including the agristability program, do not account for natural disasters like floods, where farms are destroyed beyond the possibility of recovering in a following season.

For context, blueberry plants take five to six years to reach maturation and before crops are ready for commercial-scale harvest. Insurance compensation for one season's worth of losses will not begin to match the actual loss. It is estimated that it will cost \$32,000 to \$37,000 per acre to restore these blueberry fields. We are facing a crisis like we never have seen before in B.C. Our country cannot afford to have one of our most productive agricultural areas wiped out. Federal assistance, as I have written the Minister of Agriculture this week, must come forward to assist in these vital areas.

As I come to a conclusion, I cannot thank enough the thousands of people all across my riding and across British Columbia and Canada who have come to aid and show their sympathy for my corner of this beautiful country. I thank them on behalf of everyone in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

I am thankful that the government has worked so collaboratively with the opposition to address these concerns and that we were able to have this debate tonight.

I am thankful and reassured by some of the things I have heard tonight, that we will work together to ensure, hopefully in the next budget, that British Columbia will receive some money for climate change adaptation and mitigation in an area of our country where it is needed probably the most.

It has been a tough year for B.C. It has been a tough year for my riding. For my constituents, this is my first time speaking tonight. I am going to keep fighting for them. There is a lot to be done, but if we take that team Canada approach, we can meet and exceed the tasks ahead. I am very hopeful, and I am very encouraged by our discussions.

• (2335)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I think we have all listened very carefully to the details he has offered around the situation with which his constituents are faced. He can be assured that the New Democrats will work with him and with the government to ensure they get the help they need. Being from British Columbia, I will ensure that all British Columbians get the help they need.

On that note, the government has said that there will be emergency support for people who are faced with this situation. I am worried that if they apply for this emergency support, later on down the road it might come back to hit them, such as with the seniors who have been hit on the GIS clawback, that somehow or another it will disqualify them for something or they will be penalized for something.

In his discussions on the issue around supporting individuals, families and businesses that have been hit by this has there been some assurance from the government that it will not come back and tell people that they will lose some sort of benefit or will have a claw back on some other eligibility criteria? What are his thoughts on that?

• (2340)

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Speaker, I owe my colleague from Vancouver East an apology, because during my caucus meeting today I missed our panel on CBC Radio in Vancouver. I apologize to her for that. I hope she stood up for the opposition.

Regarding my colleague's question, I spoke with the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion about the supports the Government of Canada is going to provide to those who have been impacted by the floods, but to her specific question about how those benefits relate to people's income taxes and the income one is claiming at the end of the year, I think it would be helpful to receive some clarification from the minister. That is something we both can endeavour to achieve in the coming days.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon for an excellent speech and for making it personal.

I received an email from a friend. As the hon. member will know, we have deep family connections within his riding. I give a shout-out to Mike and Brandi who lost everything. They lost their home and farm. When reading their email, I started crying at the

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part about not being able to find their dog Posie right before the helicopter came. It was bad enough they had to shoot the livestock that could not be rescued, but when I read about the poor dog terrified in a flooded basement in the dark, his rescue of the dog and getting it to the helicopter, that is when I started losing it.

Every single person in these communities has suffered deep trauma. The pain is not something we can really talk about in this place. When we talk about euthanizing animals, it is much more deeply personal. I just want to pledge the support of Green Party members and supporters, and the members of Parliament in this place, for whatever it takes to help every single community, every single farmer, every single resident rebuild and get their life back.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for keeping it real with respect to the impacts people are feeling right now.

A friend on Facebook who I went to high school with said, "My house is flooded, but I can't leave my dogs." For many people, and those of us who door-knock, basically one in three Canadians has a pet that is considered a part of the family. Those are very traumatic experiences. That is why in my speech I raised the issue of mental health, which was not really addressed tonight. There are a lot of people suffering severe anxiety and depression because of the losses we have seen throughout British Columbia. It is incumbent upon all of us to honour the people of British Columbia and those in other parts of Canada who are impacted by similar devastation to support them in the work we do here today and get them the supports they need.

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon's riding has seen devastation, as has mine and those of the members for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola and Abbotsford. I have advocated for the infrastructure that has been lost and needs to be rebuilt and the infrastructure that communities across our ridings have been asking for for a number of years now when I make an annual submission to the finance minister for the communities looking to build infrastructure. The current government has promised all kinds of funding for infrastructure, but it has not reached the ground. I hope the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon will join me in demanding that the government finally see that infrastructure funding reach the ground where the communities need it and where it needs to be put in place, so they can build for the future. I hope he will support me in that ask.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Speaker, I agree with the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap. I have already been pushing the Minister of Infrastructure in this House since we have been here together. I had the most productive hour of my month on Monday when everyone was in the House of Commons and I could go from minister to minister, impressing upon them the need to take action for British Columbia.

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What I heard tonight is that there is a collective will across party lines to work together and everyone wants to see those infrastructure dollars on the ground. We know the money is there. It is in the Canada Infrastructure Bank. I have had assurances from ministers that they want to be nimble. They want to work with us and maintain that team Canada approach. I look forward to seeing that done. I look forward to working with everyone to see those infrastructure dollars for climate change, mitigation and adaptation, for roadways and rail infrastructure, and for the port of metro Vancouver on the ground as soon as possible.

• (2345)

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his passion and his productivity, and for giving the ministers the message that we need help. That was incredible. In his speech tonight he talked about the challenges that many small indigenous communities have had and the gaps they are falling through. It is tremendously important that we try to help out those communities that need that support.

Could the member give us a few more points? Are there specifics on what would help those communities cope through this crisis?

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Speaker, the other day I had a meeting with Chief Patrick Michell. He is a very dynamic individual and has worked really hard to get the federal government out of the way so Kanaka Bar Indian Band can build housing. Right now, as part of its infrastructure plan, I think the federal government needs to get housing built. It took three years for Chief Michell to get 24 units built. Let us work with these small indigenous communities that are fighting so hard to get those infrastructure dollars to get clean water back on the reserve, because it has all been destroyed recently. They need to get housing and clean water as soon as possible. We have the people on the ground who know how to do it. We have to empower them and we have to eliminate some of the red tape that they are facing.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member mentioned the need for housing and he is absolutely correct. In the most recent throne speech, I was dismayed that the Liberal government did not even mention anything about the urgent need for a for-indigenous, by-indigenous urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy.

I wonder if the member could comment on that and what his views are. Do we need one or do we not? Should that be in the budget, or should it not?

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Speaker, the answer is absolutely yes. I worked hard with the member for Vancouver East on a study and it is very clear, especially in rural and northern communities, that indigenous people are not getting a fair shake from the federal government in terms of equal access to government programs. It is incumbent upon this new Parliament to address those rural deficiencies, especially in indigenous communities, and to give them the housing they need to live their best lives. That is the least we can do for them.

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Before I turn the floor over to the next speaker, I just want to let him know that he will have only about 12 minutes for his speech.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, before I share my observations, I would just like to congratulate you on your recent re-election as the members' unanimous choice to co-chair the House.

I am privileged to rise and speak to an issue that is on all Canadians' minds no matter where they live or their socioeconomic reality. We all know that this is a tragically historic event. I have no doubt that everyone in the House is thinking of the families who lost loved ones to the floods in B.C.

Our government wants to thank the first responders, the search and rescue volunteers and the emergency managers who are working hard to keep people on the west coast safe at this time.

[*English*]

Our government is monitoring the situation in southern British Columbia closely. We have offered to provide whatever assistance is needed to help respond to and recover from this extreme weather.

Our government continues to work with provincial and local partners. The ongoing whole-of-government response effort is coordinated to ensure that the province has the resources it needs to support the people of B.C. In response to requests for federal assistance from the Province of British Columbia on November 16, our government approved the use of Canadian Armed Forces air assets and land components to assist with the whole-of-government relief effort.

The floods seen on Vancouver Island and in B.C.'s southern mainland have shocked and saddened people across this country. While the crisis has limited its devastation to one great province, the message it has carried has flowed from coast to coast to coast. There is no community in our country that has watched events unfold in British Columbia and not felt concern for the people there or dread for what such a catastrophe means for all of us. Whether we live in Cornerbrook or Cape Breton, Kamouraska or Kenora, Colville Lake or Canmore, the B.C. floods and the rains that brought them matter.

If we look beyond the events of this month and, in fact, of this year, we cannot deny that they matter a lot. Over the course of several months, B.C. has felt the impacts of multiple climate disasters: devastating wildfires and life-threatening extreme heat.

• (2350)

[*Translation*]

The sudden heavy rains last week were the result of an atmospheric river, a phenomenon that Canadians have come to know much more about.

As the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, I am particularly moved by the events unfolding on the west coast. I share in the sadness of the families of those who lost their lives in the serious flooding. I am struck by the stories of the residents of British Columbia. I have been informed of the challenges the municipalities are facing because of the damage to the infrastructure and the repairs that will be needed.

Providing relief and recovering from a flood is a long-term prospect. We are committed to providing what is needed to help people get through this difficult time. Unfortunately, we know that British Columbia is not out of the woods yet.

[*English*]

Another atmospheric river event is occurring now. Affecting the province's north coast, it is expected to slip southward, bringing more rain to southern B.C. within days. In fact, atmospheric rivers are expected to continue to affect the province beyond that.

My department is not merely watching these developments. We are regularly updating our official weather forecast, weather watches and warnings. I encourage people in B.C. to continue to follow Environment and Climate Change Canada's official channels for weather forecasts, weather watches and warnings. There, they will find more details on the latest weather information.

Our immediate priority is support for activities on the ground. With world-class meteorological services, Environment and Climate Change Canada continues to provide assistance to B.C.'s emergency management and response efforts. The department's meteorologists are providing frequent weather updates to Emergency Management British Columbia at the primary operations centre, as well as to the regional command centres. Our National Hydrological Service technologists and engineers are monitoring water-gauging stations and providing water-level data to help guide the provincial flood forecasters. Our experts are briefing the regional coordination group, providing up-to-the-minute, site-specific weather forecasts, and our national environmental emergencies centre is monitoring for potential pollution incidents, ready to provide support.

The severity of weather events in B.C., as well as their potential impacts, is unquestionable and is not limited to one given place. Consider the torrential rain and strong winds that began lashing Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador yesterday. Many Canadians are asking openly, "Is that what climate change looks like?" It is not as simple as attributing a single weather event to human-caused climate change, but the evidence is conclusive: Canada is experiencing more frequent and more intense extreme weather events, and climate change is leading to those intense disasters, not only here at home but also around the world.

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[*Translation*]

We know that climate change is causing more frequent extreme weather conditions. Canadians are seeing this clearly. It is not unreasonable for people to associate these events with climate change.

If the events in British Columbia strongly suggest that climate change is happening, then what are we to do? Our government is taking action in different ways. Strengthening weather forecasting and environmental services and early warning systems will be essential in the future because Canada will be facing unprecedented weather conditions.

• (2355)

[*English*]

Such measures are critical for robust emergency preparedness and response to events like the ones we have seen in B.C. this year. They also complement the significant steps this government has taken already to adapt to a future climate that is in sharp contrast to today's climate.

Climate adaptation was one of the key themes at COP26, the UN climate change conference that the Prime Minister, several cabinet ministers and I attended at the beginning of this month in Glasgow, Scotland. There, on the world stage, Canada committed to doing its part.

Never before has the need to adapt to climate change been stronger. Most countries went to Glasgow to announce that they would sustain and increase their commitments to adapt to climate change. Canada was among those countries. Going forward, as we have for many years, our government will continue to foster robust partnerships and help scale-up worldwide efforts for a climate-resilient future.

What does adapting to climate change involve at home? First, it is about informing people.

[*Translation*]

Weather forecasting and environmental services, such as those provided by the Government of Canada, are becoming increasingly important in the face of unprecedented weather conditions. They support decision-making at all levels of society and increase climate resilience.

We must tackle climate change openly and directly. Extreme weather events will increase in severity and frequency in the decades to come.

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[English]

We must invest in transforming our infrastructure, our economy and our relationship with nature. Many government departments, working together, started developing a national adaptation strategy earlier this year. The strategy will unite actors at different levels of government and build Canada's strong foundation into a common blueprint for action for all citizens, governments and organizations.

[Translation]

Let us not forget the hard lessons learned these past few weeks in British Columbia. There always comes a time when the immediate crisis is over, and we must remain open to new ideas and change our ways.

[English]

In the wake of the experience of the B.C. flooding, and in fact all of the severe weather events in that province this year, we must show that by working together, governments, organizations, indigenous people and citizens can build climate resilience. Together, we must do more. We must do it faster to fight climate change and to enhance our abilities to prepare and adapt. Our government will always be there to help Canadians in need.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Madam Speaker, obviously this has been quite a debate, and I would say that all sides have been supportive of British Columbia. I want to thank the minister for being part of that.

One thing we have heard, whether it was in the election or since then, is that the government seems to have large ambitions but not many achievements. It is something the Leader of the Opposition said earlier.

There are a lot of people in my home province of British Columbia who are looking for leadership from the government. What does the minister do with the skepticism that people have toward the government in its always focusing on words rather than deeds?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Madam Speaker, earlier this evening I pointed to very concrete things that are happening in this country because of our government, namely the 300 transit projects under construction from one side of the country to the other and the record-level investments in the electrification of transportation. By the end of next year, 16,000 charging stations will be installed across the country, as more and more people are relying on electric vehicles.

We are already investing in nature-based adaptation solutions in many parts of the country, but I will be the first to admit that we need to do more and we need to do it faster.

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** It being midnight, I declare the motion carried.

• (2400)

[English]

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12 a.m.)







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