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# House of Commons Debates

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Tuesday, January 26, 2021

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



## **CONTENTS**

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

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, January 26, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Yesterday, the government failed to move a unanimous motion concerning a bill that must be passed immediately. The government claimed to be outraged about this situation. I am certain you will find unanimous consent of the House for the following motion: That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, a bill standing on the Order Paper in the name of the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, entitled An Act to amend the Canada Recovery Benefits Act and the Customs Act, be deemed to have been introduced and read a first time.

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

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

## PETITIONS

### FARMERS' PROTESTS IN INDIA

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table my second petition as a Conservative member of Parliament. It is for concerned Canadians regarding the safety of farmers from the Indian states of Punjab and Haryana who are protesting domestic legislative changes affecting their livelihoods.

Legislative independence of sovereign nations must be respected, but Canada will always stand for the protection of fundamental freedoms, both at home and around the world. Indeed, every day is

a great day to be a Canadian when we can raise our voices and fight for what we believe in through peaceful protests.

That is why I stand with the farmers in India who are peacefully protesting. I also stand with my constituents peacefully protesting in Canada, who are making their voices heard through tractor rallies, car rallies, car decals and daily protests in my riding.

They are being heard. Their voices are elevated today. Without farmers, we do not have food and we do not have a future.

### SPINAL MUSCULAR ATROPHY

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting petition e-2868, with 3,710 signatures. It is petitioning the Minister of Health regarding a rare disease, spinal muscular atrophy. Health Canada has just approved a gene therapy called Zolgensma that can be close to a cure if administered before the age of two, but it costs \$2.8 million per dose. The petitioners are asking the federal government to work with the provinces to help families with the high cost of these treatments and with other rare diseases so that we can save these children.

### PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would also like to present petition e-2378. This petition has over 1,000 signatures. The petitioners are calling on Parliament to amend legislation on medical assistance in dying to allow for advance requests if individuals have lost cognizance or cannot provide consent prior to the MAID process.

### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to support the individuals who put forward a petition on behalf of the Uighur community in China. The Chinese Communist Party is impacting them through forced sterilization, abortions, anti-religious indoctrination, arbitrary detention, the separation of children from their families, invasive surveillance, destruction of cultural sites, forced labour and forced organ harvesting. Up to three million Uighurs and other Muslim minorities have been detained in what can only be described as concentration camps.

*Government Orders*

The petitioners are calling on our government to stand up for these people who are being abused in this way by formally recognizing that Uighurs in China have been and are being subject to genocide, and to use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, the Magnitsky act, to sanction those who are responsible for the heinous crimes being committed against this community.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during the summer, the Subcommittee on International Human Rights conducted an investigation into the genocide of Uighur Muslims. All members of Parliament from all parties who sat through those hearings and heard the evidence and survivor testimony agreed that Uighur Muslims are being subject to an ongoing genocide at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada and all of Parliament to recognize this genocide and our commitment and responsibility to protect those who are subject to genocide, impose Magnitsky sanctions against those involved in perpetrating this genocide to hold them accountable and end the global culture of impunity regarding gross human rights violations.

## TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present petitions from constituents in Saanich—Gulf Islands. The petitioners want to underline to the federal government that the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion would ensure rising greenhouse gas emissions from increased production in the oil sands. They note this is incompatible with the government's commitments on climate change, a point confirmed recently by a report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The petitioners call on Parliament not to allow the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline, nor the expenditure of public funds while the Government of Canada owns this pipeline.

• (1010)

## HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today that highlights the treatment of the Uighurs and other Muslim minorities by the Chinese government.

The petitioners believe Canada cannot remain silent in the face of this ongoing atrocity. They are calling upon the Government of Canada to formally recognize that the Uighurs in China have been and are being subject to genocide, and to use the Magnitsky act to sanction those responsible for the heinous crimes being committed against the Uighur people.

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## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

## ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2020

The House resumed from January 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 30, 2020 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with Canada's favourite grandfather: the member for Cariboo—Prince George. I would remind him of the Speaker's stern warnings not to show any pictures or props of grandchildren. That would be completely inappropriate.

It is my honour to rise again virtually to speak to Bill C-14. The Liberal government's failure to protect Canadians and the Canadian economy, by approving and acquiring rapid tests and by securing vaccine doses on time, has put us at risk. Of course, the impact on the health of Canadians is the most significant impact, but the issues for the Canadian economy are very serious. Our unemployment rate is among the worst in the G7. Our GDP is continuing to lag behind most other industrialized economies'.

If Canadians can return safely to work, they will. They will re-energize our economy and bring energy and jobs flooding back to our economy, but the question is whether there will be jobs for them to return to by the time the vaccine rollout is completed, without a plan for the economy. A plan is more than just a willingness, a desire or dream to spend \$100 billion. It is an actual plan. Without that plan, the answer to that question may be no, which would be tragic.

The fiscal update did not provide any concrete answers on how we can recover from the millions of jobs we lost in the pandemic or how we can emerge as one of the world's economic leaders as we did so famously after the great recession. We led the global economy out of that most terrible recession. We need a plan that builds on Canada's proven areas of economic strength, such as energy, manufacturing and information technology. Now is not the time for grand experiments or radical transformations. We need to rely on the reliable, relentless power of our workers, business owners and free-market enterprise.

*Government Orders*

The fiscal update and Bill C-14 do nothing to put in the conditions required to empower our workers and job creators to bring prosperity back to our wonderful land. While the fiscal update has little direction, it does have a lot of spending. What the Liberal government is ostensibly asking for is a \$500 billion blank cheque. That is a tremendous amount of money. What has the Liberal government done to deserve a rise in the debt threshold to \$1.8 trillion? I will repeat that: \$1.8 trillion.

During the pandemic, Liberals have spent the most and gotten the least. We are outpacing all of our G7 counterparts with respect to deficit spending; however, our GDP growth and unemployment rates are among the worst in our peer group. What have the Liberals done to develop and build this trust, to raise the debt ceiling to \$1.8 trillion? We have seen repeated violations of Canadians' trust. From the WE scandal to the SNC-Lavalin affair, we have seen breach after breach of Canadians' trust.

In fact, unbelievably, at the beginning of the pandemic the Liberals exploited the crisis to attempt to obtain an unlimited and unfettered ability to tax and spend. What is more, the finance minister, who said she does not believe in projections, says she will not limit the Liberal government's spending with a fiscal anchor. The fiscal anchor is of course meant to protect the government's finances and protect future generations from an excessive burden of debt.

The finance minister does say she is putting up guardrails. With respect, Canada's national debt is now over \$1 trillion. Our deficit in 2019-20 is going to be over \$400 billion. We do not need guardrails. The car is already in the ditch. We need a plan to get out of the ditch. The audacity of asking for \$500 billion of additional borrowing authority, given the government's pathetic record of reckless spending and financial mismanagement, is nothing short of shocking.

Before Canadians can be asked to assume more debt, the government must create a credible economic recovery plan: a path back to fiscal sustainability. To give the government a \$500 billion blank cheque would not just be reckless. It would be negligent. Our Conservative Party believes that Canadians, including those not yet born, deserve the opportunity to be prosperous. The government is putting this aspiration at risk.

• (1015)

We need to see legislation from the government that offers stability, confidence and compassion. Unfortunately, Bill C-14 offers a lot of spending and a lot of debt, without building the framework for security and prosperity.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my colleague and friend makes reference extensively to the issue of the deficit and the amount of money the government has borrowed. The Government of Canada has recognized the importance of that by investing in Canadians through programs such as the wage loss subsidy for small businesses and, for eight million to nine million Canadians, the CERB program. All are meant to be there to support Canadians through this pandemic.

Is my friend and colleague trying to suggest that the federal government should not have been supporting Canadians through this pandemic? Following that, would he recognize that the Conservative Party did not do a good job of managing debt while it was in government? Why should we take advice from the Conservatives on deficits?

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** Madam Speaker, Conservatives have been clear that we have supported programs like the wage subsidy and CERB. In fact, if the hon. member checks the voting records he will see that.

The reality is that the Liberal government has bungled some of these plans, such as the wage subsidy. Because the Liberals bungled them and miscommunicated them, they were slow out of the gate, such as with the rent subsidy which, eight months later, the government had to redo. Canadians have felt the brunt of this, and our economics are lagging because of that. Small businesses are lost that will never come back. Employment is lost.

With respect to the great recession, we led the global community out of it, leading in growth rates, GDP and unemployment numbers. We led back to a balanced budget. Five years after the great recession, we had a balanced budget. I doubt that, under the current Liberal government, we will be anywhere near a balanced budget. In fact, the Liberals' own forecasts say so.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I was talking to Jackie Ryan, who owns Jacqueline's Aesthetics in Port Alberni. She is a constituent of mine. She is self-employed, and her home-based business has struggled immensely since the beginning of the pandemic. First she closed her doors to protect public health. Now she is down 50% because people are afraid to get out into the community.

Jackie, like many other Canadians, turned to CERB to help pay back the bills and support her family. She would not have been able to buy food or support her children and deal with her prescription medications. Now the Liberals are telling Jackie she needs to pay back the CERB, which she cannot do. She, like many others, is angry. She is disappointed. She is scared. She does not know how she is going to survive the next few months without support from the government, never mind pay this back.

Does my colleague agree? Does he have constituents who are honest business owners who maybe had a tax-filing year when they showed a loss and a carryforward, and then were caught in this quagmire, where the Liberals say that they have their backs and they do not? Many women, as we know, have been disproportionately affected by the COVID crisis. This is impacting people like Jackie.

*Government Orders*

Does my colleague agree that the government should back off and not be asking people like Jackie to pay back the government for supports it promised them?

• (1020)

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his great question and his long history of intervening on behalf of small business owners. I am sure the small business owners in my community also appreciate his great work and interventions.

The miscommunication that occurred with respect to gross versus net income is nothing short of extremely disappointing. I too have constituents in my riding who are facing audits and other actions from the CRA right now that relate back to poor communication by the government.

In fact, right now, I have constituents who were collecting the CERB and the government has audited them. Instead of saying, “You provide the proof and we will continue to pay”, the government is actually cutting off the payments before people continue to receive the CERB. These people are just like Jackie. I have thousands of Jackies in my riding who were struggling to get by but are having their benefits cut off because the government lacks compassion.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Before we go to resuming debate, I notice that there seem to be some technical issues where we have dropped the audio a couple of times on the two previous speakers. I would ask the interpreters, if they are losing the ability to understand what has been said, to let me know somehow and we will have the presenter repeat.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we are speaking on Bill C-14, and I want to thank my hon. colleague from Northumberland—Peterborough South. He reminded me of my beautiful granddaughter, and I know I am not allowed to show those photos, so I will not do that again, but if any of my colleagues want to see them, I can do that. We are here to actually speak on serious terms, but I have to say that in troubling times and challenging times, my granddaughter and my family, and all our families, bring us back and remind us what is truly important.

I want to remind Canadians that it has been almost two years since we have had a federal budget. Unbelievably, and through good faith, our Liberal colleagues in the government have had an unprecedented amount of autonomy with their spending, based on goodwill and good faith collaboration from the opposition. When Canadians needed help the most, the opposition and all parties came together and dropped partisan politics, and we worked together in a team Canada approach. Sadly, we have seen that the Liberals have failed Canadians once again. They blew it, and today they are asking for another \$500 billion. They want us to just trust them. They know what is best for Canadians.

It is disappointing. Our colleague from Courtenay—Alberni mentioned Jackie, his constituent, and her small home-based business that is struggling. As our colleague from Northumberland—Peterborough South mentioned, there are thousands of Jackies right across our country who are failing, whose businesses have been

shuttered and have closed their doors. They are facing financial hardship. A Liberal talking point is that they are investing in Canadians. Today, I am going to highlight some of the businesses in my riding that the Liberals have absolutely failed. While I will mention only a few, due to the time that I have to highlight them, I can tell members there are literally thousands of businesses right across our country that have fallen through the cracks and been left behind due to the Liberals' lack of a plan to get relief to those Canadians who need it the most.

Roy Call is a constituent of mine I have known since I was in high school. Roy's family operates C+ Rodeos in my riding. It is among the top 10 rodeo stock providers in our country. The family has worked and built this operation for over 35 years. Three generations of the family work their ranch. Their stock has been bred for over 35 years and sadly, they have fallen through the cracks. They are among those tourism or events-based businesses that have absolutely fallen through provincial relief programs and federal programs. Repeatedly, we have brought the situations of C+ Rodeos and others to the government and the ministers, trying to work collaboratively with them on that team Canada approach that they so desperately want to foist back on the opposition, saying we should work together.

Sadly, today if Roy and his family do not receive any help, they have to downsize. In a rodeo performance-based business, what does downsizing mean? It means euthanizing perfectly good, healthy rodeo stock animals. I do not think anybody wants to see us get to that point. That is where we are, with business people having to make those hard decisions.

• (1025)

I also want to talk about Central Display, an events-based business, and Jack and Sheldon. They go from community to community and help put on those events that are such economic drivers that our small communities depend on, such as conferences and other events. They provide the resources and services for those events to be put on. When they go into these communities, they temporarily hire local staff. They teach them a skill and hire them to actually provide the services in those communities. They work with dry grad groups and support special groups, like the women's hockey team in Smithers, British Columbia. However, in 2020, they lost in excess of \$650,000 and are projected to lose up to \$1 million in just the first six months of 2021.

These are real numbers. The government is asking for more money and it says it wants to invest in Canadians, but that money is not getting to where it is needed the most.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to speak with a lady who was celebrating her 100th birthday, Margaret Sweder. I phoned her to congratulate her on her 100th birthday, and she told me that she was just missing the simple things, like a hug. She is a sweet lady and very sharp. She said that it was the first time she had a call from Ottawa that she actually wanted to take. She thought it was the tax man who was calling. I gave her a virtual hug and made a date with her for tea when the “COVID thing”, as she called it, ceases to exist.

These are the real stories that I am not sure those across the way get. I could go on about the failed vaccine promises that the Liberals have mentioned. Yet again, we know they have let Canadians down.

Unbelievably, throughout this pandemic the Liberals have taken the opportunity for pet projects. Unbelievably as well, what they want to do is shutter airport towers just when we need them the most. In our critical time for recovery, they want to shutter airport towers in places like Prince George, my riding, where we have the third-longest runway in Canada. We are part of the northern corridor project and part of the Asia-Pacific gateway. They want to take a key economic driver in our region and shutter the doors. How blind are they?

The government comes to us, the opposition, to say “Just work with us.” Trust is not just given; it is earned. Respect is not just given; it is earned. Time and time again what we see is that they just do not get it. We see a lot of sabre-rattling where the Prime Minister threatens the opposition with going to an election and talks about a confidence vote. Let me be very clear: The only person who wants an election right now and wants to send Canadians to the polls is the Prime Minister. The rest of us are concerned about our constituents, about the fact that it is unsafe and we are seeing increased closures and quarantine measures.

This brings me to a very important point, and I want to thank my colleague from Carleton for bringing this up yesterday. He pointed out that there is a very human toll to what is going on here. He said, “The University of Calgary published a study recently showing that there is a two percentage point increase in suicides for every one percentage point increase in unemployment. Imagine the human cost of 7% unemployment.” We also know that substance and alcohol abuse grows with unemployment. Increased isolation and anxiety have led to increased suicide and domestic violence crises.

We have to do more. Sadly, what we have seen is that the Liberals have left Canadians behind. They have blown it.

• (1030)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am glad to see that my colleague had an opportunity to share his picture of his grandchild, and I want to say congratulations to him on that recent addition to his family.

I did take issue with what he said, when he said that the only person who wants to go to the polls is the Prime Minister and that the rest of us are concerned about our citizens. I think that this government, through the collaboration with all members of this House, has demonstrated that all members of this House are extremely con-

### *Government Orders*

cerned about Canadians and their well-being during this pandemic, but indeed coming out on the other end of it.

My question is very simple. My colleague talked about businesses in his riding that are suffering. I think it is fair to say that we all have businesses in our ridings that are suffering, but that is exactly why we are investing in Canadians now. Previous Conservative colleagues have gone on about the amount of debt that we have had to take on as a result of supporting businesses. Does he not agree that the investments that were made to support businesses were important to get us through this? If he does not, and if his concern is that we are spending money in the wrong places, can he suggest where he would have not spent money in order to help businesses in his riding and his constituents?

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Speaker, I am glad that my hon. colleague mentioned something about the last year being a little bit tumultuous and that it is an anniversary. I will also let Canadians in the House know that today marks another anniversary. Today marks the very first time I stood in this House to raise the increasing concerns of COVID coming into our country. I suggested that we perhaps look for a plan like shutting our borders to make sure that we do everything in our power to stop COVID from coming in. We were pressing the government for what its plan was.

To this day, we are still pressing it for what its plan is. What we have seen is that the money we all worked together to provide to Canadians, that we gave autonomy to the government to develop a plan to get to Canadians, has failed.

The Liberals want to say, time and again, “Well, you voted for it.” Yes, we voted for it, but the responsibility to deliver to Canadians lies right squarely on that front bench. I gave only a few prime examples of the thousands that we have of Canadians who have fallen through the cracks.

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his speech and let him know that I would be happy to see the photos of his granddaughter anytime. We need these kinds of positive things in our lives, especially these days.

In his speech, he talked about Liberal management in general. We were just talking about borders a few minutes ago. I would like to hear my hon. colleague's opinion on the Liberal government's desire to encroach on provincial and Quebec jurisdictions, especially in health care.

When we look at border management, as well as how the vaccines are being managed, we have every reason to wonder about the federal government's qualifications when it comes to managing health and the national standards it wants to impose on the provinces regarding long-term care facilities. I would like to hear my colleague's opinion on that.

Does the federal government not have a duty to fund the Quebec and provincial health care systems?

*Government Orders*

Does the member think the feds should be interfering in those jurisdictions and imposing standards on the provinces?

[*English*]

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Madam Speaker, in a time of a global pandemic and a global emergency, it behooves all of us to put away our personal agendas, our provincial agendas and our national agendas, and work together on a team Canada approach.

There has to be leadership seen from the top, but what we have seen is no plan from the Liberal government: no plan to help the provinces, no plan to assist in getting those vaccines to the people who need them the most, the people in our long-term care facilities, which are facing unprecedented amounts of concern over COVID deaths. We have not learned in the last year. Sadly, we still face the same issues that we faced a year ago. We know more than we did over a year ago, but the Liberals have not been able to develop a plan and they have failed Canadians, writ large.

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Brampton East this morning.

It is great to see the Speaker and all of our colleagues, despite this being in a virtual setting. It is the world we are living in right now.

Today I have the privilege of speaking to Bill C-14. For those sitting at home, this means the implementation of commitments that were made by our government in the fall economic statement. What I hope to do with my time here today is talk about those commitments and how they relate to what I have heard in my constituency of Kings—Hants and in Nova Scotia, and talk a bit about where I see the future in terms of our economic recovery.

I will first talk about support announced in the fall economic statement that is part of this bill. There are \$1,200 to help support children under six years old in households that are making under \$120,000 a year. I cannot say how much I have heard on the doorsteps in my riding of Kings—Hants about the power and benefit of the Canada child benefit and what it has meant for low- and medium-income households to have a little extra money at the end of the month to buy healthy groceries and make sure their dependants have opportunities in recreation, arts and different activities.

In Kings—Hants alone, though I do not have the exact number, I believe the program means that \$15 million or \$16 million a month go to my riding. My hon. predecessor, Scott Brison, talked about what this program meant for the people in Kings—Hants and, indeed, across the country. Every member of Parliament in this House could speak about the importance of what this program means. It is a temporary measure. It is \$1,200 for 2021, recognizing the fact that families are going through challenges right now and we need to be there for them as a government. It is certainly something I applaud as a parliamentarian, and I expect that all members of the House can speak about the benefit of what this represents.

I turned 30 not too long ago. I am one of the youngest members in the House and the youngest in the governing party, and I am not too far removed from my days in university. I was fortunate to attend Saint Mary's University in Halifax and Dalhousie for a law degree, and I can say that the cost of education is a challenge for

many individuals. I still hold student debt. We need to make sure we are helping to protect those students, in particular, who are most vulnerable. Right now, as I understand it, as part of this bill, 1.4 million Canadian students will not have interest accrue on their student loans during this time. That is extremely important. We know that we need to support our next generation of young workers and leaders in our country, and I certainly applaud the government in this direction.

I want to talk about long-term health care. In my part of the country, in Nova Scotia, we have seen the challenges in Northwood. There were 51 deaths in long-term care in Northwood. We have seen challenges across the country, in Quebec and Ontario in particular. I have heard from constituents in my riding who reached out to me to say that we need to do more on long-term care, that the federal government needs to be willing to help step up and support, and that is exactly what we announced in the fall economic statement.

We have dedicated over \$500 million to help support the provinces and territories in battling COVID and making sure measures are in place. We know there are probably longer-term conversations that need to happen around long-term care, but this is a meaningful step in the right direction. We recall that during the height of the pandemic, when premiers and provincial governments called upon the Canadian Armed Forces to intervene and help support, we were there to make sure that happened.

Through the safe restart program, \$19 billion went to the provinces and municipal governments to help support them through some of the most challenging times in the pandemic. This is another demonstration of the work this government has been doing to support the provinces and territories, particularly in an area that is extremely important, which of course is long-term care.

There are also \$133 million allocated in Bill C-14 for virtual care. As chair of the rural caucus, I know that for some of our most rural and remote communities having access to care may not allow for a direct relationship. We may in some cases need to be able to access tools and technologies, very similar to the way we are running a national Parliament right now on a Zoom call. We can make sure that telemedicine and telehealth options are available. Given the pandemic, this is extremely important as an interim measure, but in the days ahead it is going to be even more important moving forward.

● (1040)

The final piece I want to talk about in the key points I wanted to highlight in this bill is a change under the ability for business owners to access the rent subsidy. Before Christmas, the Minister of Finance, through I think Bill C-9, announced changes on the wage subsidy to help support businesses and simplify support for rent for businesses. This was extremely important in my community of Kings—Hants.

I live in an area called East Hants about half an hour outside of Halifax. Although Nova Scotia has been spared and we have worked collectively to avoid some of the case counts we have seen across the country, there was a rise in cases just before Christmas that required significant shutdowns, particularly for restaurants and hospitality organizations. This was something they were able to take advantage of. The provision under this act allows them to access the benefit before rent is actually due, which is extremely important because we know cash flow for businesses is challenging, particularly in the hospitality and restaurant sectors.

I have had the chance to listen in on this debate, which was happening yesterday, and will continue today and I believe tomorrow as well. I want to point something out. I have heard members of the opposition talk about the debt. As someone who considers himself a business Liberal and who certainly appreciates that we have to be fiscally prudent, I recognize that is not a bad direction, but it is hypocrisy.

There are members in this House who, in one sense, talk about the debt, which is a valid concern and we have to be mindful about managing that in the days ahead, but then in the other sense, they say this government has not done enough. In one breath they say we have taken on too much debt and are concerned about it, and then in the next breath they talk about all the measures the government should have taken further.

I would like to ask my Conservative colleagues across the way which it is. Is it that they are concerned about the debt and we should not have taken as much on, or is it that we need to do even more for our businesses? Most Canadians at home are going to recognize that talking out both sides of their mouths is hypocrisy.

I want to finish by talking about where we are going. Yesterday, the member for Carleton talked about the concern with rising debt levels. I agree with him that we need a strong economic strategy on the other side. We have a budget that will be forthcoming, I suspect, in the next couple of months. Our government is focused on ways to drive economic recovery. We have talked about providing up \$70 billion to \$100 billion of temporary economic stimulus.

The Minister of Finance has been quite clear, both in this House and outside, that her focus will be on those temporary measures. We have to be mindful of adding large structural spending that is not sustainable over the long term. I applaud her in that regard. Our government is going to have a strong plan to be able to bounce back and manage the debt load by growing our economy. That is traditionally how all countries of the world have been able to do this: growing their economy to be able to make the proportion of the debt to their economy go down and down. That was certainly the case before the pandemic, as we had the lowest unemployment in 40 years and a lowering debt-to-GDP ratio.

### *Government Orders*

I want to put on the record some things I think are going to be important in the days ahead. The first is child care. This is not just an idea of social programming anymore, this is beneficial. Economists and business leaders around the world are talking about the importance of child care to help support parents getting back into the workplace. That is certainly something we need to see in the days ahead.

The second is agriculture. As the chair of the rural caucus, the agriculture industry in Canada is extremely important to me. It represents over \$130 billion to our GDP and we are poised to be able to grow even further. I hope to see in the days ahead our government leveraging that industry for success.

I will finish with a few others such as natural resources, particularly our forest industry. I look to British Columbia around mass timber and the success it is having in being able to drive innovative practices and sustainable business practices for our forestry sector. On the Atlantic and the Pacific in our coastal communities, small craft harbours is an extremely important program to help support our fishing community.

The final point is on regulatory reform and modernization. We are talking a lot about spending, which is important. We are following other OECD countries. We also have to look at ways to leverage the private sector to be able to let it grow and create jobs, and so we have to be creative in the days ahead as well.

● (1045)

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to comment on the member's very first statement in regard to the Canada child benefit, which of course we deeply appreciate because we initiated it. However, in speaking to young families in my riding, I had one conversation with a young mom who said the money is so important to them. She said the government is not understanding it is helpful. It was there in addition to the income their family was earning, and now they are in a very perilous situation. She asked why the government was not now taking the money it wants to spend on these various programs and focusing on borders, long-term care, front-line workers with rapid tests and PPE available for Canadians; leaving it at that and letting our economy get back to work, so they can earn the income their family needs.

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, the member started by talking about the fact that families had lost income and that the Canada child benefit was beneficial. She then seemed to make the parallel that the economy will return back to normal, that all we have to do is seal up the borders and get some more PPE, and then everything will be back to normal.

*Government Orders*

We have been there for Canadian workers, through the wage subsidy, through the CERB when it was needed, and this is in addition to the CCB. We are providing additional support. We are doing all of those things the member mentioned, including testing, money for PPE and the safe restart program.

I would ask the member to look at the bill and the measures behind the legislation. We are already doing them.

• (1050)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would first like to wish my colleague a happy belated birthday. He said that he recently turned 30. I, too, completed my university studies not too long ago. I just finished my doctoral studies two and a half years ago.

It resonated with me when he spoke about the issue of the gradual elimination of interest on the federal portion of student loans. That is an issue that Quebecers care a lot about. In 2012, there was a major education movement involving more than just students. Society as a whole got involved.

That being said, to make the connection with my aside, Quebec already has a loans and bursaries program. It would have been nice if there was some compensation announced, compensation for young Quebecers on a per capita basis for post-secondary students.

Will the Liberals commit to doing that?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, the member is asking me, as a member of the governing caucus but not cabinet, for a commitment from government; this is asking in the wrong place. I will steer him to our ministers and our cabinet on the best approach.

I would certainly agree with the member that students in Quebec are well organized. This is something that Quebec has a history of, making sure that there are lower tuition rates. Quebec is certainly an example within the federation of a province that supports students and has lower tuition costs.

I know that students in Nova Scotia have talked about the way that Quebec students organized to get that. I would agree with the member in that regard.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, before the pandemic, over one million Canadians had been injured in the workplace. We know that when someone is injured in the workplace, every day that goes by without them getting accommodation from their employer means it is harder and harder for them to return to work.

Right now there is a lack of support and training to scale up workers in return to work disability management. We are hearing about long haulers. Due to COVID, we are going to be in an absolute crisis. The government has not even trained its own HR staff in disability management to prepare its own civil service to get back to work and be accommodated while they are dealing with these injuries due to COVID.

Would my colleague agree that the federal government needs to invest quickly in training in return to work disability management in institutions like the Pacific Coast University in my riding, so that we are ready for the crisis that could happen, whether it be mental health or COVID itself? Right now, we need to be ready to accommodate workers and get them back to work after they have been injured.

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, I would agree with my colleague opposite that skills training writ large for individuals, whether they have disabilities or have been impacted by the pandemic and are searching for work, is important.

I believe our government is focused on this. This is something we are delivering. I would agree with the member, particularly as it relates to individuals with disabilities. Our government has been focused on this for the last five years. We will continue to do so in the days ahead.

**Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to start off by wishing my colleagues a very safe and happy new year. The COVID-19 pandemic has put unprecedented stress and hardship on Canadians, from small business to long-term care homes and front-line and essential workers. Every Canadian has a story to share of how this pandemic has impacted them. Constituents in my riding of Brampton East are concerned about their businesses, the safety of their workers or simply when they can pay a visit to loved ones they have not physically seen in months.

For said reasons and countless others, the federal government has committed to the implementation of a strong and robust recovery plan presented by our finance minister through the fall economic statement. Our government's message is clear: We will do whatever it takes to protect the health and safety of Canadians for as long as it takes.

This message extends to our commitment to strengthen the economy by creating one million good jobs, investing in training and skills, creating valuable opportunities for youth and investing in green technologies to help combat climate change. This is a critical component in providing Canadians the support they need in Bill C-14. The economic statement implementation act would help put into action what the fall economic statement set out to do, which is supporting middle-class families, helping students manage their debt and investing in resources that will help better protect Canadians and the economy.

Amendments to the Income Tax Act will mean that families entitled to the Canada child benefit will receive additional temporary support of up to \$1,200 for each child under the age of six. Families have had to transition their entire household routines in order to accommodate more time being spent at home, which means facilitating extra child care, buying additional school supplies to aid in virtual learning or simply helping with the cost of raising a family.

Throughout 2020, our government saw that families needed our help, which is why we stepped up to provide an extra one-time \$300 payment in May and increased the Canada child benefit payment amounts in July. The proposed temporary \$1,200 support for families is an increase of almost 20% over the maximum annual CCB payment. Our goal for a stronger and more resilient middle class involves ensuring that families have the resources they need in order to help nourish and support their children's futures. This plan includes a Canada-wide early learning child care program that will help ease the burden of arranging affordable child care. We know that this pandemic has disproportionately affected women. Doing better is not simply a choice, it is a responsibility that this government takes very seriously.

We will continue to support Canadian students. Our government plans to eliminate the repayment of the federal portion of the Canada student loans and apprenticeship loans from April 2021 to March 2022. Students in Canada can feel a sense of relief once these measures are in place to help them manage their student debt. This investment will help 1.4 million Canadian students who are trying to achieve higher education and ultimately begin their careers. I have listened to their experiences. I know that this support is essential. By easing the federal interest portion of student debt, we are allowing students the opportunity to focus on working toward their career goals and not being worried about incurring additional debt.

We also provided financial support to post-secondary students and recent post-secondary and high school graduates who were unable to find work last summer due to COVID-19. Eligible students received \$1,250 for a four-week period for a maximum of 16 weeks between May 10 and August 29, 2020. Those with a disability or dependants also received an extra \$750.

Most post-secondary students in my riding were unable to access the Canada emergency student benefit and are very positive toward our government's support for students, including the doubling of the Canada student grant amount to a maximum of \$6,000 in response to the increased need for the 2020-21 school year.

Our government is actively creating opportunities for youth, whether that be through the investments of over \$300 million into the Canada summer jobs program or the youth employment and skills strategy investment. These investments help young Canadians gain practical experience and make meaningful connections in the workplace. Students need our help. They have adapted to new learning methods and have overcome tremendous adversity during these troubling times, which is why our government is here to lend a helping hand.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put immense strain on our health care systems. The amendments made to Bill C-14 mean that we can help better protect those most vulnerable, like seniors, by investing

### *Government Orders*

through the new safe long-term care fund. This funding will help prevent and manage outbreaks in long-term care homes, which will ultimately help save lives.

The heartbreak and fear that many Canadians have felt knowing that they have a loved one living in a long-term care home or, God forbid, losing someone to the virus are all too common. We will also be establishing a new national standard for long-term care facilities to ensure that none of our grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles or friends must endure a substandard level of care. No person deserves that. Amending the Food and Drugs Act means that we can increase our investments in order to support access to virtual health tools, mental health supports and substance use programming.

● (1055)

Asking Canadians to stay at home can impact the mental health of so many. Restricting social interaction for long periods of isolation and job anxiety can take a toll on people's mental health. As the government, we want to make sure that every Canadian has access to the supports they need.

As we begin this new year, there is a great sense of hope among Canadians. This sense of hope was created by the hard work that was put into composing the largest vaccine portfolio in the world. I was excited to hear that all the long-term care homes in the region of Peel have received doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. As a government, we will continue to ensure that our vaccine rollout happens as efficiently as possible. We will also continue to prioritize those who are at high risk of or vulnerable to contracting COVID-19.

The amendments made in Bill C-14 under the Food and Drugs Act will help our government increase funding to support testing, vaccine procurement and distribution, as well as isolation sites. In November, the federal government, in collaboration with various levels of government, granted \$6.5 million to establish an isolation centre for residents of Peel, in my riding of Brampton East, and throughout the region, to isolate safely if they cannot do so safely at home.

It is imperative that the messaging we continue to convey to Canadians is that we will support them for as long as it takes. That means including investments, such as the one proposed in the fall economic statement, which will help upkeep our efforts for medical research, countermeasures and rapid testing, and ensure that every Canadian can receive the vaccine.

*Government Orders*

Adapting to new research and trusting the science our health officials advise us on is how we can best protect the health and safety of Canadians. That is why investing in research is so critical under the presented amendments of Bill C-14.

The Canadian economy cannot function without the success of our small businesses across the country. Unfortunately, this pandemic has put an unprecedented strain on the ability of our small businesses to succeed. They account for over 90% of all businesses in Canada, and our economy cannot afford to stand back and allow businesses to close their doors. We must continue to provide a prudent fiscal plan that helps businesses stay viable and keeps employees on the payroll.

The Canada emergency rent subsidy saw over 20,000 organizations apply within the first four days of the application period. As a government, we are also cognizant of employees who have seen a reduction in their working hours or have been told not to come into work. Therefore, supports such as the Canada emergency wage subsidy have been extremely important to small businesses and their employees.

In my riding of Brampton East, I had the pleasure of speaking with various small business owners who were able to access both programs. I spoke with Mr. Dheri, the general manager of a local Turtle Jack's restaurant, who was thankful to have access to the Canada emergency wage subsidy so that he could keep his employees on the payroll. His is one of the over 350,000 small businesses across Canada accessing the Canada emergency wage subsidy program.

We want small businesses to be able to open back up once it is safe to do so. As we continue to fight COVID-19, our government will be there for Canadian small businesses every step of the way, so we can safely rebuild our economy and make us stronger than ever before.

While speaking to constituents, I have heard first-hand their concerns surrounding climate change and the state our children and grandchildren will inherit. Our fall economic statement represents actionable steps and investments to tackle these concerns. By taking steps to making homes greener and more energy efficient, Canadians can reduce their carbon footprint while lowering their energy bills.

Our government's efforts to establish a network of zero-emission vehicle charging stations across the country in convenient locations, including where we work, live and travel, will help accelerate the use of zero-emission vehicles. We will build on current investments and zero-emission vehicle infrastructure by providing an additional \$150 million over three years to help ensure that charging stations are available and conveniently located where and when they are needed. This is on top of the 500 electrical vehicle charging stations at more than 250 locations across Ontario announced last year. Brampton is currently home to many electrical vehicle charging stations, and I look forward to welcoming many more.

Building back our economy requires a jump-start of investments to help stimulate growth once we get through this pandemic. As we stated in the fall economic statement in November, the federal government will invest billions of dollars over three years to help make

this happen. The amendments proposed will help our government continue to make investments in resources to best manage the pandemic and support the recovery of our economy.

As I said before, there is a sense of hope among Canadians. We will continue to roll out and distribute vaccines over the coming months, and Canadians will be ready to return to a sense of normality. We must support these hopes and ensure that the economy, and Canadians' return, is adaptive, innovative and strong.

A lot of changes have happened this year due to COVID-19. Working from home has now become common practice among businesses. Students have adapted to online learning, and businesses have amplified their online capacities. The decisions and amendments that we decide on as members of Parliament will allow positive change to come to fruition. It will help us save lives, improve mental health supports, help middle-class families and create a more inclusive economy and society for all. Let us continue to move forward together.

• (1100)

**Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we are here today to discuss something very significant. We are looking at massive spending and an increase of \$500 billion in the debt ceiling, but we have not received a budget in over two years. We do not have detailed information on how the money that is currently in the deficit has been spent. While yes, a significant portion of the deficit spending went toward the emergency benefits, not all of that spending did. There is a great deal of money that has yet to be accounted for.

Could the hon. colleague give us some indication of when we will get information about what that money was spent on and when we will get a budget, before we approve this substantial increase in the debt ceiling?

• (1105)

**Mr. Maninder Sidhu:** Madam Speaker, the notion of accumulating debt at a much lower interest rate than individual Canadians can access on their own and not thoroughly helping Canadians through the biggest crisis of our lifetime was not a question our government was willing to ponder. We were not going to consider putting austerity or partisanship above supporting Canadians through this crisis.

The significant federal support provided throughout the pandemic is working well to put Canada in a stronger position for a robust recovery, especially when compared to our international peers. This stimulus will help us grow out of this recession toward an economy that is greener, more innovative, more inclusive and more competitive.

The opposition loves pointing to this, but we ask the Conservatives what they would have cut out to save money. Would they cut supports to businesses or to Canadian workers? To this they have no response.

As I said earlier, our government will always be there for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to greet all of my colleagues in this new year.

My question is very simple. I spent the holidays talking to my constituents in Laurentides—Labelle and one question kept coming up: When there is a desperate need for health care services, how is it that the government, who claims to be there for us, is not taking any concrete measures to distribute the money that the provinces, particularly Quebec, need? Everyone was unanimous and came together on this issue.

There are things that the government needs to take care of, but unfortunately, it is not giving the provinces what it should.

I would like my colleague to tell us why transfers are still not being made.

[*English*]

**Mr. Maninder Sidhu:** Madam Speaker, the federal government has been there with the provinces through the safe restart program, which was really important across the board and across the country in supporting provinces in terms of increased testing capacity, contact tracing and other federal support programs through the health agencies.

Bill C-14, the bill we are discussing today, is extremely important to so many Canadian families, and I would like to mention a few things on that end.

Inequality makes our economy less resilient. We are committed to building back a more inclusive Canada, but I am also proud of our efforts to support middle-class families throughout the pandemic, as well as our support to our promises. For families, in addition to the Canada child benefit, the government quickly provided the Canada emergency response benefit, along with many other supports.

I have heard from parents in my riding who had to buy additional school supplies to support virtual learning for their children. Bill C-14 includes measures that would introduce a temporary and immediate support for low- and middle-income families entitled to the Canada child benefit. Over 18,000 families in Brampton East, including 30,000 children, have been supported through this program, so I know the federal government has been there—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to give the opportunity for another question.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre, with a brief question, please.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, although my hon. colleague speaks about nobody being left behind, in my riding of Winnipeg Centre, we currently have cases of trench fever, a disease of extreme poverty, occurring in the middle of a pandemic. I would also like to remind him of other people who have been left behind, such as students, disabled persons and seniors in long-term care homes.

### *Government Orders*

Let us not forget the government's current climate bill, Bill C-12, which will not allow us to meet our climate targets. In the midst of all of this, the vaccine rollout is not happening. We know the impacts of the climate emergency are exacerbating the pandemic.

I would like my colleague to let Canadians know what his government plans to do, outside of political sound bites, to make sure that people are really not left behind.

**Mr. Maninder Sidhu:** Madam Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg Centre mentioned many different subjects and various topics. What I would like to focus on is students and on our relief for students. As I mentioned in my remarks, I have spoken to many students who are very appreciative of the government's response. We provided the Canada emergency student benefit. We are doubling the Canada student grant amount to \$6,000.

Bill C-14 proposes to eliminate the interest on repayment of the federal portion of the Canada student and apprenticeship loans for 2021 and 2022. This would bring over \$300 million in relief for up to 1.4 million Canadian students.

This is not just a talking point. This would be real for students and would help put money back into their pockets, so they can support their livelihoods.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

I am very pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-14, which implements certain provisions of the economic statement of November 30, 2020, including adjustments to child benefits and the emergency rent benefit, as well as provisions affecting student loan interest. It also puts certain provisions in place to facilitate the importing of foreign COVID-19 vaccines.

I would like to comment on some of the bill's measures. It is normal to want to support students during this crisis. However, we must remember that Quebec has its own loan and bursaries program. We must therefore ensure that these measures will not put Quebec students at a disadvantage.

Two provisions of the bill will help expedite the distribution in Canada of COVID-19 vaccines produced abroad, but there is still nothing to facilitate local production. That would require reintroducing the amendments to the Patent Act that the government introduced in the spring but ultimately allowed to die on the Order Paper on September 30.

### *Government Orders*

The delayed delivery of the Pfizer vaccine and the headache that this has created for Quebec and the provinces is a clear example of the ramifications of Canada's overreliance with respect to medical procurement. Investments of almost \$1 billion were included in the economic update to increase the production of vaccines in Canada. We will have to carefully monitor the federal government's handling of these investments.

It is definitely unfortunate that the economic update does not provide for an additional and sustainable increase in health transfers considering that the federal government currently covers only 22% of health care costs when it should cover half. Additionally, the amounts allocated by this bill to long-term care again bring to the fore the federal government's desire to impose so-called national standards for health care. Quebec and the provinces would not accept this blatant intrusion into their jurisdiction when the federal government has failed miserably in carrying out its responsibilities to address the health crisis, for example on such issues as border control and vaccine supply.

The bill makes no mention of other measures in the November 30 economic statement, leaving our businesses in complete uncertainty. What about the credit programs for hard-hit sectors? A year into the pandemic the federal government is indicating that it is still not prepared to help the tourism and hospitality sector or arts and culture. It is also frustrating that the federal government is still failing new entrepreneurs, whose fearlessness is at the very heart of our economy, who often have to make major sacrifices to start their business and achieve their dream, and who are now facing the agonizing prospect of bankruptcy.

I would like to read a letter that three young entrepreneurs in my riding sent to the Minister of Finance before Christmas and to which no one has yet bothered to respond.

Dear Minister of Finance,

My name is Joanie Raymond. I am 26 years old. I have been working in the restaurant industry for the past 8 years.

One year ago, with two other people, Dominik (26) and Veronique (33), after saving some money and borrowing some from friends and family, we collected \$250,000.00 and we decided to pursue our dream of opening a restaurant.

We invested \$250,000.00 with the group, Barbies Resto Bar Grill, a Quebec based chain and we started working to build our restaurant in the city of Ste-Julie in Quebec.

Our first target opening date was to be March 1st 2020 but with a couple of small delays, the opening date was moved to March 27th 2020.

Unfortunately, with the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020 and the first lockdown we were only able to open June 22nd 2020 at the end of the first lockdown.

We started paying rent March 1st 2020. We started having a small payroll in March 2020. We have our GST, QST numbers, we had our CRA business number, everything was set to go.

Based on all eligibility criteria set out in the beginning of the pandemic, we were not eligible to receive any rent subsidy (CERS) from March 15th 2020 to September 30th 2020.

● (1115)

Also, we were not eligible for any wage subsidy (CEWS) from June 22nd to September 30th 2020. Even though it was difficult for our restaurant as all other restaurants, we did understand that were not lucky and we hoped for better future days for our business.

With the second lockdown since October 1st 2020 we are still not able to receive any rent or wage subsidy. The drop in revenue is still only for businesses that were open in 2019 or January/February 2020.

We are the forgotten ones. As the pandemic progresses, Mrs. Freeland, we see our dreams turning to ashes. Our hope is vanishing and we only see dark days ahead of us.

We pay rent, we invested \$250,000.00 of our savings and \$1,000,000.00 in loans.

Bankruptcy is imminent for business like ours.

Is any help on the way for us? Or should we simply lock our doors declare personal bankruptcy and never dare to pursue a dream again?

We would like to have an answer from you.

If you decide there is no help for us at least we know and we go back to a miserable life.

Christmas holidays are approaching and for us it's usually a time to celebrate but this time for us it's of mourning.

WE NEED HELP, late is better than never.

Our head office sent several emails to you and to the Liberal MP in Brossard.

We wait to hear from you.

Let us know if you plan to help us or not or simply forget about us.

Thank you from all of us, Joanie, Veronique and Dominik.

This letter was signed by Joanie Raymond. Our young entrepreneurs need help.

Another change the government should have made has to do with the minimum withdrawals seniors make from their RRIFs.

In early spring last year, the government lowered the minimum amount that seniors had to withdraw. However, in the meantime, some of them had already withdrawn the full mandatory minimum from their RRIFs. They wanted to be able to put the difference back into their RRIFs, but the federal government refused.

The problem is that these retirees, having met their obligations promptly, are financially disadvantaged by the change the government made mid-fiscal year. Not only will they have to pay taxes on the excess amount they withdrew under the previously legislated provisions, but the excess amount withdrawn will not be allowed to continue to grow in their RRIFs.

We have consistently advocated for measures to financially support our seniors, who are particularly affected in many ways by the current health crisis. In this case, however, it is the federal government itself which, in addition to being ungenerous to seniors to date, is penalizing some seniors who have been more willing to comply with their legal obligations. This is patently unfair to them. Worse still, all RRIF recipients are being penalized in some way by this measure, which has the effect of reducing the tax exemption they can benefit from.

*Government Orders*

My colleague for Joliette and Bloc Québécois finance critic spoke several times with the minister and her team to get the government to finally correct this measure, but ultimately received a cryptic, cold and insensitive response that seniors who had withdrawn the minimum amount from their RRIFs prior to last spring's announcement would not have faced the market volatility associated with the health crisis and that their withdrawal would have been proportional to their assets at the time.

What can be understood from such a response? It is the exact opposite of the empathy we would expect from the government towards those to whom we owe the prosperity that the government has been able to lavish on just about everyone but them.

Perhaps it is not too late for the government to finally listen to reason and correct what needs to be corrected.

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Montarville, who is always very eloquent and a pleasure to hear.

I know that I often come back to the issue of health transfers. My colleague mentioned that a bit in his speech. I would like to hear him elaborate on this topic and tell us more about federal interference in provincial health care systems, which obviously fall under provincial jurisdiction.

I would like to hear him more specifically on this topic. What does he think should be done about seniors care?

• (1120)

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I know that he is very interested in what is happening in Sainte-Julie, which I mentioned in my speech. I also understand his concern about health transfers, which the government has not increased, despite the fact that we are right in the middle of a health crisis that requires major investments in health care.

The federal government has been very generous to just about everyone and every sector, but it has not made the health care investments that it should have for a long time. We are now seeing the results of that, as this health crisis has tested the limits of our health care system. These limits were reached because of the federal government's drastic cuts in recent years.

We would have expected that, at least in its own areas of jurisdiction, such as border control and vaccine supply, the federal government would be at least somewhat effective, but this is not the case. Instead, it is once again looking at the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces with a view to imposing so-called national standards for long-term care. Rather than trying to impose so-called national standards, it should reinvest massively in health care.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my colleague made reference to health care. He is not accurate when he indicates that the federal government has not provided ongoing and continual support for health care in all regions of the country. There has been additional spending on issues such

as mental health and more support for long-term care, which is a huge issue across the country.

Could the hon. member reflect on the hundreds of millions of additional dollars that have been invested in the provincial restart programs for health care? I am wondering if he just forget about that money. Could he provide some additional comments on the allocations that have been provided to provinces?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Madam Speaker, I never said that the federal government was not investing money in health. What I am saying, simply put, is that it is too little, too late. As I said earlier, we have seen the limits of our health system, limits that exist in large part because, over the past few years, the federal government has gradually but steadily cut back its health care contribution. That is why our provinces were poorly equipped to deal with an unexpected crisis. They were already struggling to make ends meet and provide basic services, so when this global health crisis struck, they were overwhelmed.

Extra federal cash injections were too small and came way too late. Now that the federal government is burning through cash, there is still time for it to get its act together and boost transfers significantly so that the provinces can both deal with the crisis and do a better job of delivering on their health care responsibilities.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague from Montarville for his outstanding speech. I was very touched by his testimony and the letter he read. When the government does not get the message, it is important to do something and find other ways to get the message across, and this was a good one.

I am going to focus on one particular aspect of the economic update, namely transportation, my critic portfolio. We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has really had a negative impact on the transportation industry, specifically air transportation, which is experiencing a serious crisis.

We had high expectations for the economic update, and we were really hoping for something major, since we had been promised for months that there would be help for air transportation. On reading the economic update, however, specifically the section on the air sector on page 32, we learned that the government was simply going to continue negotiating with the airlines to establish a financial assistance process. I was floored.

*Government Orders*

Air sector workers have been struggling since March. They are out of work, with no income. The government has been saying for months that it will find a way to help them by talking to the companies and by taking action, but it turns out those were nothing but empty promises. This economic update is from November 30. It was bad enough in November, but today is January 26. It is almost March and nothing has happened. All these workers will have been out of work for a year, yet there is still no assistance for air transportation.

It gets worse. Many people had purchased plane tickets but never received refunds. The government did absolutely nothing to defend them or protect them. However, page 32 of that economic statement says that “the government will ensure Canadians are refunded for cancelled flights.” That is good news, but it had already been announced way back on November 8.

On that date, the then transport minister released a statement in which he promised that, before the government spent even one penny of taxpayer money on airlines, it would ensure that Canadians got their refunds. Nevertheless, today, January 26, 2021, travellers have still not been refunded. As a result, yesterday, a court delivered an initial ruling and ordered an airline to refund a couple from Rimouski, Quebec.

It is unfortunate that the current government is not doing anything about this critical situation and that people are suffering because of it. It is particularly disappointing because the government is supposed to govern and make decisions when the situation warrants it. We, on this side of the House, are putting pressure on the government, pushing it to take action. We tabled a petition signed by 33,000 people calling on the government to comply and require refunds for travellers. We introduced Bill C-249 to reiterate that travellers have the right to be refunded.

A new Minister of Transport was recently appointed, perhaps to cover up for his predecessor's incompetence, and he immediately said that he would continue to seek a solution so that travellers get refunded. We are pleased with his initial reaction, but a solution already exists. All the government has to do is pass Bill C-249 and order airlines to refund travellers. The government has never really told the airlines that. Instead, it prefers to repeat that it is looking for a solution and working on the issue. This is not complicated. When a service is not provided, the consumer needs to be refunded. That is the law, and it just makes sense. If I order a pizza and it never gets delivered, that is too bad, but I will get a refund. That is how it should be.

I am flabbergasted at the government's complete lack of action on urgent issues affecting people's daily lives. I spoke about tickets and about unemployed workers who are struggling, but there is also the fact that the government's actions with regard to air transportation have been rather inconsistent.

The government is telling people not to travel and has been repeating that for the past few days and weeks, but it is not actually doing anything to stop people from travelling.

• (1125)

On January 2, the day after New Year's Day, people who had spent Christmas without their families and without gathering with

loved ones, as they would have liked to do, found out that people who had decided to take non-essential trips south or elsewhere around the globe qualified for \$1,000 in compensation from the government. This is unbelievable, and it is frustrating, too.

It took a while for the government to wake up and realize that maybe it needed to do something. It finally decided to take action, but it said its measures would only start in January, so they would not apply to people who had travelled before January. It is wrong to reward people who did not follow public health guidelines.

The same applies to border control. There is still no ban on non-essential travel, even though this has been a problem for several months now. It is nearly February, and this is still a problem. There is still no monitoring of people in quarantine. The only measure is automated calls where people press a number to indicate they are complying with the quarantine. It is frankly absurd. Even people who chose to travel have criticized the situation, saying it is ridiculous. That is the kind of job the federal government is doing.

In the meantime, customs officers are not very busy at the border, so they could help with monitoring people in quarantine.

The Government of Quebec is asking for help in getting the authorization and additional powers to do what the federal government is not doing, namely monitoring quarantine enforcement at the border.

A month after Christmas, the government still has not made a decision on a sector in crisis. That is unacceptable to me.

The economic update also addresses the issue of regional air transportation. It is nice that the government realizes that there is a problem. Again, the problem has been going on for months. In March, Air Canada announced, brutally and without warning, that it was cutting 30 regional routes. The regions' first reaction was to say good riddance. They were fed up with seeing the airline disrespect the competition, cancel flights without notice and slash prices only to jack them back up. The regions decided to find another solution. In Quebec, they decided to establish a group to look at the problem with the Union des municipalités du Québec, the Fédération québécoise des municipalités, tourism associations and the Government of Quebec and come up with solutions.

*Government Orders*

Do you know what happened? They asked the Minister of Transport to come and meet with them, to talk to them and listen to what they had to say. However, the Minister of Transport did not even bother to meet with them. In the middle of the crisis, 30 regional routes have been cut and certain regions of Quebec are now without service, but the Minister of Transport is so familiar with the problem that he does not need to listen to them. He does not need to hear from mayors, businesses, or the tourism industry. He does not even need to hear from the Quebec government.

In fact, that is what the Minister of Revenue and member for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine said when we toured her riding over the summer. I heard her on the radio saying that we see the trees, but the minister saw the forest. He is so familiar with it that he does not even need to talk to people. That is serious.

This frustration of not being able to talk to the minister is something that I heard from the airline industry. The airports were not able to talk to the minister, the airlines were not able to talk to the minister, and the pilots were not able to talk to the minister. No one was able to talk to the minister, and the minister did nothing. At some point, people got fed up. It is frustrating. I think that this is part of the reason for the change of minister.

We hope that the new minister will make some changes and that the government will get a move on, because this is a bad situation. A government that does absolutely nothing and makes no decisions is a very bad thing.

Worse still, here is one of the first things that happened in the regional air transportation sector after the crisis. Nav Canada was having trouble making ends meet, so it decided to jack up its fees by 30%. When Nav Canada asked the minister for help, the minister told it to figure things out and charge airlines that were already struggling 30% more for its services. In turn, airlines raised ticket prices, so fewer people travelled by plane. It is all nonsensical. To top it off, there is no more regional transportation.

The same thing happened with airports. The government made a big deal about rent relief for airports, but that was only for large airports. What people do not know is that rent relief is based on fees. If there is no money coming in, there is no rent to pay. The same goes for the airport assistance program. Much was made of investment assistance, but that does not help pay the bills. If they do not have any money, how are they supposed to invest?

That is what I wanted to say about the government's treatment of the air sector in its economic update. It is very disappointing indeed.

• (1130)

[English]

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague's comments regarding the people who are being impacted by the pandemic. One example is flight attendants. We know many are out of work. Through no fault of their own, people are losing their jobs right now, and their livelihoods and lives are currently at risk.

Does my hon. colleague support putting in place a guaranteed livable basic income for impacted workers and other people who

have been left behind during the pandemic? These are seniors, students, disabled persons, and temporary foreign and migrant workers, who we know, in some cases, have had very extreme human rights violations perpetrated against them by their employers. Would my hon. colleague support implementing a guaranteed livable basic income to ensure that nobody is left behind?

• (1135)

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I have to say, I do not really see the link between what she is asking and the speech I just gave, but her question is interesting nonetheless.

I think it is important to support people to give them a decent income, to get poverty under control and to ensure that everyone has a chance in life. However, what sometimes worries me about these kinds of measures is that we already have social programs in Quebec. I think federal interference in the programs under Quebec jurisdiction is a bad idea. That is the problem I have with the NDP wanting the federal government to tell Quebec what to do. We do not want that.

[English]

**Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, in his speech, my colleague mentioned the airline industry, and I think it is very important he mentioned that the airline industry has not yet paid back the people. We have been pressuring the government to make this happen, but it has been slow on its feet, and this should be given immediate attention.

Many of the airlines cancelled flights on people who had paid thousands of dollars for a trip with their families. They then found out that not only was the trip cancelled, but they had lost their jobs in the meantime. Some put this on a credit card and are now paying interest on that debt, but they do not have the service back. The airlines are taking that money and keeping it, giving the customer a voucher. The customer is actually paying the interest charges, so the airline industry is getting a free loan.

Does the member think it is imperative for this to be stopped immediately and that the airlines have to pay back the money people have paid, with interest?

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that really important question.

Unfortunately, I do not think the federal government has even looked at cases like this yet, cases where people are struggling with debts to pay, with credit card balances to pay off. People often plan to pay for their trips after they return from their travels and go back to work, but what do they do when they have no job to go back to?

*Government Orders*

It is absolutely clear that companies that hang on to money paid for services not rendered must refund that money. What is even clearer is that we have a government in Ottawa that is dragging its feet and not fixing this issue, even though that is the government's job.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his presentation.

He has painted a good picture of the current state of air transportation, and I would like him to comment on the cozy relationship between the government and certain airlines, which he condemned several times. I know that my question must be brief, but the answer requires some context. I will trust my colleague's ability to be succinct.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Madam Speaker, it will be difficult to give a brief answer to this question.

This is an example of the willingness to not take action on issues that are affecting people, such as airlines that do not reimburse their clients. Furthermore, the government is giving the wage subsidy to these companies but saying that they will not see federal money until they have reimbursed their clients. However, airlines are receiving money from the government as demonstrated by the \$800 million in loans that Air Canada received through Export Development Canada. It is really frustrating to see a government that is not doing what it said it would do.

• (1140)

[English]

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, happy new year to you and to colleagues. I sincerely hope that 2021 is a big improvement over 2020.

I will be sharing my time with the member for Acadie—Bathurst.

When this government was first elected in 2015 and subsequently in 2019, it rightly identified growing income inequality as a serious threat to a free and democratic society. Several initiatives were taken, including the raising of the upper tax bracket and the lowering of a middle bracket, a worthy initiative. However, clearly the most significant initiative was the creation of the Canada child benefit, a direct cash benefit to low-income families with young children. Pre-pandemic, this meant more than \$100 million had been allocated to Scarborough—Guildwood. This in turn led to the largest reduction of child poverty of any riding in Canada.

During the pandemic, the additional CCB funds had been allocated to the benefit of Scarborough—Guildwood and all other ridings. Bill C-14 is proposing a \$1,200 benefit for each child under the age of six for eligible families. It is estimated to be an increase of 20% over the maximum Canada child benefit. For Scarborough—Guildwood, that will likely mean an additional \$20 million directly into the hands of low-income families. The CCB has had, and continues to have, the desired effect of lifting kids and families out of poverty, supplementing family incomes and reducing wealth inequality.

I do wish there was a definitive study showing the economic return of the \$100 million distributed locally, now estimated to

be \$120 million spent locally. I would imagine there is a significant economic multiplier. Regrettably, however, a benefit is not a job. Life and economics are never that simple, but I dare say that given the choice, most parents would prefer to have a decent, if modest, job that feeds their family rather than a government benefit.

Then along comes the pandemic and knocks the most vulnerable for a loop. It is hard for people to provide for their families when they do not have jobs. Quite properly, the Government of Canada stepped in with an array of benefits, the most significant of which is the Canada emergency response benefit, known colloquially as CERB. I do not know the gross amount of CERB funds given to Scarborough—Guildwood, but it is certainly in the tens of millions of dollars, if not hundreds of millions. However, again, a benefit is not a job.

What has been revealed over time is really a tale of two pandemic economies. Those earning salaries calculated to be in the order of \$40 per hour or more have not only survived, but thrived. They have in many instances prospered with both increased income and increased capital assets, such as homes, businesses, properties, etc. However, those in the \$15 to \$20 range have been devastated, slipping closer and closer to absolute poverty, with attendant worries about food and housing insecurity. Regrettably, the biggest pop-up business in Scarborough—Guildwood has been the proliferation of food banks. Unfortunately, they are doing roaring business.

This has been a huge setback for income inequality and for the catchphrase “those in the middle class and those wanting to join it”. If this economic disruption continues for much longer, Canada risks a permanent structural inequality that will be devastating for all of us, rich and poor alike. Permanently impoverished citizens are unstable and make the lives of others insecure, hence the rise of security devices and gated communities.

The pandemic has exposed our vulnerability in supply chains as well. There are no jobs in the \$15 to \$20 range because of globalization's desire to get the cheapest product the fastest.

• (1145)

We do not make PPE, for instance. We cannot create our own vaccines. We line up at box stores to purchase products made everywhere else but here. It is good for others, but not so good for us. These are vulnerabilities that could be papered over in prosperous times, but not so much now.

*Government Orders*

I am not so Pollyannaish as to think that Canadians are going to rush out and start buying more expensive Canadian-made products just because they are Canadian. Canadians are pretty tight with their money. I would, however, argue that they might well buy Canadian products made in their community by their neighbours if they thought or knew that the competing product was made by slaves in a foreign country. I would like to believe that Canadian consumers, if they knew, would find the purchase of slave-made products repugnant. However, here we are in 2021 with massive amounts of products being sold in Canada through a supply chain infected with slave labour.

According to a conservative estimate from the walk free initiative, 40 million people are engaged in modern slavery. World Vision estimates that 1,200 Canadian companies are importing goods made with slave labour.

Recently, CBC's *Marketplace* ran a piece on slave labour in the making of the PPE products that we use on a daily basis. The *Globe and Mail* ran two articles on how Canadian companies use slave labour to build products in China. The *Toronto Star* wrote a devastating piece on goods coming from foreign sources that the U.S. will not allow to be sold there, but we allow their transshipment into Canada.

Polls are starting to show that Canadians are becoming increasingly alarmed. Some frame this argument against supply chain slavery in terms of moral repugnance. I share that view. Some frame this argument in terms of universal basic human rights. I also share that view. Few, however, frame it in terms of societal and economic suicide.

If we as consumers knowingly or unknowingly purchase a product infested by supply chain slavery, we are destroying a job opportunity for a friend or a neighbour or a family member. Remember the tale of the two pandemic economies. Those in the \$15 to \$20 range are most devastated by the absence of jobs. Any goal of redistributing income equality is out the window. The risk of permanent structural damage to the economy is increased.

What to do? I appreciate the government seems to becoming more alive to the moral and human rights argument and stepping up the authorities it does have. Time will tell how effective that increased surveillance will be. I, however, would suggest four specific initiatives.

The first is the intentional use of the government procurement process to shorten the supply chain from global to Canadian. As one person put it in our pre-budget consultation, the supply change should be run up and down the 401.

Second, let us give the Canadian ombudsperson for responsible enterprise the power to compel companies to respond to inquires on human rights abuses.

Third, let us make it abundantly clear that the failure to cleanse supply chain slavery from a company's business will immediately result in the denial of consular and/or government financial support.

Fourth, let us adopt and/or take over Bill S-216, formerly my private member's Bill, bill C-423. It would compel all companies of a certain size to certify to their shareholders and to the Minister of

Public Safety that they have examined their supply chains and are satisfied that there is no slave labour present.

Not only is slavery morally repugnant and a gross abuse of human rights, but it is also in our economic interest to ensure that the products Canadians buy are free of slave labour. Canadian workers are among the best in the world, but they cannot compete with slaves.

The government's laudable goal of reducing income inequality will never be achieved if infected supply chains are allowed to exist. The Speech from the Throne has many laudable and supportable initiatives, but to not deal forcefully and effectively with supply chain slavery is, in fact, self-defeating.

I thank the House for the time and attention. I look forward to questions from colleagues.

• (1150)

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the speech that my colleague and good friend just gave. I just have one issue, a red flag. He mentioned the importance of changing our supply routes to go up and down the 401. I would like to give him the opportunity to also include supply chains from the east to the west and the north to the south across this great nation.

**Hon. John McKay:** Madam Speaker, I thank my friend for pointing that out. I knew, as soon as I wrote that into the speech, that someone would jump on it. It was actually a quote from the Scarborough caucus's pre-budget consultation.

The member is absolutely right. It is, of course, a supply chain within the nation's borders, not just up and down the 401. However, the point the commentator made was that we need to recognize that we created vulnerabilities for ourselves. There is a lot of conversation in this chamber about vaccines. One of the reasons we have so much vaccine conversation is that we have created a dependency in our own country on other countries supplying such a vital product. If the pandemic teaches us anything, it is that we need to look at those supply chains, particularly for vital products.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to wish you and all my colleagues a happy 2021.

*Government Orders*

I want to talk about two seemingly unrelated events that happened last week that are actually more related than people think. At a time when the government is spending billions of dollars to meet people's needs during the pandemic, an indigenous homeless man was found frozen to death in a chemical toilet at 3 a.m. in Montreal. That same week, we learned that the Governor General had been terrorizing her employees for three years while earning \$300,000 a year. She will now receive a lifetime pension of \$150,000 a year.

The government has not signed a housing agreement with Quebec for three years. Such an agreement would have made it possible to build social housing for indigenous people in Montreal and could have saved the life of the man who died last week. Meanwhile, the government is going to give a woman who is completely useless and who held a costly position \$150,000 a year for life.

Does my colleague not think that it is high time Canada abolished the monarchy?

[*English*]

**Hon. John McKay:** Madam Speaker, the short answer is no.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, as we know, small businesses in the tourism and hospitality sectors, have been hit extremely hard by the pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 on these sectors has been devastating. Many are now facing closure, and the Canadian economy could see hundreds of thousands of jobs lost by the end of February.

In November, the Liberals announced help through their HAS-CAP. However, here we are at the end of January and no help has been delivered. The Liberals do not seem to understand how urgently this help is needed. Small businesses cannot wait another few weeks or months; they need help now.

Will the Liberals tell the House when the hardest-hit businesses will get the help that was promised? How many small businesses are the Liberals willing to let close permanently before they make this help available? It is urgent.

**Hon. John McKay:** Madam Speaker, I do not think there is a person, whether on the government side or the other side, who does not recognize the devastation this pandemic has wrought on small businesses in particular and the ability of a lot of them to survive. The government is, in my judgment, alive to the issue.

The question is how to get the funds to the individuals and businesses. I would say the rent subsidy is one of the ways it is being done, and the wage subsidy is another way it is being done. I think the passage of Bill C-14, therefore, is quite vital for updating the speed that relief comes to small businesses.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood for sharing his time with me today.

I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-14. I would like to begin by thanking all the essential workers across Canada, particularly those in my riding of Acadie—Bathurst, who have been working in grocery stores, hospitals, long-term care homes and other areas since the very beginning of this pandemic. They are real heroes.

[*English*]

I would like to thank all essential workers from the riding of Acadie—Bathurst who have worked tirelessly since this pandemic hit us and spread throughout Canada and throughout the world. They are the real heroes, whether they work in our grocery stores, hospitals or nursing homes. I thank them from the bottom of my heart for being there for us every single day since the pandemic hit us.

[*Translation*]

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been there for Canadian families. We have provided different types of assistance, including help for workers who have lost their jobs, for example through the CERB. We have been there for businesses in my region and across Canada that have had to close their doors because of this pandemic. The wage subsidy has been a huge help that has enabled them to retain their employees, which is why we will build on those efforts and continue helping Canadian families and workers. We are going to make sure that they have the programs they need to get through these difficult times.

I was talking about the CERB, but in my region, we have built and grown our economy around certain industries for centuries. I am thinking of fisheries, for example. At the beginning of the pandemic, there was a great deal of uncertainty surrounding our fisheries. That is why we put in place, with the Minister of Fisheries and our government, \$470 million in funding to assist fishers through this difficult period of instability in the export markets for our seafood. This is an incredible investment in this area, and we must continue to ensure that our fisheries sector thrives for years to come.

On the subject of families, and without repeating everything my colleagues have said before me, I believe the Canada child benefit is one of the greatest legacies we can leave this country. Thousands and even millions of families have been able to access this program.

[*English*]

For the Canada child benefit, the numbers in my riding of Acadie—Bathurst are unbelievable. The last time I checked, \$3.5 million is coming to this riding each month, and it is tax free. The numbers are astonishing: The number of children who received the Canada child benefit is 10,520.

[*Translation*]

Since we put it in place in 2016, this program has been a tremendous help to families, but when the pandemic hit, we provided additional funding to help these families get through the crisis and have a little more money in their pockets.

The business loan program is administered by our various regional agencies. I would like to give a shout-out to the CBDCs, here in my riding, in Bathurst or in Tracadie-Sheila, which have been tremendous at helping businesses get through these difficult times. Our financial institutions have made it possible to deliver these business loan programs.

Bill C-14 is in fact designed to enhance those programs and provide a little more support to those families and businesses in my riding and across Canada. Take students for example. As we have said, we want the interest on student loans to be forgiven. That will give students a break. I am sure that my colleagues know what that is like, having been students, just as I was. It is stressful for students to have to worry about making student loan payments, wondering if they will find a job while in school, especially since that is very difficult right now in New Brunswick, with all the restrictions and closures. No longer having to pay interest will help students get through these difficult times.

• (1200)

The enhanced Canada child benefit is another measure that will truly help families in our region. Families with a net income of \$120,000 or less will be eligible for up to \$1,200 more. Families with a net income over \$120,000 will also receive additional money. I hope that my colleagues in the opposition will support this measure to help families across Canada in their respective ridings. As members know, this program helps many Canadian families.

Once again, we want to give some respite to people struggling with mental health issues and maybe even substance abuse. This pandemic has affected a lot of people, and some have had to isolate for several weeks. This has certainly had a negative impact on mental health. Home is often considered to be a safe space, but that is not always the case. There are many incidents of domestic violence, and we need to put an end to that. This bill will provide much more support for these vulnerable people during the pandemic.

Earlier I mentioned that the regional relief and recovery fund, or RRRF, has been invaluable to businesses back home. We are going to improve this measure so that more businesses can access the fund, which will be distributed through the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, in co-operation with regional agencies such as Community Business Development Corporations, or CBDCs.

[English]

Eight dollars out of 10 from all the help programs Canadians and people in my riding receive come from the federal government. When I see a province like New Brunswick, which received astonishing amounts of transfer payments under different programs and streams, not helping the people of New Brunswick, it is unacceptable.

I saw a report today which showed that a lot of the money we transfer to provinces is being left on the table, especially in my home province of New Brunswick. I found it a bit disturbing to see that families who need help in New Brunswick do not receive the funds the federal government transfers to the province. When I look at the numbers, \$7,452 in help is coming from the federal government and only \$75 in help is coming from the Higgs government right now in the province of New Brunswick.

### Government Orders

We all have to play a role in helping Canadians during this difficult time, during this pandemic. I wish and hope the Government of New Brunswick will use these funds to help businesses and New Brunswickers across my province.

[Translation]

We will not stop there. We said that every Canadian would be taken care of, and that is what we have endeavoured to do from day one. Through the various programs we have brought in we will be able to get through this difficult period and relaunch our economy.

I see that I am running out of time, but I forgot to address some things, including about the airports. Budget cuts at different airlines have resulted in my region losing its airport. I am pleased to see that our government will not give any financial assistance to these airlines until our regional connections are restored and Canadian passengers have their tickets refunded.

• (1205)

I hope that my colleagues will support Bill C-14 to help Canadian families and our businesses.

[English]

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are hearing that small businesses and consumers are being crippled by credit card fees. When it comes to interchange fees, we are paying some of the highest interchange fees in the world. In fact, the Liberals have committed to moving credit card companies to a voluntary rate of 1.4%, whereas Europe legislated a cap of 0.3% and Australia, 0.5%.

In the 42nd Parliament, Bill C-236 was tabled by a former Liberal member of Parliament, Linda Lapointe. She moved that bill 16 times before she dropped it off of the Order Paper. Now the Liberals say they are not in bed with the big banks and the credit card companies, but she abandoned her promise to the Quebec convenience store association and the retail association of Canada by not taking action.

These credit card companies are making record profits in the middle of COVID. They are not doing their part. We are not all in this together. When is the government going to legislate a cap on interchange fees similar to what Europe and Australia have done instead of putting that on the backs of small businesses and consumers right now in this crisis? It is time for these companies to pay their fair share and it is time for the Liberals to step up to the plate.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

*Government Orders*

I think that Canadians have seen that our government has been doing everything it can from day one to help people and businesses get through the tough times we know they are currently facing. That is why we brought in a host of programs to help Canadians weather this crisis.

Bill C-14 does exactly that. It helps families and businesses and gives them greater flexibility to make the payments they are struggling to make because the economy is sluggish.

I completely agree with my colleague that we must do everything we can to reduce the financial burden on Canadians as much as possible. I agree that we must look at this matter closely and determine how to improve things in the case of certain companies that, as we know, may be taking advantage of Canadian consumers.

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I do not quite agree that the government is doing everything it can to help businesses. Some sectors, maybe even in the member's part of the country, are still waiting for support programs. I think supporting these sectors, especially the most vulnerable ones, is still urgent.

Why amend the Canada child benefit in the Income Tax Act only for children under 6? Why not amend it for children age 6 and up too?

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I am a parent too. I have two young daughters who are now in school. As everyone knows, most kids age 6 and under go to day care. Child care is extremely expensive in New Brunswick because we are not as lucky as Quebeckers, who have a provincial child care system.

I am glad that the government's fall economic statement included an announcement about setting up a national child care program. That kind of program could be a boon to all Canadian families by keeping child care affordable. That is why we want to increase the Canada child benefit by \$1,200 per child for low- and middle-income families and by \$600 for higher-income families. I think that would really help those families.

From the start, some provinces, including my own, New Brunswick, have not lifted a finger to help their citizens. I hope they will take their cue from the federal government and enhance the programs we set up for them.

• (1210)

[English]

**Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

No one can minimize the very serious effects of COVID-19 and the impact it has had on our individual lives, our communities and our entire country. The times we live in are certainly not normal and the measures that have been implemented to mitigate the harm of the virus have been significant.

In the very early days of the pandemic, Conservatives were eager to work with the governing party to find solutions for Canadians. We knew it was imperative to act quickly and effectively, so those

feeling the negative economic impact of the mandated shutdowns were offered the support they needed. We called on the government to close the borders, a recommendation it ignored for months and, sadly, caused considerable damage. To prevent job loss, we urged the Liberals to increase the wage subsidy program from 10% to 75%. When our constituents told us about the problems they were having accessing the rent relief program and other emergency benefits, we immediately proposed changes and fought for them. It often took weeks or even months for the government to respond. For some we are still waiting, but eventually some solutions have been put in place.

All of this was done with the understanding that measurable support must be given to help Canadians until the tide turns and a greater economic certainty is present, but here we are. We are nearly one year in and we are at a precipice. Even though the country is facing an astronomical deficit and debt load, there is no plan for recovery and there is no end in sight with regard to government spending. In the last year our country has adopted many policies which in normal times would have put us on a track to mirroring other economies like Cuba or Venezuela, where masses of people are out of work and individuals are reliant on the government for their very survival. It is entirely unsustainable for any long period of time, but oddly, to our detriment, the current federal government is proposing that many of the measures that have been implemented during the pandemic become permanently entrenched. This is scary.

The deficit for this year is projected to come in just shy of \$4 billion, thus bringing the net national debt to a record \$1.1 trillion. That is a massive number, one that is incomprehensible for many of us. The proposed changes to the Borrowing Authority Act in this legislation would increase the gross borrowing limit to \$1.8 trillion, an increase of a whopping \$700 billion. I realize those are big numbers, but to boil it down, we are living in a credit card economy. We are consuming more than we produce. We are buying more than we sell. We are borrowing from the world in order to buy from the world. We are sending jobs and money out the door in exchange for foreign goods. In essence, or in short, we are in trouble. Others get the jobs, the investments and the savings, but Canadians are left with the debt.

With the government's plan to increase spending, but no plan for economic recovery, Canadians should be concerned. It is the government's responsibility to facilitate an environment of economic prosperity. This is made possible by implementing policy that will draw investment into our country rather than repel it; by putting policy in place that would encourage job creators instead of punishing them; and by implementing policy that celebrates those who work hard in the private sector instead of forcing them into a place where they are reliant on the government for bread.

*Government Orders*

To sign off on the government's current intent to spend hundreds of billions of dollars without so much as a plan for economic recovery or accountability measures in place would be totally irresponsible of me and others in the House of Commons. The current government is providing poor leadership, and Canadians certainly deserve better. For Canada to get back on track, we must free the wealth creators, the innovators and the risk takers. We must believe in the people of this great country.

In response to a question about government spending, the Prime Minister said, "We took on debt so Canadians wouldn't have to." I hate to break it to him but that is not exactly how it works. Governments do not have money. There is no special government bank account that money gets deposited into without a source, and of course, that source is us, Canadian taxpayers. The less revenue there is to tax, the less money there is to spend on social programs, health care, infrastructure and education. For this reason, it is confounding that the Liberals do not fight for industries such as the energy sector, manufacturing or agriculture, industries that have traditionally helped stabilize our economy for decades. They are well positioned to continue to do so; they just need a government that believes in them.

● (1215)

When the Prime Minister was embroiled in scandal over the SNC-Lavalin affair, which members will remember he pressured the former attorney general to let a criminally charged company off the hook. He did it under the guise of saying, "I am fighting for jobs." What about the jobs here in western Canada? What about the jobs that were just lost when Keystone XL went out the door?

Why could the Prime Minister not do so much as pick up a phone, make a call and advocate for those workers and those jobs? Does he only care about jobs if they happen to be in his riding? Canada deserves a Prime Minister who will fight for unity, not against it. It needs a Prime Minister who believes that Canada is one nation from sea to sea and that the nation in its entirety is worth fighting for.

The debt-to-GDP ratio will rise to 56% this year. That is just a short distance away from our 1996 high of 66%, when the Wall Street Journal deemed Canada to be "an honorary member of the Third World".

While the private sector is shrinking rapidly, the government is engorging itself. This is entirely unsustainable, but it is incredibly beneficial to a political party that is most successful when Canadians are dependent on government. Doling out money is actually a political leader's dream. It turns the people's affection toward him. It positions him as their hero, caretaker and saviour, so to speak.

Responsible leaders restrain themselves from utilizing this enticement tool. Instead of making it a long-term solution, they limit and put restrictions in place. It is not so with our current leader. Sadly, for quite some time the current government has fostered animosity toward job creators and wealth generators. The Liberals are engineering a society that will leave everyone less prosperous and more dependent on government.

While the Liberals love to talk about giving and receiving, I wish to talk about the value of earning. I am talking about the privilege,

the honour and the dignity of work. It is an incredible thing for one to earn what one receives. Studies show that individuals who receive money without earning it are more likely to be depressed and less likely to be happy or feel fulfilled. Whenever we discuss permanently increasing government handouts, we must look at the potentially negative ramifications, not just for the economy but for society and the people. People matter. Canadians must be free to use their gifts, talents and abilities to further themselves, to benefit their local communities and to rebuild.

Ronald Reagan famously said, "The most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the government and I'm here to help."

I am convinced government programs are not the answer to getting Canada back on track. Canadians are the answer. It is Canadians who have the ingenuity, work ethic and ability to come up with the solutions to the problems our country faces.

Ronald Reagan also said, "The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things." Frankly, I am tired of hearing the government patronize Canadians by essentially telling them to sit on the sidelines and cheer. What coach benches his best players?

Instead of putting the government in the position of being the ultimate problem-solver, and exploiting the pandemic to increase government control in the lives of Canadians, I believe we have a real opportunity to do just the opposite. We can shift the spotlight onto Canadians: those who are dreamers, risk-takers, wealth generators and job creators. It is time to put them in the game. They have the ability to put forward exceptional ideas, solve problems and build toward a vibrant future. We must unleash the power of the workforce so Canadians can start receiving paycheques instead of government handouts.

The Liberals can try to reset, restart and reimagine this country, but the fact is the power belongs to the people. Canadians always have been, and always will be, the solution to the problems we face. It is time to let Canadians skate.

● (1220)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear about the level of debt that has been taken on throughout this pandemic. I heard it a number of times yesterday, and the member has mentioned it. However, at every step of the way through supporting Canadians and putting the resources in place to help them, the House has, pretty much on every occasion, unanimously adopted the bills and the mechanisms to be able to do that.

*Government Orders*

All that the member or any other member of the House had to do in those instances when that unanimous consent came forward was to say no. One person would have triggered a whole process that would have been so much more detailed in determining how we go about that spending, by going through various stages in the House through committee. The member did not say no. No member said no. I knew that the time would come that Conservatives would eventually start to critique the government for the level of debt that it took on, but in reality, they were active players in that. They participated in taking on that debt.

How can the member justify being overly critical of the debt taken on when she voted for it at every step of the way?

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Mr. Speaker, there is a place for taking on a small level of debt for a short term. That debt load, however, should have been incurred primarily in the name of generating jobs and investing in projects and industries that were going to serve this country in the long run.

That said, there is a time when due to something such as a pandemic, it is appropriate for the government to provide assistance to those who need it most. Through no fault of their own, many Canadians lost their jobs. Government policy created a lockdown. That lockdown resulted in the loss of livelihoods for many. That was a government decision; therefore, the government is responsible to step in and help. I voted for that and I am proud of that vote. What I am not proud of is where the government is going for the long-term future, which is into incurred debt over debt on the backs of Canadians. That is wrong.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, happy new year. I know my hon. colleague spoke a lot about work. I, too, support the ability for Canadians to get jobs; however, we know that a lot of people are unable to work. I will give an example: 70% of adults with severe intellectual disabilities who are unable to work live in poverty. Seniors are unable to work and live in poverty. Many students who were unable to work as a result of the pandemic are living in poverty and unable to go back to school, as another example. Indigenous people in many communities, where rates of unemployment are 95% as a result of ongoing impacts of the Indian Act and colonization, again are unable to work.

Knowing this, as it is certainly well researched, would my hon. colleague support a guaranteed livable basic income? Does my colleague support providing greater support for students who, through no fault of their own, were impacted by the pandemic? Would my colleague also support a guaranteed livable income for persons with disabilities who we know have been completely left out during the pandemic?

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Mr. Speaker, that question morphed from a celebration of work, which I was super-excited about, to a squelching of work and its benefits. That is very sad.

We are talking about Canadians who have incredible potential, ability, gifts, talents and contributions to make to this great country. By putting mechanisms in place that would bench them, we would actually be making our country worse off. Why do we not have a more grand vision for people than that? Why do we not believe in letting them thrive? Why do we not believe in letting them use those gifts and those talents and those abilities to be the problem-

solvers, to be the solution-makers and to be the people that they were designed to be?

I understand there are some who live with a disability and they absolutely deserve all the support they can get. That is an appropriate place for government to step in and provide support to those who are unable to do so for themselves. However, for the rest of us, let us skate. Let us use our gifts, our talents and our abilities to make this country a great place. Let us work.

• (1225)

**Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 58,000 businesses closed their doors in 2020. There are 58,000 families who will not have the income they would have had from the family business. The CFIB is now estimating that there will be up to 200,000 small businesses closing in 2021. Think of the devastating impact that will have on the families who depend on them for their livelihood, and on the communities where jobs will be lost. The economic spinoffs of those business closures will be devastating.

New businesses have been particularly ignored by this Liberal government throughout the pandemic. In December, I had the opportunity to ask the government a question with respect to new businesses. I talked about a gentleman named Paul in my riding. Paul was going to launch his new small business in March 2020. Of course, that did not happen because of the first lockdown, and his business launch was pushed into May. Since then, he has desperately tried to make his business viable. He is not eligible for the wage subsidy. He is not eligible for the rent subsidy. Why is this? It is because he decided to start a business, and the government has deliberately chosen not to support people who made the decision to start a small business. Why it has made that choice, I do not know. I have asked questions about this many times. I do not get answers.

People like Paul invest their life savings, the money they have worked their entire life for, into a business at great risk. They put hundreds of hours into that business, 50, 60, 70, 80 or 90 hours a week. That is what entrepreneurs do to try to make their businesses successful.

To keep his business going, Paul has had to access a line of credit against his home and put more money into the business in a desperate attempt to have his life's work remain viable. I pleaded his case to the minister in December. I outlined exactly the circumstances that I am outlining now. I asked the minister to please give something to Paul.

The response was that Paul should look at the regional relief programs. That was where there would be something. Of course, I had looked at the regional relief programs in a desperate attempt to help Paul and businesses like his, not only in my riding but all across the country. As I learned in law school, the devil is in the details. In order for Paul to be eligible for a regional relief program, he had to have been operational before March 15, 2020. Basically, the minister's response was, "Sorry, there is nothing there for Paul."

Since I asked the question in December, I have had dozens of new businesses in my riding get in touch with me, desperately asking how they can access some form of financial support so that their businesses can continue, so that they will not go bankrupt and lose their life's savings, so that they can continue to employ people in their businesses who can then support their families. They are desperate to stop the domino effect of the closure of businesses and the devastating impact that has on the business owners, the employees and the community. Unfortunately, I have no good answer for these people, because the government knows this issue exists.

• (1230)

I have asked about it in question period, and my Conservative colleagues have asked this question many times in question period and there is never an answer. Here we are debating a bill that would implement new economic programs. Conservatives have asked the government what it is doing to support new businesses and why these businesses are undeserving of any support. Therefore, Liberals know of the issue. It is clear. They have heard it. They have heard it from CFIB and from opposition members, who have asked if there is anything in this legislation to help new businesses. The answer to that is absolutely nothing.

We are left asking ourselves this question. This is a government that has opened the floodgates of spending. It is spending money on everyone and everything. We are racking up debt at a horrific rate. Why have the Liberals deliberately chosen not to support new businesses? I want to go back to that.

When people decide to become entrepreneurs and to set up a business, they do it at great risk. They have to invest their own money and often have to provide personal guarantees, including maybe a collateral mortgage against their home. People do that at great risk. They put in 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 hours a week in the hope that their business will be successful. The lockdown occurred, we understand that, but why has the government deliberately chosen to ignore people like Paul and like Michella, whom I spoke to yesterday about her business? It is something I cannot comprehend.

When I think about the answer the government gives on this, which is effectively to maybe look at a regional relief program, it is so tone deaf and offensive to business owners who have worked so hard to try to make their businesses successful. It reminds me of someone else who was incredibly tone-deaf in the midst of a crisis. There is the infamous quote by Marie Antoinette. When she was told the people had run out of bread, she said, "Let them eat cake." Guess what, the government is effectively saying to entrepreneurs and new business owners who have risked so much, "Let them eat cake." I find that offensive.

I am here advocating on behalf of small businesses and new businesses not only in my riding, but also on behalf of businesses

### *Government Orders*

all across the country. They deserve better than what the government is giving them. If the government is going to give them nothing, if it has made that deliberate decision, which is the only thing I am left to conclude, that it has deliberately decided to let those businesses fail, then it should stand up and say it. Do not say they should look at some program that offers absolutely no support. The government should just say it is sorry, because it has decided that those businesses are going to fail and good luck.

Right now, there is only one business in my riding that is expanding rapidly and doing extraordinarily well. We see their signs everywhere, in strip plazas and downtown cores. Do members want to know what that business is? It is "For Rent" or "For Lease". It is exploding all across my riding and all across this country. Why is that? It is because of the decisions the government has deliberately made, and I do not have an answer as to why. I would like to know why new businesses are being told that the Liberals do not care and that they can go out of business. They have an opportunity to correct it. We are debating this bill now. Why will they not make some simple changes so new businesses do not go bankrupt?

• (1235)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the intervention by my colleague today. When he got toward the end of his speech, he talked about the thing that seemed to be booming in his riding, which was signs "For Rent". In my riding, the same thing is going on. There are a lot of for-rent signs going up. I would argue that seeing for-rent signs going up is not necessarily the product of lack of support for new businesses, but of businesses that have been around for quite a while and choosing not to continue. My approach to this is that I believe the government has been trying, in many regards, through the support of the opposition parties and their consent to the spending, to help businesses writ large. He brings up some very valid points about new businesses and I hope he has the opportunity to discuss those points when the bill gets to committee stage so that how we can support newer businesses can be discussed further.

Would the member not acknowledge that supporting existing businesses has been so critically important? Had we not done anything, there would be even more for-rent signs going up.

**Mr. Kyle Seeback:** Mr. Speaker, I like to give credit where credit is due. There have been supports for the business community in general, including the emergency bank account and the wage subsidy after a few of its hiccups initially when the first incarnation was not great and most businesses were not able to access it. I will, of course, give kudos to the government for making the decision to support businesses. It had to be done and it did it.

*Government Orders*

I have a particular issue. I would ask the member opposite to go back to his caucus meeting on Wednesday and raise the issue of new businesses. They are just as deserving of support as other businesses. They took the same risks. They invested the same amount of blood, sweat and tears, as we say, and the same capital. They have the same exposure and personal financial loss if their business goes under. Go back to the Prime Minister and go to the finance minister and ask them to please make the changes so that these new businesses have the opportunity to succeed.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank my colleague for raising this very important issue about start-ups being ineligible for the government's emergency relief programs. I raised this very issue with the Minister of Small Business on Friday.

We have many businesses in our riding that have not been eligible and whose owners have invested a tremendous amount of their life savings to open a business or to restart a business from the past. They cannot collect the wage subsidy or the commercial rent program. They cannot access the CEBA loan program. There are ways for the government to create measures that would allow these businesses to qualify, and to avoid concerns about fraudulent businesses.

These are businesses with expenses that they can prove. Many of them have met payroll or paid rent for months. The government needs to allow them to access these programs. Many of them are in their second or third lockdown without any support. This includes a veteran-led business in my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford's riding where some of the profits go to helping those with PTSD. These are the kinds of social enterprises and businesses we have to save, or we are going to lose a generation of businesses.

I want to thank my colleague. If he wants to bring forward some ideas on how government can use measures to support those start-ups, that would be great.

• (1240)

**Mr. Kyle Seeback:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for adding his voice to this. As he points out, there are lots of metrics the government could look at for a new business to see if they should be eligible for some of these programs. I am more than happy to work with the government on determining what those metrics should be.

I know I have very little time left, but I want to really try to impress something upon the government. Maybe the Prime Minister and finance minister should take a phone call from someone who started a business and is now going to lose that business. I get many phone calls like that every single week. People are desperate and they are heartbroken. They think they are going to lose their homes when their businesses go under. Anyone listening to dozens of phone calls like that is going to be affected. I find it incredibly difficult to answer those calls, speaking to those individuals and saying that I am sorry and that there is nothing I can do to help them. The government has chosen to abandon them.

Maybe if members from the government would take the time to take a few phone calls like that, they would make changes to this bill to support small business. Behind every one of those small

businesses is an owner and a family. They are in desperate times and desperately need help from the government.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before resuming debate, I must inform the House and the members participating virtually that there have been more than five hours of debate on this motion during this first round. Consequently, all subsequent interventions shall be limited to 10 minutes for speeches and five minutes for questions and comments.

The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

[*English*]

**Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to lend my voice in support of the fall economic statement, more commonly referred to as the FES.

As we continue to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, our foremost commitment remains supporting the resilience of our people and businesses. To uphold this commitment, our government has provided an unprecedented \$407 billion in overall support to keep Canadians and Canadian business afloat.

In doing so, the federal government has provided more than \$8 out of every \$10 spent in Canada to fight COVID-19 and to support Canadians through these challenging times. The significant investments we have made, in public health, in the provision of medical supplies and personal protective equipment, in income support and paid sick leave, have very much helped slow the spread of the virus. Our commitment of an additional \$1 billion to a new safe long-term care fund will help ensure that seniors live in safe and dignified conditions and have exceptional infection prevention and control.

As a result of these efforts, apart from the island nation of Japan, Canada has the lowest peak new-infection rate among G7 nations in wave one and the lowest rate of new infections in wave two.

Canada has also experienced a rebound that is both vaster and stronger than initially forecast in the July economic and fiscal portrait, and which compares very well with its international counterparts. Whereas only about half of the American jobs lost through the pandemic have returned, in Canada 80% of these jobs have been recovered. British Columbia has very much been a leader in this regard, with 98.7% of the job losses recouped. These numbers are truly astounding when we consider the makeup of the B.C. economy and the economic sectors that have been hardest hit.

*Government Orders*

While it is always paramount that federal spending addresses the needs and desires of all Canadians, it is especially gratifying to discuss a fall economic statement that speaks to the most pressing and distinct concerns of British Columbia. I know, from speaking with business owners and non-profit representatives in my riding, that the federal supports that have been extended and expanded in the fall economic statement are, in so many cases, the only reasons why businesses have been able to keep their doors open and workers employed.

The Canada emergency wage subsidy, which has protected 3.9 million jobs across the country, is being extended until June and increased to a maximum subsidy rate of 75% so that employers can keep their workers through these challenging months. For small businesses, the Canada emergency business account has provided critical liquidity; and the Canada emergency rent subsidy has helped businesses with fixed costs, direct from the federal government to tenants, with additional support in the case of government-ordered closures.

While these subsidies have helped bolster our economy and protect our businesses, we also recognize that crucial sectors, such as tourism and hospitality and the arts, have been disproportionately impacted by the necessary travel restrictions and limitations on gatherings. This is certainly true in B.C., where tourism is one of our largest economic sectors, and it is especially relevant in my riding, where the resort municipality of Whistler alone, which has 12,000 permanent residents, is responsible for a quarter of the annual tourism export revenue for the whole province of British Columbia. Of course, our borders are now closed to non-essential travel. For this reason, the fall economic statement would create the highly affected sectors credit availability program to offer 100% government-guaranteed, low-interest loans of up to \$1 million over extended terms for heavily impacted businesses. This program will be available very shortly from financial institutions.

We are also proposing a \$500 million top-up for our regional development agencies for a total of \$2 billion, so they can continue to support small business owners who otherwise would be unable to access the federal pandemic support programs, through the regional relief and recovery fund. Importantly, 25% of these funds is earmarked to support our local tourism businesses.

Given the unique and diverse economy in B.C., it has been a very long-standing priority to establish a separate regional development agency for our province. Previously, a single office in Vancouver was designated to serve over five million British Columbians. This is in very stark contrast to the 28 offices for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, which serve a population that is less than half of B.C.'s. That is why it is so important that the fall economic statement committed to splitting Western Economic Diversification into two distinct agencies: one for British Columbia and one for our prairie neighbours. This would allow for better service for both regions to help with the important sector transformations taking place and allow these regions to take advantage of the distinct economic opportunities that present themselves.

• (1245)

My riding of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country is the most unaffordable region in the country that is not

solely situated in an urban core. While the programs our government introduced have lifted over a million Canadians out of poverty since 2015, our work on addressing that affordability crisis is far from complete. However, the fall economic statement makes continued progress in this important direction.

All Canadians have the right to safety and shelter, as well as the ability to live comfortably as part of their community, but the pandemic has exacerbated the number of our most vulnerable community members who are facing housing insecurity. That is why our government has created the \$1-billion rapid housing initiative to further the construction of modular housing, as well as the acquisition of land and conversions of existing buildings into supportive housing units. This program follows along some amazing leadership we have seen from cities such as Vancouver and Victoria.

For many in my generation, the idea of home ownership in our community is just a dream. To address the long-standing challenge of the lack of affordable housing, we are proposing to expand the rental construction financing initiative by \$12 billion to continue to provide low-interest loans and mortgage insurance to support the construction of purpose-built affordable rental housing.

Since its inception in 2017, 30% of the initiative's investments nationwide have gone to British Columbia, including the recent construction of a 24-unit affordable rental housing building in Whistler, which will be managed by the Whistler Housing Authority to ensure affordable rental levels are maintained for the next 50 years.

Alongside housing concerns, many in my riding are under strain from a lack of affordable and accessible child care. In Squamish and Pemberton, for instance, there is a three-year minimum waitlist to receive licensed child care. In the meantime, parents are having to balance exhausting hours of dual work days against expensive and unlicensed private care.

To provide immediate relief for families with young children, the government is introducing a temporary and immediate support for low and middle-income families that are entitled to the Canada child benefit, raising the maximum benefit of \$6,765 per child under the age of six by an additional \$1,200 in 2021.

To address our long-term child care needs, the government is proposing to provide \$420 million in the 2021-22 year for provinces and territories to support the attraction and retention of early childhood educators and workers by supplying grants and bursaries for students studying early childhood education.

*Government Orders*

Capilano University recently launched early childhood education programs in both Sechelt and Squamish in order to address this high demand for educators. This funding will support efforts like these, which, along with eliminating wage and infrastructure barriers, are crucial for us to meet the growing demand for educators right across B.C. and Canada.

The FES also commits to setting up a federal secretariat for early learning and child care to support the development of a Canada-wide system. We know this is not just sound policy to improve the lives of families, reduce gender inequalities and give children the best chance at success. It has also been widely identified by experts, including our former Bank of Canada governor Stephen Poloz, as one of the top two initiatives that could grow our GDP more than anything else.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the existing and more deadly health crisis in B.C. The pandemic-imposed restrictions have had a cascading effect that has led to a more toxic and lethal supply of drugs, leading to 1,500 deaths in B.C. as part of the opioid epidemic last year.

To support Canadians struggling with substance abuse, we will provide an additional \$66 million over two years to support community-based organizations responding to the opioid crisis. Funding like this will be vital for the creation and continuation of safe consumption and overdose prevention sites, such as the safe consumption site that opened in Squamish this past year and the one that opened in Sechelt as well.

While the pandemic has drastically curtailed the use of public transit across the country, it remains a critical link for essential workers and others. For this reason, we provided over a half-billion in support for public transit in B.C. under the safe restart agreement. We know once the pandemic is over ridership will rebound quickly in places such as metro Vancouver, which had the fastest-growing ridership of any public system in Canada and the U.S. prior to the pandemic.

To meet this growing demand, numerous projects are being planned or are under construction to expand this service. All orders of government on the north shore are working together as part of next step to alleviate congestion and improve public transit both to and from the north shore. I am pleased the federal government is stepping up to provide permanent public transit funding to support a lot of these efforts going forward.

• (1250)

The measures I have outlined in this speech are just some of the many ways that the FES will help bridge British Columbians and Canadians through the pandemic by providing support for the Canadians and Canadian businesses that need it most. The FES also has a number of down payments on larger programs that set the stage to build back better to a greener, more inclusive and more resilient country on the other side of the pandemic.

These measures, among others, will be part of the \$70 billion to \$100 billion in stimulus over three years to ensure our economy comes back stronger and more resilient than before. The FES is good for British Columbians. It is good for Canadians and I urge my—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We will have to stop there. We have reached the end of the time allowed for the hon. member's speech.

We will continue with questions and comments. The hon. member for Drummond.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I will take advantage of the fact that there is a Liberal colleague from British Columbia to raise the issue of tourism. I am guessing that tourism is a very important sector of the economy in his region. It is one of the sectors that was hit extremely hard by the pandemic, along with restaurants, events, festivals, arts and culture.

The government is creating one-size-fits-all programs and not considering the reality of these sectors. We need targeted programs for tourism, restaurants, festivals, events, arts and culture, and these are long overdue. The government did announce a credit for the hardest-hit sectors. However, we heard about this program two months ago, and no details have been announced yet.

I would like to know if my colleague believes that real targeted assistance will finally be given to the tourism, entertainment, events, festival and restaurant sectors.

[*English*]

**Mr. Patrick Weiler:** Mr. Speaker, certainly the tourism sector is very important in British Columbia and especially in my riding. It is our biggest economic sector, so I am very much attuned to the comments and suggestions that my colleague made. The FES has targeted supports, particularly for tourism and some of the other hard-hit sectors he mentioned. The \$1-million HASCAP program, for instance, will be available in the coming weeks to support some of these businesses with low-cost, very low-interest loans.

Also, under the regional relief and recovery fund, the 25% set aside for businesses in the tourism sector are very much needed to ensure those businesses will have access to the credit they need so that we can bridge to the other side of the pandemic, once some of the health restrictions, and other restrictions that have heavily impacted those sectors, subside.

*Government Orders*

• (1255)

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there were many things my colleague said in his speech that I was interested in, but one thing that he did not talk about is the wild salmon emergency in British Columbia. We just had the lowest return of wild Pacific sockeye salmon in the largest salmon-bearing river in the world. This is after last year, which was then the lowest return. We did not hear anything in the fall economic statement, outside of Big Bar, to help remedy that situation, and the many other watersheds that are facing the same thing.

We are in a wild salmon emergency, and we cannot even get the minister to declare a wild salmon emergency. We did not see any new investments. We are hearing that the \$148-million B.C. salmon restoration fund is a drop in the bucket. Advocates are saying that that is over five years and, in fact, we need that every year for the next five years if we are going to make any impact on saving wild Pacific salmon, which is critical to our food security, our culture, our economy and our way of life, especially for indigenous people.

Is my colleague going to be advocating for his government to invest heavily in emergency funding for wild Pacific salmon in the upcoming budget?

**Mr. Patrick Weiler:** Mr. Speaker, I very much share my hon. colleague's concern about the plight of wild Pacific salmon. One of the measures he mentioned in his comments, the permanent funding for the passage of fish in Big Bar, is a very, very important step, but it is one of many, many important steps that we need to take to restore our salmon stocks across the province. This is going to take wide-ranging efforts to rehabilitate habitats to restore this species, which is iconic to all British Columbians.

I can assure the member opposite that this is very much a priority for me, for our caucus in British Columbia and for this government. I look forward to working with my colleagues on advancing some important measures that will make progress in addressing this really, really important area.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am here today to speak about Bill C-14, the economic statement that the federal government presented to the House on November 30 of last year.

COVID has been hard on our communities in many ways. This time has been filled with constant change, significant modification in our habits and real health concerns. When I speak with constituents across the riding, I am shocked by how many things they have noticed have changed in their lives. I appreciate the innovation that I have seen in our riding. People are coming together to support one another, and businesses are stepping up to find new ways to practise what they do.

Just last week, I participated in a grand opening event at a vineyard in my riding. It was a small event with strict distancing rules and careful protocols, but 40 Knots wanted to take an opportunity to showcase their newly closed-in outdoor space, which will allow for events to happen all year round. The windows are able to open in warm weather and close in the colder weather while continuing to allow for a beautiful view of their vines. I deeply respect 40 Knots for their sustainable model of making wine and the creativity

they have shown, along with that of the many local businesses in my riding during this time.

This innovation is inspiring, yet many folks have struggled during this time because of the way our local economies are built. Across Canada, we need to see an increase in supports for regional economic development strategies. I am carefully hopeful about the announcement that there will be a new regional economic branch in British Columbia. I do want the government to understand that I believe it is the rural and remote communities that have the most need for supports during these economic changes. I hope to see an office, in fact, located in my region of North Island—Powell River.

This is especially important for me because there are some significant challenges happening in my riding right now. On December 17, the fisheries minister made an announcement about the Discovery Islands fish farms. The announcement was based on recommendation 19 of the Cohen Commission from 2012. I respect that part of the process included several first nation communities in our riding. Those nations have a constitutional right to speak on behalf of the area they protect and represent, and have represented since time immemorial.

I understand that all seven nations have notified their members that they are in support of the announcement. Indigenous communities have a right to stand for what they believe is best for their traditional territory, and as key partners in our region, it is important during this time that we work together to create solutions to move forward. Although, I do want to point out an important gap in this decision.

Prior to this announcement, my colleague, our shadow minister for fisheries, the member for Courtenay—Alberni, was very clear. The fisheries minister needed a plan to go hand in hand with this announcement. I want to be clear. It did not need to be a step-by-step plan, but I wanted some sort of commitment that would allow for certainty during this time. I do understand that the Cohen Commission recommendation was made eight years ago, and that this was a timeline that many were watching, but that does not mean the minister should not provide something. The lack of a plan has left a void in my region, especially in the more northern parts of Vancouver Island.

During this time, we do not need more unknowns to face. COVID has certainly provided enough. What we do require is some certainty.

I want to acknowledge how hard this announcement has been on communities, workers and businesses. It is overwhelming, and I know many people are worried about the future of our region. When the fisheries minister made her announcement, there was no plan at all. I was hoping to see a commitment to significant resources and a regional approach.

*Government Orders*

I want to put on the record what I am hearing from constituents in my riding. First of all, there needs to be a firm and strong commitment to wild Pacific salmon. Habitat restoration is an important part of this, but there are so many other factors. People are asking for there to be a plan. The need to see an improvement to the well-being of wild Pacific salmon in our riding has only increased, as people have shown me rivers that are no longer seeing salmon return.

Across our riding, the lack of on-the-ground fisheries staff has also been a growing concern. I ask members not to get me wrong. There are some amazing DFO staff in our region; however, there are significant concerns that for a huge part of the coast that we represent, we simply do not have enough people on the ground to manage the need.

● (1300)

Happily, the indigenous guardian program has been growing across the riding. There is a sense of trust from our communities, both indigenous and non-indigenous, that these folks fulfill the role as protectors of the natural resources in the region. Communities are looking for ways for this program to be able to grow and develop to do important work.

Currently, there is a parallel process happening in our region to go alongside the decision made about the Discovery Islands. This process is the commitment that the federal government has made for a more sustainable aquaculture system. In my region, people are asking for clarity on what that will look like sooner rather than later. Businesses that are highly reliant on the fish farm industry are clear: the next steps need to be clearer for them so that they can make sure their business plans are modified appropriately. With the closure of the Discovery Islands open-net fish farms, businesses are looking for opportunities to invest to modify their businesses, and they are looking for the government to be part of that plan. There needs to be a clear path that is accessible, and with the change that is happening so quickly, they need to see the resources there to meet it.

Investment in economic development in indigenous communities has also been identified as a high priority. There is some amazing and innovative work happening in more than 20 first nations I represent. There is a desire to have discussions about these projects and see how they can be built to provide economic opportunities in our area.

There are also several hatcheries in my riding, and many are working on a volunteer basis. They have not seen an increase in funding to support them in well over 30 years but have found many creative solutions to fill that gap. Many of them have reached out to my office and are wondering how their role will change due to this announcement. I have also heard from commercial fisheries and public fishers who are hoping to see action taken in the sustainable management of fisheries and they want a voice to be a part of that.

I have asked the minister to prioritize our region to look at how to support us moving forward with a coordinated approach that recognizes the specific needs of our region. Again, a localized regional economic development plan simply makes the most sense. This requires a collaborative approach, and the federal government needs to be a significant player in this process.

I also want to point out that the municipalities in this part of the region will be impacted as well. There is a need to have resources for them to create strategies that make sense for their communities.

More attractive economic development means that we need to see better Internet and cell reception in our region. The Connected Coast project in our area is one we are very proud of; however, we need to see the resources now, not later. Our region demands it. The lack of cell reception is a deterrent to inviting business opportunities and for safety as well. There have been multiple petitions from the region sharing this reality.

All of this really fits into the reason I put forward my Motion No. 53, principles for a sustainable and equitable future, in the fall. This motion requires the government to equitably distribute funds and programming among federal ridings and take into account UN-DRIP, climate change and the prioritization of projects by small businesses that create diversity in local, long-term, well-paying jobs, because that is how we keep profits and benefits within the community.

I also want to point out that the steel workers who work in the processing plant at Port Hardy have reached out to my office. They want to make sure their voices are heard during this process as well.

We need to look at these principles to make sure we follow a localized regional economic plan. I urge the minister to review my motion and adopt these principles as soon as possible.

For our region to work together in a positive way, we need to see some clear commitment from this government. With the lack of clarity, it is hard for people to know what steps to take next. It is not good for our region, and I am concerned it will focus us on our differences rather than on our joint commitment to this place we all live.

As I come to the end of my speech, I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge that women working in the fish farm industry have noticed an increase in sexual harassment during this time. This is on social media. I want to state clearly that this is simply not okay and that we must all strive for a better country, where women are treated with respect and not objectified by sexism.

● (1305)

As I end my speech, I want to remind the government that it is local, rural, resource-based communities like the ones I represent that have built this country. I also want to point out that economic marginalization of indigenous communities in this region and across Canada has been a huge barrier to communities and legislation has often been the barrier, so I hope to see the government do better.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will have to interrupt the hon. member. We are out of time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her advocacy for defence and security.

The member outlined some very important points around regional economic development and the lack of certainty that comes from not having a clear financial plan from the government. I am wondering if she could give us some insight on whether we need a federal budget to outline the priorities for where the money will be spent and perhaps other areas where not as much money would be spent so that we can have greater certainty and clarity to plan for the future.

• (1310)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my time greatly when I worked with the member at the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association and our joint dedication to defence and the men and women who serve us so well across Canada.

I agree that we need a budget. We need to see where the commitments are. When we look at what is happening across Canada, we know it is important that we have regional approaches that make sense for communities. All too often smaller communities are left out of the plans. Ottawa should not advise smaller remote communities of what needs to happen. They are the experts. I am hoping to see those dollars go into the communities to allow them to make that plan.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to address something a little different on this issue, which is to recognize the impact that many of our social enterprises have on communities throughout the country and how important it is to continue to show not only financial support, but also promotion.

I look at an organization like Habitat for Humanity, which in Winnipeg North has assisted in the construction of newer homes in areas that would likely be very challenged. I wonder if the member would provide further comment on the important role that social enterprises have played during the pandemic. Many of them clearly have demonstrated that it goes beyond just making a profit, but it also includes getting people engaged in a very real and tangible way and providing services.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, I will say that in my region, Habitat for Humanity has been profound. It has had amazing partnerships with many stakeholders in my region, but it does not address the core issue of my speech, which is how we address huge economic changes in our ridings with a regional economic approach that brings everybody together. I hope the government will stand up for that. It made a decision and I respect that decision, but we need support.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned, and I am sure the member is too, about the

### *Government Orders*

ongoing financial peril in which a number of regional ground transportation companies find themselves.

The member is probably aware that the current president of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council, Judith Sayers, has called for protection for Wilson's bus lines. It provides service to a number of remote first nations communities on Vancouver Island. It is being threatened with bankruptcy by the large commercial banks. No government program is helping it. This morning's announcement from the Prime Minister about more details for the highly affected sectors program will not assist either because it caps new loans at \$1 million.

I wonder if the hon. member for North Island—Powell River has any comments on what we could do about these very profitable banks that have lost some profit, but remain profitable, and their willingness to push out of business other businesses that are essential for recovery.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member. It is good to say hello from the northern part of Vancouver Island.

I could not agree more. There are a lot of rural, remote and indigenous communities in my riding that need accessible transportation. This has been an ongoing challenge. As we look at a recovery, making sure people can get to their appointments and get out of their communities for opportunities, health and many other concerns is pivotal, so I hope to see some support for this.

I appreciate the work that big banks do, but they certainly have enough profit. Let us make sure to focus on these really important supports for local communities.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, from the onset of COVID-19, the government has done everything in its power to combat the virus and mitigate its harm, using every tool available to safeguard the health and livelihood of Canadians, particularly for Canada's most vulnerable. It definitely appeals to me that protecting health is the best economic strategy in a global health crisis like this pandemic. In fact, more than \$8 of every \$10 spent in Canada to fight the virus has been spent by the federal government.

Let me be clear. By no means has this been a solo effort. In the summer, we announced support for the provinces and territories as part of our \$19.9-billion safe restart package. An additional \$2 billion is being made available to provinces and territories through the safe return to class fund to protect the health of students and staff. We are also working with cities and indigenous communities to ensure Canadians have the support they need and to help stop the spread of the virus in vulnerable communities. This has truly been, and we have said this many times, a team Canada effort.

*Government Orders*

Over the last year, I have held 30 community consultations and town halls in my riding of Whitby. Those have been mostly virtual but a few were in person before the pandemic hit. People in Whitby are engaged and I know the measures contained in the fall economic statement would help people across my community.

The recently tabled fall economic statement outlines the Government of Canada's actions to date and proposed new measures to support Canadians through this crisis and lays the groundwork for rebuilding Canada's economy through a robust, inclusive and sustainable recovery.

For example, we moved quickly in the spring to introduce robust economic programs like the Canada emergency response benefit, the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency business account to help people, businesses and organizations of all sizes survive this pandemic. These important programs helped thousands of people and businesses across Whitby and the Durham region. As has been said, we will do whatever it takes to protect Canadians and their livelihoods as we move forward. Through targeted and flexible support measures, we will continue to provide economic certainty to Canadians and businesses through this turbulent and uncertain time.

We have also assembled a comprehensive, world-leading portfolio of vaccines, investing more than \$1 billion in vaccine agreements to secure a domestic supply of up to 429 million doses.

Once the virus is under control and our economy is ready for new growth, our government will deploy an ambitious three-year stimulus package to jump-start our recovery through an investment of between \$70 billion and \$100 billion. This is comparable to other nations, investing approximately 3% to 4% of GDP.

The fall economic statement puts a down payment on this growth plan and sets the path for an inclusive recovery that is equitable, sustainable and would create good jobs for all Canadians.

This pandemic has laid bare and in many cases deepened significantly the inequalities Canadians face, especially in the workforce. Simply put, inequality makes our economy less resilient, less sustainable and less fair, which is why a robust and complete recovery must leave no one behind.

For example, the government is committed to ensuring that this growth plan addresses the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 has had on women. We have announced the creation of a task force of diverse experts to help our government develop an action plan for women in the economy, a plan that would help more women get back into the workforce and ensure a feminist, intersectional response to this pandemic and our recovery. This is evidenced by applying a gender-based analysis to every measure in the fall economic statement, which I am very proud to see. This action plan would help advance gender equality and address inequities faced by vulnerable women, including indigenous, Black and racialized women. It would strengthen our economy as a whole and benefit all Canadians.

The government will also begin work on transformative initiatives, such as a Canada-wide early learning and child care system, in partnership with provinces, territories and indigenous peoples. Investing in accessible, high-quality, affordable and inclusive child

care would not only be good for families, but also makes good economic sense. It would give children a good start in life and would give parents, especially mothers, the support they need to support their participation in our country's workforce and provide for their families.

● (1315)

It is also important to recognize that young people continue to suffer disproportionate economic impacts from COVID-19, and we must therefore ensure that the pandemic does not derail their future. That is why we are proposing to build on the employment, job skills development and educational supports provided to youth and students over the summer by introducing additional measures that would ease the financial burden on students and provide more opportunities for young people to gain work experience. This would include new proposed investments of \$447.5 million in the Canada summer jobs program next year to support up to 120,000 job placements in 2021-2022, and \$575.3 million over the next two years toward the youth employment and skills strategy to provide approximately 45,300 job placements for young people.

In Whitby alone, which is my riding, over 300 positions were funded through the Canada summer jobs program, providing valuable skills to young people in our community and helping to strengthen our local economy. This work is critical, and I think it is definitely going to make a difference in our recovery and in increasing economic participation by young people.

The legislation before us also proposes to eliminate interest repayment of the federal portion of the Canada student loans and the Canada apprentice loans for 2021-2022. This would help ease the financial burden of student debt for up to 1.4 million Canadians.

The fall economic statement also reiterates our government's commitment to fight systemic racism and discrimination in all its forms, a painful lived reality for Black Canadians, racialized Canadians and indigenous people. We will do this through clear and meaningful proposed investments in a number of key areas. For example, we will launch a pilot program for open bidding opportunities that will expand economic opportunity for Black-owned and operated businesses, building off the successful procurement strategy for aboriginal business.

*Government Orders*

Committing to diversifying government procurement, as outlined in the procurement minister's new mandate letter, is a critical step toward ensuring all Canadians can participate in government procurement and a clear step toward empowering marginalized communities. Additionally, the government will help ensure representation at the highest levels of and throughout the public service by creating a centre on diversity in the federal public service to help accelerate progress on diversity and inclusion and by modernizing equity legislation to be truly inclusive.

We will aim to empower communities by supporting community-led initiatives to combat racism and promote multiculturalism by expanding the government's community support, multiculturalism, and anti-racism initiatives program and its anti-racism action program, and through proposed investments to protect communities at risk of hate-motivated crimes. As well, we remain committed to rooting out and addressing systemic racism in our justice system by supporting the use of impact of race and culture assessments by judges and by helping to decrease the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples and Black Canadians in the criminal justice system through community justice centre pilot projects in British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario.

The fall economic statement also charts a path forward on building a net-zero future. To quote the fall economic statement:

We need to invest in meaningful climate action. Failure to do so will only increase the costs and the risks of climate change to all Canadians. COVID-19 has reminded us all of the importance of early, sustained action to address systemic risks that threaten our daily lives.

With critical investments, the government is doing just that. This includes \$2.6 billion for home energy retrofits, \$226.4 million for new electric vehicle infrastructure, \$3.16 billion in nature preservation and a plan to plant 2 billion trees, and \$98.4 million to help the agricultural sector fight climate change as well.

In conclusion, through these and other important initiatives and investments, as outlined in the fall economic statement, our government will continue to tackle the challenges and barriers that constrain Canadians.

• (1320)

Building a sustainable, resilient and fair economy is critical to our success in coming out of this crisis, and Bill C-14 helps to chart a path forward on this important work.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I found the part of my colleague's speech on the fight against racism very interesting. It bothered me because two weeks ago, in Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, two Black communities submitted a project under the supporting Black Canadian communities initiative and were told by the government that they had not proven they were Black. I can assure you that they are Black. It caused quite a commotion. People felt insulted and rejected by the government, which is promoting anti-racism while at the same time insulting communities by claiming that they are not actually Black. It makes no sense.

Could my colleague explain to me how Black communities could have gotten such a response from the government?

[*English*]

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Mr. Speaker, I recognize that many of the programs and funding envelopes that we have made available and, in fact, increased, are oversubscribed. This often means that not every project is successful in being awarded funds, but certainly there is an independent process that is verifiable. It can screen applications and is really looking for the best outcomes. Therefore, although I cannot speak to the specific initiative in question that my colleague brings forward, I am sure there is a good rationale for why that group was not successful.

**Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Whitby has made a lot of statements about the great intentions of what the government has been trying to do in putting in programs to help people under COVID-19, such as programs for workplaces, workers and children. However, some of those intentions have also failed a lot of people because of the practices that the government put in place.

What the member has failed to mention, and it was something the government did run on in its platform, was helping seniors and people with disabilities. There was a very small one-time payment to help out as the Liberals realized that costs were increasing during the first wave of COVID. In the second wave, the Liberals have completely ignored them. These people need help, and they need help now, not in the future. There is talk about giving them increases; we have heard nothing, except that it is going to come later. "Later" could be in another couple of years. What are we going to do now to help these people, our seniors who are just getting by and our people with disabilities?

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Mr. Speaker, in response to the member's question, I would say that bold action and leadership actually start with good intentions, so the expression of those good intentions is just the start. We have demonstrated action, and I share the member's concerns for individuals who are living with disabilities, individuals for whom I have often advocated in my riding.

We are moving forward on multiple fronts. The national autism strategy was a commitment that was made, and my understanding is that the consultation process is moving forward. There is also mention in the Speech from the Throne of a new disability inclusion plan that would increase disability benefits, which would be redesigned to also offer employment support and somewhat modify the eligibility criteria so that more individuals would have access to those supports.

Therefore, we are not silent on these—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am going to try to get one more short question in here.

*Government Orders*

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I was pleased that the hon. member moved from Bill C-14 to talk about the climate crisis as well. I am disappointed that the current level of spending of federal money on the Trans Mountain pipeline will total \$17 billion, which exceeds the amount of money for the good programs the member mentioned. I wonder if he does not believe we should stop subsidizing fossil fuels while we move forward to transition our economy.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Mr. Speaker, I have the utmost respect for the member opposite and I really appreciate the question. I believe the government in its new climate action plan has made a strong commitment to end fossil fuel subsidies by the year 2025, phasing those out over time. I believe that the new climate action plan is looking at hydrogen and other renewable energy sources to transition industries to that direction in the future.

We know that the economy can be grown and developed and that we can protect our environment. There is incredible opportunity for Canada to be a global leader in sustainable business. We are not there yet, but rest assured that we will get there.

• (1330)

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish you and every member the very best as we return to the House in this new year. Just as it affords us the chance to leave behind old habits that do us harm, a new year allows us to re-evaluate and correct our course. If there is one message my constituents would relay to the government as we enter 2021, it is that it should resolve to get back to normal.

Economic indicators across the country are not encouraging, and as the outlook worsens, the impacts of the government's pattern of neglect and regional division will only be amplified in western Canada. The consensus I received from my constituents over the past many months is clear. They do not want a global pandemic to be the pretext for a great reset of our economy, nor do they want the government's continued failure to effectively fight COVID-19 to justify inaction on our economic recovery.

My constituents demand a common-sense approach to recovery. They want to get back to work. They want a government that creates the conditions for every sector of our economy to thrive, but otherwise stays out of their lives. They recognize that stable work and reliable paycheques will be the key to emerging from this pandemic as quickly as possible.

The Conservatives were proud to stand up for Canadians when the pandemic hit. We worked to improve and accelerate many of the government's relief programs. They were needed and have done a lot of good. Indeed, the Conservatives pushed for Parliament to reconvene as often as possible for the sake of navigating our country through this storm. Unfortunately, our calls were largely ignored.

However, it is not March or April anymore. In January 2021, we have a much better understanding of this virus and how to mitigate its effects. It is time to begin our road to normalcy and recovery. Why? It is clear that the current approach to spending cannot con-

tinue indefinitely. Let us reiterate the seriousness of some vital economic indicators that the government has helped to exacerbate.

Looking at debt, Canadians are being asked to shoulder the burden of \$8.6 trillion of household, corporate and government debt. This equates to 387% of our GDP. Over the last six years, there has been a 40% increase in our debt, outpacing our growth in GDP by three times. Government debt in particular has grown larger than Canada's GDP, and that was the government's measuring stick.

Our situation is worse than that faced by Greece during the sovereign debt crisis, or the United States during the 2008 financial crisis. Never before has our country faced such a burden of debt, with no plan to address it. Our deficit is higher than at any point in our history, now at 17% of our GDP. Not even the deficits amassed during World War I, at the height of the Great Depression or during the 2007-09 recession come close to our current deficit as a percentage of GDP. What is more is that the government continues to lack a plan to return to some level of balance.

What do we have to show for this spending? We have very little. Our unemployment remains the highest in the G7, despite the fact that we spend the most among OECD countries.

We could have been facing an entirely different situation had the government buckled down when times were good. From day one, it was clear that the Liberals had no interest in honouring their spending promises. Over the course of their first mandate, they spent the cupboard bare, adding \$100 billion of debt before COVID even reached our shores. These patterns of reckless spending and anti-enterprise overreach have real consequences. Before the pandemic even began, \$160 billion in investment left Canada because of the government's poor decisions, leaving us in a weakened position.

What could make the situation worse? For one, the bill proposes to make COVID-era spending permanent. It asks for a \$700-billion increase in the borrowing limit, reaching \$1.8 trillion by 2024. It is almost as though the Liberals have no long-term plan to engage the hard work and ingenuity of the Canadian worker.

Let us let Canadians do their part to carry us through the storm. Rather than picking favourites, the Liberals should tap into the talents of every worker to produce the goods and services the world will buy. The government must level the competitiveness playing field with the rest of the world.

Just as Canadians must be empowered to lead us into a robust economic recovery, the government's responsibility lies with its public health response to the pandemic. In my view, it has clearly failed.

• (1335)

Last night I had the pleasure of listening to my colleague from Cloverdale—Langley City speak to the detailed systems that have been in place for years in the greenhouse industry to prevent and shut down viruses before they can severely damage the health of its plants and the productivity of its businesses. She then compared this with the fallacies of the Liberal government's response to the coronavirus outbreak.

Canadians simply want a truthful answer from the government. First of all, why did the Liberals make such obvious errors in responding to this pandemic from the very beginning?

They allowed 60,000 people into Canada from China in the first three months and never closed our borders. They ignored the first-hand warnings that came from the Department of National Defence that a crisis was coming.

They gave away precious stocks of PPE to China and took too long to secure what our first responders needed, as well as the general public. They said wearing a mask is immaterial and then insisted it was mandatory, even when social distancing indoors and outdoors. They shut down small businesses but not huge international box stores. They did not ensure balanced reporting, as their media outlets continue to focus 24-7 on only the dangers of COVID, instilling fear of the disease and fear of repercussions on children, parents, employees, employers, small business owners, seniors and students.

The Liberals are saying that staying safe is only possible through isolation; anything else is taking a big risk. They failed to provide rapid tests that would enable people to return to work faster and keep businesses open. They focused only on a vaccine agreement with China to begin with, which did not materialize and is not surprising, effectively putting us in the precarious position we are now facing, as those who wish to be vaccinated are left waiting.

All of these missteps are having huge repercussions on Canada's economy, and they are not the only factors stonewalling our ability to do what we are capable of doing as a nation: To be the first country in the world to restore our economy and restore the ability of Canadians to get back to work, school, sports and special occasions and back to being with family and friends.

The very people we are sent here to represent have more questions that leave them anxious and confused by their government's actions and by their doublespeak.

Why are the Liberals continuing to raise the carbon tax during the pandemic? Why are they pushing the clean fuel standard and introducing a bill that requires Canada to reach zero emissions 50 years from now when they cannot meet the commitments they have already set? Why would the Prime Minister want to cause such increased devastation to the livelihoods of the middle class and the working poor, who are struggling more than ever now to join it?

Why do the Liberals ignore the amazing contribution of rural Canadians, indigenous Canadians, western Canadians and east coast Canadians who have generated the wealth of this nation? To date, they have received no credit, no recognition and no appreciation for the internationally recognized environmental achievements

### *Government Orders*

of our agriculture, resource and manufacturing industries across Canada, without which the source of wealth for those who live in our beautiful major cities would not exist.

Why do the Liberals want to stagnate and kill Canada's oil and gas industry, and for that matter, the cutting-edge carbon sequestering clean coal industry, when the best resources and highest standards for environmental protections in the world exist right here and should be championed and shared all over the world?

Jerry Dias, while participating in a Corporate Knights round table, spoke to the need for Canada to move forward with building and purchasing electric cars and installing charging stations across the country, which is a good thing. My brother out on the west coast loves his electric car.

Truly, if the Liberal government cared about Canadians and this nation, it would hear what Jerry said. Forty more years of oil will be needed around the world. It should be using every opportunity to grow our economy and be a truthful, transparent and servant-oriented government. It could be honest about why its response to the coronavirus has been so ineffective.

Bill C-14 would give the government unprecedented access to billions more of Canadian tax dollars with no accountability to its citizens, at a time when those tax dollars literally do not exist and will not exist for years to come because of poor financial management. The government is printing money so that it is in control of our democracy instead of the Canadian people, and it is controlling the economy rather than enabling free enterprise.

• (1340)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, quite apart from the Prime Minister's stated intention to phase out the oil sands and how he stands to benefit electorally should the west leave Canada, the immediate crisis, as my colleague mentioned, is the absence of vaccines available for inoculation in Canada.

Today there are none. Nine days ago, Canada was 10th in line for vaccines. The EU is putting a Europe-first approach into place for the vaccines, and Canada is falling further and further behind.

What are the member's constituents who have been designated as non-essential telling her about the state we now find ourselves in? They are going by the wayside with absolutely no income.

*Government Orders*

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Mr. Speaker, my constituents are very frustrated. They are very frustrated with the approach the government has taken during the entire pandemic. We are a very resourceful and creative group of people who want to see our economy thrive, even in the midst of the pandemic. There is definite concern about every step the government has taken in regard to dealing with the virus, and I outlined a lot of them in my speech. I am speaking on behalf of my constituents.

When it comes to the vaccines themselves, there is definitely a need for them to be available in Canada in a far more significant way than they are now. Clearly the government dropped the ball on that provision.

However, I am pleased to say that in the riding I represent, vaccines are needed and wanted, but under the condition that getting them is voluntary and—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when I listened to the member, I heard a bit of what one would classify as hypocrisy. On the one hand, the Conservatives try to give the impression that the government is borrowing too much money, yet on the other hand, they tend to support the initiatives we are taking to support Canadians and small businesses, such as the billions of dollars going toward the Canada emergency wage subsidy program, the Canada emergency rent subsidy program, the Canada emergency business account and regional relief and recovery funds.

We hear Conservative MPs saying that in some sense we are not doing enough yet and we should still be spending more on small businesses. Then they want to criticize the borrowing of money.

Could the member clearly indicate to Canadians where she wants to see cuts to some of the programs we have brought forward, or does she support the entirety—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy is on the other side of the floor. On this side, we want what is called good governance.

Yes, we needed that support for Canadians; there is no question. My constituents agree with that. However, they are also saying, in the midst of this, that the government prefers to put our existing economy to sleep. There are people in my riding who are getting the wonderful Canada child benefit and appreciate it. We brought it in. However, what they are saying to me is it was supposed to be in addition to their income. Now that they are depending on it, it is not enough, and they need to get back to work.

• (1345)

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I sat on the veterans affairs committee with the member, and I genuinely miss working with her on that committee.

We are nine years out to meet our Paris climate commitment, and the government has done very little to support farmers and encour-

age them to reduce emissions, move toward alternative energy and improve nitrogen management. I wrote a letter in support of Farmers for Climate Solutions, which has been calling for supports for farmers.

The government came up with \$90 million, when farmers need \$300 million. Largely, they have not been engaged and encouraged to get involved to do their part, which they are already doing, to really modernize their practices and get the support they need.

Could my colleague speak about how important it is for the government to support Farmers for Climate Solutions and all farmers to ensure they are able to participate even more than they do now in lowering emissions and—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are out of time.

The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate, because my farmers tend to get the “minimal time” a lot.

There are significant things that our farmers do in my riding in Saskatchewan that have been making a difference to the environment to an unbelievable extent. It is to the point where, at the APAS summit in 2017, researchers at our University of Saskatchewan said that if we continued what we are doing to improve the way we farm, we will offset all of the emissions from the oil sands within the next decade.

I am very proud of what our farmers are doing, but when our farmers needed real help, they did not get it from this government.

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic is a public health and economic emergency the likes of which we have not seen in a century, certainly not in my lifetime, and if I get my way, we never will again.

Through the first wave, we saw a virus the world had never seen or heard of before. It absolutely punished communities across Canada and around the world. Although we have been spared the worst of the pandemic in my home province of Nova Scotia due to a combination of smart policy and, more importantly, community buy-in, I see my neighbours across Canada in different provinces who suffer greatly at the hands of the second wave. We have Canadians who are suffering severe lockdowns. We have Canadians who have lost loved ones. We have people who have been impacted severely in terms of their economic or personal health and well-being. The circumstances cannot be overstated and they require our attention.

Despite these challenges, Canadians have responded admirably since the very beginning of this pandemic. We saw Canadians follow public health advice, which seemed strange in those early days when people were uncomfortable wearing a mask. We learned to wash our hands in a new and appropriate way, which may have been different from what we had learned over the course of our lifetime. We saw people willing to sacrifice some of their own comforts to protect the health and well-being of their neighbours. If there is a sentiment that is more Canadian than that, I would love to hear what it is. In Canada, we stand up for our neighbours and are willing to fight as hard for them as we are for ourselves.

I am also proud of the way that our government and, frankly, this Parliament have responded to the pandemic. I remember in the early days being part of the team that was tasked with developing some of the economic measures in response to COVID-19 and taking calls not only from MPs within the government caucus but also from MPs from all parties from every region. I think of members of Parliament who represent agricultural sectors in Ontario calling about the impact on grape growers in their region; western Canadian MPs who were calling me about support for workers in the energy sector who were going to be impacted, or about the exodus in downtown office towers when more Canadians were working from home; and, of course, here on the east coast, the MPs defending not only the public health measures but the economic supports for families who were having a hard time keeping food on the table. That said, I found it extraordinary to see the commonalities between the issues that were coming from western, northern, central and eastern Canada. Regardless of who we are or where we are from, when we lose our jobs or our health is put at risk, we need the support of our neighbours. I would like to think that we came through with the help of MPs from every party to deliver the exact kind of support that was most needed during a time of unprecedented challenge.

I think of the measures we adopted, like the Canada emergency response benefit, CERB. At the time, nobody had heard of it. In a matter of weeks, we threw together a program that has now reached almost nine million Canadians to help keep a roof over their heads. To support businesses, there is the emergency business account, the wage subsidy and other measures to help them keep their doors open and workers on their payroll. These are the kinds of programs that were designed to meet very specific needs that, frankly, arose by virtue of the pandemic. These are not just things we wanted people to have because they might have been nice. We realized that the pandemic had very serious and acute impacts on our neighbours, friends and co-workers, and we wanted to step up as a government and as a Parliament to make sure that those needs were met. We knew that the cost of failing to meet the needs of Canadians in a time of emergency was far greater than the cost of extending the kinds of supports that would see them through difficult times.

The legislation on the floor of the House today largely follows the trend of our emergency response and continues the pattern of meeting the needs of Canadians that have arisen as a result of this pandemic. Over the course of my remarks, I will touch briefly on the benefits of Bill C-14 that will be extended to Canadian families and businesses and, most importantly, that will continue to protect the health and well-being of Canadians as we struggle to fight the second wave of COVID-19 from coast to coast.

### *Government Orders*

With respect to the support for families, I want to draw members' attention to the enhanced Canada child benefit for parents of young children who are dealing with shutdowns of child care, who perhaps do not feel safe sending their kids to child care, or who may have given up their space early in the pandemic because they did not know if they would need it during a period of an extended shutdown. However, there is an increased cost to taking care of kids at home.

● (1350)

I have a four-year-old at home and it is a challenge to try to work from home and deal with parental responsibilities. We want to make that easier, particularly for families that may not be in the highest income brackets. That is why we are enhancing the Canada child benefit to provide up to \$1,200 this year for parents who have children under six years old. For families that are financially better off, the benefit might not be quite as generous, but it will still make a difference. If households earn over \$120,000 a year, they will still see an increase of \$600 to deal with the fallout of taking care of kids at home during this pandemic.

Continuing with the theme of supporting families, we are extending certain features of CERB that will allow Canadians who were eligible but who maybe did not receive all of their payments to continue to receive those payments now that we have entered a new calendar year. That would not have been possible without this legislation.

I had my start in politics as the president of the StFX Students' Union in the town where I was born, Antigonish, Nova Scotia. I wear the X-Ring every day. Back then we were advocating to have the interest on federal and provincial student loans eliminated. I am so pleased to see that this legislation is going to implement that step, and also remove the interest on Canada apprentice loans to make sure that this does not just benefit those who hold loans from universities, but also those who have taken skills training courses at community colleges who are working in the skilled trades today.

To support businesses this legislation does a couple of things. It makes a technical change to the rent subsidy program to ensure that businesses continue to receive the rent subsidy support they need to keep their doors open before their rent is due, rather than having a reimbursement on the back end. We have made changes to the regional relief and recovery fund, which has done wonders for small businesses that did not qualify for other supports in Atlantic Canada, by making it more like its equivalent, the Canada emergency business account for businesses that had an easier time qualifying.

*Government Orders*

In particular, I want draw attention to the health and safety measures included in the bill. There is \$1 billion committed in the fall economic statement to improve long-term care and, in this piece of legislation, \$505 million to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within our long-term care facilities. In Nova Scotia, the bulk of the cases that we have seen come from one facility, and if we can limit the outbreaks within these facilities where people are kept close to each another and are at higher risk of the spread of COVID-19, we can protect the health and well-being of all of our neighbours and ensure that we do not put our economy at risk at the same time.

We are making significant investments, including the \$133 million in the bill toward continuing support for virtual care during the time of the pandemic. We have learned some lessons, which I hope stick around on the back end of this pandemic, that will reduce the burden on our health care system and allow Canadians and communities that may have difficulty accessing a family doctor to receive the care they need virtually.

Along a similar vein, this investment is going to help continue to allow the Wellness Together Canada portal to help Canadians who are struggling with mental health or addictions in this pandemic get the support they need and, importantly, provide support for those Canadians who are living with addictions and need support to help deal with substance abuse difficulties they may be living with, in particular, those who are struggling and living with an addiction to opioids. Opioids are taking lives from every community in our country and we need to pay attention to this crisis.

The bill includes over \$260 million to continue pursuing vaccine development, to implement travel measures and to invest in testing and research that will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. We know that the best economic policy we can adopt in this pandemic is to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and defeat it as swiftly as possible.

Before I conclude, I want to raise that I have seen notice of a Conservative motion on the Order Paper that would seek to divide portions of the bill and accelerate the Canada child benefit piece and delay other portions of the bill. Though I do not doubt that the intentions are good, I would implore all members not to fall into the trap of thinking that we can accelerate one piece without delaying the other important measures, specifically those targeted to protect the health and well-being of Canadians by preventing the spread of COVID-19 in our communities.

To conclude, this pandemic and the government's response has been the single most important project I have worked on in my career to date. In some ways I hope it remains that way for the rest of my life, because it is interesting and engaging, but for all the wrong reasons. Our fellow countrymen are hurting, are sick and are struggling financially. By continuing to advance emergency supports that will help families take care of their kids, get our communities back to normal, put food on the table, put a roof over the heads of families and help businesses keep their doors open and workers on the payroll, I know that we will remain on the right track.

• (1355)

I look forward to seeing the support of members of all parties in the House when it comes time to vote on this important bill.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):**

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague. Earlier, we were talking about the request from our constituents, who are asking us when the provinces and Quebec will get their fair share so they can provide health care that is up to par with what it should be.

In a few seconds, I would like to remind those listening that “[t]he provinces exercise very broad health powers under several provisions of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, including subsection 92(7), which gives the provinces exclusive jurisdiction over establishing, maintaining and managing hospitals”.

It is an exclusive responsibility, with direct delivery.

Can my colleague tell me when the provinces will have the money to provide the care that falls under their jurisdiction?

[*English*]

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would like to discuss increased investments to ensure that provincial health care systems can provide family doctors' improved mental health and improve the quality of long-term care, that is a very valuable discussion to have, but we cannot abdicate the responsibility to deal with this pandemic.

Frankly, the jurisdictional division of powers outlined in the Constitution, which I am intimately familiar with, broke down the moment I saw the military go into long-term facilities. When I saw the federal government being asked to fund field hospitals to deal with the consequences of provincial governments being overwhelmed despite their best of intentions, I knew that we could not sit back and send a blank cheque with no accountability.

We do need to treat the pandemic from a holistic point of view and understand that the money we put toward the emergency response will actually be delivered to improve the quality of health and protect the well-being of Canadians who are trying to fight this COVID-19 pandemic. This is the single most important thing and we cannot take our eye off the ball.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wish a happy new year to my colleague. He talked about blank cheques with no accountability, but his government and federal government institutions have provided \$750 billion in liquidity supports to Canada's big banks with no conditions. Billions of dollars in support have gone to Canada's biggest corporations, who often have used that money for share buybacks and executive bonuses. Again, there is no accountability.

When we talk about Bill C-14, I share, of course, my colleague's objectives, but the amount of resources invested fall far short of what is needed. We talk about the \$2 billion that is needed to put in place a foundation for national child care. This bill provides only a fraction of that. Canada's nurses, as the member well knows, testified that we need at least \$3 billion a year to have national standards for long-term care that would make sure every single Canadian senior lives with an adequate level of care, and, yet again, there is only a fraction of that contained within the bill—

• (1400)

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have to try to get more questions in here.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, I wish the hon. member well and a happy new year. I look forward to seeing him at the finance committee as well.

There are two buckets of issues that he has raised in his question.

One is the nature of supports extended to business and through the banks. I think the key words that he used were “liquidity supports” when it comes to the banks. We have to think about what would have happened if we did not advance those supports. If we had not allowed for increased liquidity support, the banks would not have been able to offer forbearance on foreclosures to home owners. There would have been more people out of their homes. If we actually look to the supports for big corporations, when we move fast, sometimes we will break things. There are examples to be found. I am not going to sit here and say that the response has been perfect, but it was pretty good. I have to say that I am proud of the work we have done, because we were able to keep millions of Canadians on the payroll with these supports.

With respect to the issues around child care and support for long-term care standards, I agree with the member on this. I think we need to be aggressive in the pursuit of improving these policies. This bill before Parliament does not seek to boil the ocean, but it is going to make a difference with the water in the pot.

The issues that we have tackled in the legislation are going to be advanced in a way that makes a meaningful difference and protects the economic and financial health and well-being of Canadians who live in my community as well as his.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### TERRY FOX

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, eight worthy candidates are being considered by the government for the new five-dollar bill, but one stands out from the rest: Terry Fox. I am proud to sponsor an e-petition initiated by Burlington resident and CFL Hall of Famer Tony Gabriel to have Terry Fox chosen to be on the five-dollar bill.

In 1980, Terry embarked on the Marathon of Hope to raise funds for cancer research. When he came through Ottawa, he participated

### Statements by Members

in a ceremonial kickoff at an Ottawa Rough Riders game. Tony told him there was not one person on the team that could possibly physically do what Terry was doing. This gave Terry an emotional lift. The Marathon of Hope made Terry Fox a household name and a Canadian hero. Over \$800 million has been raised for cancer research in Terry's name.

As Tony would say, let us get Terry in the end zone. It is time to put him on the five.

\* \* \*

### TERRY FOX FUNDRAISER

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate and recognize an incredible constituent. Over 30 years, Jim Terrion has raised over \$800,000 for the Terry Fox Foundation, and he is on track to reach his goal of \$1 million for 2024.

Jim's extraordinary efforts began when his hero, Terry Fox, could no longer pursue his Marathon of Hope. Jim took up the cause and in 1990, he walked across Canada to honour his hero. Along the way, he raised money for the Terry Fox Foundation and he raised awareness for deaf and hearing-impaired Canadians. Jim was born without the ability to hear, but he has never let this challenge stop him from accomplishing great things for our community and for our country. Since then, Jim has continued Terry Fox's Marathon of Hope. Each year, Jim pays a personal visit to every business and resident in Prince George in northern B.C. to collect pledges for the Terry Fox run. Just last year, Jim was awarded the B.C. achievement award to recognize his efforts.

Jim's work has undoubtedly made a difference in the lives of Canadians all across our country. On behalf of our community, I thank Jim for his 30 years of hard work and dedication to cancer research. We thank Jim for keeping Terry Fox's dream alive. Jim is a champion.

\* \* \*

### PEACE POLICY PLATFORM

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, alongside nine parliamentarians from nine other nations and Open Diplomacy, I took part in the creation of the 2020 Peace Policy Platform.

*Statements by Members*

● (1405)

[Translation]

This was presented at the World Peace Forum in Caen, France, on September 30. I attended virtually to represent Canada. Our work over two months highlighted the need for greater collaboration and co-operation among democracies.

[English]

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for a strong international institution. Despite coming from different backgrounds, we were united in our commitment to universal access to education, to fighting climate change and to mitigating the impacts of poverty.

I was proud to bring the Canadian perspective. As elected officials, we must work with our legislative body to do everything we can to better our community. Only by working together may we ensure and protect the well-being each and everyone deserves.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SAINT-EUGÈNE SCHOOL IN MONT-LAURIER**

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Saint-Eugène School in Mont-Laurier, I want to recognize the outstanding work of all the partners who made it possible to produce a publication on the history of this important institution, which was founded in 1950.

I spent some very happy years as a student at the school and I have fond memories of my time there, particularly since my father, Gaston Gaudreau, was the school principal during my last year of elementary school. In addition to my wonderful experience, I want to acknowledge this school's part in the history of education and the legacy left by all those who, over the years, worked to make this school a welcoming place focused on helping students to thrive.

I hope that this place of learning will continue to provide a good education to future generations. I wish continued success for the Saint-Eugène School in Mont-Laurier, a precious piece of our region's heritage.

\* \* \*

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, people have to stay home because of the pandemic, but home is not a safe place for everyone. The pandemic is only making things worse for thousands of victims of conjugal and family violence.

Last week, I had the opportunity to welcome my colleague, the Minister for Women and Gender Equality, to my riding of Brome—Missisquoi to talk about this new reality. We met with many local stakeholders so we could hear from them, talk about everyday challenges and discuss how the government can do even more to support them.

I also want to acknowledge the presence of Cathie Sombret from the Horizon pour Elle shelter and her contribution to the discussion. Her organization makes an invaluable contribution to our region.

The work that is being done by our shelters and halfway houses is now more essential than ever.

I want to thank all of the women's organizations in Brome—Missisquoi for their hard work.

\* \* \*

[English]

**INDIA REPUBLIC DAY**

**Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is home to over 1.3 million Indo-Canadians. Indo-Canadians have contributed enormously to the fabric of Canadian society. From local business owners to farmers to academics, they enrich our communities with their hard work, their devotion and their sense of community. In my own riding of Dufferin—Caledon, we have a growing and thriving Indo-Canadian community. Canada and India share strong and growing ties, in part because of our Indo-Canadian community.

Today, the largest democracy in the world celebrates its 72nd Republic Day, a day that marks the birth of the Indian republic. It is my great honour to stand here today in the House and wish them a very happy India Republic Day on behalf of all of my Conservative colleagues. Mr. Speaker, please join me in wishing everyone of Indian ancestry a very happy India Republic Day.

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**BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREAS**

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to acknowledge the important work done in Don Valley West, and many places, by business improvement areas, or BIAs, as they are commonly known. I especially want to commend four BIAs that are promoting local businesses and ensuring vibrant main streets in my community: Uptown Yonge, Mount Pleasant Village, Bayview-Leaside, and Yonge Lawrence Village BIAs.

These self-funded associations attract shoppers and clients, boosting the local economy. They ensure safe and attractive streetscapes, add colour and beauty to our neighbourhoods, and engage entertainers and artists at special seasonal events like the apple festival, the village art walk, the annual harvest fair and the holiday tree-lighting ceremony.

During this difficult time, BIAs in Don Valley West have helped direct their members to federal COVID-19 assistance programs, boosted the profile of businesses and strengthened ties within our local community. BIAs have stepped up for the businesses of Don Valley West. I commend them and thank them for their work and wish them the very best.

*Statements by Members*

• (1410)

**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's assault on hard-working families in the agriculture sector is reaching new heights. Last month, the Prime Minister announced an unprecedented increase in the carbon tax, resulting in farmers and ranchers losing tens of thousands of dollars in annual net income.

Red Deer is one of Alberta's most important agricultural regions. With more than 9,000 farms in central Alberta, it is no exaggeration to say that agriculture forms the backbone of our economy. The Liberal government's carbon tax is having a devastating impact.

What the Liberal government refuses to acknowledge is that the carbon tax has placed farmers and ranchers in a carbon tax trap. Farmers and ranchers do not have the ability to add the carbon tax to the prices of their products. However, they are subject to paying this tax as it is levied by their input suppliers. This is all before the Liberal government's newest tax, the clean fuel standard, kicks in. Farmers and ranchers simply cannot afford to keep paying the excessive costs of Liberal ineptitude.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**MENTAL HEALTH**

**Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.):** Happy new year, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to acknowledge Bell Let's Talk Day, which is Thursday, January 28. This day is about raising awareness and reducing the stigma associated with mental health challenges.

We all know someone suffering from mental health issues, whether it is a friend, a family member, a neighbour or ourselves. It is really hard for people to ask for help.

[English]

In these uncertain times, it is more important than ever to take care of our mental health and to check in on those around us. Feelings of anxiety and worry can be normal. People who are struggling should reach out for help. There are many resources available. Let us share, connect virtually and keep moving forward.

On Bell Mental Health Day, today, this week, and every day, spread the word and make a positive change. I know the residents of the Nickel Belt and Greater Sudbury are up for the challenge.

May everyone stay safe and take care of each other.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FRANÇOIS DUPÉRÉ**

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the life of Corporal François Dupéré, a veteran of the Royal 22nd Regiment who is a model of courage. After miraculously surviving a suicide bombing in Afghanistan, Corporal Dupéré showed exemplary resilience by continuing to live his life with the same vim and vigour.

He paid a heavy price for his decision to step up and face our enemies in Afghanistan. He lost one eye, one lung and the use of one hand. He showed great resilience after returning home to Canada, and continued to enjoy life despite the many scars he carried with him.

Our brothers in arms described him as a man larger than life. He was involved in providing support to other military families. He was a man of honour and courage, and an exemplary father, according to his friends. That is why I can say that Corporal Dupéré is a brother to us all.

I rise virtually in the House of Commons to salute Corporal Dupéré. May he rest in peace.

\* \* \*

**COVID-19 VACCINES**

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, no matter where we are—Quebec, out west, Ontario, the Maritimes or the territories—the number remains the same: zero. Canada received zero doses of the Pfizer vaccine this week. How many essential workers will be vaccinated? Zero. How many seniors will be vaccinated? Zero. How many residents of seniors homes will be vaccinated this week? Zero.

Why is that? It is because the Prime Minister prefers grandstanding to safeguarding Canadians' health. It is because the Prime Minister refuses to be straight with Canadians and disclose the deals with the drug companies. It is because the Liberal government is governing one day at a time, with no plan and no skills. It is because the kind of empty rhetoric we have been hearing for weeks about how we have more vaccines per capita than any other country in the world is useless when we are the last to get them.

Zero vaccines this week is zero. How many people will contract COVID-19 this week? How many people will die of COVID-19 because the government failed to provide vaccines to the provinces? Seniors, who are the most vulnerable, deserve better.

The Conservatives are ready to work together to protect health care in Canada.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

**HARDEST HIT BUSINESSES**

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on small businesses and workers across Canada, especially on those workers in the tourism, hospitality and events industries. For these industries, a return to normal is still years away. If a small business closes in a rural riding like mine, not only does a family lose its sole source of income, but the effect is felt across the whole community. Based on data from the Coalition of Hardest Hit Businesses, almost 40% of businesses in the travel and tourism sector will close for good by the end of February.

Today's announcement of the HASCAP program is welcome. It needs work, but still hopefully will come in time for those who are hardest hit and need it the most. These businesses need the liquidity support that the program offers, but will also rely on an extended wage subsidy, backdated rent relief and the efforts of community members to continue to shop at local retail businesses, other businesses and stores in their communities.

The government still has much work to do to help entrepreneurs and start-ups, protect jobs in the hospitality sector and guarantee the rights of workers who lost their jobs because of the pandemic. It has never been more clear that the government must act immediately to save the hardest hit—

• (1415)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Drummond.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**DRUMMOND ASSOCIATION OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on January 22, the Association des parents d'enfants handicapés de Drummond celebrated its 40th anniversary.

The association was established in 1981 by parents seeking services for their children with disabilities. Since then, it has grown with the support of very involved parents and volunteers. It has spearheaded various initiatives over the years. It was especially instrumental in improving the integration of special needs children at school and in all kinds of other settings where including them would have been virtually unthinkable not so long ago. Day after day, the association continues to improve the living conditions of these children and their families.

We must acknowledge the association's work with the parents of children with disabilities, who are often discouraged and lack resources. The association is always there to support them, listen to them and guide them. I would like to congratulate the Association des parents d'enfants handicapés de Drummond and its volunteers, and I would especially like to recognize Danny Lauzière, who has served as its director for the past 18 years.

Congratulations on 40 years of breaking down barriers and doing good.

[English]

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday's announcement by the Biden administration for a buy America plan will mean Canadian companies will be largely excluded from U.S. government contracts and projects.

This will be devastating for hard-working Canadians in manufacturing, production, aluminum and steel. I was talking with a manufacturing company in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country this morning that is worried about being shut out through their U.S. distributor, which sells to the U.S. government.

The U.S. is our largest market. It is worth half a trillion dollars in yearly exports. When former President Obama put in buy America policies, the Conservative government quickly negotiated an agreement to allow Canadian companies to continue participating.

This will put our mutual economic recovery at risk. While the Liberals may be just fine with saying that they are concerned or disappointed with U.S. trade issues, Canada's Conservatives are focused on securing jobs, securing the economy and securing our future.

The Prime Minister needs to get to work—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for London West.

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**LONDON AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, London may be known as the forest city, but with more than 7,000 people employed in agriculture and agri-food industries, we could call it the food city. The importance of this sector to my community cannot be overstated.

[Translation]

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the vital role this sector plays in supporting the health and well-being of Canadians.

[English]

Last week, I was so proud to announce FedDev Ontario's \$7.2 million investment in the Western Fair Association, which will help expand the work of the local agri-food business accelerator known as The Grove. Through this investment, 550 new jobs will be created and over 100 additional jobs will be maintained.

I am proud to represent London West.

• (1420)

#### NOVA SCOTIA CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

**Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we begin 2021, I would like to thank all those who work in public health across Nova Scotia and Canada for their heroic work over the past months.

I would especially like to thank Dr. Robert Strang, Nova Scotia's chief medical officer of health, whom I am lucky enough to have as a constituent. Thanks to Dr. Strang's incredible work, our province has not witnessed some of the acute rises in COVID cases that others have, and we are well prepared for the second wave.

Day in and day out, Dr. Strang has gone beyond the call of duty. Recently, Dr. Strang visited a tree lighting in Fall River, hosted by the local business association, to spread some Christmas cheer and share tips on how to have a COVID-friendly holiday season.

On behalf of the people of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook and fellow Nova Scotians, I would like to thank Dr. Strang for the countless sacrifices he has made and the tireless work he has done to get us through this pandemic.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### HEALTH

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' failure to deliver vaccines is costing lives.

Recently, 127 residents at the Roberta Place long-term care home in Barrie tested positive for COVID, and by Sunday afternoon, 40 of them had died. Every day without a vaccine leads to the potential for more outbreaks.

The Liberals' delivery of zero vaccines this week is completely unacceptable.

What is the Prime Minister's answer to the people, especially health care workers and our beloved seniors, who will not get a vaccine this week because of his failure to secure them?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is an intense competition for vaccines in the world today.

In anticipation of this global race, Canada took precautions. We secured the world's most extensive vaccine portfolio from seven companies, with 10 doses for every Canadian. That is why Canada has already vaccinated more people per capita than our G7 peers of Germany, Japan and France, and more than our Five Eyes partners of Australia and New Zealand.

There is no more urgent issue for this government than getting Canadian vaccinated, and together we will get it done.

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have also just learned that over 335,000 surgeries have been cancelled across the country over the last four months because of COVID. These were life-saving surgeries for things like cancer and heart disease or procedures to get people out of immense pain and

### Oral Questions

suffering. The overall health costs to Canadians because of these cancellations could be catastrophic.

A vaccine is needed now, not “maybe”, “kind of”, “sort of” or “in nine months”. Again, why are Canadians getting zero vaccines this week?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no more urgent issue for our government and for Canadians than getting vaccines. That is why over the past few days the Prime Minister has spoken with the CEOs of Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Moderna.

Let me remind Canadians that 1.1 million vaccine doses are already here, six million doses will arrive in the first quarter, and every Canadian who wants to be vaccinated will be vaccinated by September.

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing we know, it is that Liberals are going to keep misleading Canadians on vaccines. They are refusing to give clear answers on how they are going to fix the vaccine shortage.

The vaccine will save lives and bring hope, but we have none arriving in Canada, while vaccines go to other countries. People are dying, surgeries are being cancelled, and last night a Liberal MP said the Liberals are banking on vaccines that have not been approved yet. This is not a game; lives are at stake.

When can Canadians expect to be vaccinated?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every Canadian who wants a vaccine will get one by September, and we are offering very clear, precise details to Canadians in saying that 1.1 million vaccines have already arrived in our country and six million doses will arrive by the end of the first quarter.

There is a global race on to get vaccines, and Canada is urgently engaged in getting them for Canadians.

\* \* \*

• (1425)

[Translation]

### COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Liberals unsuccessfully sought the unanimous consent of the House to pass a bill that would fix the mistakes in their rushed legislation that gave \$1,000 to non-essential travellers for their quarantine. The House obviously decided it was best to study and debate the bill properly.

*Oral Questions*

I would like to know why the government has not yet introduced the bill.

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this program was never designed to encourage Canadians to violate clear public health advisories against international travel.

We are taking immediate action to address this issue so that international travellers cannot access this benefit upon their return. It is a shame that the opposition members blocked our attempt to close that loophole.

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is typical of this government. It asks us to push bills through quickly without letting us do our jobs. We often have to re-examine bills, when we could have just studied them properly to begin with.

It is a new year. Will the government resolve to do things properly and allow debate on this bill so that vacationers do not get \$1,000?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government's position is crystal clear. No one should be travelling abroad right now. Our government's position on this loophole is just as clear. We want to close the loophole and we want to do that now.

It is a shame that the opposition members do not agree.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I once knew a Deputy Prime Minister who would never have misrepresented what the official opposition or the Bloc Québécois said about why this bill had to be debated.

Why does it have to be debated? Because it will be retroactive. It does not matter when it passes. What matters is the date as of which it applies retroactively. Quarantine and monitoring, flight bans and reimbursing people who cancel their trips are the government's responsibility.

Will the government step up?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this program was never designed to encourage Canadians to violate clear public health advisories against international travel. I want to be very clear today: Nobody should be vacationing abroad right now.

We think everyone needs to step up together to close this loophole. We want to do it now, and we can do it now.

\* \* \*

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the program was not created to stop people from travelling, but the amendment to the program was introduced so that those who travel are not compensated. That seems clear to me. That is what the Deputy Prime Minister has to do with her boss.

I have another question.

In a clearly failed telephone call between the Prime Minister and the U.S. President, why did the Canadian Prime Minister not seek assurances that he could get Pfizer vaccines from Michigan?

We could practically bike there.

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the Bloc leader. We have worked well together on such things as the aluminum file, for example.

That is why I am deeply disappointed that the Bloc leader has twice made incorrect comments about my colleague, the Minister of Transport. I would like to give him the opportunity to publicly apologize in the House.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 crisis continues in our long-term care facilities. Our seniors need the vaccine. Without access to the vaccine, more of our seniors will die.

My question is simple: When will our seniors be vaccinated?

● (1430)

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is an intense global competition for vaccines, as we have always known. That is why Canada secured the largest vaccine portfolio in the world, with vaccines from seven different suppliers and 10 doses for every Canadian. Canada has already vaccinated more people per capita than our G20 peers, including Germany, Japan and France, and our Five Eyes partners, including Australia and New Zealand. Vaccines are our government's priority.

[English]

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, over 200 doctors are calling for urgent action in Ontario to address the crisis in long-term care exposed by COVID-19. They are calling for massive reforms, but in particular they are also calling for removing profit from long-term care.

Revera is one of the largest for-profit providers of long-term care. It is owned by a federal agency. Will the Prime Minister take the first step in removing profit from long-term care by removing profit from Revera by making it public, and saving lives?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying that I share the member opposite's concern and his anguish over people in long-term care facilities, and I think this is a concern shared by all Canadians. This is something we need to urgently address, and our government is doing just that, working in close collaboration with our provincial and territorial partners.

Let me also say that I think it is entirely appropriate for us as a country to examine very carefully the standards in long-term care, to set national standards and to examine what kind of care protects our seniors best.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a majority of the vaccines the Liberals are banking on will be produced in Europe, but yesterday it was reported that the European Union is considering export bans to prioritize vaccines for its citizens. In spite of what the Prime Minister said this morning, it is not up to the companies to determine this. It is up to EU officials, and they are talking about a ban.

If the EU bans exports of vaccines, where will Canada get its supply from?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government and I have been in contact with the European Union on this very important issue. There is not a restriction on the export of vaccines to Canada.

We are going to continue to work with the EU, just as we have throughout this pandemic, to make sure that our critical health and medical supply chains remain open and resilient. We share this urgency with Canadians to ensure life-saving vaccines get to Canada, and we are fully engaged to secure the continued deliveries of vaccines to Canada.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there might not be a ban at this moment, but what is being reported is that the EU is considering a ban in the future. That is a big deal because Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca produce the vaccines that are on order for Canada in Europe.

Enough with “there might not be one now”. If the Europeans ban exports of vaccines, what is plan B for Canada?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for that important question. We absolutely share the urgency with Canadians about getting vaccines to Canada, which is why our government and I have been speaking to my EU counterpart. We are going to keep working with the EU, just as we have throughout this pandemic, to ensure that our supply chains remain open so these important vaccines, and the continued delivery of them, make their way to Canada.

• (1435)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this morning, we learned in the media that the European Union has threatened to block exports of coronavirus vaccines to countries outside the EU, including Canada, after AstraZeneca announced a significant reduction in the doses promised to member countries.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that he picked up the phone this morning to call the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, to make sure that planned vaccine deliveries to Canada will not be delayed?

### Oral Questions

[English]

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, our government and I have been in contact with the EU. We are continuing to work with the EU. There is no export restriction on vaccines to Canada.

This is an important issue. We will continue to work with the European Union, just as we have throughout the pandemic, to ensure that in critical supply chains, vaccines continue to make their way to Canada.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, from the beginning, we have not been able to believe what this government is telling us. The information we get is always different.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Has he, himself, picked up the phone to call the President of the European Commission to get answers, yes or no?

[English]

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has been in contact with the EU, and we are working with the EU just as we have throughout this pandemic. It is important that supply chains continue to be resilient and continue to be open. We understand and share the urgency of the hon. member about getting these life-saving vaccines to Canada as quickly as possible. We are fully engaged to ensure that we secure the continued delivery of vaccines to Canada.

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable that Canada is getting zero doses of the Pfizer vaccine this week, when other countries are not having their supplies slashed to zero. It is Canadians who will pay for the delays caused by poor planning and bad negotiations, and it is our seniors, those who care for them and their families who will pay the highest price.

Lives and livelihoods depend on the timely access of vaccines. What is the government going to do to fix the vaccine shortage?

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear about our schedule of vaccine deliveries, and that schedule is the same. We will be receiving six million doses before the end of Q1, and we will be continuing to ramp up deliveries such that Canadians who want a vaccine will be able to access one by the end of September. This is information we have supplied consistently with Canadians and this is information we will continue to supply.

*Oral Questions*

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are getting zero vaccines this week, and the Liberals' plan is so clear that their own members cannot make sense of it. The Prime Minister needs to come clean about why Canada's supply is being slashed more than that of other countries and how that is being addressed. If we are not hitting our targets now, that offers Canadians little assurance going forward. We know that every delay has a cost, for families who will lose loved ones, for seniors facing isolation and for the front-line workers who are just plain exhausted.

Will the Prime Minister finally release the full details of the negotiated contracts?

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know that 1.1 million doses of the vaccine have already entered Canada. That number is among the best in the G20, and that number will continue to ramp up to six million in the first quarter and continue right throughout the year so that all Canadians who wish to receive a vaccine by the end of September will be able to receive a vaccine. This is information we have shared on numerous occasions.

I say to the opposition and all Canadians that we will continue to do so. There is no greater priority for this government than ensuring the successful conclusion of a vaccine program for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, everyone is waiting for Ottawa to ban unnecessary travel, monitor quarantines, close the borders and reimburse people who cancel their trips. The Prime Minister has the nerve to call a press conference to announce diddly-squat. I am not making this up. He called a press conference and proceeded to announce nothing at all. It looks like the Prime Minister will never step up. Quebec is now asking for the authority to penalize those who violate quarantine.

Will the government at least let Quebec take action?

• (1440)

[*English*]

**Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since March 2020, we have asked Canadians to reconsider and cancel their discretionary travel. We have also banned foreign travellers to Canada, and now we are requiring travellers coming into Canada to be tested and to have a negative COVID test before arriving. As the Prime Minister has said, we are also exploring further options to make sure we are containing the spread of the virus and doing everything we can to protect the health of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government cannot ban non-essential flights. It cannot force airlines to reimburse people who cancel their flights. It cannot monitor quarantine. There is so much the feds cannot do that the Government of Quebec wants to step in and punish people who violate quarantine, but the feds cannot even accept Quebec's help. If the federal government cannot help, at least it should not cause harm.

Will the government at least get out of the way and let Quebec do its job?

[*English*]

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, every step of the way in our response at the border, and indeed in fighting this pandemic, has been led by science and evidence.

In the spring we immediately took measures to screen at the border, and further strengthened these with the need for mandatory isolation and quarantine when people arrived from international travel. We have strengthened the quarantine. We have also monitored people in quarantine, and we encourage all law enforcement officers to use their tools to help enforce quarantine. It is an important part of reducing importation.

Finally, we remind Canadians that now is not the time to travel.

\* \* \*

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first the U.S. administration cancelled Keystone XL. Now it has announced buy America policies for its government procurement. This will be devastating to our exports of Canadian aluminum and steel, and for the many manufacturing and wholesale sectors that rely on integrated supply chains with the United States.

What is the Prime Minister doing to ensure Canada is exempted from these policies, or will he again just express his disappointment, as he did with Keystone?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want Canadian businesses and workers to know that we are actively engaging with our American partners at all levels, and we will always stand up for the best interests of Canadians. The Prime Minister spoke to President Biden and affirmed we will be working together and consulting closely.

Canada and the U.S. share a unique relationship. We will continue working with our Canadian businesses, our exporters. We are going to take a team Canada approach. We have been doing that for the last five years, and we will keep doing that to ensure we are working with our neighbour to create good jobs in North America.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when the U.S. put through buy America policies in 2009, the Conservative government secured an exemption agreement so Canadian businesses and workers were protected. We need similar leadership now.

Canadian manufacturers and exporters have said that these buy America policies may force them to move across the border, taking tens of thousands of jobs with them. Is the government pursuing an exemption agreement with the United States to protect Canadian workers?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the president have agreed to consult closely and work together. We understand that both countries benefit from the integrated, secure and resilient supply chains between our two countries.

Canada is the number one customer of more than 32 states. We look forward to working with the American administration in the interests of Canadian workers and Canadian businesses here in Canada, and indeed, on both sides of the border.

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#### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister talks a big game, but he is collecting failures at every turn. He is failing on indigenous reconciliation, the environment and job creation when he fails to support Keystone XL with the new U.S. administration. Everyone knows pipelines are safer and cleaner than rail to transport oil and gas.

Designed to achieve net-zero emissions, Keystone XL ticked all the boxes, yet the Prime Minister could not find it in his schedule to make it a priority. Why did he not fight for the Canadian workers who depend on these jobs?

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are not happy about this decision. We made a strong argument for this project at every level and in every way we could, from Ambassador Hillman to the Prime Minister. I spoke weekly with Minister Savage and the former member for Edmonton—Leduc, Alberta's special representative in Washington, James Rajotte.

We worked together all through the fall. The Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta stood shoulder to shoulder to make the case together. We made the case for Canada, and the president has made a decision to honour his campaign commitment.

• (1445)

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we know when the Prime Minister wants a file to go his way by the effort he puts into it, such as with SNC-Lavalin, when he bent every rule to save jobs at one company. Surely Keystone XL workers deserve more than a quick chat.

Canada is facing another energy crisis. This one could hit Ontario and Quebec hard. Michigan wants to kill Enbridge Line 5. This pipeline supplies Ontario's and Quebec's industries, which thousands of workers and their families depend upon. Will the government stop sitting on its hands, or are we going to add another trophy to the Prime Minister's failure collection?

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, President Biden's decision to rescind the permit for KXL has no impact on Enbridge's Line 5 or Line 3 replacement projects. These pipelines continue to operate.

#### Oral Questions

These are projects to modernize existing energy infrastructure, and they are driven by safety and good labour jobs. Both of these projects have been repeatedly validated by the U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

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#### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is the fifth anniversary of the historic Human Rights Tribunal ruling that ordered the Liberal government to end its systemic discrimination against first nations children, yet the Prime Minister's obstruction has resulted in eight non-compliance orders and over \$8 million in legal fees. The cost has been paid in children's lives, children such as Chantel Fox, Jolynn Winter and Jenna Roundskye.

When will the Prime Minister just call off his lawyers, do the right thing for first nations children and end his systemic discrimination against their rights?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while today is the fifth anniversary of the CHRT order on the inequalities and overrepresentation of indigenous children in care that spanned decades, we have been clear that our goal is a comprehensive, fair and equitable compensation for those impacted by the historic inequities in first nations child welfare.

Let me be equally clear in saying that currently Canada is facing three competing lawsuits that purport largely to represent the same group of plaintiffs, and we welcome the appointment of a mediator to navigate this process. I would also take a moment to highlight the termination this week of birth alerts in Saskatchewan.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Indigenous Services recently stated that his government does not recognize the jurisdiction of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on expanding Jordan's principle. He wants consultation instead. Is the minister for real? We are talking about children who have no access to health care supports for the basic and urgent care they need. This is about care for children.

I am asking the minister to not take first nations children to court again. I am asking for reconciliation and action, not words. I ask the minister to please drop the legal action now.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would highlight for the member opposite that Indigenous Services Canada has provided 800,000 supports since 2016 in implementing these orders. The appeal of the particular order that the member is referencing will in no way prejudice indigenous children.

We will implement every single aspect of that order, regardless of the outcome. It is part of the competing three lawsuits that this government is facing, purporting to affect the same group of plaintiffs. We welcome the appointment of the mediator to navigate through this process.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, more than two years have passed since Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor were arbitrarily detained in China. The former minister of foreign affairs was right when he said, on the second anniversary of their detention, that these are two years that have been stolen from them. Canadians, including all members of this House, remain united in calling for their immediate release so they can come home and reunite with their families.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs please provide an update on the government's efforts to make that possible?

• (1450)

**Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is a very, very important question. Ending the arbitrary detention of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig is an absolute priority of mine and of the government. We will work on this every single day in order to obtain their release.

As people well know, the Prime Minister raised the matter with President Biden, who was informed on the subject, and I intend to raise it with my counterpart, Secretary Blinken, as early as this week as a top priority for the Canadian government. We want to get the two Michaels released.

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have another question on China.

A number of entities, including a subcommittee of this House, two consecutive U.S. administrations and Canada's official opposition, have concluded that the Government of China is committing a genocide against the Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims. Yesterday, the minister said the government believes an independent investigation is needed to arrive at that conclusion. Ambassador Rae said something similar before Christmas.

What specific action has the Government of Canada taken to initiate an independent investigation?

**Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, we are gravely concerned with the very strong allegations that have been made against China with respect to its treatment of the Muslim minority Uighur people and other minorities.

We are calling upon China to allow unfettered access to the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the United Nations, and also

to allow an independent and impartial committee of experts to enter China to examine the situations that exist there to confirm or not the situation that has been reported.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the all-party subcommittee already conducted hearings and recognized these crimes as genocide months ago. Now the government is talking about an investigation, but clearly, in the absence of any action to make that happen in the meantime, this is simply obfuscation and delay.

The minister knows full well that the same government that lied to the WHO about the spread of COVID-19 is not going to allow unfettered access to members of the International Court of Justice, or to any other independent investigators.

When will the government put aside the delays and doublespeak, and recognize and respond to this genocide?

**Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are very concerned with the very compelling reports that have come out pointing to the treatment of the Uighur Muslim minority with respect to forced labour camps and other excesses, which do not respect human rights. That is why we want to look at this in detail.

We are urging the Chinese government to allow a full, impartial and independent examination by experts of the situation in Xinjiang province.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS**

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians who voluntarily leave their employment are not entitled to employment insurance benefits, but we just learned that the former governor general will be entitled to a generous lifetime pension after resigning. Canadians are outraged.

The primary responsibility for this fiasco lies with the Prime Minister, who hand-picked the Governor General himself without consulting anyone. Did the Prime Minister promise her a lifetime pension of \$150,000 a year in exchange for her resignation in order to put a lid on this issue? When will the Prime Minister announce that the former governor general will not receive another penny of taxpayer money?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well that the Governor General's retirement benefits are prescribed by law. Before making things up and assuming that this was a promise made by the government, he should read the act. He knows that this is prescribed by law.

That is the exact amount that the former governor general will be entitled to. With regard to additional spending, the Treasury Board obviously regularly monitors such spending and will ensure the appropriateness of all expenditures since we are talking about taxpayer money.

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the list of this Prime Minister's bad decisions is starting to become quite costly to Canadians. We just found out that he once again has lost face on the world stage: Bill Morneau has withdrawn from the race for the secretary general post at the OECD, saying he did not have enough member support to win.

We already know that 19 officials were working on Mr. Morneau's campaign. In addition to the travel expenses and all the other fees, can the Prime Minister tell us how much money Canadians have spent on this new dismal failure?

**Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we were disappointed that Bill Morneau did not get enough support to become the next secretary general of the OECD. We think that Bill Morneau was the ideal candidate to lead the OECD during these difficult times. We want to thank Mr. Morneau for his dedication and his campaign, but also for everything he has done to improve the quality of life of Canadians. Although this was not the result we were hoping for, we will work with the next secretary general of the OECD that members will select.

\* \* \*

• (1455)

## HEALTH

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Pfizer plant in Europe is unable to deliver even a single dose of the vaccine to Canada. This should not be a problem, because we could turn to the Pfizer plant in the United States. However, we cannot do that, because the Trump administration issued an executive order stating that Pfizer had to vaccinate Americans first before it could export doses.

There is a new president in Washington, and the Prime Minister spoke to him on Friday. Did the Prime Minister ask Joe Biden to make an exception for Canada, at least while Pfizer's European operations are paralyzed?

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we have repeated so many times, we have the most diversified portfolio of vaccines and vaccine candidates in the world. Yes, we signed agreements with Pfizer. Yes, we are expecting four million doses of the Pfizer vaccine in the first quarter. That number will increase throughout 2021, and all Canadians who want a vaccine will get one by the end of September. That is still the case, and I want to reassure the member and all Canadians about this.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the United States is our best trading partner. Logically, it should also be our best health partner. Vaccination will help boost not only our economy but theirs as well, because the two are integrated.

The Prime Minister spoke with Joe Biden. After agreeing to concessions on Keystone XL and the Buy American Act, he should absolutely have asked for something in return. That is called negotiating.

## Oral Questions

Did he seize the opportunity to ask the President to intervene in order to give Canada access to the vaccine?

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I share the hon. member's sense of urgency when it comes to vaccinating all Canadians. It is a sense of urgency that we all share as a government, including the Prime Minister—who is speaking with leaders around the world and with the CEOs of the big pharmaceutical companies—the minister I am representing today and myself. We are working on this every day. We are doing our jobs, and every Canadian who wants to be vaccinated will be able to do so by the end of September, if they wish.

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[English]

## PUBLIC SAFETY

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has been one year since the senseless, preventable death of 22-year-old Marylène Levesque in Quebec City by a convicted murderer who had brutally killed his wife, yet was out on day parole so he could satisfy his “sexual needs”.

We now know from a report released last week by correctional and parole officials that there were warning signs that were missed in this case.

Does the Prime Minister accept responsibility for the failures of the correctional services in the tragic death of Marylène Levesque?

[Translation]

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our colleague is experiencing technical difficulties at the moment, and he would like to answer the question. He will have to answer it later.

**The Speaker:** I think that he was ready, but you started speaking at the same time.

I do not know whether the hon. Minister of Justice would like to answer the question.

No? Okay.

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, our colleague from Public Safety would like to answer the question.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Once the problem is resolved, we will come back to it.

The hon. member for Niagara Falls.

*Oral Questions*

● (1500)

*[English]***COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government likes to make hurried announcements and then take its slow time in implementing critical support programs such as the highly affected sectors credit availability program, HASCAP. Hardest hit businesses, especially those in Canada's travel and tourism industry, are relying on HASCAP, which was announced nearly two months ago. Just moments ago, we found out that applications for HASCAP will finally open on February 1.

Will the Prime Minister and this government apologize to those who have been hardest hit for taking their time to implement this much-needed program?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I share the concerns that the hon. member has for our businesses across Canada, particularly those that have been so hard hit because of the pandemic. I thank them for their contribution to help all of us stay safe and to flatten the curve.

This much-needed program is another lifeline to help our businesses get loans, 100% guaranteed, for \$25,000 to \$1 million, and for up to \$6.25 million for those that have multiple locations.

I look forward to continuing to work with our businesses so that they get the help they need through this very difficult time to the other side of COVID-19.

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**PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, taxpayers should not be paying billions to subsidize cruise ship repairs.

*[Translation]*

The Liberals are saddling the country with debt, and now they want to spend \$3 billion supporting a private shipyard. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation and Canada's entire shipbuilding industry have rightly expressed outrage over this unfair competition.

Are the Liberals borrowing money in an attempt to buy votes? Why are they sabotaging the national shipbuilding strategy?

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as my dear colleague knows very well, we are considering adding a third shipyard to the national shipbuilding strategy for all Canadians.

Unlike the government he represented, we are putting ships in the water. We are expanding work across Canada, as we did for the Davie shipyard with the icebreakers.

I thank the hon. member for his interest, and I assure him that we will continue to carry out Canada's national shipbuilding strategy.

*[English]***CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a survey by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation found that racialized Canadians are three times more likely to be exposed or targeted by violence on social media. This can lead to hate crimes, which are up by 7% this year.

Four years ago, six people were murdered at a mosque in Quebec City. It was a crime motivated by Islamophobia and xenophobia, with a perpetrator radicalized through a social media environment that amplified hateful messages in a way never seen before.

As the Minister of Canadian Heritage is responsible for creating new regulations for social media platforms, could he please update us on his work to protect Canadians online?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the conclusions of this survey are clear. Hate speech has no place in our society. It is time to step up against online hate. The numbers are disturbing, but they come as no surprise. Almost half of Canadians report either experiencing or seeing violent or hateful content online.

Canadians want us to act, and that is exactly why we intent to introduce legislation. Our approach will require online platforms to eliminate illegal content, such as hate speech, terrorist and violent extremism, child pornography and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images online.

\* \* \*

● (1505)

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the cancellation of Keystone XL is another blow to Alberta's energy workers and Canada's economy, but is also a huge step backward in our fight to protect the environment.

Keystone XL checked all the boxes: renewable energy to power the pipeline, check; emissions neutral, check; agreements with first nations equity partners, check. TC Energy did everything it was asked to do, and it still was not good enough for the Prime Minister.

If the Prime Minister will not stand up and fight for Keystone XL, why should energy workers ever believe the Prime Minister will stand up for another pipeline or their livelihoods?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we fought every step of the way, along with the Government of Alberta, in Washington, D.C. We made our case and did so every step of the way, knowing that if we did that together, our chances of success would increase. We were both proud of this project. We believe it checked off all the boxes. The President, in this case, has decided to keep his campaign commitment.

\* \* \*

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, far too many seniors in B.C.'s long-term care homes are without emotional, mobility or decision-making support. There are only 8,000 people with essential senior visitor status in B.C., supporting only 24% of the estimated 34,000 residents in licensed long-term care. There are 26,000 seniors who live without essential support.

Health Canada has already approved a solution. When will the government allow rapid testing at long-term care facilities so we can move to provide seniors with safe access to healthy family members?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, we have not only approved rapid tests but also shipped over 15.4 million rapid tests to provinces and territories to date, including almost 1.5 million to B.C. alone. Provinces and territories have also received guidance, and most recently, a document from a testing and screening expert panel on how best to use these rapid tests to screen in long-term care.

I agree with the member opposite: It is important that provinces and territories have the tools they need to protect people living in long-term care from the introduction of COVID-19.

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our country is battling a mental health crisis. It has been over one month since the House unanimously passed my motion calling on the government to consolidate all provincial suicide prevention hotlines into an easy-to-remember national suicide prevention hotline using a simple three-digit number. With the passage of my motion, it is now up to the government to work with the provinces and industry to develop a plan to bring 988 to Canada.

Minister, where is the plan?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his constant advocacy for mental health supports. I remind all Canadians we do have [wellnesstogether.ca](http://wellnesstogether.ca). It is an online portal that is available in both official languages, and translation into 60 others, so people can get immediate mental health and substance abuse supports no matter where they live in this country.

In terms of working toward an easy three-digit number, the member knows that my department is tasked and seized with this issue, and I am looking forward to continuing our hard work together to make it a reality.

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last summer, the government said we would be receiving vaccines last fall; in the fall, the Liberals told us to expect vaccines in the winter; now in the winter, they are telling us to wait until next spring.

The government received no new shipments of COVID vaccines this week, and now we are hearing that the EU is looking to stop vaccines from leaving Europe, something that would devastate our ability to get through this pandemic, so forgive us if we are unwilling to take their word for it.

I will have to ask again: With the possibility of even more cancelled deliveries, what is plan B for getting vaccines into Canadians, because it is clear that the Liberals' plan A has failed?

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, plan A through Z has been to have the most diversified vaccine portfolio in the world. That is what we have done. We have announced deliveries of six million vaccines in the first quarter, and that will be ramping up right through the end of Q3, by which time we have told all Canadians who wish to receive one, that they will have access to a vaccine. That is the story we have told Canadians.

Unfortunately, different versions of the story come from the other side of the House, but our story on this side of the House is very consistent: Every Canadian who wishes to receive a vaccine will have one by the end of September.

● (1510)

**Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Vancouver Granville, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, three months ago, I asked a question about the use of the Emergencies Act. Today, COVID cases continue to rise, with new strains emerging. Provincial responses are inconsistent, the rules are confusing and not all federal funds available are being used. Border control and travel restrictions are an issue.

Vaccine deployment must be coordinated and swift. The next six months are critical. I understand that the Minister of Foreign Affairs says that he has not ruled out the use of the Emergencies Act to limit travel. We need leadership. Will the Prime Minister now consider invoking the Emergencies Act to do whatever it takes to help protect the health and safety of Canadians?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague very well knows, there are a number of different requirements that go along with the Emergencies Act. We are looking at all options, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs has said publicly, in response to this crisis.

From the beginning of this crisis, we have focused on listening to our health experts, working hand in hand with them and the provinces, as well as municipalities and indigenous leadership, to make sure that we fully attack every element of this crisis. The Emergencies Act is one option that has possibilities, but we are looking at all possibilities in order to serve Canadians.

*Points of Order***PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has been a year since the senseless, preventable murder of 22-year-old Marylène Levesque in Quebec City by a convicted murderer who had brutally killed his wife yet was out on day parole so he could satisfy his “sexual needs”. We now know from a report released last week by corrections and parole officers that warning signs were missed in this case.

Does the Prime Minister accept responsibility for the failures of correctional services to prevent the tragic death of Marylène Levesque?

**Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to answer this very important question.

In the immediate aftermath of this terrible tragedy, a board of investigation, with two external co-chairs, was stood up to determine the facts and provide recommendations in this case. The Correctional Service of Canada and the Parole Board have announced very concrete actions under way following the release of that report, which was made public. All recommendations have been accepted as part of our commitment to do everything possible to ensure that this terrible tragedy never happens again.

[*Translation*]

**The Speaker:** We will now give the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin an opportunity to ask his question again.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, intolerance and hate have no place in a free and democratic society. That is why everyone, including former Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe, was shocked by the dangerous comments made a few weeks ago by the member for Beloeil—Chambly, the current Bloc leader.

Does the minister agree that we, as parliamentarians, have a duty to lead by example and engage in respectful dialogue?

• (1515)

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with my hon. colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin. Any insinuations that propagate intolerance or hatred against anyone are completely unacceptable in Quebec and across Canada. We cannot let partisan games create a hostile environment. Today, instead of apologizing, the Bloc leader doubled down on his unfortunate and shameful comments. This kind of behaviour is far from honourable. It is abhorrent and unworthy of a leader.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

As you know, I had technical problems during my statement, so I request, and hope to receive from my colleagues, unanimous consent to redo my statement.

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

Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member's request will please say nay. It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the request. All those opposed to the hon. member getting another chance, please say nay. It is agreed.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on small businesses and workers across Canada, especially on workers in the tourism, hospitality and events industries. If a small business closes in a rural riding like mine, not only does the family lose their sole source of income, but the effect is felt across the whole community. Based on data from the Coalition of Hardest Hit Businesses, almost 40% of businesses in the travel and tourism sector will close for good by the end of February.

Although it needs some work, today's announcement of the HASCAP is welcome and hopefully comes in time for those who need it. The hardest-hit businesses need the liquidity support the program offers, but they will also rely on an extended wage subsidy, backdated rent relief and the efforts of community members to shop at local businesses. The government still has much to do to help entrepreneurs and start-ups, protect jobs in the hospitality sector and guarantee the rights of workers who lost their jobs because of the pandemic.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2020

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 30, 2020 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise virtually today to join the debate on Bill C-14, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement.

The bill has seven parts, mostly containing items to which I do not object and aims that I support under the circumstances that Canada currently finds itself. Having said that, I have three main criticisms of the bill. First, it does not contain a plan or indeed any reason for hope for the millions of Canadians who own, work for or otherwise depend on small businesses, especially new businesses that have been ignored in aid measures that have been either adopted or proposed by the government. Second, the bill contains nothing to address the significant problems that were facing the Canadian economy before COVID. Third, the government should not be granted the unnecessary increase to the borrowing authority contained in the bill.

To my first two issues, some would say that it is not fair to criticize a bill for something it does not say. Ordinarily I would agree, but this is not an ordinary bill, nor is this an ordinary time.

The government is closing in on two years without a budget. The fall economic statement is as close as the government has come to tabling a budget, and that statement followed a period of chaos and crisis management. Here I am not referring to the COVID crisis, but to the tumultuous months during which we saw a government that should have been procuring vaccines, approving and distributing rapid at-home test kits and figuring out ways to allow the economy to function, if and when the second wave would hit. Instead, it was consumed by the scandal that saw the resignation of the former finance minister, prorogation of this Parliament and the appointment of a new finance minister. The bill is the government's missed opportunity to help small businesses that have fallen through the cracks in its aid measures and to fix its series of failures that left Canada on the brink of a recession before COVID.

As the shadow minister for small business and the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge, I have spoken to many small business owners who had been left behind by the government. These small business owners are the pillars of our communities.

There are millions of owners, workers and customers who depend on small businesses and who are paying the price for the government's failures, like the owners of the Bitter Sisters Brewing Company in Calgary, whose owners live in my riding. They do not qualify for the wage subsidy or the rent subsidy, because they reopened their business in March 2020 after spending most of 2019 refurbishing it. The owners of this business exhausted their capital. They went through a lengthy period when reinventing their business, and they opened literally within days of the declaration of a global pandemic. They do not have access to government aid measures. I spoke to another constituent last week who had expanded

### Government Orders

his successful tattoo studio in early 2020. As a result, he does not qualify for either the rent subsidy or the wage subsidy. His rent is \$30,000 a month and his revenue is zero.

I know that every member of the House has heard similar stories from their constituents and from other members during debate on the bill. The fall economic statement and the bill do not help these constituents.

It is easy to forget the extent to which the government's fiscal and economic mismanagement was coming to a head before COVID. This is a government that was elected in 2015 on a promise, which it immediately broke, to run modest deficits to fund infrastructure for three years, returning to surplus in the fourth. Its maximum deficit of \$10 billion was to be its fiscal anchor.

That anchor was cut immediately after the Liberals took office, and the 2015 election promise was seemingly obliterated into an Orwellian memory hole never again to be acknowledged by the government. It was replaced by a new anchor: that Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio was low and would always shrink.

The finance minister clung to that anchor until it was clear, before COVID, that the deficit was going to rise as a percentage of GDP, and replaced that anchor with the last one, which was maintaining Canada's AAA credit rating. That anchor was cut loose as well, and there have been no fiscal anchors articulated by the government since then.

● (1520)

We saw all of this backsliding into a serious structural deficit before COVID. The Liberal government piled on nearly \$100 billion in new debt at a time when it should have been running surpluses, like the one it inherited, in order to prepare for a financial disaster like COVID, but it did not. Furthermore, the government piled on job-killing laws, like Bill C-69 and Bill C-48 that devastated the western economy and will harm Canada's ability to recover from COVID.

This bill does not contain elements that would undo the damage the government did to our economy that prevent and reduce our ability to recover from COVID. It brought in a carbon tax in the last Parliament and has announced that it will almost immediately break its promise not to raise it in this Parliament.

*Government Orders*

There is nothing in this bill that will address the hostility of the government to the energy industry, which is an essential part of the federal government's tax base. It is historically Canada's largest and most valuable export. It is the creator of great high-paying jobs in every province across Canada, not just in Alberta.

The fall economic statement that this bill is to implement does not address the past economic mistakes the government made and that had Canada teetering on the brink of recession before COVID. It does not repeal the red tape that killed projects, like Teck Frontier, and scared off the private sector investors that would have built Trans Mountain without taxpayer support.

There is nothing in this bill for the thousands of Canadian workers who will lose their jobs due to the devastating Keystone decision or those already without jobs, whose hopes for returning to work are now reduced in the wake of the Keystone decision.

There is nothing in this bill to rein in the culture of wasteful corporate welfare that the government has and the ease with which it ran up significant debt, again, before COVID.

This brings me to my third criticism of this bill and that is the unprecedented increase to Canada's borrowing limit. Make no mistake, and I will say this again, that at a time when governments force businesses to close and lay off workers, governments need to support them. Governments do need to support Canadians who are being compelled not to work and to support businesses that are being compelled to close their doors.

This crisis has created a temporary necessity for extraordinary spending measures to support Canadians, but the government's proposal in this bill to increase its borrowing limit to \$1.8 trillion is simply not justified. It is not justified by the government's present needs, not by its short-term needs, not by its medium- or long-term needs, and certainly not by its past enthusiasm for non-crisis deficit financing.

Parliament at its most basic function exists to authorize taxation, expenditure and borrowing by the government on behalf of the governed. As legislators, we have a responsibility to vote whether or not to grant the government these powers, and there is simply no reason to grant such an extraordinary sum for the government to borrow when its own fall statement and the estimates that have already been voted on do not require the authority for the level of borrowing that is contained in this bill.

If the Liberal government, or indeed a future government, needs to increase the national debt to \$1.8 trillion, then that should be left for a future debate in this Parliament or a future Parliament. In the meantime, I urge the government to focus on establishing a coherent COVID policy, one that would result in a vaccinated population, a reopened economy and a full-employment workforce fuelled by private investment into Canada's economy, unshackled by job-killing regulations.

We must return to an employment-based economy as soon as possible. While there are items in this bill that would help some Canadians cope with the difficult circumstances of the present, I urge the government to get serious about giving Canadians more hope for the future, especially for those small businesses that have

consistently fallen through the cracks of the government's aid measures.

With that, I look forward to questions from the floor.

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to wish you all the best for 2021, and here is hoping that it will be better than last year.

My question for my colleague is very simple. What does he think of the government's performance when it comes to supporting businesses? Are we doing enough for our SMEs and entrepreneurs? What does he think of the government's loan- and debt-based strategy for businesses?

[*English*]

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Mr. Speaker, the answer is there are many measures the government has undertaken that were necessary and indeed are supporting small businesses, but there are also many small businesses that are falling through the cracks, that have not been able to access the aid measures they need for a variety of reasons. The most recent ones that I referred to in my speech are those for new businesses that opened their doors, that maybe spent all of 2019 gearing up for a reopening at the end of last March. Those businesses are just devastated. They are not qualifying and the government knows it, but it has not taken action to support those businesses in particular.

The debt load that businesses are taking on is extremely concerning. These businesses are just desperate. They are desperate to see the end of COVID and to reopen. The government needs to get serious about answering questions on its vaccination rollout so we can get a vaccinated population and an employment-based economy back on track.

● (1530)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I agree with the member when we talk about small businesses and how important it is for government to come to the table. That is something that I believe we have done. We can talk about the Canada emergency wage subsidy, the Canada emergency rent subsidy, the emergency business account, making sure there is better business credit availability and regional relief in recovery funds. There are a number of things out there that the government has done to ensure that small and medium-sized businesses and others, the backbone of the Canadian economy, are able to better manage as a direct result of the negativity from the pandemic.

Would the member not agree that as an opposition member, or any member of Parliament, one of the most creative things to do is to come up with specific suggestions and ideas for a plan, something that we can do as government? Being very specific would be helpful at this time.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Madam Speaker, the opposition spent much of the last year doing exactly that. We proposed all the fixes the Liberals needed to make on their rent subsidy program, which was a disaster for months. The opposition was instrumental in fixing that program. The opposition was instrumental in fixing all of the shortcomings of the CEBA program that he also mentioned. The opposition has been very active in constructively offering fixes to the government.

Right now, in the few seconds I have left, I would suggest that the government get busy very quickly on some kind of modification to the rent subsidy and wage subsidy programs that would provide some relief to businesses that literally drained their bank accounts just to open their doors at the dawn of the pandemic.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is quite right to note that government policy has affected profits of businesses, including small business.

Would my colleague not agree that there should be some regulatory reform with regard to credit card interest rates, especially small businesses that have unjust pricing and service fees during this time?

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Madam Speaker, the member points out a problem well known to especially the small business community. Merchants in Canada pay the highest fees probably in the world. It is an ongoing issue that has been exacerbated by COVID. I am concerned by the lack of competition in that area. It is a very important concern that I have heard from many small business owners.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, since it is 2021, I would like to first take the opportunity to thank the residents of Nickel Belt and Greater Sudbury for putting their trust in me. I always do my best to represent them properly. I would also like to thank my family for their support. Finally, I would like to say a special thank you to my staff, who continue to work hard to support all residents of Nickel Belt and Greater Sudbury.

I would also like to assure the people of Nickel Belt and Greater Sudbury that our government and I have one priority: their health and well-being. Our responsibility is to ensure their physical and mental well-being, as well as the economic health of our businesses and communities. By so doing, we can ensure the ongoing economic recovery of our ridings.

[English]

COVID-19 is a non-partisan issue across the country. We have a duty as a country to work together across all party lines and across all levels of government to come to the collective goal of getting through this pandemic together. From the beginning of the pandemic our government has mobilized with the opposition and passed concrete measures that offer direct assistance to those in need.

Many families, students, seniors, businesses and indigenous communities felt the challenges. Mental health remains a challenge.

### *Government Orders*

We must prioritize our health in all its forms, check in with those who need it the most and recognize and reach out to those who need better support. That is why we stepped in. CERB provided \$2,000 a month to eligible individuals, and we listened to residents to make changes to ensure people were not slipping through the cracks. Now it is the CRB.

We have also provided \$300 million to first nations communities. Many in my riding also received funding. We provided over \$157 million for Canadians who are experiencing homelessness and to address these unique challenges during the pandemic. There is over \$50 million for women's shelters, because of the unique challenges women have faced during this pandemic, like job losses, violence, disproportionate income loss and child care needs.

Also, there are payments to seniors, up to \$500, and for those with disabilities, up to \$600. In Nickel Belt we have 17,360 people receiving OAS and GIS benefits for seniors. Also important is the one-time payment we also provided for the CCB payment. This is an important measure to help families and to help children, especially single moms in our communities. In Nickel Belt we have 9,700 families receiving the CCB, and it is important that we continue to support our children and our families.

Student loans are also important. We have offered grants for students and also deferred the loan payments.

Rental assistance for businesses throughout this pandemic has been important. We have modified the regional relief fund through agencies like FedNor. We have heard clearly from businesses the need to adjust some of these relief programs. Some \$1.2 million was given to economic partners in West Nipissing to help local businesses meet their needs during this pandemic.

There is also the \$2 billion for the safe restart agreement with Ontario. We have supported things like enhancing testing, contact tracing, supporting those in long-term care homes and ensuring there is safe and sufficient child care spaces for returning to work. More needs to be done.

It is important that we offer stability and support to local priorities outlined by local area municipalities. We also ensure emergency programs for private sector businesses, Legions, food banks, arts and culture and not-for-profit organizations all across Canada, Nickel Belt and Greater Sudbury.

*Government Orders*

For example, there is \$350 million to support vulnerable Canadians through the charity and non-profit organizations that deliver essential services, like the United Way North East Ontario. It is helping those in need and helping municipalities like French River, St.-Charles and Markstay-Warren. It is helping Valleyview Community Church, the Greater Sudbury municipality in partnership with Onaping Falls Lions, and the Metro grocery store in Valley East. This is all to support our most vulnerable.

We have also provided \$100 million in emergency funding for food security. Of that, \$100,000 went to five organizations in Nickel Belt: Onaping Lions Club, Destiny International Church in Val Caron, Helping Hands Family Mission in Hanmer, and Atikameksheng Anishnawbek First Nation community.

● (1535)

It is also important that we support Canadian heritage and arts and culture. In Nickel Belt there is the museum in Sturgeon Falls, the Capreol Historical Heritage Museum, the Greater Sudbury archives and the Conseil des Arts de Nipissing Ouest.

[Translation]

It is important to continue to support non-profit organizations.

[English]

I want to thank all the volunteers who are supporting our organizations with their time, and for submitting proposals and working hard at the grassroots level with solid partnerships to make a difference in people's lives, in their communities and in our neighbourhoods.

The support that flows through this community shows how resilient our economy is and shows the dedication of our government and people tasked with making changes at the local level. These include infrastructure in the municipality of Markstay-Warren, bypass roads in Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and investments for providing a light industrial park for economic development.

Also, regarding broadband, there was \$270,000 for the Wahnapiatae First Nation. It is very important to get high-speed Internet to homes and businesses in the community.

We made important strides. The fall economic statement was a true testament to this, and I am proud that our government is investing in RDAs all across Canada and FedNor in northern Ontario. I am proud of the staff at FedNor and the work that they do in the community. As a government, continuing to enhance regional development agencies is important.

We committed to investing in research and development and procurement of vaccines for all Canadians who want them. Just yesterday, public health in the district of Sudbury announced that vulnerable seniors and long-term care residents in northern Ontario are closer than ever to getting the vaccine. Progress is happening. The federal and provincial governments will continue working together to offer solutions and to ensure we all persevere through this.

That is why we need to support our long-term care residents and staff. This is a non-partisan issue. All levels of government need to get together and find solutions. We need to make sure that we look after our most vulnerable, and long-term care is an important area

at all levels of government. We need to do what we can. If it means using the Red Cross or the Canadian Army, we need to make sure that residents and staff are safe in long-term care residences.

When we look at the most vulnerable, we look at seniors living in apartments who are isolated, and seniors who are living in their homes and are isolated. We need to make sure we support them also.

COVID-19 has highlighted just how challenging something as dangerous and disruptive as COVID can be. Through the pandemic, Canadians have shown that it really takes a lot to keep our communities safe. As we are showing, we will do whatever it takes to support our communities.

● (1540)

[Translation]

Overall, the government's quick and comprehensive assistance made it possible to provide unprecedented, comprehensive support of \$407 billion, nearly 19% of the GDP, to help Canadians and Canadian businesses keep their heads above water during the pandemic. That includes \$270 billion in direct support measures, or 12% of the GDP. It is really important to continue to ensure that we are supporting individuals and businesses.

[English]

The fall economic statement also reminds us that there are other changes that we must continue to address. Digitization continues to be important and carries the potential for tremendous benefit if it is managed fairly and effectively as we grow our economy. With the measures in the fall economic statement, we would leverage this potential to better benefit Canadians.

I want to thank residents of Nickel Belt and Greater Sudbury, and say *meegwetch* to all of the front-line workers, first responders, police officers, truck drivers and retail workers. I thank them for the work that they are doing in making a difference in our community. I ask people to stay safe and keep following public health measures.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we are here today to discuss the economic update, make decisions and vote on whether or not we are going to approve spending. Typically, we do that with a financial budget. We have not had a financial budget for two years. I wonder if my hon. colleague could give us an idea of why we are voting on an economic update in the absence of a broader and more comprehensive budget.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for that important question.

We have not tabled a budget in two years. The measures that our government took during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the support of the opposition parties, had an impact on everyone, on all Canadians. It was therefore important for us to present the fall economic statement.

This spring, we will table a budget based on greater certainty. It is very difficult to come up with a budget in these uncertain times related to COVID-19, but we will do so by continuing to focus on support for Canadians and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

He listed all the measures that have been taken, which we welcome. They needed to happen. I would just like to remind him that all of this work is also based on ideas proposed by the opposition parties, and that it is all a collaboration between the government and the representatives of the people.

However, after almost a year of COVID-19, the federal government is still sending the message that arts and culture are not important and that the sector will be getting no support. Many of the municipalities in my riding rely on arts and culture, which is a well established industry there.

What form of assistance is available for this sector, which is at the very heart of our Quebec identity?

• (1545)

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

I mentioned in my speech that the government and the opposition parties collaborated on the measures to assist businesses and individuals. Some measures were taken very quickly at the beginning of the pandemic, but changes were also made during the summer and fall. This proves that Parliament and our elected officials are here to help Canadians.

Arts and culture are indeed very important, and our government must do better for the entire not-for-profit sector. We must find better ways of supporting not only arts and culture, but also all not-for-profit organizations in order to build on our language and culture. As a francophone, I think that this is really important, not only in Quebec, but throughout Ontario, and particularly in northern Ontario.

### *Government Orders*

[*English*]

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the speech by the member for Nickel Belt. I want to share the sentiment he expressed at the end in thanking the front-line workers who continue to provide essential services for all of us with respect to groceries, policing, fire and all of those kinds of things.

I want to ask the member a question about something that is not really addressed in the economic statement, which is the sick leave benefit. I am not talking about the fact that wealthy people who broke the rules have been able to get compensated for being in quarantine. I am talking about the fact that working families are having severe trouble accessing the sick leave benefit because of the way it is being administered.

Will the hon. member join with the New Democrats in pressing his government for a sick leave program that is more flexible, and will meet the needs of those front-line workers?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her important question.

One of the first things the Conservative Government of Ontario did when it was elected was to eliminate sick days. It is really important that Parliament review the issue of sick days.

We have already adopted certain measures with the collaboration of the opposition parties. I agree with my colleague. When we look at the most vulnerable populations, we realize that they are mainly women who work in the health care sector, and we must take them into consideration to ensure that we are implementing the right measures for them. The comments put forth by my colleague in the opposition will help me when we discuss how to help workers, as well as what financial support can be provided to give them a better sick leave plan.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Madam Speaker, as the member of Parliament for the expansive riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, I take this opportunity to thank the good people of my constituency who have repeatedly placed their trust in me to represent their interests in the Parliament of Canada. Being a member of Parliament is a unique privilege, and I thank them for that privilege.

I rise to speak to Bill C-14, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 30, 2020. Specifically, I intend to focus on those provisions in the legislation that deal with the COVID-19 vaccine shortage in Canada.

### *Government Orders*

I send a clear message on behalf of all Canadians to the government and to the Prime Minister: Canada, as well as beating the COVID-19 virus, must prepare for the next pandemic. Unfortunately, the federal government's response to the pandemic has been a tragic comedy of errors. Mixed messages on masks, with federal cabinet ministers early on advising against their use because the government had thrown away or given the masks we had to China, to now insisting that masks be worn, has confused people. That confusion of mixed messages led to the spread of the COVID-19 virus, with tragic consequences for our seniors, particularly those in long-term care.

What should have been stated by the Prime Minister during one of his cuckoo clock appearances was, "We do not have enough masks," and "Stay home."

In March 2020, there was an awareness the virus was coming. The border should have been closed to all travellers to keep the virus out of Canada. Following up on the Liberal meme "man-made," as in man-made global warming, what we have in Canada is a man-made vaccine shortage crisis.

The Part 5 amendments to the Food and Drugs Act contained in Bill C-14 come up far short of what is required to fix broken Liberal policy.

It is important to note the pharmaceutical industry has been trying to reach out to the government for years. After the short-sighted changes made by the government in 2017, it is as if the government was setting itself up for failure.

A letter written to the Financial Post by Paul Lucas, the former CEO of one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world, states:

The question is: Why is Canada not able to acquire more vaccine early?

Is it because the Liberal government has virtually no relationship other than as a buyer and regulator with the only organizations that could possibly produce a vaccine quickly and in sufficient quantities, the global innovative pharmaceutical industry?

Successive Liberal governments, including this one, have created an unfavourable environment for investment and commercial success for innovative pharmaceutical companies in Canada. They have made it very difficult for Canadian CEOs to attract investment to Canada despite many attempts by the industry to work with governments to do so. They have made no effort to work with the innovative industry to encourage a partnership that could deliver tremendous value to the health-care system and the economy and give Canadians early access to new medicines and vaccines.

Not surprisingly, the industry has gone elsewhere to invest—to places like the U.K., the U.S. and the EU where that positive environment does exist. They are all performing better than Canada on early vaccine acquisition.

It is important for Canadians to hear the truth about why we are at the back of the line when it comes to life-saving medicines to protect our population.

I am pleased to reference previous comments I have made in Parliament to inform Canadians of what the government does not want them to know. From the very onset of the pandemic, the Prime Minister has been disrespectful of Canadians, starting with parliamentarians. What has been particularly predictable has been the tactic by the Prime Minister and his party to try to pass off blame for his government's failings. His attempts to smear former prime

minister Stephen Harper over the current government's lack of action are pathetic and dishonest.

● (1550)

Canadians should not be surprised to learn that the reason Canada does not have any capacity to manufacture its own vaccine is a direct consequence of the policy of the Prime Minister's father, Pierre, when he eliminated patent protection for drug manufacturers. This policy produced short-term gain for the long-term pain Canadians find themselves in today. The short-term gain was the drop in drug prices when the patent protection was reduced. The pain was felt more slowly.

When the Liberal Party changed the patent protection of new drugs in 1969, it led to a brain drain. There was an exodus of major drug companies that used to do their research in Canada. The University of Toronto was world-renowned as the place Banting and Best did their Nobel Prize-calibre research that led to the discovery of insulin. Montreal had a vibrant research community. That proud legacy has been lost.

What Canada received in its place were knock-offs: cheap generic drugs that rely on the work of others. It was not until the election of a Conservative government in 1984 that a real attempt was made to reverse the damage. During legislative committee hearings, the deans of the leading medical schools pleaded with Conservative parliamentarians to fix Pierre's mistake. If a gifted Canadian medical researcher wanted to continue in his or her field, they were forced to leave Canada. This fact was noticed in our medical schools.

For every successful discovery of a miracle drug, there are a hundred failures. The money for failures comes from the successes. The pharmaceutical companies could not afford to have their research stolen by generic companies. It made sense to do their drug research where they manufactured the drugs. The Patented Medicine Prices Review Board that was formed could not bring back the companies that had fled Canada. Whenever government interferes in the marketplace, a price must be paid. The price today is Canada has no domestic capability to manufacture its own vaccine. This leaves Canadians and its enterprises where we are today.

I now correct the record from comments made by the Prime Minister and the federal Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who wrongly stated on national media that Canada does not have any domestic vaccine production because GlaxoSmithKline Canada closed its facility during the Harper years. In fact, the former CEO of that facility confirmed it is still operational and manufactures much of Canada's annual flu vaccine. The retired CEO of pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline went on to state:

*Government Orders*

The Mulroney and Harper governments supported the innovative industry by improving the patent landscape but Canada only partially recovered and to this day does not have globally competitive patent protection. The negative trend continues even now with the imminent implementation of a punitive pricing regime through new federal...[set of] regulations. One now has to ask: where are the generic companies when we badly need innovation? Liberal government pharmaceutical policy has failed Canadians at our time of greatest need.

The punitive legislation being referred to is legislation that the federal government rammed through Parliament before the last election and which Bill C-14 should be fixing. The government needs to be open, honest and transparent with Canadians about the true cost of the pharmaceutical promise made to the fourth party in the House of Commons.

This is what the president of Pfizer Canada has to say about that bad legislation made by the federal government before the last election:

The reality is, had the government applied its new pricing guidelines to COVID-19 vaccine candidates, our ability to move at the speed of science would have been restricted. This should be a key learning. As future innovative breakthrough treatments in areas such as oncology, rare disease and acute care are discovered, Canada needs to have a regulatory and pricing framework that encourages and fosters early access for patients.

In this regard, our industry association Innovative Medicines Canada has proposed an alternative approach to the federal government that would allow it to achieve its public policy objectives of reducing the price of drugs without undermining patient access to potentially life-saving medicines or vaccines, clinical trials, or investments in the country's life sciences sector.

• (1555)

The shortage that Canadians are facing today is a direct result of bad decisions made by a succession of Liberal governments.

I will conclude with those remarks.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, in previous comments by the member for Nickel Belt and Greater Sudbury, he stressed the importance of working across party lines and orders of government. I did not get that same sense from the recent intervention by the foregoing member.

Could the member comment on the importance of all parties working together to fight the pandemic, versus fighting each other?

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, I will conclude my remarks with a quote from the Financial Post article previously referenced, and perhaps this will lend some information to the member who just questioned me:

When it comes to vaccine supply Canada should be in the same position as these other leading countries. Instead, we are three to four months behind. How many more people will die in this pandemic who wouldn't have if the federal government had done a better job acquiring more early doses? How many more businesses will fail? How long will the lockdowns go on? Months matter in this struggle. Days matter. Unfortunately, Canadians are paying a steep price.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech.

On the news this morning they were saying how well Israel is doing with its vaccination plan. That reminded me that the entire population of Canada is the victim of the Liberal government's poor planning in vaccination procurement, as my colleague men-

tioned in her speech. To what does she attribute this, and why is Canada behind in vaccination procurement?

• (1600)

[English]

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, from the outset, the government led by the Prime Minister clearly did not take this outbreak seriously. A year before, they had dismantled our early warning system, and then they backfilled any PPE that we had, or sent the expired ones to China. When it was discovered that the virus had originated in Wuhan, he never stopped flights from coming in. He did not stop anyone from spreading it. He did not start contact tracing until the virus had manifested itself right across Canada.

Liberals did not have the pharmaceuticals in place because they scared off all the pharmaceutical companies. Now we are left behind. While the rest of the world is recovering, we are still going to be looking for vaccines.

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I always listen with interest to speeches by the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and, of course, I enjoy working with her on the defence committee. As usual, we seem to live in different worlds. We have one point in common here, which is that we should have capacity in Canada to produce our vaccines.

I want to ask about the commitment that the government made, with the support of New Democrats, to have sick leave in place for workers so that those who need to stay home in quarantine or who need to stay home because they have symptoms, will not have to go to work if they have paid sick leave. The Conservatives have often talked about disincentives to work, so I wonder in this case whether they would join the other parties in supporting an effective program for sick leave, both to help workers maintain their paycheques and to prevent the spread of the virus.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, one thing Conservatives do is respect jurisdictions, and requirements for sick pay fall within provincial jurisdiction and law. When we form government, we will of course be pleased to work with the provinces in any way to prepare for the future.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to contribute to the debate on this important bill. Bill C-14 would implement several important measures from the fall economic statement which highlighted the additional steps our government is taking to support Canadians and Canadian businesses during the second wave of the pandemic.

### *Government Orders*

This bill, in seven parts, would provide much needed economic support for Canadians. The measures include increasing our supports for families with young children, helping students, investing in mental health resources and improving the long-term care system. It also makes important adjustments to the Borrowing Authority Act, the regional relief and recovery fund and the Canada emergency rent subsidy.

In addition to those measures, it proposes to deploy a three-year stimulus package to jump-start our recovery and provide the fiscal support that the Canadian economy needs to operate at a full capacity. Today, I would like to address these important measures and how they will truly support Canadians and Canadian businesses.

We know that many families with young children have been struggling trying to find affordable child care during the pandemic. For these families, we are introducing a temporary support of up to \$1,200 for each child under the age of six. This support will be provided to low- and middle-income families who are entitled to the Canada child benefit. This would benefit more than 10,000 families in my riding of Richmond Hill.

We will also help the students in our country. During this time, we have heard from many students who are burdened by student debt and are struggling to find work. We are committed to ensuring that this pandemic does not derail their futures. The bill would eliminate interest on the repayment of the federal portion of the Canada student loan and the Canada apprentice loan for 2021-22. This measure will bring \$329.4 million in relief to up to 1.4 million Canadians. This, on average, will amount to \$235 of interest potentially saved for each student. This money can be used to buy textbooks, computers and other necessary resources for our nation's students.

As mentioned earlier, our government has a plan to help our nation's most vulnerable. The COVID-19 outbreak in long-term care homes has been tragic and completely unacceptable. The pandemic has further highlighted the need for significant improvements in the standard and care of our most vulnerable. Bill C-14 will invest in a safe long-term care fund to help provinces and territories protect people in long-term care and support infection prevention and control. We are committing up to \$1 billion in support to ensure that every resident in our long-term care system is supported.

The COVID-19 Emergency Response Act passed on March 25, 2020. It permitted the government to borrow to fund its response to the extraordinary circumstances from April 1 until September 30, 2020. These borrowings are exempt from the overall borrowing limit set out in the act. A separate external borrowing report was tabled in Parliament on October 22, 2020. It provides details of the amounts borrowed.

The proposed measures in Bill C-14 would increase the maximum borrowing amount from \$1.168 trillion to \$1.831 trillion to cover projected borrowing until March 2024 and will include external borrowing made as a result of COVID-19. The new limit will allow the government to continue to support Canadians and businesses in my riding of Richmond Hill through the pandemic. As well, it will allow for a necessary investment once the pandemic is over to power a robust, sustained recovery in job growth to March 2024.

The action the government has taken and plans to take will help Canada come roaring back from the COVID-19 recession and prevent the long-term economic scarring that would weaken our post-pandemic recovery. The bill before us would also authorize payments to be made to Canada's six regional development agencies for the regional relief and recovery fund.

● (1605)

The government announced the \$962-million regional relief and recovery fund on April 17 to help support those businesses unable to access other pandemic support programs. It provides this significant funding through Canada's regional development agencies. The government expanded the fund on October 2, bringing the total support to more than \$1.5 billion.

In the COVID-19 context, the regional development agencies are playing a vital role in helping to bridge small and medium-sized businesses to better times. To date, the regional relief and recovery fund has protected over 102,000 jobs and supported over 14,700 businesses, including 8,500 clients in rural areas and 5,100 women-owned businesses.

As a next step, the fall economic statement proposed a top-up of \$500 million on a cash basis to regional development agencies and the Community Futures Network of Canada, bringing the total funding to over \$2 billion in this fund.

Finally, the bill proposes to amend the Income Tax Act to allow for the Canada emergency rent subsidy to recognize a rent payment as a qualifying rent expense when it comes due rather than only when it is paid, provided certain conditions are met. We are still in a situation in which not all small businesses have the cash flow to pay their rent on the first of the month, with a reimbursement to come later. The new rent subsidy provides simple and easy-to-access rent and mortgage support for qualifying organizations affected by COVID-19. It is provided directly to the tenants while also providing support to property owners.

In addition, under the lockdown support program, organizations that must shut their doors or significantly restrict their activities under a public health order are eligible for a 25% top-up in addition to the base rent subsidy of up to 65% until December 19, 2020. This means hard-hit businesses in my riding of Richmond Hill that have had to shut their doors because of provincial lockdowns are eligible to receive up to 90% support for rent and mortgage interest.

*Government Orders*

To provide greater certainty to businesses and other organizations, the fall economic statement proposes to extend the current subsidy rent for an additional three periods. This means that a maximum base subsidy rate of up to 65% and an additional 25% for lockdown support would be available until March 13, 2021. The government will put in place regulations to effect this extension.

These are important changes to the program and are pieces of legislation that will allow the government to continue to provide direct support to Canadians so that they can pay their rent and mortgage and feed their families. It also provides scalable support to businesses to help bridge them through the crisis and keep Canadians healthy, safe and solvent.

In closing, better days are coming. The government has a plan to get through the pandemic and the recession and to recover strongly. We will do whatever it takes to support Canadians and get the economy firmly back on track.

• (1610)

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member talked about the array of government programs that are available, but at the same time the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has identified that 200,000 Canadian small businesses may fail this year because of COVID-19. The future success that we need to move forward in getting people back to work is a vaccine. It means getting vaccines here and getting people inoculated. As the government's own COVID-19 tracker said today, only 113,000 Canadians have received two doses of the vaccine.

Will the member say that the ultimate success of getting the economy back to work is getting people vaccinated?

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Madam Speaker, I agree that we need to make sure there are vaccines available, as Canadians need them. We have made sure there will be 1.1 million vaccines available in the spring, and by the end of September there are going to be vaccines available to all Canadians who want to be vaccinated. With a total of six million vaccines being available by the end of spring, we feel that we are well on our path to recovery.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to go back to the part of the bill that addresses the extension of the Canada emergency response benefit, an emergency measure I approve of because it has helped many people. However, it is rapidly becoming a source of concern for others, with the tax season around the corner. Canadians are starting to receive their T4s.

Some of them are learning that they owe income tax for the CERB, for which they never applied. Then they quickly realize that they are victims of fraud. Whether through this bill or otherwise, has the government considered measures to better support victims of fraud? When people call the Canada Revenue Agency they are referred to Service Canada, but both agencies keep passing the buck. There is confusion, and that is causing anxiety for many people. How is the government going to help them?

[*English*]

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Madam Speaker, we were made aware of the concerns that Canadians had. The government took the necessary steps to inform Canadians early in December, especially the ones who received the CERB, and provided needed alternatives to processes to make sure that their taxes would be filed properly and that no undue hardship would be put on them.

I recommend that Canadians reach out to the CRA and their members of Parliament to work with them to make sure they truly understand those measures.

• (1615)

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, time and time again we have heard Liberals saying that they have done everything they can for seniors in LTCs, yet that is simply not true.

It is true that the government has provided investments for long-term care, such as wage subsidies, but it is also true that these private LTCs are sitting on mountains of profit while collecting federal subsidies and paying out dividends. They are doing this at the exact same time that they are cutting wages and not providing critical PPE to their workers and residents.

Will the member work within his caucus to ensure that every dollar invested in LTCs results in the care of its patients and seniors?

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Madam Speaker, our government has always committed to full accountability and transparency. We will continue working with the provinces and territories to make sure of the funding being granted. As Canadians know, \$8 out of every \$10 provided as part of the emergency funds is coming from the federal government.

We have provided billions of dollars in support of long-term care and we will work with the provinces and territories to make sure that these funds are put to effective use.

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, happy new year.

I speak on Bill C-14 this afternoon, which is legislation that, among other things, increases the federal spending authority from a staggering \$1.1 trillion to an astronomical \$1.8 trillion.

For a government that spends tens of billions of dollars here, hundreds of billions of dollars there, racks up a debt of more than \$1 trillion, it is tough to keep track of exactly what \$1.8 trillion means in context. My friend, colleague and former fellow finance committee member, the hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, put it into some important context yesterday when he spoke to Bill C-14. In that regard, my colleague noted that in the more than 150 years since Canada's founding in 1867, total accumulated federal debt equalled \$700 billion in the beginning of 2020. In the span of a single year, that debt level rose an astounding 50% to \$1.1 trillion. Now we have before us legislation that is contemplating and indeed authorizing the debt ceiling to rise to \$1.8 trillion—in other words, more than double the total accumulated debt since 1867, all within the span of a little more than a year.

### *Government Orders*

If that is not unsustainable, I frankly do not know what is, yet one would not know that if one were to listen to the speeches from Liberal MPs across the way. They seem to believe there is no issue and go on at great lengths to pat themselves on the back for the supposedly wonderful job they have been doing since COVID and, more broadly, for the government's economic track record.

If the metric by which to judge the government was on the basis of how much it spent, it absolutely could pat itself on the back or get an A, but when it comes to delivering results for Canadians, someone who is objective would be hard pressed to give the current government anything close to an A, for its track record has been wanting, to say the least. After all, it is a government that has delivered the second-highest unemployment rate in the G7, save for the stagnant and socialist economy of Italy. It is a government that has delivered the slowest rate of economic growth in the G7. It is a government that has presided over a decline with respect to Canada's competitiveness. Under Prime Minister Harper's government, Canada was within the top 10 countries in the world with respect to competitiveness. We have now fallen to 17th and we are declining further.

The current government presided over a time when we have seen divestment from Canada, with \$160 billion of investment in the energy sector gone. In the last week we saw a major pipeline project, the Keystone XL pipeline project, cancelled for the second time by the second U.S. administration under the current Prime Minister's watch, and he could barely pick up the phone and call the new president to make a case for Keystone as thousands of Canadians lost their jobs, including Canadians in my very hard-hit home province of Alberta.

• (1620)

Consumption is set to grow five times faster than investment over the next two years, and, as depressing as those economic numbers are, when one speaks of the massive deficit, the massive mountain of debt that has been accumulated, it is not any rosier. Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio has hit a staggering 387%, including government, personal and corporate debt. By far and away, it is the second highest in the G7, save only for Japan, which ekes us out for first place at a little over 400%, which is hardly something we should be aspiring to.

When it comes to the federal debt-to-GDP ratio, the numbers are equally concerning, with that ratio climbing from 31% last year to 56% for next year. Sometimes when we talk about numbers, they need to be put in context, so what is the context of going from a 31% debt-to-GDP ratio to 56%? The historical high was 66.6% in 1996, at a time when the Wall Street Journal ran the unflattering headline "Bankrupt Canada", comparing us with a third world banana republic. There was truth to that unfortunate headline, inasmuch as Canada was effectively bankrupt in 1996. Literally no one would buy Canada's debt. That, of course, resulted in very difficult decisions, with significant cuts being made to social programs and transfers to the provinces by the former Chrétien Liberal government.

Very simply put, why would we ever want to go back to those years? However, that is where we are headed if we stay on the current course.

It is true that right now interest rates are very low, at around 1%. That is about the only thing this government has going for it at the present time. However, the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the former head of the Bank of Canada, in testimony before the finance committee, stated that interest rates are bound to go up in the foreseeable future as a result of inflationary pressures. That really should not be news to anyone. Therefore, when one thinks about a simple 1% hike, let alone the average rate over the past number of decades being 5%, it is very difficult to imagine the cost of servicing the now \$1.1 trillion debt, which is soon to be \$1.8 trillion in debt, and if the government does not change course, it will be over \$2 trillion in debt.

What Canadians need right now is more than a plan to spend money; we need a plan to get Canadians back to work, to get businesses open again and to do it safely, and that includes a strategy around a vaccine distribution plan. In that regard the current government has no plan. Canadians deserve to get their lives back. They deserve a plan from the government and, unfortunately, that has been sorely lacking.

• (1625)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I just heard this member go on for 10 minutes about the debt that has been incurred over the last 10 months as though he were not part of it. The reality is that he voted in favour at every single step of the way to spend this money, quite often through unanimous consent motions. All he had to do, and we know he does not have a problem speaking up when he feels like it, when unanimous consent motions were brought forward, was to say no. That would have triggered a whole series of events to get into the fine critiquing of every single spending measure. However, he voted in favour of them at every step of the way.

Quite frankly, it is getting tiring listening to Conservatives rail on and on about the debt all day long in here, when they were part of spending that money over the last 10 months. How can this member possibly be so critical of it, when he was right there every step of the way, spending the money with us?

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, let me acknowledge first of all that this is an extraordinary time and there has been some spending that has been required. I do not dispute that.

Conservatives have tried to work with the government to get dollars out to workers and businesses and Canadians who need it, but that being said, it is also true that out of the \$375 billion deficit, only about \$175 billion relates to direct COVID spending, so it is equally true that the government has a spending problem far beyond the necessary measures to help Canadians get through COVID.

*Government Orders*

Quite frankly, as much as there has been some need for spending, I am surprised that the hon. member would not be concerned about the fact that if we are going to reopen, we need to do so safely and need to get Canadians vaccinated. The government has wholly failed as we move into what is now the most important next phase of COVID.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would also like to wish you a happy new year.

My question for my colleague is as follows: What does he think about the government's transparency at this time when the Parliamentary Budget Officer is telling us that, if the aim is to help the economy recover from the pandemic, the government may have missed the mark? What does he think about that?

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, I would concur with the member's assessment of the PBO that the government has been less than transparent. This problem with transparency has been a long-standing one we have had with the government. It does not just relate to fiscal and economic issues, but also includes their being straight with Canadians on where Canada is with the vaccine distribution plan.

Where does Canada fit in terms of receiving vaccines relative to other countries? Are other vaccines beyond Pfizer one part of the government's plan and are we waiting for approval of such vaccines?

Those are basic questions that go with being open and transparent, something the government has not been.

• (1630)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I listened attentively to the member. I have to say that when we talk about deficits and deficit spending, particularly in this context, one of the things we know is that had the federal government not stepped in with a lot of financial relief, that same deficit would simply have been on the books of individual Canadian households. Millions of Canadians would have been facing bankruptcy. Of course, that would have had serious economic consequences.

There is a question of how we raise revenue to be able to fund social programs going forward. The NDP has suggested many times closing things like the corporate stock option loopholes and other ways to get at the wealth of the people at the top who have been receiving a bigger and bigger share of the pie for decades now.

We hear Conservatives complain about the deficit. They are not willing to support us when we talk about taxing the rich to make sure that we have a fair tax system. Then they do not really acknowledge the consequences of having no public spending at this time and what it would have meant not only for individual Canadians, but also for the economy overall.

Could the member finally offer a reckoning of some of these points for people in the House?

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, given the brief time I have to answer the member for Elmwood—Transcona, let me simply say that he speaks of a reckoning: We will face a fiscal reckoning if we stay on the current course.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I wish you a happy 2021.

I am pleased to be able to speak today about Bill C-14, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 30, 2020 and other measures.

[*English*]

Bill C-14 is an essential step to implement measures from the fall economic statement that would provide assistance to families with young children, support students and invest in resources to protect the health and safety of Canadians as we continue our fight against COVID-19.

[*Translation*]

Canadians have been hit hard by the pandemic in the past 10 months. Whether financially, physically or psychologically, everyone has been affected by COVID-19 one way or another. Nearly 20,000 Canadians have died from the virus. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians have lost their jobs and much of their family income because of the closure of countless businesses. People are also suffering mental health problems like never before in our lifetime as a result of isolation.

[*English*]

Our government has done its best to be there for Canadians through it all. Among the measures that are included in this bill is an increase to the Canada child benefit, referred to by its acronym, the CCB, for low- and middle-income families, totalling up to \$1,200 in 2021 for each child under the age of six. We know that it is expensive to raise a child, and doing so during such uncertain times can be extremely stressful. The price of groceries and other necessities has gone up.

It is important for us to support families by giving Canadians who are raising small children, and who need it most, a boost. I know that many of the families in my riding will be benefiting from this measure. The total increase in the CCB payments will amount to about 20% of the maximum annual payment, and this measure will benefit 1.6 million families and 2.1 million children in Canada.

Data show us that young people are the ones hardest hit by the COVID-19 job losses in Canada. It is more difficult now for young Canadians to get a good job in their field after they graduate than it was before. That is why our government has tried to find new and innovative ways to support young Canadians by creating opportunities for them to gain relevant work and volunteer experience.

*Government Orders*

Additionally, thanks to Bill C-14, we will be able to ease the financial burden of student debt during the recovery for up to 1.4 million Canadians by eliminating the interest on repayment of the federal portion of the Canada student loans and Canada apprentice loans for the year 2021-22. This measure will bring \$329.4 million in relief to Canadians who are looking for work or who are otherwise in the early stages of their careers.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

As I mentioned before, our economy was hit hard by the lockdowns in various provinces. Small businesses such as restaurants and local shops have been severely affected by the public health measures, yet many are doing their best to stay open and keep their workers on the payroll.

Fortunately, thanks to the co-operation of all of the members in the House and our government's initiative, we have succeeded in helping numerous Canadian businesses since the start of the crisis. The wage subsidy and the original rent relief program known as Canada emergency commercial rent assistance for small businesses helped companies survive until the summer, when they were finally allowed to reopen. However, the program had its problems. Not all businesses were able to benefit, since they had to rely on their landlord to apply to the federal government.

[*English*]

At the time, many businesses in my riding had reached out to me to let me know that this was not working for them because their landlords were not willing to help them. The government came back with a better program that allowed businesses to apply directly for rental assistance. Bill C-14 will allow even more flexibility to help businesses during their most difficult moments, as it formally provides that an expense, such as rent, can qualify as an eligible expense under the new Canada emergency rent subsidy when it becomes due, so businesses can access the subsidy before the expense is actually paid.

[*Translation*]

More importantly, Bill C-14 will give the government additional funds to help Canadians get through the pandemic and return to normal as quickly and effectively as possible.

Since many Canadians have been living in isolation for the past 10 months, some of them have developed mental health issues. For many of them, it has become a major problem. Furthermore, many family doctors are not seeing patients in person right now, instead offering services by telephone or video conference because that is safer for everyone.

In an effort to provide them with the best support possible, in this bill, our government will invest \$133 million to improve access to virtual care, mental health tools and substance use programs in order to help those who, in addition to trying to survive COVID-19, are struggling with addiction and fighting for their mental health as well as their overall health.

[*English*]

Additionally, Canadians can expect, and they do expect, their government to invest in a way out of the current reality we are liv-

ing in. They want the vaccines to come quickly so we can return to normalcy and our businesses can begin to reopen. Thanks to measures already put in place, our government has been able to invest millions in testing, medical research, vaccines and more.

Bill C-14 would provide the government with up to an additional \$262.6 million for a suite of COVID-19 initiatives, including testing, medical research, countermeasures, vaccine funding and development, border and travel measures, and isolation sites for those returning Canadians.

Bill C-14 would allow our government to continue making the necessary investments to weather the pandemic and support the economic recovery. Now is not the time for austerity. It is time to invest the amount we need to in order to get Canadians out of the situation they are in, a situation that everyone is tired of and that is taking a major toll on all Canadians.

It is time to invest in vaccines. It is time to invest in ensuring Canadians have what they need to get through this difficult time.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Saint-Laurent spoke at length about ways of getting out of this health crisis and, of course, addressed the issue of vaccines. Let us talk about that.

People seem to be surprised that the United States and the European Commission are putting their own citizens first. Quebec actually used to have vaccine laboratories. The government did not realize how little vaccine manufacturing capacity there is. In its economic statement, instead of figuring out how to make up for our dependence on foreign manufacturers, the government is proposing standards for long-term care facilities.

Does my colleague not think that her government should focus on our dependence on foreign vaccine manufacturing, because there will be more pandemics?

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from the Bloc Québécois for her question.

I am entirely in agreement that Canada should address this question and find ways of producing vaccines here. Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic is the first major pandemic our generation has faced. It is obvious that we need to invest in businesses that develop vaccines. However, it was very important to invest in the seven businesses that were already producing vaccines.

It was also very important to invest in our long-term care facilities, because the pandemic brought serious problems to light. I still agree that we need to invest in research and find ways of strengthening our domestic pharmaceutical companies.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for talking about mental health and addiction. I was with my new friend Mark, who has had his own recovery journey of living with addictions. He lived at a therapeutic treatment centre, long-term care that gave him the complex supports he needed.

I joined Mark on Sunday morning because there were 38 people sleeping in doorways in Port Alberni. They have nowhere to live. We had coffee, hot chocolate and some food with them on Sunday morning, and everyone said they cannot get anywhere without help.

The member talked about a way out. They need a way out, and the rapid housing initiative the Liberals announced, the 3,000 units, is not even a drop in the bucket. There are 360,000 Canadians who are homeless on any given day.

We have not seen any units in Port Alberni. We have an application in, but rural communities are being forgotten. People are dying. The federal government needs to step up instead of downloading onto the provinces.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Madam Speaker, I agree that homelessness is a major problem, and it has only been highlighted because of the pandemic. More people are on the streets now than there were before. Our government was the first in decades to propose the national housing strategy, where \$40 billion was to be invested in housing. Some of that money has gone out the door already to help with these investments, help build homes for people who do not have them and create affordable housing.

We are on the right track. I would strongly encourage the member to talk to Minister Hussen, who would probably be very willing to work with him in order—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I would like to remind the member that she is not to use the names of ministers or individuals.

We have time for a brief question. The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

• (1645)

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for outlining all of these different programs and needs that Canadians have.

One of the things I am deeply concerned about right now is the growing inequality and wealth disparity in this country. We have seen that over a long period of time, but right now we have 200,000 businesses that could go bankrupt and disappear, while the big box stores are surviving.

Does the hon. member think that it is time for a wealth tax and for a better and fairer tax system in this country?

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Madam Speaker, this is something that I am concerned about as well. I am going to be

### *Government Orders*

working with the government to see how we can move forward in order to help solve this problem and make Canada a fairer place for everyone.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Madam Speaker, as we said, we will support this bill. However, we are still disappointed. We need to do more than what is in the bill, much more.

First I will reiterate our requests, and I hope that the Minister of Finance will include them in her first budget, which we are eagerly awaiting. The betting is that it could come as early as late February, or else in March or April.

The federal government needs to contribute its fair share to health care. I heard the hon. member for Saint-Laurent say in her speech that long-term care facilities need funding, but she did not say anything about the standards the government wants to impose. Our long-term care facilities do not need standards, they need better funding. Barely 20¢ of every dollar spent on health care comes from the federal government. The rest is paid by Quebec and the provinces. This is unfair, and it needs to change. Health care costs have exploded since the beginning of the pandemic, and the federal government needs to increase funding on a permanent basis.

We are also asking for a permanent increase to the old age pension, since seniors were hit hard during the health crisis and deserve support.

I would also like to mention the need to immediately create a special committee to study COVID-19 spending, because it is an urgent matter. Yes, businesses and workers and their families need and still need help to get through the pandemic.

We have made several proposals that were accepted. All this costs money, which is normal, but we cannot forget the size of the deficit, as the Liberals are doing. It is a costly legacy to leave to future generations, and given the government's reckless spending, the WE scandal and the awarding of dubious contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars, it is urgent that we create the special committee that the government promised us to make sure that taxpayer money is being used for the right reasons, namely to help Canadians, not cronies.

We would have liked this bill and the economic statement to focus more on environmental issues. We have my colleague from Repentigny here who is proudly taking on this fight against climate change to protect the environment. The government is failing to implement a green recovery like we are proposing. The section on the environment is one of the smallest in the entire economic statement. The federal government is missing yet another opportunity to join the 21st century, create jobs and restart the economy with clean energy, research and regional economic development. Instead the government is merely announcing yet again that it may plant some trees some day. I sincerely hope that the upcoming budget will focus on a recovery that emphasizes the environment and a real green economy.

*Government Orders*

I want to come back to November's economic statement, which this bill is based on. A credit program for highly affected sectors was announced. We did not have any details until today, when we finally got a little bit of information about it. I am sure that my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue will ask me about that. The pandemic has been going on for more than 10 months, but the federal government says that it is still not ready to provide help to the tourism, hospitality, arts and culture, or major events sectors. We also see that Ottawa still has not announced any support for the aerospace sector. Clearly, a lot of work remains to be done for the industries hardest hit by COVID-19.

There were good intentions in the statement, but there is nothing in the bill. Today I got a little message saying that we will discuss it when I am questioned about it. Before the pandemic hit, Canada was the only country with a major aerospace industry but no aerospace policy. That is unacceptable. The pandemic had a direct impact on the industry, one it will not soon recover from. Some say it will take a decade. The government must urgently set up a targeted support program for the industry. France, Europe and the United States have done so, but Canada has not. The industry plays too important a role in our economy, especially Quebec's economy, to be abandoned. The government must take urgent action.

In addition to creating a targeted support program and an industry-specific strategy, the government should make better use of its civilian and military procurement budgets to buy Canadian-made aircraft. It should also set up a program to finance purchases of aircraft made in Canada to make it easier to sell them under the present conditions. The strategy also needs to include strong support for research and development. That is crucial in high-tech sectors like aerospace.

• (1650)

Our industry needs to stay on the leading edge, especially when it comes to the environment. Let me remind the House that the plane manufactured in Mirabel is the most fuel-efficient plane in the world. It is therefore ideally placed to fight climate change. In addition, it is the only plane capable of circulating fresh air while in flight, which is a significant advantage in a pandemic. The airlines that have these planes are leaving their other models on the ground in order to fly them because of the advantages I just mentioned. If there were a sales program, it would help them significantly.

One of the good things about the economic update is, of course, that the GST will apply to web giants as of July 1, 2021, but also that their revenue in Canada will be taxed by 2022. At last, some good news.

However, there is no reason to wait. This government has the power to act now, and it must act now. Quebec's culture and economy are suffering from the pandemic while the web giants are raking in record profits. These giants must take part in the recovery by paying what other companies are paying, sooner than next summer. They are currently exempt, which is unacceptable and must change. We welcome these announcements, but all of this can be done sooner than has been announced.

As I mentioned earlier, we will have to wait until we see the budget to learn more about the Liberals' recovery plan. Most of the measures in both the economic statement and Bill C-14 are mea-

asures that had already been announced rather than plans for the future. We are disappointed that the government is making highly targeted expenditures but not addressing the actual problem. We are in the midst of a public health crisis and we need to prioritize health and vulnerable Quebecers and Canadians.

I want to touch on one last point, about the Canada emergency wage subsidy. We have heard from all kinds of workers on this issue. Some large employers are apparently requesting this subsidy solely for the employees who are still working at the company and not for the workers that the company chose to lay off.

Since the implementation of the emergency wage subsidy, the government has gone on and on about how this subsidy is meant to help and provide an income for workers, including those who were laid off. This is in line with the spirit of the measures intended to help us through the pandemic, and it also helps maintain that employer-employee relationship. This is meant to help stabilize the economy and get it back up and running more quickly.

Why are some large employers refusing to pay this subsidy to the workers they laid off? We need to look into this issue, understand what is happening and do something about it. The government is implementing programs with the support of the House. In this case, some large employers appear to be misusing the program. That does not work and we need to change it. We will come back to this.

• (1655)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my question is about something that I have believed for many years as a parliamentarian, both at the provincial legislature in Manitoba and now as a member of Parliament in Ottawa. It is with regard to the important issue of health care. No matter the region, province or territory I have had discussions with, there seems to be a general feeling, which has been reinforced during the pandemic, that the federal government has more of a role to play in health care than just giving money. Long-term care and a pharmaceutical program are the two specific areas that constituents want me to advocate for.

I wonder if my friend could provide his thoughts on the idea that we need a national government to be involved in health care beyond just giving out cash.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader for his intervention, his comments and his question.

*Government Orders*

Clearly, he and I are not talking to the same people. I invite him to come to Quebec—virtually, of course, because of the pandemic—and visit the Quebec National Assembly to speak with any elected official there. Every one of them will tell him that health is a Quebec and provincial jurisdiction, and that all roles and standards are for Quebec to decide. It is not up to Ottawa to decide these matters.

In closing, I would remind the House that for every dollar spent on health care, just over 20¢ comes from Ottawa, while Quebecers pay half of their taxes to the federal government. We can do better.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his description of the leading-edge clean aerospace technology.

The government has had a string of failures, led by the Prime Minister, such as the dismantling of GPHIN, the early warning system for viruses; plowing PPE into landfills; refusing to allow rapid testing until October; no serum testing except for blood donors; and refusing to allow soldiers returning from the Military World Games in Wuhan, just before the virus was exposed, to be tested for COVID. Now the government is intimating that it will decide who is going to get to travel outside of Canada and who is not.

Given this wonderful aerospace technology being developed in the member's riding, what is he going to do and what are these future employees going to do if Canadians cannot travel?

[*Translation*]

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

The aerospace sector is not in my riding, but it obviously plays a vital role in Quebec's overall economy. There is, of course, a clear link between aerospace and aviation. In light of the pandemic and the COVID-19 variants, extra caution is required. That is what the Quebec premier has been telling the Prime Minister over and over again. We need to pay attention and we need to take action.

Early on, in the first wave, this government did not do its job. This caused more infections than we should have had. The Quebec government is saying that we need to pay attention. It is important to have a long-term vision, for when this crisis is behind us.

The aerospace industry is extremely important and must be supported so it can make a full recovery.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the question I want to ask my colleague concerns the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that we need leadership from the federal government.

As we know, many indigenous communities are going through a real crisis. Not only do they need more vaccines, but they also need investments in clean drinking water and a solution to the housing crisis.

Does my colleague believe that this should be a priority for the federal government, which does not seem to be the case, so that progress and real improvements can be made to the situation of people who are suffering right now?

• (1700)

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Madam Speaker, in short, yes. The Manawan Atikamekw live in my riding. They are in desperate need of health care. We stand with them. The government must do more for health care, especially during a pandemic.

[*English*]

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to have the opportunity today to discuss our government's plan to fight COVID-19 and support Canadians.

At the beginning of the pandemic, our government acted quickly and decisively to support Canadians through the crisis to help workers, businesses, the provinces and territories, municipalities, indigenous communities and public health officers to do the right thing. Our government has made major investments in health care, income support, paid sick leave and responding to the urgent needs of businesses. Our commitment to do whatever it takes to keep Canadians safe, healthy and solvent through the turbulence of this pandemic has always been at the heart of our plan to ensure that we are well positioned for a resilient recovery.

When the virus is under control and our economy is ready to absorb it, our government will deploy a stimulus package of up to between \$70 billion and \$100 billion over the next three fiscal years, roughly valued at between 3% to 4% of GDP. The growth plan will help us jump-start our recovery toward an economy that is greener, more innovative, more inclusive and more competitive. We will make smart, time-limited investments that act fast, while also making a long-term contribution to our shared prosperity, our competitiveness and our green transformation. We will spend this winter working with Canadians to plan and prepare these investments when the virus is under control.

Canadians know that inequality makes our economy less resilient, so it is key for us to ensure that young people have the opportunity to acquire skills and work experience, that all Canadians have the means to find housing, that women can fully participate in our economy, that racialized Canadians and indigenous people who missed opportunities are given a chance and that all communities have the 21st century infrastructure that people need. This plan includes investments in good jobs for Canadians and helps deliver on our commitment to create millions of jobs and bring jobs back to pre-pandemic levels. The investments proposed in the fall economic statement will help us achieve these goals, lay the foundation for a fair and lasting recovery and create good jobs for all Canadians.

### *Government Orders*

When it comes to jobs, many Canadians have already faced barriers to pre-pandemic employment, and they are now at risk of falling even further behind. This could have a long-term impact on their ability to build a career and create financial security for themselves and their families.

That is why our government proposes to invest an additional \$274 million over two years to further bolster training programs for those hardest hit by the pandemic, including marginalized and racialized women, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and recent newcomers to Canada. This funding will support the indigenous skills and employment training program, the foreign credential recognition program, the opportunities fund for persons with disabilities and the women's employment readiness Canada pilot project.

Let me reassure members of the House that our government is committed to ensuring that our job plan addresses the unique characteristics of this crisis and the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 has had on women. Job losses have affected people across Canada. They seem to have had a reassuring rebound, as 80% of the jobs lost at the beginning of the pandemic have been recovered, but employment gains have been slower for women.

As many of the hardest-hit industries disproportionately employ women, women have also faced a greater loss of earnings and hours worked. Lockdowns have led to closures of schools and child care centres across the country. For families with young children, it was more often than not mothers who took on the unpaid burden of care for children, many of them reducing their hours or leaving their jobs entirely. In September, our government announced in the Speech from the Throne that we will create an action plan for women in the economy to help more women get back into the workforce and ensure a feminist intersectional response to this pandemic and recovery.

● (1705)

With this fall economic statement, we are announcing the creation of a task force of diverse experts to help the government develop this plan. We are bringing the task force together in the coming weeks to begin the work of advising the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance on policies and measures to be included in the government's stimulus plan to support women's employment throughout the recovery period.

What is good for everyone must also be good for young people. The economic impact of COVID-19 on young Canadians is disproportionate. It is important that the government ensure that this pandemic does not derail their future.

Young people need to be able to transform their hard-earned knowledge and skills into secure, well-paying jobs. It is essential to their success and to Canada's future prosperity. That is why we are proposing to build on the employment, skills development and education supports available to young people and students over the summer. These measures include doubling student grants and funding for new employment opportunities with additional measures that will ease the financial burden on students and provide young people with more opportunities to gain work experience.

More specifically, we are proposing to allocate more than \$44 million to the Canada summer jobs program to increase the number of internships available; invest more than \$575 million over the next two years in the youth employment and skills strategy in order to be able to offer internships for young people; and eliminate the interest on the repayment of the federal portion of Canada student loans and the Canada apprenticeship loan program for 2021-22. This measure will apply to up to 1.4 million Canadians who are looking for work or are in the early stages of their careers.

The final issue I would like to touch on today is the work that we are undertaking to build a more inclusive and diverse Canada. Systemic racism and discrimination is a painful lived reality for Black and racialized Canadians and indigenous peoples. Data shows that racialized Canadians have experienced many of the worst health and economic impacts of the pandemic. Global events during the pandemic have also shone a spotlight on the realities of racism, particularly anti-Black racism, and that it still persists including here in Canada.

Our government has reiterated our commitment to fight racism in all its forms through clear and meaningful proposed investments in our fall economic statement. These are in a number of key areas: economic opportunity, representation at the highest levels of and throughout the public service, diversity in corporate Canada, modernizing the equity legislation to be truly inclusive, community empowerment, and action to address systemic racism in the justice system.

These measures reflect the advocacy and hard work of community leaders across Canada. We will ensure that senior government officials work directly with them to make sure that these programs are delivered as intended. Building on the previous investments, these are early steps in the work to be done to make sure that federal policies appropriately serve the historically underserved and in a manner that all Canadians deserve.

There is no doubt that the direction we take now will decide the future of our country. As members can see from the measures I have highlighted today, the government's stimulus package will make smart investments and create genuine sustained value for many years and generations to come. These are measures that will have a real impact on jobs in the short term and strengthen Canada's competitiveness in the long term. These are measures that will support people and communities hardest hit by this unparalleled economic crisis and provide economic benefits for a more inclusive workforce.

Bill C-14 is the first step in implementing these important measures and I hope that all of the House will support it. We must take advantage of the full potential of Canada and Canadians and what Canadians have to offer to create a stronger, more resilient Canada. Together, and now, is how we build the foundation for a better, fairer and more inclusive Canada for all, the Canada we all deserve.

• (1710)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I do not like to disillusion the novice MP, but his Liberal government did not act decisively. The government knew about the virus in December and did not do anything about it until St. Patrick's Day. The government told us the virus was not contagious and then told us it was contagious. It told us not to wear masks and now it is the law to wear masks. Millions of people are without jobs, and the government wants to play gender politics.

Let us get the vaccines that people want so desperately so that they can get back to work and out from under Draco's code.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Madam Speaker, I must admit that I have been a banker for almost 30 years and have seen our economy endure things like sovereign debt crisis, the tech bubble, the real estate bubble and interest rates at 18%. One thing I have learned throughout all of these crises is it is important for us to work together toward a common goal and avoid acrimonious criticism, which is counterproductive for everyone. I believe this government is willing to work with others and is keen to make sure we have a Canada everyone is proud of.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Newmarket—Aurora for his presentation.

I would like to hear what he has to say about farmers, a group that may have been forgotten in the suite of measures that the government wants to implement by passing Bill C-14. Have farmers been forgotten?

[English]

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Madam Speaker, having grown up on a 50-acre farm, I understand the specific challenges many farmers are facing, based largely on the capital investment required and, in many cases, struggling with the return on equity. I believe our government has undertaken a number of programs that support farmers. That commitment continues and will sustain the farm community as a result of this government being committed to making sure that everybody shares in the recovery as soon as possible.

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, in his remarks, we heard the member reflect that the government has done everything it can for the most vulnerable Canadians, but that simply is not true.

What does the hon. member have to say to the tens of thousands of Canadians living with disabilities, people who are in deep and dire need across the country who have still yet to receive a red cent from the government in support during COVID?

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Madam Speaker, I would remind the member of the comments I just completed and the commitments

### Government Orders

this government has outlined with respect to supporting disabled persons.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member for Newmarket—Aurora was also the mayor of Newmarket. Maybe in that role he gained a sense of how communities work through the not-for-profit organizations. The two of us have had some conversations about this as well.

Could the hon. member share his thoughts on the importance of supporting not-for-profits throughout this pandemic?

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Madam Speaker, I genuinely believe that not-for-profit organizations play a critical role in the recovery. We have seen that through some of the programs that are undertaken by the United Way. There are many organizations that contribute to our economy. If we were to give consideration to the volunteer hours that are contributed to our not-for-profit organizations, it would be in the value of \$80 billion. Some 4% of our GDP comes from not-for-profit organizations. These organizations are critically facing challenges and therefore, support for not-for-profit organizations is very important.

• (1715)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke referred to the member as a novice member as if to suggest that somehow he was less capable of understanding the concepts that we are engaged in here in Parliament. We should not be referring to people in such a way. I for one enjoy listening to the refreshing remarks from a novice member such as this one.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I do want to remind members to be careful with the wording they use. However, I believe that the point the member just raised is more of a point of debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Madam Speaker, this is a very important debate that we are having today. The most critical things facing this country right now are the fiscal economic situation and, of course, the vaccine situation. I have the privilege and honour of speaking to the vaccine issue this evening, which is where I am going focus most of my remarks in terms of the fiscal economic update.

Before us today we have Bill C-14, a bill to enact certain provisions of the economic statement. As members are aware, we had an economic statement tabled in this House. It was a fairly significant update, especially considering that we have not had a budget in this House in the last two years.

### *Government Orders*

First of all, I want to talk a little about history, because if I am leery about what the government is putting before us, it is with very good reason. As many people may recall, at one point the Prime Minister made the very infamous, or famous, comments about how budgets would balance themselves, and from the heart out. Clearly, budgets do not balance themselves.

In 2015 the current Liberal government had the good fortune to assume a very strong economy and a strong fiscal position. After working our way through the global recession, which was an extraordinary challenge, Conservatives did exactly what we said we would do. We said we were going to put some stimulus into the economy, and we put that stimulus in. We said we would get back to a balanced budget in a certain time frame. Many, certainly on my side of the House, miss our colleague Jim Flaherty, who was so articulate and so thoughtful in terms of how he was going to deal with both taking care of the economy of the nation and taking care of the government's finances.

After finding that budgets clearly do not balance themselves, the Liberals, who promised a balanced budget, found that they could not do that, so they started to talk about the debt-to-GDP ratio, and Liberals were actually having trouble meeting their fiscal anchors in terms of the debt-to-GDP ratio. Essentially what Liberals have done is abandon any sort of attempt at trying to maintain some sort of control, so we have no fiscal anchor.

Before the crisis hit, we had issues with an aging population and poor productivity. We had challenges and we were heading into some very difficult times. This was pre-pandemic. I do not know if people are aware of the flight of capital that was leaving this country because of some of the policies and positions the Liberal government was putting in place. We were seeing a flight of investments leaving Canada.

The pandemic, of course, is an extraordinary crisis, and countries across the world are having to determine how they are going to deal with this extraordinary crisis.

We now know that we have gone from a \$20-billion-plus deficit to likely one over \$400 billion and that we have surpassed \$1 trillion in debt. Day after day, I have witnessed a Prime Minister out on the porch announcing significant dollars with unfettered concern.

I do want to say, for those Liberals who are listening, that yes, we supported those measures, and yes, they were important measures during these extraordinary circumstances, but we certainly did not support everything the Prime Minister was announcing every day. We did realize that the CERB and rental assistance had to go out. However, there is a difference between supporting measures in the pandemic and some of the unfettered spending that we have seen.

What we have before is a fiscal update and a vague commitment by the Minister of Finance that she was going to have to spend \$100 billion to build back better, so Canadians can understand if we are a little leery in terms of what the Liberals plan to do and how they plan to do it.

• (1720)

Within this particular update, there are some important measures. I will talk about the area of specific concern in part 7 after I reflect on one part of what the concern was. This is where the government needs to do some soul-searching and really wonder how it handled this pandemic. I am talking about long-term care homes.

We know that the vast majority of the deaths from the pandemic have been in our long-term care homes. We knew that in phase one. When we look at the tragedy that is happening today and what is happening in our long-term care homes, it has to break our hearts.

I certainly remember that at the time, we said the government had a window of opportunity to prepare for phase two. We knew we had challenges in our homes and we knew we had some time between phase one and phase two. What happened? The government got so sidetracked with the WE scandal and other issues that, other than sending some money to the provinces to support vulnerable populations, it did nothing.

We now have a commitment from the government for a few things. One is \$1 billion for our long-term care homes. It is too late. That \$1 billion should have been in the hands of the provinces between phase one and phase two to deal with infection control and do the minor modifications that would make the environment safer through investing capital into infrastructure for airflow. The Liberals had a window of opportunity; they missed it, and now they are saying that they are going to give \$1 billion. By the time that money gets out the door, hopefully our residents will be vaccinated, but they missed an opportunity to do what needed to be done, and now they are saying they are going to give \$1 billion for measures that should have been done months ago.

The other thing is that their answer to long-term care was talking about national standards. Whether one agrees with national standards or does not agree, everyone in government knew that it would take years to develop national standards. It was not a measure that was going to deal with the crisis of the pandemic.

What we have is a government that was negligent. The Liberals were sidetracked because they were so busy handing dollars to their friends at WE that they did not do the basics that they should have been doing to prepare for wave two, and that negligence is on their shoulders.

That is just one part of the fiscal update, and when I read it, it broke my heart, because it is too late. It should have been there earlier, so I felt it was important to draw attention to that particular component.

To go back to the main legislation, perhaps the reason that I find it so difficult to support it is that we have not had a budget. We had an economic update. We had some very vague talk from the finance minister about building back better, picking their winners and losers and, if it is anything like WE, making sure that Liberal-friendly companies were part of that build back better idea.

*Government Orders*

What they have asked for in part 7 is spending authority to be able to borrow money that far exceeds even their \$100 billion. For any parliamentarian to give that authorization for borrowing power to the Government of Canada without having had a budget in the last two years is, quite frankly, irresponsible.

Therefore, I would recommend that the government take part 7 out of this legislation. Let us move forward with those measures in parts 1 to 6 that are actually going to help people. That would certainly be an approach that would be supportable.

• (1725)

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I know that the member has worked on the issue of Anbang and the Chinese state government takeover of Canadian long-term health care facilities, and I ask her whether now would be the appropriate time to review the for-profit model. Between those government-controlled investments and private equity firms, a series of things have taken place, and in my neck of the woods here, it is our private facilities that have had the biggest problems with COVID illnesses and deaths and require government intervention.

Therefore, I ask her for her thoughts on why it is so important, as we have an aging population, to continue to have a profit-driven model to care for our loved ones, as opposed to a not-for-profit model. In a not-for-profit model, the profits and proceeds, if there were any, would be modest, but more importantly, they would be rolled back to protecting and providing a quality of life that is of a higher standard, as opposed to making a profit and shipping it out of our country at the expense of our seniors.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Madam Speaker, we did express great concern about the Anbang takeover of our seniors' facilities. It is a state-owned enterprise, and I think it is important to note that previous to the pandemic, when a number of those facilities on the island were found to be providing inadequate care, the health authority actually had to take them over.

I remember, and at the time they should have been held accountable. When we were questioning on Anbang and its takeover, the Prime Minister raved about the standards and how the provinces had excellent quality and would make sure there were no issues with standards in our care homes. Again, that is something that he needs to be held accountable for.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I have to say to my friend from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo that we have a blind date tonight. We are featured in the TVO show that is coming up tonight.

In any case, my question is about whether she shares my concern that in this pandemic we are seeing too many really important small businesses that play a big role in our transportation and tourism infrastructure being pushed into facing bankruptcy. No government program is yet helping them. The coach bus line services across Canada are calling out for help, and they are not getting it. In my area here on Vancouver Island, it is Wilson's bus lines, but we are talking coast to coast, including all the way to Maritime Bus in the Maritimes.

I wonder if my hon. colleague has any comments on that.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Madam Speaker, this is a wider issue than just the pandemic and what has happened with the pandemic. We know that when Greyhound stopped its service, the government at the time said that it was going to give it a couple of years and that it would help with routes where Greyhound was going to be challenged.

Certainly in the riding I represent, the ability for people to come down the North Thompson Valley is not there. That was a route that was never even adapted to in the new model. We had a problem before the pandemic. I know that here flights out of the airport are almost nil, and of course we do not have an adequate service. People who need to get to Vancouver for cancer treatments and people who need to go to other places for essential services are completely stymied, and the pandemic has made it much worse.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, we know that the Parliamentary Budget Officer deplors the government's lack of transparency. I would like to know if the member agrees with the Bloc Québécois' plan to create a special committee to study all COVID-19 spending.

• (1730)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it has been interesting to compare the transparency of the government with other governments around the world. For example, in many countries we can look at the vaccines, know what the contracts are and what was purchased. In Canada, it is completely non-transparent.

For a government that is committed to transparency, and sunlight being the best disinfectant, it certainly has fallen through and broken another commitment it made to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[English]***FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS ACT**

The House resumed from October 28, 2020 consideration of the motion that Bill C-224, an act to amend an act to authorize the making of certain fiscal payments to provinces, and to authorize the entry into tax collection agreements with provinces, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to provide some thoughts with regard to an important issue that goes beyond federal tax return forms and filing those forms. It has a lot to do with our national identity and the types of services we provide as a country, as well as how we best finance those programs. It also has to do with the important role the Canada Revenue Agency plays in our society.

That really has been amplified this year with the pandemic. Outstanding work has been demonstrated by our professional civil servants through the Canada Revenue Agency. I want to take a moment to recognize the valuable contributions they have made during this very difficult time.

I was looking at what I might want to say on this legislation. I often forgo notes and instead speak on a few points. I want to reference a note I received. In the COVID-19 pandemic, CRA, as an essential support to millions of Canadians, came to the plate. It delivered the Canada emergency response benefit, CERB, which we all know came from nowhere. This fantastic program was created and CRA was an essential support for Canadians with respect to it. That benefit reached somewhere in the neighbourhood of 8.8 million people, including approximately two million in the province of Quebec. Imagine how much more difficult it would have been if we did not have the CRA performing as it did during the pandemic.

The Canadian emergency wage subsidy program reached 3.5 million Canadians. In the province of Quebec, we are talking about 860,000 Quebecers. We can describe the efforts supporting students and young people, again through the CRA. The emergency student benefit reached 708,000 Canadians, about 140,000 of whom were from the province of Quebec.

One could take a snapshot of 2020 and recognize the value of the Canada Revenue Agency. We understand the role it plays in getting the necessary revenues, and how diligent it is in collecting taxes. In fact, we have been using the CRA to look at ways to go after individuals who try to avoid paying taxes. This government has invested close to a billion dollars over two federal budgets to go after individuals who were not paying their fair share or were trying to avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

CRA employs thousands of Canadians, many of whom call Quebec their home province. CRA plays a very important role in the city of Winnipeg. I would like to think we would continue to support the Canada Revenue Agency, because it is absolutely fundamental to have. Without it, we would not be able to generate the revenues required to provide the many spending programs we do.

• (1735)

Many members of the Bloc are saying that Quebec has a tax-collecting system and the Government of Canada has a tax-collecting system. They are arguing that the federal government could forfeit its responsibility of collecting taxes in the Province of Quebec in favour of Quebec collecting it all and then handing over a portion to the federal government.

In previous debates in the House, I have talked about my heritage. My ancestors trace directly to the province of Quebec. I believe it is in Canada's best interests, by which I mean all regions of our country, to have a single collection agency. The best government to accomplish that is the national government.

Can members imagine if we had taxation collection from all the provinces and territories? That would be chaotic. The national government continues to be in the best position to ensure that we have a standard that is applicable across the country. We can still respect the interests of each region, province and territory. We have a certain level of expertise and we have responsibility. Over the years, I believe the national government, through the CRA, has done an outstanding job for Canadians in all regions.

I wonder why the Conservatives, at times, seem to be very sympathetic to this particular piece of legislation. I am disappointed by that. Hopefully, I will be surprised and I will see the Conservatives vote against it.

Earlier today, I was asking members of the Bloc questions about health care, believing that it is important to recognize provincial jurisdiction issues but emphasizing that there is still a role for the national government to play in it. I can articulate why we recognize that as a fact.

I have not heard from Bloc members why they believe the CRA should give up that responsibility for a provincial jurisdiction, whether it is Quebec today, or another province or territory in the future. It seems to me the Bloc does this for reasons that are not in the nation's best interests.

The Conservative Party, on the other hand, claims to want to be a strong national party. However, it seems prepared to decentralize certain responsibilities the Government of Canada not only should have, but is doing in a manner that serves Canadians to the optimum benefit. All one needs to do is to reflect on the past year, as I have pointed out, and how well CRA has served Canadians. It is not just an agency that collects. It is a fundamental part of the way in which we operate as—

• (1740)

*[Translation]*

**Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The interpretation is not working.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I thank the hon. member and would ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to wait a moment.

*Private Members' Business*

[English]

I wonder if we could just check the interpretation. Thank you.

I will just ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to wrap up with his last few thoughts. There is only about 20 seconds in his time. Then we will go on to the next speaker.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I have one final thought just to emphasize the incredible efforts we have seen by the CRA in 2020 and to amplify how important it is to our nation.

My thanks to CRA employees for everything they have done in serving Canadians from all regions of our country for these past 12 months. I look forward to that ongoing professionalism in the year ahead.

[Translation]

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise virtually in the House today to talk about an issue that is so important to many of my friends in Quebec.

[English]

It is absolutely my pleasure to rise today on Bill C-224, an act to amend an act to authorize the making of certain fiscal payments to provinces, and to authorize the entry into tax collection agreements with provinces.

Before I get into the substance of my remarks, I would like to address the very learned comments of the previous speaker. When we talk about Canada and the great country that we are, yes, Canadians believe in a strong Canada. There is no doubt about that. However, that does not mean that we do not also believe in provinces having a certain amount of autonomy and freedom to do the great things they do.

I would be remiss if I did not address the provincial governments and the provincial workers who are also doing a fantastic job. I would particularly point out our front-line workers, many of whom work for our provinces and who are doing a fabulous job, including our nurses and doctors, keeping our country safe.

I would like to directly address the member's comments and say that Conservatives will always stand for a strong Canada, but we also believe in respecting provincial jurisdiction and provinces' right to a certain amount of autonomy.

Getting to the substance of my remarks, as the shadow cabinet minister for national revenue and having been a previous practitioner in the area of taxation, I know tax season is an extremely stressful and confusing time for many Canadians across this great land of ours. I can confirm that in my practice, and also in my role as the shadow cabinet minister for national revenue, I can say that Canadians have learned the hard way, unfortunately, many times, that the income tax system is far too complicated. If anyone doubts me, they should go online, or better yet, pick up a copy of the Income Tax Code. They will see that it is about yay thick or so. Average Canadians should try to open it up and read it. I defy average parliamentarians to try to grab that Income Tax Act and even understand the first 20 pages in it. It is incomprehensible. It goes from

subcomponent to the subcomponent to the subcommittee of this to the subpoint of this, and ongoing. It is a difficult book.

Anyone who knows me knows that I have long since been an advocate of simplifying the tax code. We need to flatten it. We need to make it fairer and more compassionate for Canadians across this great land of ours.

One area in particular that I would call out would be the fact that in order to understand and comply with the income tax rules, people have to understand the various rules and exemptions, and exemptions to the exemptions, and exemptions to exemptions. It is incredibly difficult. I cannot say in strong enough terms that the Income Tax Code is burdensome to Canadians. It is in fact a competitive disadvantage to Canadians, to Canadian businesses and, perhaps most regrettably, to charitable organizations. We need a Canadian Income Tax Code that is better, flatter and fairer to Canadians.

COVID-19 has been a trying time for our country. I would like to agree with the previous member that the CRA has done many great things. I know for a fact that many of our public service workers literally worked around the clock to make sure that the CERB and other benefits came out. Even as the government dawdled, the public service was there to push out those important cheques that people relied on.

I have to say that I have a real concern that with the CERB originally, there was some miscommunication. It went back and forth about whether the CERB was taxable or not. The government has come out and clearly said that in fact the CERB is taxable. I have to tell all Canadians right now that there were no source deductions taken.

• (1745)

Some Canadians might not be aware that when they get a paycheque, the government takes a deposit against their future taxes, and that is called a "source deduction", which is why, at the end of the year, they do not owe \$2,000, \$5,000, \$10,000 or \$100,000 in taxes. The government matches the deposit they pay versus what they actually owe. For many Canadians, it means they get money back in the form of a tax refund. Unfortunately, with respect to the CERB, the government did not take that source deduction, which means that Canadians will owe tax on it. They will effectively have to pay a portion of that CERB back.

I am surprised and, quite frankly, disappointed that the government has not gone out and told people about this. As people get ready to file their taxes, and tax season will soon upon us, I want to make sure that Canadians are aware of that. It is of critical importance, because it is estimated that throughout this pandemic 47% of the labour force turned to the CERB during the pandemic, which is one in four Canadians. Those Canadians who had additional income outside the CERB could very well owe additional money to the Canada Revenue Agency. We want to make sure that point gets out there.

*Private Members' Business*

I also want to mention that there are a couple of things going on right now with respect to the CRA and its audits. As I said, the public service has worked hard to get benefits like CERB out to Canadians, and I am appreciative of that. Nonetheless, I would call upon them to exercise restraint with respect to audits, as we called for in our motion when the CRA attempted to audit small business owners on the wage subsidy during the middle of the second wave of the pandemic, which was particularly acute in some provinces, such as Ontario and Quebec. Please, let us allow our Canadian business owners and Canadians to get back to work without the fear of an audit coming to them.

Getting back to the substance of the issue, the challenges caused by the Income Tax Act are particularly acute in Quebec. In fact, Quebec is currently the only province in Canada where residents are required to submit both a federal and a provincial tax return. On top of dealing with the pandemic and, of course, the devastating impact it has had on the provincial economy, the residents of Quebec also must file their income taxes not once but twice.

Members who have filed an income tax return, and I am sure all have, would know that it is a painful experience. I cannot imagine having to do that twice in one year. People in Quebec have rightly, to my mind, expressed a desire to simplify their tax filing experience and file a single tax return. In fact, the Assemblée nationale du Québec adopted a unanimous motion calling upon the federal government to allow Quebec to administer a single tax return.

Some critics may present a straw man argument that if Quebec collects its income tax, it may not remit it to the federal government. Aside from the obvious insult to the Government of Quebec, this is a disappointing argument. Quebec has been a faithful member of our great confederation and has been remitting money to the Canadian government year after year for decades, including, notably, the HST, and not once, to my recollection, has it missed a payment. I believe in the Province of Quebec, I believe in the civil service of Quebec, and I believe them to be more than capable of administering this.

My colleague, the hon. member for Joliette, has proposed Bill C-224, which would authorize provincial governments to collect federal income tax on behalf of the federal government, effectively simplifying the tax-filing experience for residents of Quebec, but we do have some questions with respect to how the bill would be implemented. For example, we want to make sure that CRA employees are protected and that there would never be any job losses as a result of this legislation. We want to make sure that the Province of Quebec will do as great a job as the CRA will do in administering and collecting these taxes. We are more than happy to discuss this at committee. I look forward to a productive discussion with expert testimony.

As the shadow cabinet minister of national revenue, I am very happy to support Bill C-224.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

We will always stand up for Quebec and the rights of Quebecers.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-224. I want to start by talking about the NDP's past involvement with this bill, which would authorize agreements with the provinces to collect income taxes.

This bill is at second reading. As members know, it will theoretically be sent to a committee, which will hear testimony and propose amendments. The bill will then return to the House at report stage and third reading. The bill still has to go through several steps. It is not complete, but I will come back to that.

The bill seeks to authorize the federal government to enter into agreements with Quebec and the provinces for the purpose of tax collection. We will vote in favour of this at second reading. We support this today just as we have supported it in the past. The NDP has always advocated for things or steps that improve our Confederation, which is why the NDP was the first political party to advocate for an official languages act, at a time when English was virtually the only official language in the country, with a few exceptions.

Second, the NDP was the first party to support the democratic principle of Quebec's right to self-determination.

The rights of official language minority communities, especially those of Canada's francophone communities, have increased significantly in every province where the NDP has been in power, be it my province, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba or Ontario.

The Sherbrooke declaration was brought forward by our former leader Jack Layton. We have always advocated for Quebec's ability to decide, with compensation, how it wants to manage certain programs that the federal government wanted to implement.

The NDP, the former member for Sherbrooke, Pierre-Luc Dusseault, and other members were the first to propose that Quebecers should fill out one tax return instead of two.

I lived in many parts of Quebec for years, including Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, the Eastern Townships, Montreal and the Outaouais, so I know that filling out two tax returns really complicates things. At one point, I even had to take classes in Sherbrooke to understand all the intricacies of two tax returns. I asked lots of questions, so I finally figured it out. The time it takes people to understand these complexities could be better spent in the community, at work or with family.

The principle is important, and we support it. Now we need to concentrate on the repercussions. I feel the bill is lacking in that regard. I really hope we can talk about that in committee so we can improve the bill.

*Private Members' Business*

● (1755)

When talking about this bill, no one wants to talk about the employees who will be affected once it comes into effect. We are talking about 4,700 jobs in Quebec, primarily in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region, which I know well, and the Mauricie region. The jobs of these loyal and very talented public servants seem uncertain at this point.

Other parties have also introduced similar bills in the House of Commons in the past. Pierre-Luc Dusseault, the former NDP member for Sherbrooke and former national revenue critic, proposed some amendments. Those amendments, which were rejected, were intended specifically to protect those jobs. It is not as though there is a shortage of work.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer tells us that we are losing \$25 billion a year to offshore tax havens. Wealthy and affluent Canadians, as well as large corporations that make huge profits, regularly use these tax havens to avoid paying taxes in Canada. This is not fair to Canadians, especially since we do not have the resources to create programs and services that could really help ordinary Canadian families.

We could do great things with that \$25 billion a year. Like the current Liberal government, the former Conservative governments did not do anything at all to put an end to all that special treatment, which means that a lot of our collective resources are slipping through our fingers, despite the efforts Canadians are making by paying their taxes.

That brings me to the improvement of the health care systems and the implementation of standards in long-term care facilities to support safe living for every senior. We are seeing the impact of the pandemic and the lack of resources and investments that could improve our health care systems and accomplish many other things. When we think of it that way, we can no longer afford to lose \$25 billion a year. These 5,000 public servants who are currently working for the Canada Revenue Agency could be tasked with closing all the existing tax loopholes.

These employees contribute to their region's growth. We are talking about a total payroll of \$150 million in Mauricie. I am very familiar with the region as I have been there many times. I am also familiar with the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean area because I lived there for several years. That is where I learned to speak French. There is no nicer accent than the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean accent. We are also talking about a total payroll of approximately \$150 million in that area. We cannot ignore the economic impact that the loss of those jobs could have on the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean and Mauricie regions.

As we examine this bill, we also have a responsibility to assess the impact it would have on employment and the payroll throughout Quebec and the regions. We agree that a committee should examine this important bill, but we also need to ensure that we talk to the public servants who are affected by this bill. We need to implement a strategy to ensure that no jobs will be lost and that the tax loopholes that are costing Canada a lot of money will be closed.

● (1800)

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I can tell by his applause that my colleague from Joliette is enthusiastic, which stands to reason because he is the author of the excellent Bill C-224.

I heard my NDP colleague say some things are missing from the bill, so I am counting on all my colleagues to collaborate in an effort to improve this bill and make sure it covers everything it needs to. I would not want to run into any trumped-up arguments along the way about how some little thing is missing here or there to justify opposition to the bill. If the purpose is worthy, we need to find solutions.

I think there are solutions to each of the objections raised so far. I will come back to that in a bit. Before I begin, Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would like to start my little timer to make sure I keep to my limit.

Anyway, I would once again like to salute, thank and congratulate our colleague from Joliette, who introduced the bill before us today.

This is an issue that keeps coming up in Quebec, and the Quebec National Assembly has now come to a consensus about it. This is something that the Government of Quebec is now calling for. In that regard, we know that the Premier of Quebec and the Prime Minister have had the opportunity to discuss this issue.

However, the federal government always seems to drag its feet. We are therefore going to talk about it and ask why the federal government is so reluctant, especially given the fact that this is not, constitutionally speaking, one of its responsibilities, as we will also see. The federal government took over this responsibility in 1916-17, given the circumstances at the time, which is understandable. However, the government conveniently forgot to relinquish that responsibility later, so now it is still overseeing a jurisdiction that is not its own and has been doing so for just over 100 years.

Quebeckers agree that there should be a single tax return. Why? Because that will result in significant savings not only for the government but also for businesses and taxpayers as individuals. We are talking about an annual cost of over \$400 million. That is what two tax returns cost. A single tax return would save a lot of money and would also be more efficient. I will give some examples in a just a moment.

*Private Members' Business*

I listened to my colleague from the NDP talk about tax evasion and tax avoidance. The current system of having two entities that do not share information does not help with the fight against tax evasion and tax avoidance. To answer this argument, I would say that, on the contrary, the proposal made by our colleague from Joliette would have a clear benefit and would be very appropriate for achieving this objective being pursued by our colleagues in the NDP, among others. Lastly, we would avoid confusion in data transcription from having to do everything twice, which can cause problems in that area as well.

Here is a question I am sure I will be asked: If having a single tax return is a good idea, why not have the Government of Canada administer it, as it does for the other provinces? My answer is that this overlooks the fact that Quebec is a nation. I am not just saying that to insist on our status. The fact that Quebec is a nation has even been recognized by the House.

Quebec, as a nation, should have a certain degree of fiscal autonomy so it can implement programs and policies that reflect its aspirations, needs, special status and distinct character.

As I mentioned a few moments ago, this would also overlook the fact that this power falls to Quebec and the provinces.

● (1805)

Fundamentally, under the Canadian Constitution, this power falls under Quebec's jurisdiction. Why did the federal government stick its nose in once again? During the First World War, the federal government asked if it could collect income taxes to help pay for the war effort. The provinces saw no problem with that. A century later, the federal government is still collecting income taxes.

When Maurice Duplessis created an income tax in Quebec, he did not do it just to show up the federal government because he thought we were distinct. He simply wanted to exercise Quebec's constitutional jurisdiction over taxes.

For some time now I have been hearing members, including my NDP colleague who spoke before me, put forward the legitimate argument of keeping jobs in Mauricie and Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. It is an argument worth considering, since families rely on those jobs. However, it is a fallacious argument because where there is a will on both sides, there is a way.

The best evidence of that is when the Government of Quebec took back control of labour, which the federal government had controlled until then. The two governments sat down and negotiated in good faith. It all went smoothly, with no job losses, and I believe the same can be done in this case.

The argument is that the federal government collects the taxes for all the provinces. That is fine, if the other provinces are willing to accept this intrusion into their jurisdictions. I would like to point out, however, that in Quebec, it is the Quebec government that collects the GST for the federal government. How is that possible? The two governments negotiated and arrived at a more efficient and economical solution. That is a good example.

The Government of Quebec has proven that it can do a good job for the federal government. If it can be done for the GST, why not for income tax? I therefore do not think that last argument holds

water. When the Quebec government began collecting the GST, no jobs were lost. As long as there is goodwill on both sides, I am confident that we can come up with solutions.

I do not mean to be disingenuous, but the Canada Revenue Agency has had some fairly bad press lately. I have heard some negative comments about Revenu Québec, but I should point out that Revenu Québec has not been in the news for unfavourable reasons in recent years. I will leave it at that, because I do not want anyone to claim I am being disingenuous.

I heard my colleague mention the discussions on the resolution the NDP adopted in Sherbrooke, as well as the political and constitutional future of Quebec and Canada. However, that is not what we are talking about here. This falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces in accordance with the Canadian Constitution. This is not about separatism or federalism. It is about respect for the Constitution, which is so important to our federalist colleagues.

When the Constitution works for them, they bring it up often. However, when the Constitution does not work in their favour, for example with respect to the provinces' exclusive jurisdiction over health, they ignore it and do not mention it much. It is out of respect for that Constitution that my colleague from Joliette has asked for Quebec to be allowed to collect income taxes for its government and for the federal government, as it already does with the GST.

● (1810)

[English]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge at the outset of this debate that the intent of the proposed legislation is appealing. It is only when we look at what it would mean in practice that its problems become apparent. These problems are significant: higher costs for taxpayers; inconsistent administration across jurisdictions; less capacity to move quickly, efficiently and effectively to support Canadians through emergencies like COVID-19; the need to renegotiate existing international tax treaties and agreements; employment disruptions; and job losses.

*Private Members' Business*

These adverse impacts may not have been taken into consideration when Quebec's National Assembly passed its motion back in May of 2018 calling on the federal government to allow the Province of Quebec to administer a single tax return. They also may not have been taken into account when Bill C-224 was drafted. However, it is our duty and obligation as representatives of Canadians to take them into account now. Canadians rightfully expect their governments to administer taxes and deliver programs in a fair, efficient and cost-effective manner. It is in this regard that Bill C-224 falls well short of this intent.

Let us take a moment to revisit these shortcomings. First and foremost, Bill C-224 would likely entail higher overall costs for Canadian taxpayers. That is because the Government of Canada collects and administers not only federal income taxes, but also income taxes of all the provinces and territories, except for corporate income tax in Alberta and personal and corporate income taxes in Quebec. This results in savings for taxpayers because a single tax administrator at the national level creates efficiencies and economies of scale that lower overall taxpayer administration costs. If a province were to assume responsibility for the collection and administration of federal income taxes, these efficiencies would be reduced, increasing costs to taxpayers.

Moving in the opposite direction and creating an additional layer of tax administration, as proposed in Bill C-224, would have the opposite effect. It would create inefficiencies, decrease economies of scale and increase overall per-taxpayer administration costs. It is an unavoidable fact that the cost of tax administration is driven by fixed investments in the technology and office space needed to administer taxes, and the administration of federal income tax by the Province of Quebec would not help lower these fixed costs in the province. Rather, these fixed costs would have to be incurred instead by both CRA and Revenu Québec.

Canadians would be right to ask who would pay for the increased costs that could arise from such duplication in investment and administration, and the Premier of Quebec has at least been forthright in providing the answer for them: the Government of Canada. The Premier of Quebec has made it clear that his government would seek reimbursement for costs associated with the administration of federal income taxes. Canadians may be curious about how much this will cost them, but in this respect, we have seen no proposed cost implications. Determining what the additional costs would be depends on the scope and scale of the tax programs transferred to Quebec and the outcome of the negotiations between governments.

However, based on experience of when the administration of sales tax was transferred from the Ontario government to the federal government following the harmonization of the GST and PST, and given the much greater scale of this change, it would be expected that the transition costs alone would be at least \$800 million, and likely more than this. This does not include increased costs from the loss of economies of scale for CRA or the costs associated with the renegotiation of our international agreements, even if our international partners were willing to entertain such negotiations.

What we do know for sure is that Bill C-224, by effectively creating a separate tax administrator for federal taxes in Quebec, would reduce the consistency of tax administration nationally. Doing so would impair CRA's administrative capacity, and therefore

the federal government's ability, to deliver timely and effective support to Canadians in the face of sudden national challenges and emergencies, as we have seen in the case of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

● (1815)

Bill C-224 would hobble our efforts at supporting Canadians not only nationally, but indeed internationally. Canada has over 100 international tax treaties and agreements that protect Canadians against double taxation and assist in addressing international tax evasion and avoidance. These treaties and agreements specify the Minister of National Revenue as Canada's competent authority, and we have no sense that our international partners would be interested in changing this arrangement. In fact, it is entirely possible that they may not want to interact with two or more separate tax administrations in their many treaties and agreements with Canada. The renegotiation of these treaties and agreements could take years and expend significant financial resources that could be put to better use at a time when we are confronted with challenges like the immense ones posed by COVID-19.

Bill C-224 would also introduce new complexities and costs related to the administration of federal benefits and programs, including the Canada child benefit, the Canada pension plan and employment insurance, given the significant links between these programs and the administration of personal income tax.

Last but not least, the bill could have a negative impact on jobs in communities that depend on them. There are currently between 4,800 and 5,500 CRA employees in Quebec, depending on the time of year, serving at 14 offices throughout the province. Around 60% of them are women. There are also many CRA employees working outside of Quebec who work on federal taxes for Quebec residents. Bill C-224 would inevitably change some of their employment situations. The impacts this carries with it are not just at the personal level, but also at the family and community levels.

While Bill C-224 would require the Government of Canada to carry these costs, it provides no detail or accounting in terms of their skill, which could be significant. Such an open-ended deal could lead to similar demands from other provinces seeking federal funding for the creation of their own tax administrative systems, leading to an inefficient patchwork of separate tax administration programs across Canada. This would lead to challenges similar to those I have just outlined but on a wider scale, with even higher per-taxpayer administration costs.

*Private Members' Business*

As I said at the outset, Canadians rightfully expect their governments to administer taxes and deliver programs in a fair, efficient and cost-effective manner. For all the reasons I have outlined today, Bill C-224 falls well short of this goal. Rather than lowering costs for taxpayers and supporting further efficiencies, it would take us in the opposite direction. That is why our government cannot support Bill C-224.

While we remain open to improving tax administration in Quebec, we can do this while maintaining Canada's role as the administrator of the federal income taxes in Quebec. We will continue to work together with Revenu Québec, with which we have a long-standing collaborative relationship, to find ways of streamlining the filing of taxes to ensure better harmonization of our respective tax administrations and make filing easier for Quebec taxpayers.

We are always open to making things better. However, for the reasons I have outlined today, Bill C-224 does not deliver on this front.

• (1820)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before we resume debate with the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, I will let him know there are only about three minutes remaining in the time in order for us to permit five minutes for the sponsor of the bill to have his right of reply.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will try to speak quickly.

I am proud to support Bill C-224, which would authorize Quebecers to file a single tax return.

Some people may be wondering what I am talking about. Quebecers have to file two tax returns a year, as though filing a single tax return were not already hard enough for many Canadians. Quebec is the only province with a confusing system that requires two tax returns.

[English]

Conservatives are proud to support Quebec's desire to require only one tax return to be filed by Quebecers. It is a reality in other parts of Canada that people only have to file one tax return, and for a lot of people, I think filing one tax return is quite enough.

The government member who spoke before me, in a desperate effort to justify the government's opposition to this concept, trotted out this old Liberal trope that centralization means efficiency, that the more the federal government does, the more efficient it is going to be and, by the way, let us also worry that there will be less work for federal employees, not seeming to notice the inherent contradiction in those arguments.

On the Conservative side, we believe there are many worthwhile things that we could have employees at Revenue Canada do. Perhaps the government could finally support a Conservative idea, which is to give CRA a duty of care when it comes to serving Canadians and maybe redeploy those employees just to have the

additional time and flexibility to provide greater service and response and care to people who have questions and issues.

Really, it is just fundamentally, philosophically wrong that the Liberals always think that centralization is efficiency. On the Conservative side, we understand the value of subsidiarity, of having services delivered at the level closest to the people, that it is practical to do so. We believe in empowering provincial governments and municipal governments; respecting the role of families, of communities and of individuals; respecting individual rights and not thinking that the federal government taking more and more power for itself away from individuals, away from families and away from provincial and municipal governments is the way to go. Government is not always the solution, and bigger government, national government, is not always the solution when provincial governments and municipal governments are closer and more responsive to people.

• (1825)

[Translation]

I had many other comments to make, but I will simply say that I am proud to support this bill at this stage.

[English]

I look forward to the study that is going to take place at committee as we further work to refine it and to operationalize these principles of subsidiarity and respect for provincial governments that are a key part of what Conservatives stand for.

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am pleased to give the hon. member for Joliette his right of reply.

The hon. member has the floor for five minutes.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to wish you a happy new year and hope that we will turn the page on this pandemic.

I listened carefully and with interest to my colleagues' interventions on establishing a single tax return administered by Quebec. I will start by thanking my colleague from Montarville for his eloquent speech, and also my colleague from La Prairie. I also acknowledge the speeches made by my Conservative colleagues, who seem to be receptive to this bill. I thank them.

The same goes for my NDP colleagues. I listened carefully to the interventions of the members for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and New Westminster—Burnaby. I see that the NDP is open to the principle, but has concerns about protecting jobs. That is my concern as well, and I know that we will be able to improve this bill in committee to address this very legitimate concern. The bill was actually drafted with this issue in mind.

I was very disappointed to hear the Liberal Party members voicing their opposition to this bill, mostly because their arguments are not at all valid. For example, their contention that they plan to vote against the bill in order to save money because it would cost more to administer a single tax return than it would to administer two does not make any sense.

What I understand from their spurious arguments is that the government and the Liberal Party are against the bill but for reasons that they do not want to discuss. That much is clear.

If we were not in the midst of a pandemic, I would try to have an informal discussion with the Minister of Finance to find out the real reasons why the Liberals are opposing this bill. I would like to remind members that this bill on a single tax return administered by Quebec is widely supported.

What is more, this is not a major undertaking but rather a simple improvement to our way of doing things intended to make life easier for individuals and businesses in Quebec. Under this bill, they would have to file only one tax return instead of two and answer to only one agency instead of two. The bill would also eliminate the duplication of effort. That is all.

I would like to point out once again that there is consensus in Quebec on this legislation. The National Assembly has expressed its unanimous support for it. Premier Legault has formally requested it from the Prime Minister of this federal government. An overwhelming majority of Quebecers support this bill. All of corporate Quebec supports this idea, including chambers of commerce, the Conseil du patronat du Québec, independent business owners, the Quebec CPA Order and many unions.

The bill is good for Quebecers. According to the IRAI, it will save \$425 million a year. Individuals will save \$39 million, businesses will save \$99 million, and \$287 million would be saved by eliminating bureaucratic duplication. This bill will allow Quebec to crack down on tax havens more effectively on its own, rather than relying on Ottawa, which is asleep at the wheel.

This is a pretty simple bill. There is nothing revolutionary about it. It respects the Quebec nation and saves everyone time and money.

I would also remind the House that, 20 years ago, after years of negotiations, Quebec City managed to come to an agreement with Ottawa on the collection of sales tax from businesses. Rather than Ottawa collecting the GST and Quebec collecting the QST, Revenu Québec collects both the GST and the QST at the same time. This means far less paperwork for businesses and generates significant savings. Revenu Québec is present in every region of Quebec, and this system works well. It has been successful, and no one complains about it.

I would therefore ask my colleagues to support this bill for a single tax return administered by Quebec, to finish what was started 20 years ago.

• (1830)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question is on the motion.

*S. O. 52*

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

The hon. member for Joliette.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to order made Monday, January 25, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, January 27, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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## EMERGENCY DEBATE

[*English*]

### COVID-19 VACCINE

**The Deputy 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 COVID-19 vaccine.

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

That this House do now adjourn.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be dividing my time with the shadow minister for health, the MP for Calgary Nose Hill.

This is an emergency debate so that Parliament can be seized with the lack of vaccines and the lack of an effective and consistent rollout of vaccines in a pandemic.

Today, the Prime Minister described the situation as things being in “good shape”, which is his quote, for vaccine deliveries in Canada. He thinks we are in good shape while COVID cases are setting record numbers in a week that Canada is receiving zero vaccines. He thinks we are in good shape when Canadians will only receive 8% of the vaccines his government promised Canadians just last month, 8%.

If this is what the Prime Minister considers “good shape”, what does he consider terrible shape, 3%? Canadians need a prime minister who understands that things are not okay, that Canadians are not okay.

Yesterday marked the one-year anniversary of the first presumptive COVID-19 case in Canada, and since then, almost 20,000 Canadian families have had to face the loss of a loved one due to COVID-19

[*Translation*]

Today the Prime Minister is telling us that everything is fine, but I refuse to bury my head in the sand like him. We have to be honest with Canadians: Everything is not fine.

Yesterday was the one-year anniversary of Canada's first presumed case of COVID-19. Since then, 10% of our fellow citizens have lost their jobs, and thousands of businesses have closed their doors.

S. O. 52

[English]

We must secure vaccines; we must secure jobs and we must act now to secure our future.

What has the Liberal government done to improve its slow and confused approach? We want to see the government succeed in securing vaccines for Canada because vaccines let us turn the corner on COVID-19, but in reality, time and time again the government lets Canadians down.

Last spring, we saw countries hoarding PPE when faced with a global crisis. Planes full of supplies were diverted or never arrived. We saw countries stop the export of PPE from their countries. The Deputy Prime Minister called trying to secure medical supplies during the first wave the “wild west”, so are we really surprised to see the same thing happening with vaccines? It seems that time and time again the Prime Minister and the Liberal government never learned a single lesson from the first wave of this pandemic.

There is no plan B because there was never an effective plan A for the distribution and securing of vaccines for Canadians. Now we are learning the European Union is stopping vaccines before they leave its borders. All of our present vaccine supply comes from Europe, so where does that leave Canadians?

This week, in the midst of a raging pandemic, we are receiving zero vaccines. Is that an indication of where we are going in the next few weeks? The health and prosperity of Canadians is at stake. The bottom line is we need vaccines to secure our future, rebuild our economy and get Canadians back to work.

While Canada's Conservatives are committed to protecting jobs, the Liberals appear to be holding meetings to save their own. With the return of the House, our team will relentlessly focus on the COVID-19 recovery, jobs, rising wages and getting Canada's economy and finances back on track.

The Liberals, by contrast, view this pandemic as an opportunity to experiment on risky, ideologically driven and unproven schemes involving the Canadian economy. They want to reimagine the economy, which means they will decide which Canadians get jobs and what sectors they target for recovery.

This Liberal "Ottawa knows best" approach is a distraction from getting vaccines into the arms of Canadians and getting Canadians back to work in every sector and in every region of this country.

• (1835)

[Translation]

At the beginning of the pandemic, the Liberals decided to send some of our medical equipment to China. We ended up having to buy that same equipment at exorbitant prices.

Now the Prime Minister wants to play with our economy instead of finding a stable solution for vaccines. This is not the time to experiment with our economy. This is not the time to push an ideology. The only goal should be acquiring vaccines so we can get our economy up and running again. The government needs to work with the opposition parties to improve distribution.

[English]

Canadians are also feeling a range of pandemic side effects. We are all seeing this in our ridings. Some two-fifths of Canadian workers are worried about the mental health and wellness of one of their colleagues. Hundreds of thousands of surgeries across this country have been delayed. Millions of people have lost their jobs. Millions of people have not been able to see their family members, in some cases for months.

[Translation]

The pandemic is having numerous side effects. Mental health problems are growing every day. Families are being left to educate their children at home.

[English]

The ability to get our country to rebuild the economy and get Canadians back to work in every sector, in every part of the country, so that we can pull together and bounce back from COVID, hinges on a smooth and stable rollout of vaccines. As I have said several times this week, the opposition Conservatives want the government to succeed. We want to see these vaccines. Our nation literally depends upon it for turning the corner in this pandemic.

In October, the opposition passed a sweeping motion to direct the health committee to study the COVID-19 pandemic. That included information about the government's vaccine rollout and key related documents. It became clear then, with each week and with more documents, that the government had no real plan to speak of. It was late to the game on vaccine procurement.

The Liberals then took a victory lap when they announced deals with Pfizer and a few other companies. They boasted about their portfolio of vaccines over the next several years. However, Canadians do not have several years to wait. They need vaccines now, just as other countries are getting. At the very least, Canadians need the knowledge of when they can anticipate receiving a vaccine and life starting to return to normal.

Even the government's own MPs are confused. Last night the member for Hull—Aylmer said the government was counting on vaccines yet to be approved to reach its own numbers. If Liberal MPs do not know what the plan is, how are Canadians supposed to know what the plan is?

• (1840)

[Translation]

The key to getting our country back on track is vaccines. We need a reliable government. The truth is that there is now a shortage of vaccines. The Prime Minister talks a good game, but the reality is that we will not receive any Pfizer vaccines this week.

[English]

Premiers report they are running out of vaccines. This week Canadians know we are receiving zero vaccines. Next week, according to a revised schedule, Canada will receive less than a third of what the government said we would have just a month ago. The following week, the schedule uses the term “unknown”. Unknown is proof there is no plan.

Between now and the middle of February, Canada was supposed to receive a million vaccines. Instead, we will be getting 8% of that. Perhaps the Prime Minister thinks that 8% is acceptable. The Conservatives do not.

We need to secure our future. We need better from a slow and always confused government, and a Prime Minister who chose to partner with a Chinese firm to develop a vaccine. It was a reckless partnership that broke down and resulted in us being months behind our peer countries.

The Liberals did not move quickly. They partnered with the wrong country. They lost the chance to manufacture the vaccine here at home. Again, the Liberals learned nothing from the first wave of the pandemic. The Prime Minister and his deputy rode us back into the Wild West, where vaccines can be withheld and Canada is falling behind. We need to do better.

[Translation]

We want our government to succeed, but the Prime Minister is letting us down.

We need to work together.

[English]

It is imperative we work together to get the vaccines we need to get this country moving and get people working to secure our future. Canadians deserve leadership. They deserve a plan tonight. We will work together to push for just that.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for the last 10 minutes I have heard the Leader of the Opposition go on and on about everything that this government has done wrong. Meanwhile, he brings forward a motion to have this debate tonight and keeps repeating the phrase, “We want them to succeed.” He concludes his speech by saying he is here to work with us, but he offered absolutely nothing in the 10 minutes he spoke, other than to trash-talk this government.

If I can use his words, maybe it is time that we work collaboratively. Let us get to work.

**Hon. Erin O’Toole:** Mr. Speaker, when the pandemic started, I stopped my leadership campaign. I spoke directly to three top ministers of the Crown and volunteered to work in a union cabinet to get this country moving to save our country. My experience in the military and the private sector working on the approval of health care products would have meant that we would have had the regulatory process to approve the mRNA vaccine. We were eight months behind the developed world. The member for Kingston and the Islands, which has Queen’s University, an incredible medical school, should go and tour it and learn some more about the capacity of our own country.

*S. O. 52*

This year marks 100 years since insulin was discovered by Banting and Best. We can be the best, but 8% is unacceptable. It is failure. The government was late on the border, late on tests, late on vaccines and opaque on any details about the pandemic. We can and must do better, so we can turn the corner and secure our future. We will give that to Canadians.

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill for requesting this emergency debate. I also welcome the speech of the Leader of the Opposition with whom I share many of the ideas that have been mentioned.

The Liberals have obviously set the table for an election. In this context, the major element that will determine whether there will be an election or not, the crux of the matter, is the vaccine. The vaccine is produced neither in Quebec nor in Canada, and yet, just 15 years ago, the pharmaceutical industry was one of the flagships of Quebec’s economy. This is no longer the case since a Paul Martin government suspended technology partnerships Canada, the risk-sharing investment program, and Stephen Harper’s Conservatives abolished it.

Should there be an election this year, will the Leader of the Opposition commit to re-creating this program so that the pharmaceutical industry can once again become one of Quebec’s flagships and ensure domestic vaccine production?

• (1845)

**Hon. Erin O’Toole:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

We are in the middle of a pandemic and there is no plan for vaccines and no plan for rapid testing. We do not have the necessary information to ensure the well-being of Canadians. It is a shame, because the government is getting ready for an election, but not for distributing vaccines. We must have vaccines to stop the spread of COVID-19 and to get the economy up and running after the pandemic. I am proud of our researchers in Quebec. I have had meetings with people from Medicago, an extraordinary company from the greater Quebec City area. We have so many opportunities here at home to develop a plan to produce vaccines and rapid tests.

Unfortunately, we have a government that is dragging its heels and has no plan. Canadians and Quebecers deserve better.

[English]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the leader of the official opposition for moving this motion for an emergency debate. As he knows, I did as well, and it is, I think, a very timely and important debate.

The hon. member speaks about a plan. One of the biggest deficiencies Canada is facing right now is that we do not have the ability to manufacture a single vaccine. The Liberal government failed to negotiate with a single one of the seven vaccine manufacturers the right for Canada to manufacture vaccines domestically.

*S. O. 52*

As the Prime Minister himself has acknowledged, obviously a country that has the ability to manufacture will prioritize its own citizens. We are seeing that now with the EU and the United States prioritizing their citizens. Unfortunately, it was a Conservative government under Brian Mulroney that sold off Connaught Labs, which was a Crown corporation owned by the federal government.

My question for my hon. colleague is this: Does he agree that the federal government should establish a public drug manufacturer to ensure that Canada is never again caught without the capacity to manufacture critical vaccines and medicines for Canadians right here at home?

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Vancouver Kingsway for working with my colleague and our team on this debate tonight, and for pushing for better. I think all parties here tonight, other than the government, and I note that there is no one here from the government side right now, deserve better in a pandemic. We want better results, as 8% is not sufficient.

It is clear the government did not negotiate the ability to manufacture a vaccine in Canada. Why did it make the decision to partner with a Chinese, state-owned pharmaceutical, CanSino? That partnership fell apart within months. In fact, within days of the Prime Minister making the announcement, it knew it had failed. Recent documents have shown that. That is one of several reasons why we are five months behind in proper negotiations with other companies.

We have talked about bringing in and securing innovation in Canada. We have a proud history of that. We do not believe it should be done by government. There is less innovation in government. However, we have to have the environment to secure PPE, essential medicines and the tools needed to open our economy.

That has to be our goal, to get Canadians working. The vaccines will be the first step in rounding the corner to a stronger future. That is why we brought this debate tonight. That is why we are demanding better from the government.

• (1850)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his leadership in bringing forward a debate that concerns all Canadians. All Canadians watching tonight are unified and should be unified in their concern about the topic we are looking at. For those who are watching, I want to break down exactly what the problem we are facing is and what the Prime Minister and the Liberals need to do to fix it.

Tonight we are trying to get answers on the COVID-19 vaccine. Canada has a huge vaccine shortage. This week, Canada got zero doses of vaccine, none, while countries around the world like Romania, the Czech Republic, the United States, Italy, Spain, France and virtually every other country that had a contract got doses of the vaccine this week. That is great for their citizens, but what about Canadians?

The Leader of the Opposition did a great job empathizing with every Canadian watching this debate tonight. Those who are watching are probably sitting at home feeling the mental health effects of

not seeing loved ones, losing a job or losing somebody to COVID. It has been a year so far and we need to move on. I am sure nobody watching this tonight wants to keep hearing about more lockdowns and more removals of civil liberties. People who are watching this debate want us to get it right. They want to see solutions from the government.

A year into this worldwide crisis, things have been developed to get us out of the crisis, such as rapid tests, therapeutics and vaccines. The problem with Canada is that, as a democracy, a G7 country and a leader in the world, we have not been provided with those tools by the government. Therefore, it is incumbent upon every person in this place to ask why and to get those answers. We should not be sitting in lockdown and talking about more curfews and more restrictions. We should not be asking Canadians to sacrifice more. We should be asking our government to do better. That is what the Leader of the Opposition did tonight.

I want to break down exactly what the problem is, how we got here and what we need to do to move forward.

This is my suspicion. About a year ago when all of this started, I really do not think the federal Liberals or the Prime Minister took the pandemic seriously. We saw that because they did not lock down the Canadian borders. They did not want to cancel flights from China. They said there was no person-to-person transmission of COVID. They were relying on data that was not coming from Canadian sources. They were doing a lot of things to downplay this issue. Let us talk about what that means in the context of a vaccine.

We know that the federal Liberals at that time when they did not think it was a big deal, and here we should remember that Canada did not close our borders until middle to late March last year, signed a deal with a company called CanSino. This company has ties with the Chinese government. They put all of our eggs, all of Canada's hopes that we are now relying on to get out of lockdown, in that basket. I do not know why. We do not have a lot of clarity on that. The Leader of the Opposition, I, and all of my colleagues have been fighting for answers on that. I think they were working on scientific diplomacy with this company, and not actually getting Canadians vaccines.

What does this mean? Because they were working with this company, and I do not have any evidence to the contrary because we have not been provided with contract details to refute this, we wanted the government to succeed, but because it put all of its eggs in this one basket, it failed. The Chinese government would not roll the dice.

We did not come to the table. The Prime Minister and his cabinet did not get Canada to the party. We were late to the vaccine negotiating party with the companies that were producing vaccines that would work, like Pfizer and Moderna. We are seeing these plane loads of vaccines coming in, giving hope to countries like Brazil and the United States, but not here. That is because our government did not come to the table.

• (1855)

What have we been trying to do to address this issue? We have been trying to get information, because with information we can create solutions. If we do not have information, if the Canadian public, those who are watching, do not have information, we cannot create solutions. Therefore, we need to know why the government started negotiating those contracts so late. Why? What did it actually negotiate?

Pfizer, within a year, created this amazing product that could stop the pandemic in its tracks. Why is it that other countries this week are getting vaccines, but we are not here in Canada? We need to know that. Why is that? There have to be reasons and those reasons lie in those contracts.

Because Conservatives have been trying to drive to solutions, want Canada to get vaccines and want the government to be successful, we tried to pass a motion in the House for the government to release some of those details and be transparent with Canadians. What did it do? It put forward a minister who said that we are not going to get any vaccines if those details are released. It is politics at its worst at a time when we need to come together. Information means answers, information means solutions, information means vaccines, information means an end to lockdowns.

What has disappointed me is that in the last few weeks we have seen the government do something that no government should do in a situation like this, which is point fingers. The federal government said that it is the provincial governments' fault, but provincial governments cannot deliver vaccines they do not have and it is the Prime Minister's job to get us those vaccines. The federal government even said that it was the drug manufacturing company's fault. Maybe it is, but we do not know because the government will not release the details of those contracts. Even a lot of media today are asking why it is not releasing those details.

Countries around the world that are facing production delays are starting to put forward the details of their contracts, saying that they are going to fight for the remedies they have in those contracts, the recourse they have when things go awry with companies, so that their citizens have a tool to move forward, but the federal Liberals and the Prime Minister have not been doing that. We do not know.

To move forward, the first thing the government needs to do is make those details public so that provincial governments of all political stripe can start planning for the delivery of these vaccines, so that when provincial governments talk about ending lockdowns and ask about the variants, they have some hope or some information on these variants. That is what the Conservatives are fighting for: we are fighting for that information, to start. We are doing that at committee meetings by compelling ministers to appear, and this is happening with all of the opposition parties. We are working to-

gether on this because we understand that this is not about politics; this is about getting answers.

Tonight, this debate is about holding the federal government's feet to the fire and telling it to come clean so we can move forward. There are so many other things. Last night, I was on national television with a senior Liberal MP, who was put forward by the Prime Minister's Office to talk about vaccines and these issues. He started talking about how a lot of the federal government's plans were banking on vaccines that had not been approved by the government yet. Information means vaccines, information means a way out of lockdowns, it means hope and the government could not tell us what the approval process was for these vaccines or how many doses it ordered. That needs to stop; it really does. We need to have those answers. We need to understand what happened so that we can move forward.

For those watching tonight, I do not care if they vote Conservative or not. We are all Canadians and we need every Canadian to help us demand answers on this. That is the only way we are going to move forward and what my party wants. There are a lot of stories. I encourage people watching to ask themselves this one real question: When could I get a vaccine if I wanted one? Right now, the Prime Minister cannot answer that question. That is a big problem because it means that we do not have hope as a country while other countries do. We need to do better. It starts with that information and with demanding more.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, it is about doing better to provide hope and compassion for all Canadians. On this side of the aisle, that is what we are fighting for.

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill for moving this motion this evening. I would also like to thank her for her fighting spirit.

The problem we have today is that we cannot get vaccines. I also think that the problem is that we cannot produce vaccines. Currently in Canada, we are not producing any.

What are the hon. member's thoughts on how we got into this situation today? What could we do to ensure that Canadian industries end up in a strong domestic economy? How can we ensure that Quebec or the rest of Canada can produce vaccines like we used to and have a pharmaceutical industry that makes us self-sufficient and independent from what is being produced elsewhere in the world?

S. O. 52

[English]

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague because this is a great show of what the Canadian Parliament can do. We have opposition parties working together to get answers and I know my colleague has been working hard on the industry committee to get answers on that very topic. I know that in coming days at the industry committee, we are going to be having the Minister of Health to answer that very question.

Why did the federal Liberal government not do more to allow Canadians to have hope from manufacturing vaccines here at home? Why is that the case after spending \$400 billion. That is a lot of money: they could have built a gold-plated rocket ship to the moon with that, yet they did not really do anything on the vaccine manufacturing front. Those Liberals are going to face some tough questions from members of all parties next week.

I thank the member for his work and look forward to fighting hard with him next week to get vaccines for Canadians from coast to coast.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is really quite a privilege to work with my hon. colleague at the health committee. Given that the current disruption in supply will further delay vaccinations of Canada's highest-risk populations, does the member opposite agree with me and my New Democrat colleagues that additional public health measures such as paid sick days, national standards for long-term care, frequent rapid testing at high-risk workplaces, stricter travel restrictions and quarantine requirements are needed now to interrupt the rapid growth of COVID-19 and the spread of the highly contagious variants that are now appearing in Canada?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for bringing this to light. If I could summarize what he just talked about, it is the fact that COVID has really created and exacerbated inequalities in the Canadian system. Not everybody can afford to take two weeks off of work when their kid is sick and has the sniffles to wait for 10 days for test results. It is just something that people cannot afford.

People who have loved ones abroad cannot afford two weeks in a COVID detention centre. The government has been so far behind on these issues, and yet we have the tools to address these things. There are things like rapid testing and the vaccines that Canada is not getting right now, and better therapeutics. My colleague has been at the forefront of addressing some of these issues. It has been very frustrating not to be getting answers from the federal government on these fronts, but absolutely, we need to be fighting the inequalities and injustices that have been created by COVID through techniques that we have known and talked about since March last year. We need leadership from the government and if it is not going to give it to us, the opposition parties will.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated the speech by the member for Calgary Nose Hill, and also that of the leader of the official opposition.

Let us remember that, last fall, on this side of the House, we bombarded and hounded the government with 126 questions about the importance of vaccination. We even commended and applauded

the appointment of Major-General Fortin to coordinate the various activities.

However, last December, here in the House, we also watched the Prime Minister rise and tell us that they deliver. Today, we have no vaccines.

Could the member tell us why, in her view, the Prime Minister ensured that he would have vaccines for a big Christmas gift, but did not ensure that we would have anything after that?

[English]

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague not only for his leadership but also for being such a strong, authentic voice for the people of Quebec. I hear over and over again about how Quebecers right now are struggling with the curfews and their mental health, and this is because their provincial government and their premier do not have the tools they need to get through it, such as rapid tests and vaccines. I feel for the provincial government. I really want to thank my colleague, the House leader, our chief quarterback here as the opposition in the House of Commons, for championing these issues on behalf of the people of Quebec, getting the vaccine, getting hope, getting a way out, and that is what we need to do. That is why we are having the debate tonight.

I thank my colleague and I certainly hope he keeps his efforts up.

• (1905)

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians have endured so much since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Extended families have been separated, unable to see each other or travel because of the stringent restrictions that we need to follow to curb the spread of the virus. Many are feeling isolated and alone.

While we have seen some positive signs over the last few days that the spread is slowing, these past few months have been hard ones as we have experienced a resurgence of the virus. The pandemic continues to take a toll on all aspects of our lives, including our economic well-being and our mental and physical health. Many are unable to work, and of course many of our small business owners have had to close their doors while we grapple with bringing case numbers under control.

Our government has taken numerous measures to ensure that Canadians are supported in their time of need, and with that support we are laying the foundations for an economic recovery, one that will have Canada bounce back stronger than ever. I know that members agree that we need to do everything we can to get our economy back on track, and we all want that recovery to happen as soon as possible.

*S. O. 52*

However, most importantly, we need to keep Canadians safe now. Since the first case was reported in Canada, nearly 20,000 Canadians have died from the virus. That number is a stark reminder of what is at stake here as we hold this emergency debate. Each one of those deaths represents a grieving family that has lost a loved one, be it a grandparent, a parent, a sibling or even a child, in so many cases not even having the opportunity to say goodbye. It is true that Canadians are tired of restrictions and limiting their contacts, but most are doing their part because they know the cost. They have been doing their part since day one, and our government has been doing everything it can to get us all through this unprecedented crisis.

Since the beginning, my department of Public Services and Procurement Canada has worked diligently to procure the necessary supplies to support our front-line health care workers. We worked non-stop to procure vital PPE and other medical supplies for front-line health care workers. This work was not easy. Global demand meant that early and urgent supplies largely came from overseas. However, Canadian industries stepped up, building domestic capacity so that many of our procurements are now Canadian-based. With over 2.5 billion individual pieces of PPE and medical equipment secured, we are increasingly returning to competitive procurements wherever feasible.

In this same competitive environment, we have also made great strides in purchasing much-needed COVID tests, including rapid testing, an important element for Canada's ongoing response. To date, we have delivered more than 15 million rapid tests for use by our provincial and territorial partners. Ultimately, though, we know that the only way out of this pandemic is by getting vaccines to Canadians as quickly as possible.

Our approach to procuring vaccines has been deliberate, strategic and comprehensive. At the outset of the pandemic, when pharmaceutical companies took on the challenge, none of us knew if it was even possible to develop a vaccine against COVID-19.

Once vaccine candidates began to show promise, we knew that we would be dealing with a highly complex and competitive global market. Scientists, manufacturers and regulators around the globe would be working under intense pressure to develop, produce and carefully assess safe and effective vaccines. Not unlike our experience in procuring medical supplies and equipment, we knew that we would be operating in a highly competitive marketplace. To say the least, the risks were high and the unknowns were many. For that very reason, starting last summer, we pursued a diversified vaccine procurement approach, one that allowed us to secure doses as early as possible by signing agreements in principle while the details for the final purchase agreement were being negotiated.

● (1910)

At the same time, we were proactive in acquiring critical goods and services such as needles, syringes and more in order to support the provinces and territories when it came time to administer the vaccines.

As a government, our decisions and our response to the pandemic have always been based on the best and most recent scientific understanding of the virus. Our work here was guided by our COVID-19 vaccine task force, the creation of which was a key ele-

ment of our government's vaccine strategy early on. The task force is composed of experts and industry leaders, providing scientific and technical advice.

On the advice of this task force, we began signing agreements with potential suppliers as early as last July on behalf of the Public Health Agency of Canada. In all, our government managed to gain access to nearly 400 million doses of potential vaccines from seven different manufacturers, resulting in one of the most robust and diverse portfolios of COVID-19 vaccines in the world. Our goal was to solidify early access to a highly diversified portfolio so that Canada would be well positioned to receive doses quickly once they were deemed safe and effective.

In December, our approach began to pay off when Health Canada was close to authorizing the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. We were similarly able to negotiate the arrival of doses earlier than scheduled. Similarly, Canada was successful in negotiating the delivery of the Moderna vaccine beginning in December, which proved important for distribution to indigenous and remote communities, given Moderna's less stringent refrigeration requirements.

Through our agreements with Pfizer and Moderna, we were guaranteed 20 million doses of each vaccine, with options to purchase more. Soon afterward, the vaccines began to roll in and, thanks to the flexibility of those agreements, we were able to exercise options for 20 million more doses of each. Because we laid the groundwork, because we took action as early as possible and because we took a strategic approach, one that would ensure the best outcome for Canadians, we have secured 80 million doses of authorized vaccines under contract to be delivered this year. I would add that when candidates from the five remaining manufacturers we have under agreement receive Health Canada approval, we will take a similar course of action, with a view to getting vaccines into this country as soon as possible.

As for timing, the shipments of Moderna and Pfizer we have secured are already bringing relief to communities across Canada, with vulnerable people in long-term care homes and health care workers being vaccinated. So far, we have received and distributed a total of 1.1 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to the provinces and territories. It has been truly a team Canada approach; thanks to the work of the provinces and territories, vaccines are now getting into the arms of Canadians.

*S. O. 52*

Just as I have committed to being transparent and up front with Canadians about our progress on vaccines, I am also committed to being up front with Canadians when issues arise. As I have said, we have always known that we would be operating in a highly complex and intensely competitive environment. We knew that vaccine manufacturers would need to ramp up production at unprecedented speeds as they fielded orders from around the world. That is why we pursued a number of agreements early on in the pandemic when the vaccines began to show promise so that Canada would have more security through a diversified portfolio.

When Pfizer informed us that there would be a temporary delay in its shipments, starting this week, I was disappointed and frustrated, to say the least. My team has been in direct communication with Pfizer, as have I, to make sure that Pfizer meets its commitments.

● (1915)

I can also assure the House that I have personally been in contact with Pfizer almost daily to firmly reiterate the importance, for Canada, of returning to our regular delivery schedule as soon as possible. It is important to note that the temporary delay in deliveries is so that Pfizer can increase its production capacity. We can expect a ramp-up of deliveries of the vaccine following this disruption.

It is also important to note that Canada is far from the only country impacted by the disruption. All countries supplied by Pfizer's European facility have had their shipments impacted. Pfizer has confirmed that while the next few weeks will be challenging when it comes to deliveries, hundreds of thousands of doses will be delivered the week of February 15 and in the weeks that follow. It has also confirmed that we will receive all four million doses owed to us in the first quarter of this year, on time, before March 31.

Between Moderna and Pfizer, we still anticipate receiving six million doses of COVID-19 vaccines by the end of March. After that, we can expect a significant acceleration in the delivery of authorized vaccines. From April to June, we expect that at least 20 million doses of vaccines will be available to Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Between Pfizer and Moderna alone, we remain on track to have enough vaccines by the end of September for everyone in Canada who is eligible and wants to be vaccinated. We also continue to follow developments concerning vaccine candidates from the five other manufacturers with whom we have agreements: Sanofi-GSK, Medicago, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, and Novavax. I can tell Canadians that we will continue to pursue even more doses through these agreements as more vaccine candidates are deemed safe and effective, with a view to getting them into Canada as quickly as possible.

The toll that COVID-19 has taken on our citizens and our economy has been devastating. I have to reiterate that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. We are on our way to getting through this. The vaccines are here and more will arrive very soon. In working with the provinces and territories, we have established supply chains to get vaccines into the arms of Canadians as soon as possible.

The immunization effort will be one of the greatest undertakings in this country's history, but it will not happen overnight and there will be bumps along the way. I will always be transparent and up-front with Canadians about the status of our efforts, and while the global market is complex and can be unstable at times, the fact is that now we can see a way out of this pandemic.

We are in the final stretch, with vaccines being rolled out. As the Prime Minister reported to Canadians on Friday, Canada is now approaching three-quarters of a million vaccine doses administered across the country. The average number of doses administered daily is now almost four times what it was just three weeks ago.

There is more work to do, and we must remain vigilant. For Canadians, that means continuing to follow guidelines from our local health officials, doing everything we can to limit our contacts and once again flatten the curve. It will not be easy, but our actions quite literally will be saving lives over these winter months. For our government and for all members of the House, it means continuing to support Canadians in their time of need. As we returned to the House yesterday, it marked one year since the first recorded case of COVID-19 in Canada.

Not many of us here could have anticipated what the past year would look like, but we found a way to come together in the face of such adversity. Our work is by no means done. Yes, the vaccines are arriving and Canadians are doing their part to flatten the curve until we can inoculate everyone who wants a vaccine.

● (1920)

Thanks to our efforts so far, through our collaboration in the House, working with provinces and territories and because of our team Canada approach, we are making progress. By this time next year, my sincere hope is that the pandemic will be behind us once and for all.

While I appreciate the fact that this emergency debate is addressing the most pressing issue facing our nation, now is not the time for scoring political points. The fact is that we are getting the job done when it comes to vaccines, and despite bumps in the road we are on track to meet our goal of inoculations being available to every eligible Canadian who wants one by September. I know that if we can keep working for Canadians together, we will get through this and we will make our hopes a reality.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have a big problem in Canada. We did not get any vaccines from Pfizer this week. Italy is pondering suing Pfizer related to production delays, which means that it has some sort of recourse negotiated in its contract and that the government of Italy would have negotiated some sort of clause that allowed it to do this.

I am wondering why the federal government has been so quiet. If it negotiated this, why has it not been out on it? What recourse did the federal government negotiate with Pfizer, and why has it not decided to pursue it?

**Hon. Anita Anand:** Mr. Speaker, I should add that, as a matter of contract law, any contractual party can sue another party if there is a breach of contract, but the reality is that we believe that the most effective course of action is to continue to negotiate with our suppliers to ensure that they are obliging and abiding by their contractual commitments. That is exactly what we have been able to secure from Pfizer: a commitment that it will deliver its contractual commitment of four million vaccine doses prior to the end of Q1. That has proved to be an effective strategy thus far.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned that decisions had to be made quickly and at the last minute.

Speaking of last minute, on January 19 we learned that Pfizer was going to upgrade its Belgian facility, thus giving rise to the current situation. Upgrades are planned: There are materials and technology to be purchased. Why were we not made aware of this upgrade until January 19? When did the government learn about it?

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

Pfizer informed me of this reduction in supply on Thursday evening, Friday morning, the next day, 12 hours after I was informed by Pfizer, I told Canadians the news.

• (1925)

[*English*]

It was just 12 hours after Pfizer told me of this news that I told Canadians, because I believe that, whether news is positive or negative, I have an obligation to tell Canadians what that news is.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has repeatedly and explicitly talked about her commitment to transparency, yet to this day, she has not released one word of any of the seven contracts that the government has signed with vaccine manufacturers, unlike other countries.

In the interests of transparency, will the minister release to Canadians portions of the contracts that at least tell Canadians how many doses we are going to receive, when and from whom, or does she not trust Canadians, who are paying for these doses of vaccines, with that information?

**Hon. Anita Anand:** Mr. Speaker, we are forthcoming with information about our delivery schedules. As soon as we have those, we provide those to the provinces and territories and the public at large.

No other country, to my knowledge, puts out week-to-week delivery schedules. The reason we put those delivery schedules out is because we believe that the provinces, territories and Canadians at large need to be able to plan when vaccinations are going to be occurring in their province. That is our commitment to Canadians: to make sure that we have an orderly rollout of this vaccination campaign, which we began in earnest with our negotiations last August, putting in place contracts to secure the largest, most significant portfolio of doses in the world and the largest number of doses per capita in the world.

S. O. 52

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I want it said from an opposition bench tonight that I know that the minister has been working extremely hard. I do not know how it is so easy to Monday morning quarterback these vaccines. I think it is extraordinary that we have vaccines. It is a remarkable achievement of modern science that vaccines exist for something we did not even know about a year ago. That is not to say mistakes have not been made, but I think we can turn the temperature down.

I am disturbed by the fact that Pfizer is trying to negotiate in the media with the government to get better tax treatment at the same time as it is withholding vaccines because of difficulties with its Belgian manufacturing operations.

Has the minister detected any link between Pfizer's requests for better tax treatments and Canadians' access to vaccines?

**Hon. Anita Anand:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to state very firmly that the only thing I have discussed with Pfizer is the delivery schedule for the vaccines, the contractual obligations for the vaccines and the dates of arrival of vaccines in this country. It is something I do every single day with our vaccine suppliers, and I will not personally rest until all Canadians have access to a vaccine, which we expect to be by September 30, 2021, if not before.

I want to reiterate that I have not discussed any other matters with vaccine suppliers at all.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government prides itself on being a great defender of seniors. I would therefore like to know what the consequences of this supply shortage are. Who are the first to get the vaccine? It is seniors. Who are the first victims of the vaccine supply shortage? It is seniors. Who are the ones who are still left alone and isolated? It is seniors. In the first wave, there was distress. That has now turned into frustration. Seniors are upset, they are angry, and they are anxious to get vaccinated.

I would like to hear from the minister about the impact that this supply shortage is having on seniors.

• (1930)

**Hon. Anita Anand:** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to say that my father is 70 years old, and he too would like to get the vaccine. I want him to be vaccinated as well. This is an issue for all seniors across the country. That is why I am working hard for Canadians. I want to make sure that there are vaccines here in Canada for everyone as soon as possible. That is my priority and the priority for our government.

[*English*]

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, saying thanks to the minister is not enough for the amount of work she and her department have been doing.

S. O. 52

I have been working with our local public health office in Guelph, the family health team of physicians, the hospital and long-term care facilities, and I see the coordination required between the local efforts, the provincial efforts and the national efforts. Some conversations are happening between the national and local levels.

Could the minister comment on the importance of getting feedback from local agencies about how things are going with the actual rollout, the acquisition of storage for vaccines and the phased approach, which are building up to a massive distribution of vaccines in the coming months?

**Hon. Anita Anand:** Mr. Speaker, we put in place a very complex and deliberate mechanism and logistics system to ensure there would be a smooth rollout of vaccines across the country. Indeed, we had to assure Pfizer and Moderna that we had a smooth logistics system in place before they would provide us with the early deliveries we received in December. Once Major-General Dany Fortin did a dry run with the provinces and territories and we were able to assure Pfizer and Moderna that we had a logistics system in place that ran end to end, from the point of production to the source of delivering these vaccines, they felt they could deliver those vaccines to Canada.

That is why we were one of the first countries in the world to begin inoculations and one of the first countries to have every jurisdiction undertaking inoculations. It was because of the end-to-end logistics systems the federal government implemented in collaboration with the provinces and territories, including local municipalities.

We also purchased a total of 446 freezers. We purchased dry ice. We purchased syringes, needles, gauze, bandages, alcohol swabs and sharps containers. We delivered all of this across the country free of charges to the provinces so that we could support the local vaccination effort.

That is our commitment as a federal government. That is what we are going to do, because we believe the health and safety of Canadians, through this vaccination program, is of the utmost importance.

• (1935)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou.

We did not need to cite many reasons, Mr. Speaker, to convince you of the urgency of this debate, and rightly so. There is a total lack of transparency with respect to the vaccination schedule and the contracts.

The key words in my speech this evening are “the urgent need for action” and “transparency”. To date, the virus has resulted in 19,238 deaths in Canada and infected more than 753,000 people. In Quebec, 256,000 have been infected and 9,577 have died. I want to stress these numbers because we should never see them as mere statistics and downplay these deaths and human suffering.

We have all been directly or indirectly affected by the death of a parent, friend or acquaintance, or we all know someone who has lost a loved one. Not to mention all the patients not suffering from

COVID-19 who are awaiting treatment. It will be too late for some of them. There is also the exhaustion and desperation of front-line workers, those who were direct or indirect victims of the virus. This evening I am thinking with compassion of the family of the young doctor who recently took her life.

People have lost their jobs, they have declared or are on the verge of bankruptcy, or they are living in a state of perpetual stress. Many Quebecers and Canadians of all ages are experiencing mental health issues. This virus is pernicious and insidious. It demands that each and every one of us adopt an impeccable hygiene routine and ironclad perseverance. A single misstep can have unfortunate consequences for ourselves and for others.

Managing a health crisis of this scale involves making decisions. This virus is always two weeks ahead of us, which is why we need to be proactive. I will come back to this point later. One thing is certain: We must never waver or hesitate. These decisions are urgent.

To date, Quebec has vaccinated 225,000 people. It is two weeks ahead of schedule, but supplies have run out. There are no more vaccines this week. The Prime Minister should apologize for claiming that the vaccines would end up sitting in refrigerators.

A year ago today, we were taking stock of the enemy at our gates. We knew then that the only way out was vaccination and that, in the meantime, we had to manage time and space. We had to manage time to develop a vaccine, we had to take the time to wash our hands regularly for at least 20 seconds, we had to take the time to put on a mask. We had to manage the space between ourselves, from a total lack of contact in lockdown to two metres of physical distancing, to avoid contaminating one another.

If we were not ready for the first wave, we had to be ready for the second wave, and we had to be ready for the solution to get out of the crisis, namely vaccination. There have been several decision-making steps since the beginning of the management of this pandemic. These included border closures, quarantine requirements for foreign workers, the wage subsidy and amendments to the subsidy to prevent political parties from taking money away from the companies, employers and employees who really needed it. They also included changes to the CERB to incentivize work and the necessary changes to the commercial rent relief program.

More recently, there was talk of banning discretionary travel, including travel to sunny destinations and other vacation spots during school breaks. There has also been discussion of starting to monitor travellers in quarantine for greater control and to better protect Canada from the threat of virulent new variants.

• (1940)

There is also the matter we are considering this evening, namely vaccine procurement.

The Liberal government is dragging its feet. Unfortunately, this has become a pattern in how the Liberals are managing this historic pandemic. From the very beginning of the pandemic, we have known that vaccination would be the light at the end of the tunnel, a chance for survival for a patient who might otherwise have been seriously ill, and a chance to finally get out of this enormously difficult situation and our restricted economy.

How did we get here?

The Prime Minister boasts about the size and diversity of the vaccine portfolio, but it is important that those vaccines arrive on time and that the provinces and Quebec can plan for the deliveries. A predictable vaccine supply is critical for Quebec, the provinces and territories. Transparency is crucial when it comes to the delivery schedule. Currently, we know the amount, but we do not know either the costs, the contractual agreements or the delivery times. I suppose the government negotiated in good faith, but it is as though it did nothing to ensure delivery. However, when it comes to any procurement deal, the basic equation is amount, cost and delivery. In this case, only the amount is known.

On November 27, 2020, the Public Health Agency of Canada told us that the entire population would be vaccinated by 2021 but did not specify if it would be vaccination or immunization. Dr. Njoo said that three million Canadians would be vaccinated during the first quarter of 2021. To be honest, I am not sure how anyone could think that, especially now with the Pfizer delivery delays. Earlier, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement talked about six million doses, but we have to divide that in two, so does six million doses really mean three million immunizations?

One thing is certain: The government should share scenarios ranging from the best to worst case. That would give us a sense of the numbers and the hypotheticals underpinning its vaccination time frame, assuming there is a vaccination plan, which I doubt this evening. Even so, there is still time to do things properly. Better late than never.

How can the government claim that everyone who wants the vaccine will get it by this fall? Personally, with the data I have in hand and considering how little the government is telling us about its hypothetical vaccination plan, I cannot guarantee that. That is the least we can tell people who are currently on lockdown and under curfew in Quebec.

The government must not make the same mistakes. It did not properly invest in our self-sufficiency in terms of vaccine production. The government needs to quickly reduce our dependence on vaccines produced abroad.

• (1945)

The government needs to take the necessary measures to increase local production because there are going to be other pandemics. We cannot continue to depend on others. I imagine that the agreements the government negotiated are ironclad because it divested itself of

*S. O. 52*

the means that it had. It had the legal means to ensure a minimum of local production.

I would like answers to all of these questions. Fortunately, this evening's debate gives us an opportunity to ask those questions.

*[English]*

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague could speak about the fact that Quebec has experienced a very difficult situation over the last few weeks with the curfew. I know that he has been on top of this and has talked about how the curfew has affected his constituents. Maybe he could speak a little more about how the work that he is doing on the health committee will help find a way forward, and how important it is for the federal government to be clearer to the residents of Quebec about when they will be able to get a vaccine.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Luc Thériault:** Mr. Speaker, my esteemed colleague knows very well that we are about to undertake a study on vaccines at the initiative of my Conservative colleagues. We will begin that study as of Monday.

I would imagine that, in addition to hearing from the ministers concerned, we will be able to get some answers to the questions that I am asking this evening at those four meetings, so yes, the Standing Committee on Health has played an important role in understanding the situation and in determining the solutions that we are and should be implementing.

Unfortunately, even though the government may be hearing good ideas, it often drags its feet and is not proactive in implementing solutions.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Montcalm for his hard work on this file.

To me the key element is the capacity to produce vaccines. What is coming out of this debate is that no vaccine is being produced here in Canada. What could have been done from the start of the pandemic to ensure that all Canadians and Quebecers can have access to a vaccine that is produced here?

Is the Medicago solution still viable? How could we have better supported it? What is being proposed at this stage to ensure that everyone can be vaccinated as soon as possible so that we can get back to normal life as much as possible?

**Mr. Luc Thériault:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and I thank him for raising the fact that the people at Medicago in Quebec are offering a promising solution that could result in local production.

It is not as though they were favoured or encouraged from the start. They had to work very hard to keep their head above water and get to where they are today. As others mentioned earlier, governments have divested from the pharmaceutical industry in Quebec, which was flourishing, including in the capacity to produce vaccines. We must address that situation because, as I was saying, there will be more pandemics.

*S. O. 52*

The government also should have held on to the provisions that were put in place during the first wave, even if that means paying fees to pharmaceutical companies to allow the vaccine to be produced here. This divestment in the pharmaceutical industry and the unfortunate experience with the Chinese pharmaceutical industry has reduced Quebec's production capacity. There is a way to come up with a solution if we make the necessary investment and do not put all our eggs in the same oil production basket in western Canada.

● (1950)

[*English*]

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am wondering whether the Bloc will support the call for action to ensure that all migrant workers, documented and undocumented, also have access to the vaccine free of charge. As we know, many of them are front-line workers in the sense that they are providing food on the table and putting their lives at risk. I wonder whether the member will support the call for action to ensure everyone who wants a vaccine in Canada, whether they are migrant workers, Canadians or undocumented workers, would be able to get one free of charge.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault:** I am surprised by the question, Mr. Speaker. This is a global pandemic and, at the beginning of the first wave, the Standing Committee on Health was told that it was important, with programs like COVAX, to be able to vaccinate the entire planet and that everyone should have fair access.

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that front-line workers in our country are entitled to it. We must also ensure that elsewhere, in poorer countries, people get the vaccine. Until everyone in the world is vaccinated, we may continue to discover variants in our country. We must stand together. We must stand with people around the world and even more so with those who come to Canada to give us a hand.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the last pandemic dates back 100 years. The last national immunization campaign was for polio and dates back to 1952. Since then, there have been dramatic changes in knowledge, techniques and technologies.

This time, we were almost lucky. Since the 2003 SARS crisis, scientists around the world have been warning governments about the extremely high risk of an impending pandemic. They were ready to bet their boots that the pandemic would be caused by a coronavirus. However, governments around the world made cuts to academic research. That was a bad idea.

We were even lucky enough here, thanks to technology, to see the devastation that the virus caused in China a few months before it came to Canada. A year ago today, questions were asked in the House about the measures being taken to limit the spread of the virus in Canada by imposing a mandatory quarantine on people arriving from China.

I was looking at the situation and thinking that we were lucky to have been warned, that we were going to be prepared. I was wrong.

I am going to talk about procurement, simple mathematical calculations and the importance of information.

Procurement is by nature a complex matter. The pandemic has made things even more complicated because the government has to take on new obligations on top of fulfilling its usual duties. It was clear that we needed PPE, but procuring enough was sometimes very difficult given that Quebec, the provinces and Canada pretty much abandoned their manufacturing capacity when they decided to rely on Chinese manufacturing.

Another element that took some planning was vaccines. The government had to invest in research and reserve supply. It was sensible to reserve doses with several companies because we did not know which ones would come up with safe, effective vaccine candidates first. How much did those reservations cost? We do not know. What kind of timelines were attached to reservations and deliveries? We do not know. What percentage of the weekly vaccine production at each of those facilities is destined for Canada? We do not know. No matter how much the government pats itself on the back for having the biggest portfolio in the world, there are no vaccines to be had.

When it comes to vaccines, as a result of changes made to the Patent Act, pharmaceutical companies that were once here moved elsewhere. As a result, Quebec and Canada have very few plants producing vaccine candidates. I feel fortunate that my riding is home to Medicago. Not only is it in the midst of clinical trials for its vaccine candidate, but its manufacturing plant should be ready sometime this year. We will be able to get vaccines quickly.

A pharmaceutical company from western Canada announced today that it is also able to produce its vaccine. That is good news, but it almost did not happen because the financial support promised in April to Canada's pharmaceutical companies did not arrive until July or August. Meanwhile, open negotiations were happening internationally, as our domestic companies were waiting for assistance. Comprehensive planning should have included follow-up in the Prime Minister's highly publicized announcement.

I would add one final point regarding planning. It is not normal for a company to advise on January 19, or Thursday, January 14, that it will not be able to supply the number of doses set out in the agreement for the coming weeks because it needs to update its facilities. There is no mention of emergency repairs. An update is planned months, sometimes even years in advance. Let us say months. These kinds of decisions are planned, and we did not hear anything about it at the time.

Why was Canada not informed in advance of this update, especially when the vaccine delivery schedule was being finalized? We do not know. If the government had been informed of this facility update before January 19, or January 14 according to what the minister told us, it could have asked Pfizer to use its Michigan plant to supply us. Why was that not done? We do not know.

If the government had known this during the negotiations, it could have turned to other suppliers, such as Moderna. This is called basic planning.

• (1955)

I want to do some simple math. I wish I had my whiteboard here, but since I do not I invite my colleagues to grab some paper and a pencil.

Since December, the government has been saying that all Canadians will be vaccinated by the end of September. This morning, the Prime Minister specified that there will be vaccines for every Canadian who wants one. That being said, in order for us to achieve herd immunity and finally get a break from this virus, 70% to 80% of the population has to be vaccinated. Say that 75% of the population wants to get vaccinated. That means that out of 38 million Canadians, 28.5 million will have to be vaccinated. Since it takes two doses of vaccine, we will need 57 million doses.

Since there are 35 weeks between now and the end of September we will need a little more than 1.6 million doses delivered and administered every week for eight months to keep the promise made by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

The minister told us that between the beginning of the vaccination campaign and the end of March, we will receive a total of six million doses. That leaves a shortfall of 51 million doses before we achieve herd immunity.

There are about 24 or 25 weeks between the end of March and the end of September. What does that mean? It means that we will have to receive and administer 51 million doses. During that six-month period, we will have to administer about 1.9 million doses per week.

Based on its calculations, will the government manage to achieve herd immunity by the end of September? We do not know. According to the government, how many people will receive two doses by the end of September? We do not know. Would it be possible to see someone's, anyone's, calculations? It could be jotted down on a piece of paper or a napkin. I do not have a problem with that, as I am not picky. I just want to understand. I want the public to understand.

It is easy to tell governments that they must not hold back doses and have to distribute the vaccines, even if they point out that a second dose is required. Once the governments start distributing the first dose of the vaccine, however, the directive changes and the governments are then told to wait because a second dose is required. It is easy to blame others. We need a plan. Where is this plan? We do not know.

I understand that there are trade secrets to be kept, but there must still be a way to show a schedule to the members and the provinces so that everyone can adjust. It would also help the government to see that the figures do not match what was promised, unless the government has information that it is keeping to itself.

Information is power. People often think that they hold a lot of power when they have a lot of information and keep it to themselves, but when the perspective is switched, we find that people work together and are more open when they are properly informed and not kept in the dark.

*S. O. 52*

I have found that sharing information gives people a reassuring sense of control over their lives. There are two versions of the old saying: Either we use information to wield personal power to benefit one person or a small group of people, or we use information to share power that benefits the entire country.

I have a few questions. Why is the government keeping information about the vaccine delivery agreements to itself? Is it thinking about the purely electoral value of the information, or is it thinking about the common good? Personally, I have made my choice: I am thinking of the common good.

• (2000)

**The Speaker:** Before we go to questions and comments, I would like to remind hon. members that when giving a speech or asking a question, we do not refer to individuals in the House by name; we refer to them by their title or their riding. That was a brief reminder.

The hon. member for Shefford.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it has been a while. Happy new year.

My colleague did a great job explaining the importance of vaccine distribution and the latest estimates that are quite worrisome and about which we are getting no answers.

The main concern in both Ontario and Quebec right now is the arrival of variants, which have been identified in some seniors' homes. Mr. Legault is concerned about the arrival of variants in Quebec. Over the weekend, it was proven that the vaccine may help with certain variants, in particular the British one, but that it would not work until an individual has received a second or even third dose of the vaccine.

Based on the numbers we are seeing, how can we combat the arrival of the infamous variants? On top of this is the government's failure to take action on international flights and failure to take effective and decisive action against these variants and with respect to vaccines.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her very astute question.

When the governments of Quebec and the provinces and when Quebecers and Canadians do not get answers to questions about the delivery schedule, how are they supposed to feel reassured? All they need is information and reassurance to get through this crisis. If they need two doses, people want to know when those doses will be here. That is all. They do not have that information, which is difficult to accept.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matap dia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

Could she expand on the point that Canada unfortunately relies on foreign manufacturing? Businesses here in Quebec and Canada are capable of producing the vaccine. One such example is Medicago, which could have a promising lead on producing a vaccine.

We of course need some short-term solutions. However, in the near future, should the federal government put some faith in domestic production?

*S. O. 52*

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question.

I strongly believe that we need to review the Patent Act to encourage pharmaceutical companies to come back here. I also strongly believe that we need to recognize the pharmaceutical expertise that we have in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. We need to recognize that we have the knowledge and the power. All that is missing is the political power. The government needs to invest here for the people here.

● (2005)

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague whether she has heard anything recently about what happened to the investment that was made in Montreal's Institut national de la recherche scientifique last August. The former minister of innovation, science and industry proudly made a wonderful announcement about how we could produce 250,000 vaccines a month in Canada. Has the member heard anything about that?

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I have not.

The newspapers published some good news out of Montreal this week about an anti-inflammatory that reduces the effects of COVID-19. However, I am not aware of any updates on the minister's announcement.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is very simple. What does the member think about the current situation, about the fact that people are unable to get access to the vaccine? She spoke about it already, but what impact might that have on people's mental health, for example, or on other factors that directly affect people's lives?

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which shows that he is a caring and generous person.

People are growing increasingly anxious because they are not getting any news or information. People want to get back to work, see their families, have fun, go out for drinks, play pool and go outside to talk to others without worrying about getting sick or getting their family sick. Knowing what is happening with the vaccine would make all that possible.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver Kingsway.

I want to begin by talking about the impact of COVID-19 in Canada. To this point, over 19,000 Canadians have lost their lives. Families are grieving their loved ones. We have seen losses on the front lines among front-line health care workers. We have seen loved ones lose their lives.

Seniors have been the most impacted, though. Long-term care centres, which have already been in crisis, have been devastated by COVID-19. What is happening in long-term care right now is being described by over 200 doctors in Ontario as a humanitarian crisis. To be clear, the crisis in long-term care existed before COVID-19, but COVID-19 has laid bare the crisis in a devastating way.

To compound this crisis, we have even worse news: delays in receiving vaccines, which are a part of the solution to protect those

who are most vulnerable, including our seniors in long-term care. We see surging numbers around the country and variants that are even more likely to spread and even more contagious. Every day the vaccine is delayed, every day the rollout is delayed, more Canadians die. One physician, Dr. Dosani, noted there is one senior dying every hour in Canada. That is a staggering number.

Given how serious this is, it is clear the Liberal government's plan for procurement and rollout has been inadequate to meet the severity of the crisis. The rollout has been too slow and has not procured enough doses, and people are hurting as a result.

We know additional measures need to be taken in addition to procuring and delivering the vaccine, but I should make very clear that it is not enough to just procure the vaccine. Seniors who are vulnerable are safer only if they are actually vaccinated. We need to get the vaccines into people's arms.

In addition to the problems around procuring and delivering the vaccine, which is one major part of the solution, we also have to identify some of the key problems. One of the biggest problems right now in the COVID-19 pandemic, and the reason we need vaccines so badly, is the crisis in long-term care, specifically the crisis in for-profit long-term care. A recent report indicates that for-profit long-term care residences in Ontario have 78% more COVID-19 deaths than non-profit residences. The evidence is overwhelmingly clear that for-profit long-term care means more infection and more deaths among residents.

One of the points we laid out at the beginning, months ago, is that Canada lacked a clear plan, the Liberal government lacked a clear plan, and the outcome would be that we would not meet our goals. When we contrast that with other countries, we see there was a very clear plan in Australia, in the United Kingdom and even in America. They had a clear plan for procurement and delivery, and they are doing better than we are.

The Liberal government has certainly failed in having a plan that gets us to our goal. It is not enough to say there is a goal to vaccinate a certain number of people by a certain date unless there is a plan, a road map, to achieve that result.

● (2010)

What do we need right now? We need a clear plan with deadlines, timelines and specific details about vaccine procurement and delivery. We want the Liberal government to be clear and transparent with Canadians about when we will receive vaccines, who will get vaccinated and how quickly that will happen. We need details month by month. We need to know the plan for the next 100 days, and we specifically need to know the plan for the most vulnerable Canadians.

[Translation]

Today we are talking about vaccination and vaccines in general. This is an emergency debate because we are in a state of emergency. To date, COVID-19 has taken 19,000 lives in Canada. That is not just a number. Those 19,000 people were our loved ones, our seniors, our front-line workers. Families are mourning the loss of their loved ones.

Over 200 doctors and health experts in Ontario have called the long-term care situation a humanitarian crisis. Canadians are extremely concerned about the impact of the Pfizer vaccine delays on Canada's vaccination schedule. This interruption will further delay the vaccination of Canada's highest-risk populations even as the incidence of COVID-19 is rising and very contagious variants of the vaccine are spreading across the country.

Each day's delay in rolling out the COVID-19 vaccination plan will result in avoidable infections and deaths. When the Liberals announced that Canada would finally be getting the vaccine, people were relieved that this horror story would be coming to an end. Unfortunately, the Liberals are not deploying the vaccine fast enough. Canada seems to have fallen well behind other countries. As Canadians are being forced to wait, people are dying.

The number of cases in long-term care homes is rising, and families are losing their loved ones. A recent report revealed 79% more COVID-19 deaths at for-profit long-term care homes in Ontario than at not-for-profit homes. People are making huge sacrifices to keep their communities safe because they know that every day counts during this pandemic.

Other countries have implemented clear and concrete plans, and Canada's lack of such a plan has created this crisis and this situation. We call on the government to present a clear and detailed plan. When are we going to get the vaccine? Who will be vaccinated? What are the details for planning purposes? What is Canada's plan for the next 100 days?

This is essential. We know there are problems. We must act now. We can save lives, but we need a concrete plan to do so.

● (2015)

[English]

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for outlining the situation in long-term care homes. It is abysmal what is happening in long-term care homes. I was talking about this issue before the pandemic, particularly the foreign ownership issue with Anbang Insurance buying up Retirement Concepts in British Columbia. We need to make sure that our seniors are not warehoused in profit centres. This issue has become about senicide, as our seniors are dying in horrible numbers.

Does the member think we should be using the Emergencies Act to force the provinces to change the way they are operating long-term care facilities, and make sure we are preventing deaths in these facilities?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Speaker, I think there are a couple of things we can do right away. I absolutely believe that we need to set

S. O. 52

some national standards. What are the best practices? What has worked in this pandemic, and what has not worked?

One of the things that is absolutely clear is that for-profit long-term care does not work. It results in more infection and more deaths. One starting point for the federal government, in addition to establishing national standards and norms, would be to start the process of removing profit from long-term care with Revera, which is owned by a federal agency. The federal government can immediately end the profit, move it to public and ensure we are saving lives.

We are calling on the federal government and on the Prime Minister to ensure that Revera, which is owned by a federal agency, is turned into a public service that is no longer private, so we save lives.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the leader of the NDP for his speech tonight. I also want to tell him that the member for Vancouver Kingsway has been a very hard worker on the health committee. That is just a little plug for him.

I wonder if the leader of the NDP can give some feedback on whether or not he thinks the government is doing an adequate job in procuring vaccines for the provinces, and what he thinks we could be doing better as a Parliament to light a fire under the federal government.

Provinces cannot distribute what they do not have. I was wondering if the member could comment on some potential solutions that the federal Liberals could undertake in order to overcome the fact that we have received zero doses of vaccines this week.

● (2020)

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Speaker, that is really at the heart of this debate. We are up against a crisis in which one of the solutions, the light at the end of the dark tunnel for a lot of Canadians, was the vaccine. The reality is that we are now at a point where there are not sufficient doses of vaccines. We have no vaccines coming this week, and this is the crisis we are up against. We absolutely need to emphasize to the Liberal government that any delay in procuring vaccines and vaccinating vulnerable people means more people will die.

What we have said from the beginning is that there has been a lack of a clear plan. Other countries had very detailed plans around procurement, and they were very transparent with their plans. This Liberal government has been very reticent to provide details and transparency. We need that now.

Canadians are urgently in need of answers to their questions. They want to know what the plan is. There needs to be a clear deadline and a timeline laid out with clear steps to achieving the goal of ensuring that everyone is vaccinated. That is what is lacking.

S. O. 52

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to quickly indicate that we have been very clear in terms of the plan. A part of that is to say that we will have six million vaccines by the end of March. When we take a look at Canada's population of just over 37 million, I think that is a fairly significant commitment.

I wonder if my friend could provide his thoughts in regards to ultimately being able to achieve that aspect of the plan, which is six million vaccines by the end of March. Is that a good thing, a bad thing? Does he think we could do better than that?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Speaker, the member raises exactly what the problem is. Having a goal that just describes the outcome at a certain point in time without a plan to achieve that outcome is exactly what we are missing. To say we will have six million doses by a certain date in March is not sufficient. We need to know what the plan is on a week-by-week basis.

How many doses do we need to receive on a weekly basis to achieve that goal? What is the plan to get to that point? How is that going to be delivered to people and the provinces? Ultimately, what is the plan to ensure vaccinations are happening? Without the details to get from here to there, it is not sufficient to just say there will be a certain amount by a certain date. We need the plan and the road map to actually achieve that goal.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I think I can safely speak for all parliamentarians when I say that none of us could have possibly envisioned how profound this colossal economic and health shock has been to our country. I do not think any of us ever anticipated having to deal with a global pandemic that would have such tectonic impacts on our society, families and communities across this country.

It is equally fair to say that the light at the end of the tunnel, as it has been referred to by some of my colleagues tonight, is the hope we can get—

**The Speaker:** One moment, please. The member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue on a point of order.

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Someone's microphone seems to be screeching loudly on the interpretation channel. Those participating online can hear it and so can we. I wonder if that can be fixed, as it is hard to follow the debate.

[English]

**The Speaker:** It is working now. We will continue.

The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway, thank you for putting up with the technological glitches we sometimes have to face. Please proceed.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Speaker, I began by saying that I think I speak for all parliamentarians when I say how surprised perhaps we were at having to deal with this completely unique situation, which has faced not only our country but also our globe. I think that none of us envisioned that we would be dealing in 2021 with the colossal dislocation in our communities, our economy, our families and our health care systems that we have been confronted with. I think I al-

so speak for all parliamentarians when I say that the hope we all have to restore ourselves to some sense of normal, hopefully a better normal, is that we all get access to a quickly administered and broadly effective vaccine or treatment.

The proximate cause of this very important debate tonight is Canadians' concern about the impact that delayed shipments of the Pfizer vaccine will have on our country's vaccination schedule. Of course, this was generated by news last week from Major-General Dany Fortin, our military commander overseeing vaccine logistics for the federal government, who confirmed that Canada will receive only one-third of expected deliveries between January 18 and February 7.

This was the third time in two weeks that the federal government's delivery schedule was revised downward. Canada will not receive any COVID-19 vaccine doses this week at all, and will only receive 79,000 doses in the first week of February. That is one-fifth of what was once expected. Major-General Fortin has yet to confirm how many doses will arrive during the second week of February.

Despite previous assurances from the Liberal government that countries will be impacted equally by supply reductions, the European Union will in fact have a much shorter interruption in deliveries than Canada. However, even before this delay, Canada's vaccine rollout had fallen far behind that of our closest allies and trading partners. For example, last week the United States administered an average of 1.16 million doses per day, but as of today Canada has only administered a total of 863,000 doses overall. Now we hear that the Biden administration is aiming to provide vaccines to 1.5 million Americans per day. The Government of Canada, by contrast, has not even established a daily target.

The government claims that the current supply interruption is a temporary and isolated incident, due to a factory expansion at Pfizer's Belgium plant, but unfortunately other factors could further disrupt Canada's delivery schedule. Just today the European Commission announced a new plan to require companies to register any exports of COVID-19 vaccines out of the European Union.

The EU is also poised to impose export controls to preserve supply on that continent. That proposal would require drug companies to seek approval before shipping vaccines to countries outside the trading bloc. Given that Canada is entirely dependent on importing COVID-19 vaccines, we could very well find ourselves squeezed by this growing vaccine nationalism.

That is the specific context for the debate, but there is a broader context. The broader context is that the Prime Minister's talking points really amount to this: We have secured the biggest portfolio of vaccines in the world, and not to worry. The truth is that Canadians are not interested in how many vaccines we could get. They are interested in how many vaccines we will get.

*S. O. 52*

Moreover, the federal government's response on the entire COVID file, in my view, has been slow, weak and inconsistent. It has been marked by a shocking lack of transparency, and that is now borne out in performance. Canada is now 16th in the world in terms of vaccinations per capita, and we still have no clear plan for vaccinations in this country.

That is why New Democrats are calling on the federal government to do a number of things to rectify the situation and fulfill the dreams and hopes Canadians have for returning their economy and health to a more normal state of affairs. First, we are calling on the federal government to establish a public drug manufacturer, so that Canada is never again dependent on foreign drug companies for vaccines and critical medications during a pandemic.

● (2025)

It is a well-known fact by now that the government failed to negotiate with a single one of the seven drug manufacturers the right to manufacture a COVID vaccine in Canada. Many other countries did, including Australia, India, China, Malaysia, Japan, etc., and yet we still cannot receive a single explanation from the government why it failed to do so in this country. Today we are seeing the results of that as we wait, receiving no doses of vaccines while we see vaccines produced in other countries by other companies.

In the immediate term, the federal government has an obligation to outline a detailed plan in case Canada's vaccine supply is further curtailed. This morning the Prime Minister claimed that he is very confident that Canada is going to receive all promised doses by the end of March 2021 and that our vaccine supply is in "good shape". However, he provided no explanation for this confidence, and confidence is not a plan. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister's glib response typifies the federal government's opaque, confusing and often contradictory approach to communicating Canada's vaccine plan.

As I said, for months the federal government has been totally secretive about the terms of the deals it signed with drug manufacturers. It has failed to release a single word from a single contract of the seven contracts it has signed on behalf of Canadians. This is not only unfair to the taxpayers who are paying for these doses, but also, transparency is essential for maintaining the public's trust and confidence in Canada's vaccine strategy. Taxpayers also have a right to know how their money is being spent and the provinces and territories need clarity from the federal government to adjust their vaccination programs in response to supply shortages.

New Democrats are also calling on the federal government to reveal how many vaccine doses have actually been secured for each month until September 2021; confirm if Canada is actually guaranteed delivery of four million doses of the Pfizer vaccine by the end of March and what recourse is available to us if this deadline is missed; and provide full transparency on the terms and conditions of all vaccine supply agreements between the Government of Canada and drug manufacturers. Furthermore, the Prime Minister insists that Canadians do not need to worry about the current vaccine shortage because the government's goal of securing enough COVID-19 vaccine doses to immunize all Canadians by September remains feasible. However, this talking point obscures the grim re-

ality that Canada's current supply disruption will have severe consequences for our most vulnerable citizens.

Indeed, Canada's vaccine shortages will further delay inoculation of the highest-risk populations, namely, seniors, long-term care residents, indigenous communities, teachers, first responders and front-line health care workers, at a time when COVID-19 cases are surging and highly contagious COVID-19 variants have reached our communities. Every day that the COVID-19 vaccine rollout is delayed will result in avoidable infections and deaths across Canada. That is not positive news.

The Public Health Agency of Canada's latest modelling projects that Canada is on track to hit 10,000 new daily cases by February. We remain on a rapid growth trajectory with widespread community transmission and increased outbreaks in long-term care facilities. Public health experts are also issuing dire warnings that dangerous COVID-19 mutations could undermine Canada's COVID-19 efforts.

Yesterday, epidemiologists from Simon Fraser University warned that a massive spike in COVID-19 cases could be coming to Canada if the U.K. variant becomes further established here. The researchers looked at the exponential growth of COVID-19 cases linked to new variants of concern and concluded that failure to prevent or contain these strains now will spell disaster for Canada as early as March. The authors do not expect to see much impact for about six weeks. However, if and when the spike comes, they expect it will come steeply, with a doubling time of one to two weeks in case numbers. This would represent a sharp increase from the doubling times of 30 to 40 days recently recorded in provinces like Ontario.

The U.K. variant is believed to have a substantial transmission advantage of a 40% to 80% increase in the reproduction number. A transmission rate increase of this magnitude is worse than a higher severity or mortality rate because so many more people can get infected.

● (2030)

In most of Canada, we have been able to control previous variants of COVID-19 with strong physical-distancing measures. However, we are being warned that a variant with a 40% or more increase in transmission rate would likely not be contained with the measures we have in place today. Therefore, instead of relying on the Prime Minister's ambiguous assurances and unfounded confidence, we must be willing to act decisively to curtail the spread of COVID-19 in Canada now.

*S. O. 52*

The federal government must take immediate steps to prevent the introduction of new variants into Canada through stricter border controls, a ban on non-essential international travel, mandatory hotel quarantine like Australia and New Zealand have introduced, and improved detection.

The federal government must also take immediate steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within Canada through additional essential public health measures such as paid sick days, national standards for long-term care, frequent rapid—

● (2035)

**The Speaker:** We will now go to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in listening to my colleague's comments, one of the things that stood out was his comment to the effect that the United States President is now saying 1.1 million people a day. He seemed to emphasize it as if that were a really good thing. If we look at that number, and please correct me if I am wrong, that would imply that sometime by the end of the year all Americans south of the border will have been afforded the opportunity to be vaccinated. We have made a commitment to Canadians through the process that we have established—

[*Translation*]

**The Speaker:** I believe we have a point of order.

[*English*]

I am just going to interrupt the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Shefford.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, as we no longer have interpretation.

**The Speaker:** It seems there are some problems with the interpretation this evening.

[*English*]

Can we see if the translation is working?

[*Translation*]

It appears to be working now. The hon. member for Shefford can now hear the interpretation.

[*English*]

I will let the hon. member for Winnipeg North continue.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the essence of the point is that member made reference to the United States' 1.1 million people a day, and kind of hit home that particular point. That means that the Americans would have their population vaccinated sometime toward the end of the year.

Through our plan, we have made a commitment that every Canadian will have a safe, free vaccine made available to him and to her

before the end of September. We have made the commitment that there will be six million vaccines by the end of March.

Would the member not agree that the way we present things can be somewhat deceiving and that the reality is that tangible numbers are being shared with Canadians and the provinces by this government.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Speaker, just to correct my hon. colleague on numbers, the United States was vaccinating 1.1 million Americans a day to last week, and they announced today that they are going to move that to 1.5 million Americans each day. If we compare that with Canada, it means that the Biden administration's commitment that it will vaccinate 100 million Americans in the first hundred days means that about a third of Americans will be vaccinated in three months.

We compare that with Canada where we are talking about six million doses in three months. That is about three million Canadians, which is eight per cent of the Canadian population. Therefore, we can see that the Americans will have one third of their population done within about the first three or four months, and we will at less than 10%.

The other thing about this is that the Biden administration is announcing a plan, not just a future goal with a commitment to vaccinate everybody, but an actual plan with numbers per day. I challenge my hon. colleague to tell Canadians how many Canadians are going to be vaccinated every day between now and the end of this year in this country.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I really liked what my colleague said in framing this debate, namely that it is not the Prime Minister's vaccine. It is Canadians' vaccine, and they actually deserve to know when they are going to get it, under what terms, how much we paid for it and if we are actually going to get it at some point. That is information we have not received to date.

I am wondering if my colleague could expand on that comment and the fact that the federal government should not continue to be opaque with the information that we need to understand when we are going to be getting these vaccines, from which manufacturing company, under what circumstances, and if he could also expand on how this lack of information has stymied both Parliament's job in holding the government to account on this critical issue and also the provincial governments' ability to deliver vaccines in a timely manner.

● (2040)

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Speaker, another question that is repeatedly asked of the government and that it utterly refuses to answer is why is it refusing to release a single line from any of the seven contracts it has negotiated on behalf of Canadians, and why will it not tell us why?

We all understand that there may be commercially sensitive information. There may be some technology secrets in the documents. There may be some confidential aspects that may interfere with the government's ability to negotiate. Surely there is information in those contracts that does not fall into those categories, and which Canadians have a right to know about. However, the government will not release a word.

What does that tell Canadians? How can that inspire confidence that the government really is backing up its rhetoric with reality? If someone goes to a lawyer and the lawyer tells them not to worry, that everything is taken care of, and they ask to see the paperwork but are told they cannot see it, that is not going to inspire confidence that the paperwork backs up the words spoken.

It is time the government trusted Canadians with the basic information in those contracts and assisted the provinces and territories with planning their vaccinations, because it is the provinces and territories that are responsible for rolling out the vaccination plans. They cannot do so if we do not know the basic details from the government, details it is so carefully and inexplicably hiding.

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share my time with my hon. friend and colleague from the national capital region, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. I am pleased to have the opportunity, at least metaphorically, to rise in the House and speak about vaccine delivery.

Canadians have been struggling through this pandemic for almost a year now. From the very beginning, we have had their health and their safety at the forefront.

[Translation]

That is also true in my riding, Gatineau, where people are patiently waiting, as are the people from Vancouver Island or Newfoundland and Labrador for whom this pandemic has been a challenge. That is what drives and motivates us every day to ensure that we can secure supplies, provide vaccines, the necessary material and equipment for all Canadians and get through this pandemic more quickly.

From day one of the pandemic, Public Services and Procurement and the team at the department have focused on one thing: ensuring the protection of all Canadians. I want to make a point about our current situation and assure Canadians by telling them that we are still on track to provide vaccines to all Canadians who want one.

From day one of the pandemic, we started buying hundreds of thousands of N95 respirators, gowns, surgical masks and any other personal protective equipment that front-line workers need to ensure the safety of Canadians. That is also why we started negotiating early with the manufacturers of vaccine candidates.

[English]

In fact, Canada was one of the first countries to sign agreements with Pfizer and Moderna, which are of course the only two currently approved vaccines in Canada. This we did back in early August. We knew that having a diverse portfolio of vaccines with strong delivery schedules and options to increase our orders would ensure

that we would have enough vaccines for every Canadian who wanted one as early as possible.

[Translation]

I can assure Canadians that we are on track to vaccinate every Canadian who wants to be vaccinated by the end of September 2021. Through our sound negotiations with these companies, we prepared for every eventuality, in the event of delays in vaccine delivery and in the global supply chain. We are prepared for this situation and we believe that we will still be able to meet our target by the end of September.

• (2045)

[English]

We understand that Canadians are urgently awaiting vaccines. They certainly are in my riding, and I know that all members share in that urgency from their constituents. Whether they are people in long-term care homes, front-line workers, grocery workers or drivers, everyone is anxious and wants access to a vaccine quickly. That, of course, motivates and animates us every day. Let me reassure all of those people through their members of Parliament that we are still on track.

Allow me to provide an explanation of the delays that we are seeing with the Pfizer vaccine this week. Pfizer is retooling its distribution at the moment. While this is temporary, it means that the vaccines that we were meant to receive this week will be coming a little later, but let me be clear: We are not losing any doses, not a single one, as part of this retooling. We are still in position to have at least three million people vaccinated by the end of March.

[Translation]

I remind members that we were one of the first countries to approve a vaccine and start distributing it across the country. To date, we have distributed 1.1 million vaccines, which puts us among the top five G20 countries in terms of COVID-19 vaccinations.

As we have been saying, we will continue to receive deliveries of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines in the coming weeks, and three million people will be vaccinated across the country by the end of March. By the end of June, 13 million people will be vaccinated, and by the end of September, we will be able to vaccinate 36 million Canadians with our orders from these two manufacturers alone.

[English]

That is with Pfizer and Moderna alone. Because of our strong agreements with these candidates, we have ensured that we will be able to vaccinate all Canadians who wish to receive a vaccination with just these two vaccines. We have agreements with five other candidates, two of which are currently in rolling reviews with Health Canada. With these contracts, we will far exceed the number of doses that we need to vaccinate all Canadians.

*S. O. 52*

With the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada, we have also ensured that the logistics of distribution to provinces are strong and secure. To ensure that vaccines will be delivered effectively, we entered into contracts with FedEx and Innomar Strategies to provide vaccine logistics.

[*Translation*]

We have also ensured that we have enough freezers to keep the vaccines stable so that they are ready for use. Furthermore, we have bought syringes, needles, gauze, bandages, sharps containers and all other supplies needed to administer the vaccines. All of these supplies will be provided to the provinces and territories at no cost. We have kept Canadians informed throughout the process so that they can see we are making informed decisions in their best interests. This has been our approach all along.

[*English*]

We started strong by procuring the PPE and medical equipment front-line workers needed. When the global market was incredibly volatile and demand was high, we were still able to begin acquiring and delivering much-needed PPE in a matter of weeks. We took the same approach with vaccines, and we are seeing the benefits of the strong agreements we made unfold now.

Despite our assurances in the House and to the public, sadly the opposition is once again trying to say that this government has somehow missed the mark. Nothing could be further from the truth. I understand that opposition members have the right, the privilege and sometimes the need to raise issues, but one thing that I think we can all agree on is that Canadians require the clarity needed and the assurance that their government is there for them and will provide the vaccinations that we need to get through this pandemic.

[*Translation*]

The opposition's rhetoric last fall was nothing but hot air. A few days later, we announced that the first vaccines had been approved and that distribution was set to begin.

[*English*]

The Conservative Party tried to instill fear and panic in Canadians by implying that vaccines would not be received until 2030. We know how ridiculous that claim was. How can Canadians be expected to entrust them with their confidence now? It is irresponsible to continue to sow doubt and fear despite clear evidence that we are on track to receive enough vaccines this quarter, the next quarter and throughout this year.

• (2050)

[*Translation*]

While the Conservatives continue to be partisan and attempt to gain traction with fear tactics, we will continue to work hard for Canadians and to prove that we have their fundamental interests at heart.

With regard to claims that we are far down the list of countries for supplies of vaccines, I want to say that we continue to be in a good position among the G20 countries. In fact, Canada began receiving vaccines in December, well before a number of countries.

Countries such as Japan, New Zealand, Australia and South Korea have not yet started vaccinating their citizens.

[*English*]

In response to the claim that we should have seen production delays coming and done something about it, I would like to clarify that we did anticipate that there would be delays in delivery schedules. It is a high-tension, high-pressure race to vaccinate citizens across the world in every country. We anticipated the pressures on this system, and that is why we planned carefully, had a diversified strategy of procurement for vaccination and ensured that any delays would be minor. That is why we are still on track for deliveries in this quarter.

As usual, the opposition's rhetoric holds no water. Once again the members are making bold, unsubstantiated claims, and once again we are proving that this government is there to deliver for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

As we have demonstrated on multiple occasions, our government puts Canadians' interests first when making any decision. We know that vaccine distribution will be a decisive and complex element of our COVID-19 response. We want to ensure that we are ready to face any situation and that Canadians will be able to receive a vaccine as soon as possible.

That is exactly what we did. The Minister of Public Services and Procurement and our team negotiated solid contracts with seven suppliers of vaccine candidates, an unprecedented number of contracts, to ensure that we will have enough vaccines for every Canadian who wants one.

[*English*]

We have created a strong logistics plan so that as soon as these vaccines are delivered to Canada, they can be distributed to each province and territory as quickly as possible. At every turn, we have done our best to protect Canadians, and that certainly will not stop now.

[*Translation*]

We will continue to stay focused and to work hard until every Canadian who wants a vaccine can get one. While the opposition and the Conservatives continue their partisan games, we will focus on Canadians and do everything we can to ensure their safety and good health.

[English]

**Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Liberal member, and he kept talking about the government being on track with vaccines. I wonder what he says to someone who has a parent in a seniors care home whom they cannot see. I wonder what he says to someone who has had a grandchild born in the last little while but has never been able to meet that grandchild. I wonder what he says to someone who is hoping to have their wedding and begin their lives together, but has had to put it on hold and wait, or to people who have lost a loved one and cannot hold a memorial service.

I wonder what he says to all those people. I wonder what he says to people who are struggling with their mental health because of the lockdowns that they are facing. What does he say to those people? Does that sound like “on track” to him? It certainly does not sound like on track to me, and I know it certainly does not sound like being on track to a whole lot of Canadians who are waiting for a vaccine while the government is falling behind. What does he say to those people when he says they are “on track”?

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon:** Madam Speaker, what I say to all of those people, all of whom fit profiles of people in my riding, and I presume in the hon. member's riding and in every riding in the country, is that their stories motivate us, they animate us, they get us out of bed in the morning and they make sure that we do everything we can to deliver every single possible dose of vaccine to Canadians in the shortest possible time. That is what we are doing every day. That is why we have signed such an aggressive number and diverse number of contracts with vaccine manufacturers. We have been very fortunate that two of the seven we have signed are already approved and deployed, a miracle of science, and we have also achieved agreements with two that are in rolling reviews. These are proving to have been very wise decisions.

I say to the young couple looking to get married or the mother looking to visit her grandmother in a long-term care home that their country is steadfast and four-square behind them and looking to get vaccines into their arms, their mothers' arms and their grandmothers' arms at the earliest possible moment.

• (2055)

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his speech.

I would like to come back to something that happened earlier today. The Prime Minister held a press conference, but in the end, no new information was provided. He did not announce anything new on travel restrictions or vaccine supply. He wanted to reassure the public on this issue, but instead he only increased our concerns. Our dependence on foreign production for vaccine doses is worrisome when other nations threaten to bring in export restrictions, as could be the case with the AstraZeneca vaccine.

A reporter asked the Prime Minister what would happen if this were to occur regarding a vaccine approved by Health Canada. The Prime Minister replied that it would be extremely worrisome, and that was it.

S. O. 52

Can the parliamentary secretary give us an answer that is more reassuring?

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. colleague that the Prime Minister, his ministers, Canadian diplomats and the entire government are working with our European counterparts.

Those countries are some of our closest allies. We worked with countries in Europe and around the world to keep supply lines and supply chains for personal protective equipment open. Obviously, we will do the same for vaccines, and we want to reassure the House that the contracts signed for the vaccines that are to be delivered in the first quarter of this year are intact. We expect those deliveries by the end of March.

**Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by acknowledging the stress that Canadians have been under during the second wave of the pandemic.

We are all tired, anxious and frustrated by the resurgence of the virus, the ongoing uncertainty and the constant disruptions to our daily lives. The pandemic has been going on for a long time, and things have been hard as the virus continues to wreak havoc on all aspects of our lives, including our economic, physical and emotional well-being. We know that the only thing that will let us get back to normal is the COVID-19 vaccine. We have all been looking forward to it. It cannot come soon enough, since the pandemic weighs on us every day.

Today more than ever, I am asking that we rise above our political differences and party lines and work together to help the country get through the most difficult stage of the pandemic. Canada's response to the COVID-19 pandemic requires everyone's involvement to ensure that we make it through these hard times and turn the corner. We cannot get caught up in brinkmanship. We are at a critical point in the pandemic, and we must join forces to make it through this last leg. For Canada to get to the finish line, all of us in the House must work together as part of a completely collaborative approach. This approach has been central to our strategy from the beginning, and it is especially vital now.

Our government has kept its promises to Canadians. We worked day and night in a hyper-competitive global market to obtain vital personal protective equipment, build one of the most diversified vaccine portfolios in the world and act quickly to provide doses of the two currently approved vaccines to the provinces and territories. Only by working together will we get through this situation. It is time to lower the temperature and focus on what Canadians need us to do.

*S. O. 52*

As we started rolling out the biggest vaccination campaign in Canadian history, we knew that there would likely be some bumps in the road. That is to be expected when undertaking this type of initiative during a global emergency. We saw that in the recent slowdown in delivery of the Pfizer vaccine, which, I would remind hon. members, is true for every country being supplied by the European plant. We knew we would be facing challenges when it comes to supply given the complexity of production, an unprecedented global demand and a rapid acceleration of production.

It is precisely with these types of questions in mind that Canada signed seven agreements with the key vaccine manufacturers and developers in order to guarantee the diversity and flexibility of our supply chains. To be clear, I understand and share the concerns of Canadians over this temporary delay in delivery. We can rest assured, though, because the minister, the Prime Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada are in constant contact with representatives of Pfizer to strongly reiterate how important it is to Canada to get back on schedule as soon as possible.

As we have said many times, Pfizer assures us that we will receive every dose that we have been promised and that we have bought. I agree that this is an unfortunate and unwelcome situation in light of our urgent situation, but we are living in volatile times. I want to assure the House that Pfizer has committed to meeting our quarterly objective and has said that deliveries will increase considerably as promised in the spring. Between Moderna and Pfizer, we will have access to 80 million doses in 2021 and we will have enough vaccines for everyone in Canada who is eligible and who wants to be vaccinated by the end of September.

We want this to be a safe and speedy vaccination campaign. Unfortunately, we have to expect that problems like this and others may arise. As always, we have to adapt. As part of our procurement strategy, our government has secured a diverse portfolio, signing seven agreements for the main vaccine candidates.

● (2100)

These seven agreements will provide access to no fewer than 234 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine and the option to buy up to 164 million additional doses. From the start, we adopted a diversified approach to vaccine procurement. We did not put all our eggs in one basket. We made sure we diversified our risk by ordering vaccines from many different suppliers. That means Canadians will get guaranteed access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they are available.

Obviously, we cannot defeat this virus in Canada if we do not eliminate it everywhere. That is why we will participate in COV-AX, a global vaccine supply initiative that will develop and deploy safe, effective, accessible COVID-19 vaccines around the world. Supporting other countries in their fight against COVID-19 is an essential investment that will help put an end to this pandemic around the world.

Make no mistake. We are tackling this pandemic head on, and this government's top priority remains protecting people from COVID-19, saving lives and helping Canadians get through this crisis. Our government is continuing to do everything in its power to overcome the challenges presented by this pandemic. However,

we can be more effective if we work together. As elected members of the House of Commons, it is our duty to rise above our political interests and focus on protecting Canadians. This is a pivotal moment in our history, and it calls for rapid, unified action. We must unite to serve Canadians. Every day here in the House, we must work to fight the pandemic responsibly and effectively as we head into the home stretch. Canadians expect nothing less from us.

While we continue to see an increase in the number of infections, our government is remaining focused on its response and on rebuilding the economy, while preparing for any scenario during these uncertain times. Nonetheless, we know that the real solution, the wide-scale administration of an approved vaccine, will take time and there will be challenges along the way. In the meantime, Canadians must continue to manage the risks of COVID-19, follow public health advice and make a concerted effort to slow the spread of the virus. It is hard work that challenges us in a way that we could never have imagined. However, we will get through this together and come out of this even stronger.

I want to reiterate how essential it is that we commit to working together for the health and safety of all Canadians. To overcome this pandemic once and for all, we must all work together, every level of government, every community, all Canadians.

In closing, I want to thank the medical officer of health of eastern Ontario, Dr. Paul Roumeliotis, and his team who have already started the vaccination campaign back home in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. They are an incredible team.

● (2105)

**Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the first thing I want to say to my colleague is that no serious business or institution could move forward without a clear game plan that has been clearly articulated and laid down. That is what we are really missing.

Any business that wants to survive, especially during a pandemic, has the duty to plan, to predict the unpredictable and to create a game plan. We are not seeing or hearing anything like this from the government. We want to see it develop its projections for the next few months. At present, they are all talk, and voters are certainly not buying their projections. No board of directors would accept that its CEO would govern the way our Prime Minister is currently governing.

My question for my colleague is very simple. As his predecessor stated so well earlier, some countries have not yet started vaccinating their citizens. I would simply like to know why, in his opinion, New Zealand has not started vaccinating its citizens.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Madam Speaker, I am glad my colleague mentioned New Zealand.

I would rather focus on Canada's vaccination plan. My colleague said we do not have a plan, but I would like to set him straight and assure him that Canada has a guarantee for the delivery of six million vaccine doses by March 31. I can also tell him that Canada will receive an additional 26 million doses by June. If he does not consider that to be a solid enough plan, I would point out that we have already received 1.1 million doses.

I believe our plan is credible. Yes, there is a vaccine shortage today, this week. However, contrary to what some of my colleagues have suggested, that does not mean we can tell people that, because we did not get vaccines this week, we can just lift the lockdown for everyone next week. I think we need to be careful with how we present political arguments to the public.

[English]

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the reality of course is that provinces are struggling to get vaccinations out because they do not have the vaccines. We are in a situation where front-line workers and first responders such as firefighters, teachers, and people who work in grocery stores and on farms to put food on our tables are not able to access the vaccines because the provinces do not have them. I hope the member and the government will take this to heart.

My question for the member is this. On the issue of vaccinations for everyone, does the Liberal government include those who are migrant workers: those who are documented and undocumented as well? Will it take the approach to ensure that truly anyone who wants a vaccination would be able to get one free of charge? Would it be accessible and not require, for example, a health care card? Would they not have to fear authorities?

• (2110)

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Madam Speaker, it is important that we put things into perspective. I was reading this morning about when Europe anticipates it will have vaccinated 70% of its population. It intends to do that by the summer at some point, which could be up to September 21. I was also looking at when Australia plans to vaccinate its entire population, and the plans right now put the date in October or November if things all go well.

In Canada's case, we plan on vaccinating every Canadian who chooses to have the vaccine by the end September. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Health, as well as the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, have been clear that vaccinations will be free for every Canadian who chooses to get one.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. It seems like forever ago, but I used to refer to the hon. member as my neighbour as we sat so near each other in Parliament when such a thing was allowed.

Tonight's debate is terribly important, and I want to get a few points on the record, because I will not have a speaking occasion.

I agree with the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway that contracts should be transparent and that Canadians have a right to

*S. O. 52*

know on what terms we are getting vaccines. I am not as critical as some others in opposition about how things are going in getting vaccines, which were not even invented until months ago. Who could have anticipated that we needed to buy refrigerators at mega-levels of freezing? However, I am concerned. I do not know if the hon. member can answer this question. If he cannot, perhaps he could ask a member of the cabinet for help.

We were attempting to get, as a country, not just vaccines but also other treatments: antibody treatments. We saw the Department of Innovation and Science invest about \$200 million in one such company located in Vancouver: AbCellera, partnered with Eli Lilly. Their treatment apparently was looking very promising. Tens of thousands of doses came to Canada, and they are potentially effective.

In terms of the suite of treatments, vaccines and preventative measures, the full suite included antibody treatments. I wonder if the hon. member knows anything about what has become of that strategy.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Madam Speaker, I have to say to my colleague that I miss her too, and this is a different format.

However, if I do not have enough time to answer the complete question, I will say that any strategy we put in place will always be led by science. I know that, at the Public Health Agency of Canada, Dr. Tam is doing a great job of leading this country, and I can only applaud her.

The contract questions we can discuss after the pandemic is over. Right now I do not think it is a smart strategy to expose all of the contracts that Canada has signed, knowing that the vaccine is a rare commodity around the world.

• (2115)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Foothills.

Today's debate has to do with vaccines and how hard it is to get vaccines, but I want to take this opportunity to say the following.

This evening, I heard many of my Liberal colleagues talk about a lack of co-operation on the part of the opposition parties, particularly the Conservative Party. I would like to remind everyone that, exactly one year ago today, when the virus first appeared, it was the Conservative Party that called for an emergency meeting of the Standing Committee on Health to talk about the virus. As the shadow minister for public safety, I personally attended the committee meeting to ask questions about what was happening with our borders. At that time, on January 30, 2020, I was told that the government was beginning to look into that. From the start, we have taken a collaborative approach.

*S. O. 52*

What we found worrisome was that the government, the minister of health at the time and the Prime Minister were somewhat in denial. They said that this was not dangerous, that there was no need to worry and that Canadians did not need protection or masks. They said that the virus was not transmissible. From the start, the government was in denial, which worried us.

Then we realized that the easiest and fastest way to stop the virus in Canada was to control our borders, so that is what we called for. I said that the border was our first line of defence. The government did nothing. It said it was watching this closely and that border service officers were providing information to international arrivals. We said that much tougher measures were needed. Sometimes we were told that Canada is a big country and the territory is huge. I am trying to understand, but the fact is that there are three major international airports: Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. If we direct our flights to those airports, we are talking about three locations. Even though the country is 10 million square kilometres, we can still control three airports. That is no worse than a smaller country with the same number of airports.

What bothers us is the government's very weak and listless response. If we had worked together as team Canada, if the government had agreed that what the Conservatives were saying made sense and we could have agreed on how to respond, then we could have easily worked together.

It is easy to say that the opposition parties do not want to cooperate, but we are taking concrete action to try to work together. It is not working. At some point, we have to come to an agreement.

Over the past year, the key word, as far as I am concerned, has been "consistency", and this applies at every level, whether we are talking about the border, vaccines or even economic programs like the CERB. When it comes to matters involving the government, "consistency" will be the key word for me in 2020 and early 2021.

We are doing what we can to help. Even when discussing the economic agenda, we brought forward solutions whenever we saw a problem. Just because we are an opposition party does not make us stupid. We are still experienced people. We already had lives before becoming MPs. We brought forward amendments, and they were rejected out of hand. Worse than that, they publicly said that the Conservatives do not want to help Canadians...

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I am going to have to interrupt the member in order to see whether the interpretation is working properly.

The hon. member may continue since everything seems to be working.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** As I was saying, Madam Speaker, since the start of the pandemic, we have been working to bring forward solutions and proposals in order to help, but instead the government dismissed them out of hand. Therefore, it is difficult for us to accept—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Order. I think there is a problem with the member's microphone, because the interpreter is having trouble understanding what he is saying. Apparently she has no problem hearing me from where I am

speaking. I would ask the member to make sure he is on the right channel before we continue.

Everything appears to be working. The hon. member may continue.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Madam Speaker, I was talking about consistency and transparency.

The problem with the vaccines is that there is a lack of transparency. I have heard my Liberal colleagues say that they cannot disclose what is in the agreements. How do they explain that the Americans have disclosed this information? I have here eight pages of information from the U.S. Department of Health. These documents contain the agreements signed with assorted companies since March 2020. For example, the documents indicate that Pfizer was paid \$1.9 billion and that the first 100 million doses must be given to American citizens and distributed directly by Pfizer. I have eight pages of similar kinds of information. Why can the Americans disclose the amounts paid and the quantity of vaccines in the contracts but we remain in the dark here in Canada?

I heard my Bloc Québécois colleagues talking about this earlier. This is what bothers us the most. If the government wants to take a team Canada approach, it needs to be transparent. Were party critics invited to a briefing? Were they asked to collaborate and were they given information? No. No one did that. It is quite insulting to be attacked like this.

I have heard members talking about the situation in New Zealand. They are wondering why there is no vaccination campaign happening there. It is important to understand that New Zealand is a shining example of border control, which explains why there are nearly no cases of COVID-19 there. It is therefore less urgent to vaccinate people. The borders are very well controlled, there are very few cases of COVID-19 and even the economy is doing well. The same is true in Australia. These countries do not have the same problem that we do.

As I was saying, the government's lack of transparency is a major problem.

Since we are talking about vaccines, the number one problem is the agreement that was signed in May 2020 with the Chinese Communist regime and CanSino Biologics. There was another article about that again this morning. Canadian patents, Canadian intellectual property, our knowledge, everything was transferred to CanSino Biologics. What did that company do? It left the containers of manufacturing equipment on the dock in China and then said to forget about Canada. We gave that company all of our information and knowledge and it said that it was not going to do anything for us. That is what slowed the Canadian government down. While other countries were moving forward with Pfizer, Moderna and other companies, we were lagging behind because the government put its trust in the Chinese Communist regime.

Madam Speaker, are you signalling to me that I have one minute left?

• (2120)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I will have to interrupt the member again because we are having problems with the sound. Since it seems that the interpreters can hear the hon. member better when my microphone is on, I will ask that my microphone remain on while the hon. member finishes his speech.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The first mistake was the agreement with CanSino, which the Chinese Communist regime did not honour. Canada fell behind after that. We have talked about this since the start, but every time we reminded the government that we are several weeks behind our international partners, they laughed at us instead of saying it was true and trying to work together. The Liberal government refused to collaborate every step of the way.

My time is almost up, and the sound is bad, so I will wrap up my speech. As the Conservative Party critic, formerly for public safety and now for procurement, I want to work with the government to help Canadians get through this as quickly as possible.

We all want to defeat this damned COVID-19 pandemic, which is taking a toll on the Canadian economy and Canadians' health. The only way to do that is with transparency and consistency. That is all we are asking. I am pretty sure that all my opposition colleagues agree with me.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's speech. We often work on the same files, including issues related to public safety and borders. We are interested in the same issues. I agree completely that there is a lack of transparency, a lack of consistency and, I would even add, a lack of leadership in how the vaccine supply is being managed. I am sure he will agree with me.

I doubt the Prime Minister is accustomed to calling up pharmaceutical companies when problems arise. Having to come up with solutions to the delays we are experiencing today seems to be new to him.

Why is it that countries like the United States can share the details of the contracts signed between the governments and the pharmaceutical companies? Why do we not have access to those details? This government lacks transparency. I would like to hear my colleague's opinion on that.

• (2125)

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

As I mentioned in my speech, we can see a list of all the agreements the U.S. government has signed with the various companies. It is quite clear. We can really see everything that is planned and understand why 6% of the American population has already been vaccinated. Quebecers can get vaccinated in Florida because the United States was able to get its act together.

*S. O. 52*

On our side, we have only half the information. The Prime Minister comes out of his cottage to say things that are not clear. It is never clear. Consistency and transparency are the key words here.

*[English]*

**Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member opposite is critical of our government for not closing the border soon enough. I point out that the international health regulations, which we are bound by as members of the WHO, require our government to take the least restrictive measures for travel and trade. I believe these regulations and measures were partly put in place in response to the criticism of the Conservative government during the SARS pandemic. It was very critical of the WHO for imposing travel restrictions then, so it was the Conservative government that had a hand in creating this rule under the IHR.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Madam Speaker, I understand the meaning of my colleague's question. At the same time, it should be noted that a report was drafted, and my former colleague, Tony Clement, gave us some advice on it. We can criticize every year, every criticism, but at some point we just want to get out of this. The advice we were given at the start was to screen passengers at the airport. That was the foundation. When we get meaningless answers, it is hard to stay calm.

*[English]*

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am hearing from a large number of people in central Alberta about how damaging the economic effects of a lasting lockdown is on their businesses, their livelihoods and their mental health. I wonder if my colleague could elaborate on why it is so important that we have a plan to get our Canadian population vaccinated so that we can get back to business as usual and back to our lives. Is my colleague hearing the same thing?

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

It is clear today, one year in, that we have no intention of going on like this. At the same time, we realize that from a public health perspective, we have no choice. In Quebec, there is a curfew starting at 8 p.m. People are in lockdown. We have to stop the virus from spreading.

The only way to get out of this is to get a vaccine as quickly as possible. As soon as the population is vaccinated, we can get out of this. The end of September 2021 is a very long time from now. It is nine months away. That is why it is vital to pick up the pace.

S. O. 52

[English]

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak in this emergency debate to try to address some of the issues that I know many of my constituents are concerned about. The goal of what we are trying to achieve with this debate on vaccines, vaccine distribution and procurement, is answer some questions that many Canadians have. I know I am not the only member of Parliament here who has had numerous calls of frustration, anxiety, depression and mistrust from constituents. They just do not know who to believe anymore.

If I may, I would like to back up a bit to where we started with this, and the mixed messages and inconsistencies from the very beginning from the Liberal government when it came to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Liberals dismantled Canada's early warning system which would have allowed us to learn much more about this pandemic than we did before. We had members of our military warning the Liberal government about the impending impacts of the COVID pandemic and the Liberals ignored that. They were flip-flopping on travel restrictions. At first they said that wearing masks was not important, was not necessary and did not help. Now we have a very different message.

The Liberals even talked about accessing rapid and home-based testing. They compared rapid testing to selling snake oil to Canadians, when at the same time our allies, our partners and western democracies around the world were accessing technology like home-based and rapid testing to keep their businesses open, keep their schools open, keep their front-line health care workers safe and allow their constituents to travel. That is where we started, how we got here and why we are so adamant to learn more about the vaccines and where we are.

That came to a head when we saw that no vaccines are being delivered right now, zero. I saw a map on the Health Canada website that said our vaccination distribution process is well under way. In many jurisdictions around Canada, it is about 1% of Canadians who have been vaccinated. We can compare that to the United States where it is well over 5%.

I have constituents who have family in Texas and Oklahoma who have said their families will be vaccinated by this spring and many of us may not have that first dose until next September. That shows us the very stark difference between what is happening in Canada and what is happening in other parts of the world, why we are so far behind and why, as Conservatives, as members of Parliament and elected officials, we are so concerned with this information and certainly, in many cases, this lack of information.

We have come full circle on the vaccines. I spoke about some of the numbers we have right now, but I am going to talk about why I question why we are here and where we could have been if the Liberal government was not discriminating, and I do not know another better way to say that, against a made-in-Canada solution. Canadian vaccines could have been developed and manufactured here in Canada.

The Liberal government originally started with an agreement with CanSino, a Canada-Chinese partnership to develop and manu-

facture the vaccine. The Liberal government poured literally millions of dollars into that partnership at the beginning. I would question after everything we have been through with the Chinese Communist Party why we would have ever put our trust in a partnership with the Chinese government. Why would that have been the one solution that the Liberal government looked at?

Not surprisingly, that partnership fell apart in the spring and early summer. As a result, the Liberal government had to scramble to find what other solutions were out there. Unfortunately, we do not know what agreements it signed. We do not know the details of what it relinquished or what we gave up. Did we give up the licences to manufacture the Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccines here in Canada? What I find the most frustrating is we did not have to go through any of this. We could have had a made-in-Canada solution.

● (2130)

We saw today in the media Providence Therapeutics in Calgary began its first clinical trials of a Canadian vaccine earlier this month. What I found most frustrating is this. When I was watching the representatives from Providence Therapeutics on the news this afternoon I was angry. They said they approached the Liberal government in March with a vaccine based on the same technology being used by Pfizer and AstraZeneca and were ready to begin trials and hopefully production. There was silence from the Liberal government. Now they have gone public with the position they were put in.

Brad Sorenson, the CEO, said today, "We have a Canada solution. We've sourced it. We've followed the rules. We've done what we were supposed to do and we're not getting any engagement from the government." The company even offered to transfer its production and studies to the Montreal facility the Liberal government had initially funded to increase capacity to manufacture another vaccine. However, it received radio silence from the Liberal government. Meanwhile, we have a Canadian technology that could have been in clinical trials and maybe even production.

Another example is Solstar Pharma out of Laval, Quebec. It approached many members of Parliament, including Liberal members of Parliament, last March. I have the emails that were sent back and forth to the Minister of Health and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. It has a very unique antiviral technology and was asking for help from the Canadian government. Again, there was no response, just silence. It is frustrating as it wanted a made-in-Canada solution.

This antiviral technology requires no special storage. It is a powder that is inhaled. Unlike the vaccine, it attacks the virus in the body and kills it. Although the vaccine is important, it does not stop people from being infected or the spread of the virus. The antiviral on the other hand kills the virus in one's body. Again, it is a Canadian solution.

I spoke to the CEO of the company today. He said if it had the support of the Canadian government last spring it would be in clinical trials now and ready to begin production. As it did not get any support or even a response from the Liberal government, out of utter frustration it applied to Operation Warp Speed in the United States. It immediately received a response. It is now being fully funded and is working with Pfizer and research companies in San Diego.

Here again was a Canadian solution and the company received no response from the Canadian government and had to go elsewhere. It is incredibly frustrating when a Canadian company like Solstar Pharma, born and raised in Laval, Quebec, receives no response from the Canadian government.

That makes two. We could have had a vaccine and an antiviral on hand right now if they had received a response.

We also have the ClearMe rapid testing technology out of Calgary. It is 98% accurate and was approved for use in the United States and the United Kingdom last spring. It is still waiting for support, an answer and an approval from Health Canada and the Liberal government.

Why is there discrimination against Canadian companies that have a Canadian solution and want to be there? Unfortunately, it seems like the Liberal government is treating this like a *Seinfeld* sketch.

Anybody can order a vaccine, but the most important thing is actually having a vaccine that one can distribute and deliver to Canadians. This is not a joke; this is very serious. Imagine where we would be today if we had an antiviral, a vaccine and rapid testing made and manufactured in Canada. Where would our economy be? Where would the mental health of Canadians be? Would we be relying on global supply chains? The EU may block the distribution of vaccines. Can we really rely on a vaccine manufactured in New Jersey that people in New Brunswick are going to get before people in New York? That is what we are facing.

I want to offer a solution as I conclude. It is not too late. These Canadian companies still want to work with Canadian organizations. The Ontario and Quebec governments have reached out to Solstar to offer help with its lab testing at Western University. The Liberal government needs to reach out to these Canadian companies that are ready to go and expedite their approval processes and clinical trials. It needs to be there to support the Canadian companies that desperately want to be part of a Canadian solution so we can get our economy back up and running and Canadians back to work.

• (2135)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Foothills who, truthfully, I am noticing today for the first time in the House. I believe that his speech, together with that of my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou, was the most inspiring, pertinent and constructive speech in this evening's debate.

S. O. 52

My question is simple. He mentioned several examples of vaccine production in Canada. In the Liberal government's strategy that he observed, at what point did vaccine production in Canada fail? Why is the solution not to produce Quebec or Canadian vaccines in Canada, and how can we fix this quickly?

• (2140)

[*English*]

**Mr. John Barlow:** Madam Speaker, unfortunately, when we have this system we do not get to see each other all that often, and that is too bad because I am sure we could be friends down the road.

I agree with the member. This is incredibly frustrating, and I cannot even articulate how angry I was watching Mr. Sorenson on the news this afternoon talking about Providence Therapeutics and what it could have been doing in offering a Canadian vaccine manufactured here in Canada.

It is obvious that we have the capacity and the technology. What we are lacking is the participation of a Liberal government, which, for some reason, put all of its eggs in the Chinese Communist government basket. For the life of me, I cannot understand why the Liberals would put the health of Canadians at risk when they could have solved this months ago.

**Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member opposite claimed we could have had effective antivirals made right here in Canada. Could he please cite evidence to support that statement? What evidence does he have to back up this claim? Could he cite a randomized controlled trial, for example, that came to the conclusion that such a medicine could be produced in Canada?

I am a doctor. I have a Master of Public Health degree. I am interested in knowing. He is making a claim that I think is totally unsubstantiated.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate working with my colleague on the health committee.

I had a conversation with the CEO of Solstar Pharma this afternoon and previously. The company is now going through its trials and its testing and getting close to completing its clinical testing in San Diego right now. It has a partnership with Western University and the Ontario government. The Quebec government is now coming on board.

This is the frustrating part. We are offering a potential solution and Solstar wants to be part of that solution, but there still is this disbelief. Is it disbelief that a Canadian company and Canadian skills and Canadian innovation can come up with this solution? I am asking my colleague to please, tomorrow, call Solstar Pharma and get this going.

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Madam Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that we needed a lot more transparency with this whole vaccine rollout and the plan. I would like to have seen the contracts for the manufacturing of vaccines in this country. I agree that we should be using Canadian ingenuity.

*S. O. 52*

I heard a number of his colleagues today talking about the great legacy of Canada and our medical history. I know about insulin and about diphtheria. We were a world leader in providing vaccines to countries around the world, and the lab that was responsible for that was Connaught Laboratories. It was a public lab that was established in 1914 and it had a long-running legacy until it was privatized in 1984 by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, a Conservative prime minister. Would the member like to see this model of a public lab reintroduced in Canada so that we can be on top of these things when we face the next pandemic or the next serious health issue?

**Mr. John Barlow:** Madam Speaker, what my colleague is talking about is at the root of a larger issue that we need to discuss. When we are back on our feet a little bit, I would like to see a royal commission investigate the COVID-19 pandemic: what worked, what did not work, whether there were voids in the system and vaccine manufacturing distribution. All of those things should be part of that.

I do not want to make that contention now, but there should be a very thorough investigation on how the Liberal government handled this situation and what could be improved in the future.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity tonight to speak on this important matter. I am glad we are having this debate. It is incredibly important for Canadians to see parliamentarians discussing the health and safety and importance of the vaccines that are going to help us get through this pandemic.

There is no question that all Canadians and all members of the House want to see this health pandemic come to an end. There is no question that the economic recovery and rebuild is also going to be incredibly important, but until Canadians are healthy and safe, that needs to be Canada's number one priority. Obviously vaccines have been a critical part of this and I am really proud—

• (2145)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I am sorry, but there is a point of order.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe the hon. member intended to split her time with the member for Winnipeg North.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Does the hon. member concur?

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Madam Speaker, yes. I apologize.

Thank you. I am splitting my time with the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

That being said, vaccines are going to have an incredibly important role in getting us through this pandemic. That is why our government prioritized the signing of contracts and making sure that vaccines would be available in Canada. That work required a lot of information going into the background. This work began with our government back in July. At that time, there was so much uncertainty about vaccines, including their timing and when they would be safe and effective. That is just something that politicians and politics cannot control. It had to be science-led, which is exactly

why our government made sure to have a diverse portfolio and to work with industry experts to prepare for all possible scenarios.

Frankly, the Pfizer delays for the next few weeks are disappointing, but demonstrate precisely how our government's plan was to diversify and to ensure that there would be a variety of vaccines and that once they were deemed safe and effective by Health Canada, Canada could then access them.

In addition to that, even prior to the vaccines' development, our government was working to ensure that we had all the materials we needed to help deal with the COVID-19 virus. That meant we heard early calls to ensure that we would have enough PPE, which we then delivered on, and calls for increasing rapid testing, which we again delivered on. Every step of the way, every twist and turn of this pandemic, we have been there for Canadians in ways that have been very responsive and fast, all things considered, given the dynamics of this pandemic globally and the global competition for all of these same materials.

To see Canada as one of the leaders in ensuring that we have these materials and vaccines for Canadians is precisely why I am very hopeful that we will be able to come out of this pandemic quickly, and also in ways that make us all stronger and, frankly, from which we can learn lessons to ensure that we have strategies in place, not just in pandemic times but throughout governments so that we always keep pandemic planning at the forefront.

Getting back to what we were discussing, which is the vaccines and their procurement, I have heard a lot of members during this debate talk about there being no plan. That could not be further from the truth. Our plan is precisely what we are debating. In fairness, I understand the role of members of the opposition. It is completely their duty and right to pose questions to the government, but there is a big difference between challenging the government or having a difference of opinion and spreading misinformation.

Some members have risen to the occasion in this debate by understanding what is on the line while supporting Canadians during this difficult time, but there are many who, frankly, have used this opportunity to spread misinformation and cause incredible confusion. They have done so for political gain. That is so disheartening. This is an opportunity, whether we all agree or not on the specifics of the rollout, for us to come together as a Parliament and as Canadians to step forward and work together on ensuring the health and safety of all Canadians.

• (2150)

To see members rise in this place but not rise to the occasion is, frankly, very disheartening. We should be discussing strategies and steps for moving forward as a Canadian government and as Canadian parliamentarians looking out for our friends and neighbours, not using this as an opportunity for whatever political game we might see. I remember that back in December Conservative members were claiming we were never going to get the vaccine or we were going to be last, and that did not happen. We had a plan, we stuck to it and we saw deliveries of vaccines in Canada.

We were one of the first countries to get vaccines, and the Conservatives looked deflated after that happened. They should have been elated. They should have been happy that vaccines were delivered for Canadians. Instead, they did not ask any questions about it until this point. There is no question that the Pfizer delay is something we are all disappointed about, but the suggestion that we have no vaccines in this country is simply false. We have over 1.1 million vaccines in Canada to date and we have more vaccines coming next week from Moderna and Pfizer, and as Health Canada continues its work and its reviews, if additional vaccine candidates become approved, we have additional contracts.

As parliamentarians, we have a duty to assure the public that we are working to make sure we have everything that we need in place. We need to build up public trust to ensure that Canadians know that when vaccines are available and it is their turn to receive the vaccine, they can trust that it was not a group of politicians determining which vaccines move forward and which ones do not, that it is instead based on science and evidence and that the regulators at Health Canada are the ones who make these decisions.

This is an opportunity we all have as parliamentarians, and I hope that we will rise to the occasion. The Conservatives should work with us on solutions. I keep hearing Conservatives say there is no plan, yet I have not heard a single solution from them or heard them say that they would have done something differently. Working together is the type of leadership that all Canadians would welcome, and we should get away from the partisanship in a pandemic and crisis like this. If not now, then when? I really think that is what Canadians are expecting.

As we move forward, it is important to assure Canadians that until vaccines are available in their jurisdictions for mass distribution, we need to protect our most vulnerable and continue with these measures. Canada has procured enough vaccines to ensure that every Canadian who wants a vaccination can get one by September. We have six million doses of vaccines coming by the end of March, and from April to June at least 20 million doses of vaccines will be available. They are coming, and we need to work together to ensure that all of us play a role in keeping Canadians safe.

• (2155)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her intervention. I must say that it is one of the most partisan speeches I have heard today.

We are hearing the Liberals say that they have a portfolio of vaccines and that of course they have a plan. Our colleague reminded

*S. O. 52*

us of that in her speech, even though she has no idea what this plan is.

I will ask her a very simple question. What is the plan for the 330 million additional doses that we will acquire with the much-vaunted portfolio of 400 million doses, given that there are between 35 million and 40 million Canadians and that we each need two doses?

Would it not be possible for us to demonstrate international solidarity? What will happen to developing countries that also need vaccines? Can we also help them? I believe that it is our responsibility as a rich country.

[*English*]

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from my hon. colleague. In fact, the irony is that as my hon. colleague was speaking and asking about the plan, he actually highlighted several elements of our plan. The Government of Canada website displays timelines and the numbers of doses that are coming, and there is that commitment that once Canadians have received vaccines, if there are additional vaccines, we will absolutely work with other countries and developing nations that need help.

I agree with the member that Canada does have a duty to help around the world if possible, but the government has committed to make sure that we take care of the health and safety of Canadians first and then we will do our part globally. That is going to be good for Canadians, and it is going to be good for our global community and our global economy.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, does the member not agree that transparency and clear communication are essential for addressing the vaccine hesitancy in Canada, and that it is critical that we share information and get as much information as we can out to the public?

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Madam Speaker, I do agree that transparency is incredibly important.

This is why I think the opportunity for this debate, in terms of vaccine hesitancy, is a good opportunity to talk about how Canada is a leader in regulation, safety and making sure that vaccines are safe and effective. We have a world-class system through Health Canada and our regulators to ensure that vaccines are safe before they go out to the general public.

S. O. 52

Health Canada does an excellent job in providing the science-based analysis to provide the level of transparency that the member spoke to. I agree, and as parliamentarians we have a role to play in sharing that information with Canadians to ensure that when vaccines are available and ready, like the ones that are already in Canada, Canadians feel safe and comfortable receiving them. That is precisely what we need to do to get through this pandemic.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the member spoke a lot about that plan we keep hearing about and about how all Canadians will get vaccinated.

Last weekend, Joanne Liu, a former president of Doctors Without Borders, explained how every delay and every moment that we wait and do nothing allow cases to multiply. Since Canada could see an increasing number of variants, even the smallest delay matters, whether it is a delay in vaccinations or in tightening border controls.

Could our hon. colleague explain these delays and the inaction on the part of the Liberal government, given that we could still see cases surge again in the coming weeks or months?

• (2200)

[*English*]

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Madam Speaker, there were some challenges with the interpretation, but from what I was able to pick up, I think the question was around inaction by the government. I do not know if there was something specific.

I will just say that since the beginning of this pandemic, countries around the world were grappling with the best measures to take based on science. It was evolving. We have come to the table at every step of the way to ensure that the health and safety of Canadians is at the forefront.

The interpretation did not come through, and I apologize if I did not hear all of the question. I think the key is ensuring that—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to address the chamber. I believe this is, in fact, one of the most important debates we will have this year in terms of the significance of a great deal of hope that I believe is out there at the end of the day.

Ever since this world pandemic started to take flight, the government has been aware of it and has been taking action. Canadians understand and appreciate that we made an early decision to listen to what science, health experts, civil servants and Canadians as a whole, the different stakeholders, had to say on this very important issue. I believe that when we take a look at how Canada has managed through this whole process, we will come out okay. I really and truly believe that.

For example, with regard to the vaccination issue, which is today's debate, we have the COVID-19 vaccine task force. We have

to remember that this is the group that, in essence, recommended that we go out there and secure these contracts. There was concern about capacity here in Canada. At the end of the day, the most important thing we have to do here is ensure that we have a vaccination that is free, safe and effective. Those are the expectations of Canadians from all regions of the country.

When we hear about this lack of a plan, nothing could be further from the truth. We have known for weeks, if not months now, of the government's commitment to ensure that every Canadian who wants to get the vaccination will in fact have that opportunity by the end of September of this year.

We are working day in, day out with provincial and territorial jurisdictions to ensure that not only is Canada acquiring the vaccines that are so critically important but also that there is high co-operation with provinces to make sure the distribution is there. I believe that Canadians can be confident of the system we have in place.

Opposition members will pick and choose and talk about country X doing better or country Y already vaccinating, but it is important to realize that Canada received vaccines back in December. Many other countries did not receive vaccines late last year. Some countries such as Japan, New Zealand, Australia and South Korea have not even started vaccinating. Someone mentioned earlier today, and I believe it was the health critic, my New Democratic colleague, that the United States is going to bring vaccinations up to 1.5 million people per day. There are over 350 million people living in the U.S.A. Do the math: There are 37 million people in Canada.

I believe Canada is doing exceptionally well in meeting the expectations Canadians have of the national government. We are doing that because we are working with those health experts and groups that have a vested interest in making sure we get it right.

Some of the criticisms are interesting. The member of Parliament for Foothills says that the government's first priority was a deal with China. That is just not true. It is not the only thing members of the opposition will say that is factually incorrect. There is misinformation out there, and opposition members have to take some responsibility for the type of information they are passing on to Canadians.

• (2205)

I believe, at the end of the day, Canada is in a great position. Based on the recommendation of the COVID-19 vaccine task force, Canada actually signed agreements with seven different companies to reserve vaccine doses for Canadians. Those who want to be vaccinated will be able to be vaccinated, at the very latest, by the end of September. There should be no doubt about that. We know we will have six million doses by the end of March and that we are on target to be able to get them. These are pretty straightforward and fairly easy to understand.

When I heard that we were going to be talking about the vaccine and having this emergency debate today, I thought it would provide us an opportunity to provide some other thoughts. I had some correspondence from the Manitoba Teachers' Society. One of the things I really appreciated them raising, and I want to share with members tonight, is the impact school closures have on our economy. It is incredibly significant.

Members should do some research and try to understand, when our public schools start to shut down, the impact it has on our economy, as well as society in general. They are recognizing that the government needs to urgently look to maintain and return in-person schooling as a key component toward Canada's economic recovery. We all know that it is the provinces that establish these priorities, but Ottawa does have a role to play in terms of sharing some of our thoughts.

We parliamentarians all agree that there are situations where we need to establish priorities in terms of the vaccine. For example, everyone agrees those in long-term care, and the health care workers who have been working in long-term care facilities serving seniors, have to be a priority.

The government relies on the advice of the National Advisory Committee for Immunization to inform vaccine priority lists across the country. Being able to share thoughts on that issue would be of great value. We recognize that Pfizer and Moderna are the two we have secured and that have met the requirements from Health Canada and their regulations. Because of that, we know they are safe and effective vaccines. We have an organization, through our regulations, that is second to no other in the world.

We also know that there are still five others that are out there. AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson are under current review, and hopefully we will see more approvals not that far in the future. We cannot include or incorporate those into the numbers, because they have not been approved, but at least we have a government that recognizes that the best way we can guarantee that every Canadian will get vaccinated is to have that diverse portfolio.

If members want to use stats and say that country X is doing this and country Y is doing that, in an attempt to try to make Canada's vaccination plan look bad, I would suggest that they are being very selective, in terms of what they are using.

There is no doubt in my mind that, whether it is the Prime Minister, cabinet members or members of Parliament, to a certain degree, from all sides of the House, we understand the importance of getting this right. There will be an opportunity for us to be able to get more into the details in the weeks, months and years ahead, so that we are better positioned to be able to deal with this.

To say that we would not have wanted to see a made-in-Canada solution is ridiculous. Of course it would have been nice. Members can take a look at what we did with some of the personal protective gear and how industries in Canada responded that need.

I see my time is already expired. I appreciate the opportunity to share a few thoughts.

*S. O. 52*

• (2210)

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to enter into this important debate.

I wish I could share the rose-coloured optimism the member opposite certainly has regarding this. Just this past day, I was fact-checking some of the elements of this debate, and there was a whole rash of articles about the CanSino deal, its mismanagement and the troubling revelations that are coming out. Serious questions need to be asked.

There are a lot of very valid questions that need to be asked about this government's management of vaccines from the beginning and the impact of that today with the fact that next week Canada is getting zero vaccines. How can the member speak so optimistically about the government's supposed successes when the number of vaccines that Canada will receive next week is zero?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, it is not that difficult. The government has said for a while now that we will have six million doses by the end of March, and even with this interruption, that number is not changing.

What I find interesting is that it is easy to talk about an issue and to be critical months after. Where was the opposition's concern in regards to the issue of vaccinations back in the summer when, for the first time in 30 years, the House of Commons was actually sitting? Yes, it was in a committee format, but we were on the floor of the House of Commons, and there were literally hundreds, if not thousands, of questions being asked. Where were the questions on vaccinations back then?

To be able to try to—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I have a lot of members who would like to ask the hon. member questions.

The hon. member for Montcalm.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my esteemed colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government, spoke about a partisan attitude and misinformation.

I want to point out that earlier, his colleague compared Canada's performance to New Zealand's, saying that New Zealand had yet to start vaccinating. However, vaccination is not an issue there, since their measures are working quite well. New Zealand is not lagging behind like we are now. That is a little misinformation from the government.

We are saying that there needs to be more transparency to get a better understanding of where things are going. Does my esteemed colleague not find it a bit odd that small changes in the spread of the virus are being published, but when it comes to the government's so-called vaccination schedule, which we are not seeing, no scenarios, whether optimistic, negative or pessimistic, have been proposed or tabled to allow us to monitor the progress and see what can be done to achieve these objectives, given that AstraZeneca and vaccine nationalism seem to change things for the government?

S. O. 52

My colleague's colleague did not answer the question earlier. Does my esteemed colleague not think that the government should table these changes so that we can all see what is going on at the same time with full transparency?

• (2215)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, what is important is that the national government continues to work with provincial jurisdictions, which are administering the vaccines for the most part, and there are two vaccines that have been approved. We have up to another five that we have agreements for, and a couple of them are getting closer.

I believe there is weekly, even daily, dialogue between the different levels of government. I encourage individuals who want to get a better sense of the bigger picture to take a look at the coronavirus page of Canada.ca. There is all sorts of information there. There is a plan. To say there is no plan is to give misinformation—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time tonight with the member for Brandon—Souris. Before I begin, I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition, our colleagues in the NDP and the member for Vancouver Kingsway for asking the Speaker to grant time to what I think is the most critical issue that is facing the country today.

I say that from the epicentre. Just 10 minutes away from here, we have an unfolding situation with the Roberta Place long-term care centre that requires Parliament's attention. At Roberta Place, 127 residents have tested positive, 92 staff have tested positive and 46 members of this long-term care centre are dead as a result of COVID-19.

I have been representing this area, as a city councillor and as a member of Parliament now, for the better part of 14 years. I have built tremendous relationships with not just the staff, but the people who live in that residence and their families. It is heartbreaking to understand what has been going on there. As a country, I ask everyone to not only pray for the staff and the residents, but also those who are helping them, such as the staff from the Royal Victoria Hospital, from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, and from Soldiers' Memorial Hospital.

I also ask everyone to pray for Edwin Ng. Edwin is a support worker who is on a ventilator right now in critical condition at the Royal Victoria Hospital. His wife Samantha and his three children are dependent on Edwin to provide support for them. He is in critical condition. I ask that Canadians pray not only for everybody involved in this situation, but also for Edwin.

There have been 99 of these cases confirmed as the U.K. variant. For 10 months, Roberta Place had built a wall around itself. There were no cases. Everything was going well. Then, all of a sudden, the U.K. variant came in and, like a firestorm, it raged through that building resulting in the situation I described earlier.

There is a tremendous amount of fear and anxiety within our community. In particular, the chief medical officer of health, Dr. Gardner, is warning of the potential for this to spread and of community transmission. I have spoken to Dr. Gardner several times. The only way to deal with this and respond to the U.K. variant is to use immunization, and that means vaccinating.

I know that Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and RVH have been doing their best to look after those in long-term care facilities and seniors facilities within their jurisdiction. However, the stark reality is that we have run out of vaccines. Any thought of using immunization as a response to this U.K. variant right now is not going to happen unless and until we get more vaccines. The challenge this week, as has been documented tonight and why the importance of this debate is upon us, is that we are not getting any vaccines this week. Based on the numbers we have from the Province, Ontario will only be receiving 20,000 vaccines next week. That is hardly enough to deal with the situation that is unfolding in central Ontario.

The challenge with that is it is not just who we are vaccinating in the long-term care and senior homes. Many of them have received their first vaccines because the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has had to prioritize our most vulnerable.

A total of 10,000 people have been vaccinated. Many of them are front-line health care workers, personal support workers and long-term care workers who received their first dose of the vaccination and were expecting, within a 28-day period, that they were going to receive it last Thursday. However, they were told that it had been put off and that they would not be receiving the vaccine. They were further told on Friday that they were not going to be receiving a vaccine in the near term. Think of what that does to the front-line health care workers who are putting it out there every single day for our community and not knowing when that second dose is coming.

• (2220)

I have been dealing with phone calls. The level of fear and anxiety among these health care workers is unimaginable. They are having to go into work every day not knowing when the second vaccine dose is going to be administered. They were counting on it, and it is heartbreaking. For anybody who thinks this is all about politics, this is about solutions. I know that our local MPP has been working day and night trying to coordinate this multi-agency effort that has been going on, but there is significant concern, not just among our community but among health care providers, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, Dr. Gardner and others.

There is a lot going on, and this was predicted last year. The opposition was talking about how Canada had been at the back of the line.

Last May, I had a conversation with my next-door neighbour, who works for AstraZeneca. He asked me if I knew what Canada was doing about vaccine procurement. I said that I assumed that they were doing it. He said none of them had been approached at that point.

AstraZeneca had not been approached, Pfizer had not been approached, Moderna had not been approached, and we find out today from stories that are appearing in the paper why that is.

What was the opposition accused of? It was accused of fearmongering and spreading false information. I have been on this call for a couple of hours now, and I have heard several members of the Liberal Party accuse us of that. We were actually telling Canadians the truth about what was going on.

We need help in central Ontario. This morning, I spoke with Dr. Gardner and received correspondence from RVH and our MPP that speaks to the issue of vaccines. I tried to contact the health minister today, and I am grateful that her director of operations called me tonight. We need 4,000 vaccines to ensure that those who are vulnerable in our community are able to get their second doses by February 8. There are no vaccines available from the province. That is the stark reality. Therefore, I am seeking the federal government's assistance in dealing with this.

The other thing that needs to happen, and I have been on this push for a year now, are rapid tests. There are rapid testing solutions out there, both antibody and antigen solutions. I am aware of at least one company that has had an application before Health Canada since last April or May and it still has not been approved. I am aware of other companies. These are three-minute antigen and antibody tests that must be approved. They are part of the overall solution of not just vaccines, but rapid testing.

When I talk to people about this, they cannot believe that Health Canada has not approved them. Despite the fact that the U.S. FDA and the European Union, with the most stringent testing regime in the world, have approved these antibody and antigen tests, we do not have them here in Canada. That is another thing that Dr. Gardner talked about, as did Dr. Lee, the associate medical officer of health. If we had these rapid tests in place, much of this could have been avoided. Those are their words, not mine.

We are in a desperate situation, as I said, here in central Ontario. Last Friday, I received this correspondence from the chief medical officer of health at RVH:

Unless we receive more vaccine in the interim, it will mean only 25% of Simcoe Muskoka long-term care residents will receive their second dose within 28 days. No new Simcoe Muskoka LTC residents will receive dose one. No new Simcoe Muskoka assisted living care patients will receive dose one, making them ineligible for transfer to LTC or retirement homes, and no Simcoe Muskoka health care workers will receive dose two within 42 days.

The clinic actually closed on Thursday, and all dose two appointments were cancelled. If we are going to be in alignment with provincial direction and protect our region from this highly transmissible variant, we need 4,000 doses, ministers, and we need them by February. Help us, please, in central Ontario.

• (2225)

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for sharing the very dire situation he is experiencing in his riding right now.

I share his concerns. I am equally off-put by the partisanship I am seeing defending incompetence. In today's news, the paper said that for the next four weeks, Canada's vaccine deliveries would be cut in half with up to 400,000 doses delayed, according to Major-General Dany Fortin, who is leading the country's vaccine rollout.

*S. O. 52*

I spent my morning fighting for people in my riding with trench fever. We have had long-term care COVID outbreaks in my riding. The response has been grossly inadequate. Now is not the time for partisanship. As my hon. colleague mentioned, the lives of the most vulnerable are on the line. In Winnipeg right now it is -39°. I spent all day trying to fight for health care supports and housing for the people of Winnipeg Centre.

I just want to say that I stand with the member, although we come from different parties. We have to stand in non-partisanship and ensure people get the vaccines and health care services they need now.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Speaker, this is the greatest challenge of our generation. Unless and until we come up with solutions for people, many who are vulnerable in our communities are going to continue to die. We are seeing that here in my riding of Barrie—Innisfil.

We need these vaccines. I do not care what it takes. I do not care what we have to do. We need to ensure that we have, and are in a position to provide, vaccines for those who are vulnerable. I will also add rapid testing to that, as an ancillary solution to this issue.

I do not know what to do to encourage the government. I have no idea of what to expect now. Everything we have been told has failed to happen. I have no confidence, and I know that there are many in our communities, including front-line health care workers, who have no confidence in the government's ability to deliver what it said was going to come.

I know the government has said it has a robust portfolio. We have procured that, but I need the government to deliver. We need this, as a community and as a country.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulo, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his comments. We share many situations and emotions.

I previously taught the methodology of intellectual work, which requires searching for information and avoiding disinformation. One of the ways to avoid disinformation is to have sources of information. That is what we are calling for today in this debate: transparency.

What does my colleague think about the degree of transparency that suddenly appears when questions are asked repeatedly?

• (2230)

[*English*]

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Speaker, all Canadians deserve a heightened level of transparency. All of us in opposition have been calling for the government to disclose the contracts with the manufacturers, and the government refuses to do that.

*S. O. 52*

This is a government that came to power in 2015 and said it was going to be transparent by default. It was going to be the most open and transparent government in the history of Canada. It has failed to do that on many fronts. Now is not the time to hide information. Canadians need to know, and they need to have confidence in their government's ability to produce exactly what it said it was going to.

As I said earlier, I know our community, our health care workers, our PSWs, the people in our long-term care facilities and their families are losing faith that the government will be able to provide the provinces with what they need in terms of a solution. That solution is vaccines and rapid testing, as well.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Barrie—Innisfil for sharing his time with me tonight and for his presentation.

I want to take a moment to thank all of the frontline workers who have worked tirelessly throughout this whole pandemic. Day in and day out they put themselves in harm's way to help those who have contracted this terrible virus. I also want to acknowledge the families who have lost a loved one during this COVID pandemic. Over 19,000 Canadians have died from this terrible virus, and many are battling for their lives as we speak here tonight.

We are still in the middle of this crisis. Millions of Canadians are still unable to work and countless businesses are shut down. Families have been separated for months and many of our youth are not in their classrooms. Long-term care homes are still having outbreaks and some intensive care units are full. The only way to end this pandemic is through vaccinating people.

Tonight we are having this emergency debate because the Liberal government has failed to deliver a reliable supply of vaccines to the provinces and territories. Let me elaborate. The Liberals can twist themselves into pretzels in trying to spin their way out of this mess, but the fact remains that we are falling further behind.

Now the Liberals are promising that every Canadian who wants to will get vaccinated by September. Tonight I hear it might even be the end of the year. Forgive me for not blindly trusting some of these words, as the Liberals have proven a pattern of saying one thing and then a couple of weeks later having to renege. I truly hope we can vaccinate everyone by September, but there is no guarantee it will happen.

We do not know the likelihood of success, as no one has seen the signed contracts. They have been mentioned several times tonight, but no one has seen the signed contracts with the various pharmaceutical companies. Before I go any further, let us discuss what we know to be true.

We know the Liberals have signed contracts with seven different pharmaceutical companies, contracts worth over \$1 billion. This does not mean that all seven are going to get Health Canada approval, and it does not mean that we currently have any of those vaccines on standby. It also does not mean that we know when the vaccines will actually arrive. We still do not know if we are able to manufacture any of those vaccines on Canadian soil. We also do not know if the latest Liberal promise of vaccinating everyone by September is feasible, as I said before. Those are the unknowns,

and it boggles my mind why the government has not been more transparent.

Before the Christmas break, the health committee started a new study on the government's response to COVID. However, Canadians might be interested to know that we still have not had a single meeting on vaccines since the House came back in September.

Last night, after our Conservative team had to call an emergency health committee meeting, we also had to overrule the chair to pass a motion to finally start talking about the Liberals' vaccine strategy. Not only that, but Canadians should know that the Liberal chair did not like that we pointed out that the health committee had not met in the last 45 days in the middle of the worst pandemic we have ever had.

Thanks to my friend and colleague from Calgary Nose Hill, who rightly pointed out to the Liberal chair that we are in the middle of a pandemic, we know time is of the essence. Canadians want answers, and I know the Liberals would prefer it if we did not ask tough question. However, we would not be in this position if they had provided meaningful answers.

It did not help that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement shared erroneous information last night on a media panel and then had to text in to correct the record. If the parliamentary secretary does not know the details of the government's vaccine strategy, it begs the question: Who does?

In the past week we have learned that Pfizer has dramatically reduced vaccine shipments to the point that we will not receive a single dose this week. We have also learned it is having problems at its manufacturing facility, but we still do not know how many doses will be delivered in the coming weeks. Now the German government has formally requested that the EU block all exports of COVID vaccines produced within the EU. On top of that, the European Union's health commissioner has said pharmaceutical companies must "provide early notification whenever they want to export vaccines to third countries." Let me state on the record that if that happens, we will be in even more trouble and will fall further behind. Now more than ever we need to know what can be done if the EU blocks those shipments.

Let us not forget the Liberals announced millions for Medicago, which is a pharmaceutical company, to establish a large-scale manufacturing facility here in Canada. The Liberals also announced \$44 million to update the National Research Council's facilities to meet manufacturing standards.

• (2235)

Originally, when these announcements were made, the Prime Minister blamed a previous government from 36 years ago for why he had to do it. If we are going to start pointing fingers over what previous governments did or not do, there is not enough oxygen in the room to carry on the discussion. Instead of blaming others, it would have been wise for the Prime Minister to outline which vaccines can be manufactured at the new facility.

To date, we have not received any updates from the government on this funding announcement, and I think that shows a flaw in the contracts. If we are going to continue to see logistical challenges with getting vaccines into Canada, it would be prudent to know if any of the contracts would allow us to domestically manufacture a vaccine.

For months now, we have been asking for more details about the contracts the Liberals signed with the pharmaceutical companies. While I understand some of the sensitivities around pricing, what I do not understand is the level of secrecy. All these delays and smokescreens are deeply concerning.

While the Prime Minister was sabre-rattling with the premiers, to his credit he recognized his comments were not helpful and said so during a recent meeting with the provinces. Now that the premiers' concerns have proven to be correct, the issue of procuring vaccines falls squarely with the federal government. Because of that unpredictability and the necessity of having to give a second dose of the Pfizer vaccine, the Liberal government has put the provinces in a very difficult situation.

It takes a considerable amount of time to get a vaccine clinic organized. There is a necessity to have an on-site freezer tested for multiple days before using it to store vaccines. Staff must be arranged and notices posted. I know our front-line staff are up to the challenge, but let us give them the greatest chance of success.

For months now, we have been asking for more details about the contracts the Liberals signed with the pharmaceutical companies. While I understand some of the sensitivities around pricing, as I have said, what I do not understand is the level of secrecy. That part of the secrecy could stem from the Liberals not wanting certain details leaking out. For example, iPolitics is reporting that after the Liberals signed a deal with CanSino Biologics, the Chinese government blocked shipments for clinical trials. While we still do not know a lot of the details about that arrangement with CanSino, we do know that it took the Liberals an additional three months to sign another contract with a different pharmaceutical company. In those three months, countries around the world were signing vaccine contracts while the Liberals did not. It was not until the Liberals signed those other deals that the Prime Minister finally admitted that the CanSino vaccine was going nowhere.

In the coming days I fully expect the Liberals to be transparent with Parliament, with Canadians and with our health committee. When did they know that the CanSino deal was off the table? Why did it take them three months before signing another contract? These are legitimate questions that deserve answers.

As the leader of the official opposition has said, we want to work together on getting a strategy that will result in Canadians getting

*S. O. 52*

vaccinated. For that to happen it is up to the government to invite us to the table. In all opposition parties there are very talented members. If I were in the government's shoes, I would rather have the member of Parliament for Calgary Nose Hill working alongside me rather than being on the other end of her tough questions.

We cannot secure jobs this way. We need to secure our economic recovery, and we can do this to secure our future with vaccines. To protect our citizens and for provinces to lift restrictions, we must get this right.

In closing, it is my sincere hope that the government picks up the phone, calls the opposition parties and invites them to the table. Now let us get to work to secure Canada's future.

• (2240)

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Ironically, a few days ago, some Liberal members accused the provinces and Quebec of letting vaccine doses languish in the freezers, when that was not at all what was happening.

The rate of administration is very good. It is the supply of vaccines that is lacking. That is what we are realizing today with the delay in vaccines and doses from Pfizer.

Does my colleague agree with me that it is the lack of predictability and reliability from the federal government that is to blame in this matter?

*[English]*

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Madam Speaker, absolutely. It is part of what I mentioned about putting all of our eggs in one basket, as was originally done. We may have the largest portfolio now, but with a three-month delay. I think part of the reason we are not seeing the contracts is because of the delivery mechanisms that might be in them. For instance, did this initial contract to get four million doses delivered by April 1 mean that they are all going to arrive in the last few weeks of March, or was it a contract that actually stated that we would get a million in January and a million and a half in each of the months leading up to it?

These are details that we just have not been able to access at this point, when other countries in the world have done so. It is part of the delay that my colleague just mentioned, and I agree with her.

*S. O. 52*

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, tonight I was talking to a friend of mine who is an infectious disease specialist. He is concerned not only about the progress of the rollout of the vaccinations but also about the volume of international travel that is taking place, and he said that these issues actually intersect. He stated that not only do we need to limit entry of the virus into Canada but that we also especially need to stop the spread of the new variants that are starting to come to fruition. As we start to see case reductions in Ontario and Quebec, it is critical that we use all the barriers possible to keep transmission low. The last thing we need is a new variant coming in that we cannot fight or for which our vaccines are no longer effective. He also said that it is critical that we vaccinate as many people as possible.

After seeing other countries imposing strict measures and requiring people to stay at designated hotels for quarantine upon arrival, does my colleague agree that we need to be doing more when it comes to international travel?

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Madam Speaker, it is very important. I think that was a big part of the problem when we first started. Many countries in the world were shutting down travel much ahead of the Canadian government, which did not do it until well into April but had known about the virus in Wuhan since early December.

I think there is a time frame there to be very vigilant in regard to the type of travel happening today. We need to be very sure that we are not putting all our eggs in one basket again and look at vaccines that will attack these variants as well.

I certainly appreciate the member's question.

• (2245)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I know that my colleague cares a lot about this issue, because it is particularly impacting seniors in his riding. I was wondering if he could perhaps use this time to give more personal examples of situations in his riding of seniors and everybody else being deeply affected by the lack of vaccines in Canada.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Madam Speaker, since I and my colleague deal with long-term care facilities across Canada in our roles as members of the health committee, she knows full well that our long-term care facilities are where 85% of the deaths that have occurred in Canada are happening, and we need to make sure that we can get these residents vaccinated as quickly as we can.

This delay in vaccines, the lack of planning from the government to be able to supply the provinces with the vaccine, is really hurting our ability to stabilize things in our long-term care facilities here in Canada and certainly here in Brandon—Souris in the southwest. We just had another death in one of our facilities here today, even though Manitoba is doing better than it has in the past.

We need to make sure that we are utilizing those vaccines in our long-term care facilities as quickly as we can get them there, but we cannot put in arms what we do not have.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

It is such an honour to join my colleagues this evening for this incredibly important debate on one of the greatest challenges that has ever faced our country. Many of my hon. colleagues have spoken about the whole-of-government effort to provide vaccines to Canadians and keep Canadians safe. I would like to focus my remarks on one specific aspect of our response, the important work being done by our defence team and the Canadian Armed Forces. No matter the mission, Canadian Armed Forces members have continued to demonstrate the very best our country has to offer.

*[Translation]*

This is clearer than ever, now that we are now transitioning to supporting the distribution of vaccines. This evening, I would like to speak about how the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence have been reliable partners in our whole-of-government fight against COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic.

*[English]*

As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic has required us all to make important changes to our lives and our routines to stay safe. This has truly required a whole-of-nation effort. From individuals to businesses, to our government, everyone has an important role to play in our response to COVID-19, including our defence team. Most notably, since the pandemic first emerged here in Canada, Canadian Armed Forces members and DND personnel have been working closely with the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Starting in October, when the Public Health Agency of Canada began to develop its strategy to distribute vaccines across the country, defence team members once again answered the call. A number of Canadian Armed Forces members and civilian staff have been temporarily reassigned to support the Public Health Agency of Canada in the planning and coordination of these efforts.

*[Translation]*

They include Major-General Dany Fortin, who was named vice-president of logistics and operations in November. He is working alongside other leaders on a vaccine distribution task force at the Public Health Agency of Canada, or PHAC.

*[English]*

He is well positioned for this role, having led complex operations as the first commander of the NATO mission in Iraq from 2018 to 2019. Major-General Fortin is joined by several defence team logistics experts, operation planners, health care workers, engineers and information technology and systems experts. Each of these defence team personnel brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table, which are critical to facilitating vaccine delivery, ensuring that vaccines are safely stored and effectively distributed to our provinces and territories. Canadians can have full confidence in their military to support this national effort under Operation Vector.

In December, Canadian Armed Forces members delivered five medical-grade freezers to two of our northern territories in support of our Public Health Agency of Canada partners. Earlier this month, in Nain, Newfoundland and Labrador, they helped transport vulnerable individuals to and from vaccination sites. Last week, they helped local authorities in Watson Lake, Yukon, tear down a temporary vaccine site in the community and the Canadian Armed Forces is working closely with the Government of Ontario and the Nishnawbe Aski Nation to finalize the planning to deploy to up to 32 communities in northern Ontario to help with the public health vaccination program.

Canadian Armed Forces units across the country are ready to support civilian authorities if and when they are needed. However, it is important to note that their primary role is not to administer vaccines. That important responsibility rests with local health authorities.

● (2250)

[*Translation*]

At this crucial time in Canada's fight against COVID-19, the members of the defence team are providing essential support to PHAC.

[*English*]

The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces remain ready and responsive at all times and have been since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through it all, Canadians have been able to depend on the dedicated professionals on the defence team to help them and to save lives.

This past year has been a testament to their adaptability and resilience, and it is a stark reminder of how Canadian Armed Forces members risk their lives every single day to protect and defend our nation and its people. Despite the unique challenges of the past year, they have continued to make Canadians proud.

In February of last year, Canadian Armed Forces members were integral in bringing Canadians home in the face of the growing threat of the coronavirus. Through this work, we know how critical it is that Canadian Armed Forces members remain safe and healthy to deploy when needed. That is why defence team leadership took decisive action to protect all employees and Canadian Armed Forces. Our focus was on ensuring that critical capabilities remained intact, and many Canadian Armed Forces members came home from or delayed deploying on operations abroad.

[*Translation*]

All these measures made it possible for Canadian Armed Forces members to be ready to answer the call and help Canadians. That call came quickly.

[*English*]

By April, thousands of Canadian Armed Forces members were assigned to Operation Laser, the mission to support our government's response to COVID-19. They worked on the front lines alongside health care professionals in 54 long-term care facilities: 47 in Quebec and seven in Ontario.

*S. O. 52*

[*Translation*]

In Ontario and Manitoba, Canadian Armed Forces members also helped the Public Health Agency of Canada manage PPE in warehouses, to ensure that it could be distributed quickly to the people who need it.

[*English*]

In addition, more than 1,200 Canadian Rangers deployed in northern and indigenous communities across the country, providing essential support when it was needed the most. Recently, as cases began to surge again in the second wave in the fall and winter months, Canadian Armed Forces members answered the call once again in several indigenous communities in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec.

Among other critical tasks, Canadian Armed Forces medical assistance teams helped establish and operate alternative isolation areas in these regions, and Canadian Rangers are currently supporting the Hatchet Lake Denesuline First Nation in Saskatchewan, delivering food, firewood and care packages to members of the community. They are also ensuring that community leaders have the information they need to mitigate risks and put effective health measures in place for their residents.

Our Canadian Armed Forces are helping out in some of the hardest-hit communities in Canada and deploying abroad to support our partners and allies in training, deterrence and peace support efforts. While they protect the health and safety of Canadians, it is our job to protect theirs. We have worked hard to ensure that they have the appropriate PPE for each deployment and closely follow public health measures and quarantine requirements as needed. Canadian Armed Forces members have begun to receive the vaccine, starting with front-line health care providers. All of this ensures that they remain safe and ready to help Canadians through the pandemic and beyond.

● (2255)

[*Translation*]

It will take time for things to get back to normal. We need to be patient and stay committed to ensuring that Canadians have access to a safe and effective vaccine.

[*English*]

However, I am confident in the work of the defence team and our partners across government to reach that light at the end of the tunnel and bring this pandemic to an end.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I always find it a pleasure to work with my friend on international human rights files. We agree sometimes, though we do not always agree.

*S. O. 52*

I want to pursue the point about what 2021 is going to look like. Obviously, in the official opposition we have many concerns about the delays in the rollout of vaccinations. Even if the government achieves its targets, there is going to be a need for greater testing, at-home testing, and the approval of new testing technologies as well as tracing. During the first wave of this, many people saw the lockdown as an opportunity for the government to get some of the testing and tracing mechanisms that we needed up and running, but we are into a second wave and still do not have available the kind of rapid testing and at-home testing that we need. We are still going to need these things for much of 2021, especially given the vaccination rollouts.

I wonder if the member could just explain what happened with testing. Why do we not have those systems in place right now?

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question and the work we are doing together, especially on the human rights committee, which met earlier this evening on the important topic of the Uighurs.

I would like to respond to him by saying that we have already deployed over 15 million rapid tests.

He also mentioned contact tracing. Right now there are public servants and Canadian Armed Forces members who have been helping with contact-tracing phone calls and helping out the public health authorities.

Therefore, with respect to testing and contact tracing, these are things we are already working on and doing for Canadians.

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, no one here is calling into question what the army has already done, but I would like to talk about the issue of upfront funding. Maybe the reason the army was needed in long-term care homes during the first wave was that the Conservatives and Liberals have been cutting health care funding for years, and the federal transfers are not keeping up with the demands of Quebec and the provinces.

Before we can get vaccines into people's arms, we need to get some, so that members of the military can help with the vaccination campaign. In response to all of this, the Liberals are proposing national standards. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Members of the military even decried the lack of resources in their report during the first wave. To get resources, the government needs to supply money so we can pay our staff and provide medical equipment. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** Madam Speaker, I agree, we need national elder care standards.

The situation our Canadian Armed Forces encountered in seniors' homes was terrible. I completely agree with my colleague that we need those standards. We continue to help the provinces care for seniors along with the Red Cross—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order. The member for Shefford on a point of order.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Madam Speaker, I never said I agreed with national standards. I was criticizing the Liberals' solution, which is to impose national standards instead of investing money.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** That sounds like debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** Madam Speaker, I am sorry I misunderstood the question. I truly believe that we need national standards.

• (2300)

*[English]*

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague and also the Canadian Armed Forces for the work they have done, as well as the truth telling from Major-General Dany Fortin. Thank goodness we have somebody telling the truth. CTV News stated:

For the next four weeks, Canada's vaccine deliveries will be cut in half with up to 400,000 doses delayed, according to Maj.-Gen. Dany Fortin, who is leading the country's vaccine rollout. Canada won't receive any new deliveries from Pfizer this week, and only one-quarter of the previously promised delivery next week.

I am wondering when the government will start actually having some accountability and being transparent to Canadians, like we have seen from Major-General Dany Fortin. Canadians deserve answers about what is going on. We are in a crisis and we need answers now.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** Madam Speaker, I do believe that we have said it in the House today. We have been providing answers and we will continue to.

By the end of March, there will be six million doses. By the end of September, every Canadian who wants a vaccination will be able to receive a vaccination.

Major-General Fortin is doing incredible work. The current delay is temporary. We will be receiving all of the doses so that Canadians can get vaccinated if they wish to.

**Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to virtually rise in my home office today to address the government's ongoing strategy for rolling out COVID-19 vaccinations.

As my colleagues have outlined this evening, from the very early days this government's focus has been on doing whatever it takes for as long as it takes to get us through this pandemic. We know that the only way to conquer this pernicious virus is for all of us to continue to follow public health advice alongside a successful vaccine rollout.

Intense pandemic fatigue only serves to further strengthen our resolve to get vaccines out to Canadians as rapidly as possible. Across the globe, every country is faced with a challenging vaccine supply chain. Every country wants to get vaccines to its citizens as soon as possible, and every country shares the same goal: to get to the other side of this pandemic.

From the beginning, the focus of this government has been to provide safe, effective and reliable vaccines to all Canadians who wish to be vaccinated. Our comprehensive and meticulously planned vaccine strategy means vaccines are getting into the arms of Canadians. We have hit more than three-quarters of a million vaccine doses administered across Canada. As the Prime Minister announced on Friday, the number of doses administered daily is now four times what it was just three weeks ago. That is the good news. The number and pace of vaccine delivery to Canadians is increasing.

However, the government has pledged that it will be up front with Canadians when it comes to bumps in the vaccine rollout road. Yes, the temporary delay of delivery of doses of the Pfizer vaccine is frustrating for all of the countries supplied by that company's Belgian manufacturing facility. That is why when we set out our vaccine strategy we were so ambitious in the large number of contracts that we signed and the doses that we secured.

Here in Canada, during this historic worldwide scramble for vaccines, such bumps in the road were expected. This pandemic is happening in real time. The government's comprehensive planned vaccine strategy means when bumps occur, we are able to respond and adapt in real time.

From the start, our government recognized the highly complex and intensely competitive global market for vaccines, and that is precisely why we pursued a diversified vaccine procurement approach. We knew that temporary production delays such as that announced by Pfizer would be highly likely, given complex manufacturing, unprecedented global demand and a rapid ramping up of production.

Allow me for a moment to remind the House what the world looked like when we started our COVID-19 vaccine procurement strategy. At that time, none of us knew if it was even possible to develop a vaccine that would be effective against COVID-19. We knew that, historically, developing and testing a new vaccine to protect against an infectious disease would normally take several years, but the world did not have several years.

From making sure the vaccine was safe to making sure it was effective, to obtaining regulatory approval to manufacture truly vast quantities of vaccines such as we have never witnessed, we knew from day one that first scientists and then regulators and then manufacturers around the globe would be working under intense time pressure to produce a safe and effective vaccine demanded by every country in the world. Faced with a myriad of differing vaccine types, dosage requirements, as well as manufacturing and finishing needs, working day and night, this government has been dedicated to procuring the very best vaccine candidates for Canadians.

These efforts paid off. Canada invested in one of the most diverse COVID-19 vaccine portfolios in the world. We knew that not all vaccines would make it through the clinical trials. We knew that global demand for the safe and effective vaccines would be like nothing previously witnessed, and we knew that the pressure on biomanufacturing facilities could lead to production delays. That is why from the start Canada had plans in place to mitigate the impact of these challenges. Canada had plans in place to make sure that

*S. O. 52*

this country would receive as many vaccine doses as possible, as rapidly as possible.

Because of this foresight and planning, Canadians have been receiving the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines since last month. We have agreements in place with five other potential vaccine suppliers. We have access to more vaccine doses per person than any other country. We continue to work day and night to get as many vaccine doses as possible into Canada.

• (2305)

So far the government's vaccine strategy has succeeded in delivering 1.1 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to the provinces and territories so that they can rapidly administer the shots to vulnerable Canadians and those on the front line battling this pandemic day in and day out.

Yes, the delay in the Pfizer shipments will have a short-term impact on the vaccination rollout, but this is temporary. Let us be clear: We remain on track to receive the four million doses of the Pfizer vaccine we are expecting by the end of this quarter.

As we head into spring, we expect to be able to send out more than 20 million doses to provinces and territories. That will keep us well on track so that each and every eligible person across this country who wants a vaccine will be able to get one by the end of September.

By the end of March we expect to have six million doses of Moderna and Pfizer vaccines in Canada and up to 80 million doses by the end of the year. The agreements we have in place for five additional vaccine candidates will provide access to even more doses, which we will bring to Canada as soon as regulatory authorization is in place.

Further disruptions to supply are likely, but again, multiple agreements with multiple manufacturers mean that Canada is prepared. As spring gets under way, Canadians will begin to see a dramatic increase in vaccine deliveries. We remain on track for each and every person across this country, as I said, who wants a vaccine and is eligible to be able to get one by the end of September.

Across this country and around the globe, we all have the same aim: to end this pandemic. Nobody in this House underestimates the pain, the anguish and the grief felt by Canadians. The terrible loss is felt by our friends and by our families across the globe during these past depressing, distressing months.

It has been months and we are all living with pandemic fatigue, but this government is steadfast in its commitment to the health and safety of Canadians. The pathway out of this pandemic will not be straightforward and we will face setbacks, but the meticulous early planning of our government means that we will get through it. By continuing to pull together and to support each other, we will make it to the other side of this pandemic.

*S. O. 52*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, in response to a question from my colleague from Montcalm earlier, the member for Winnipeg North said that opposition members were being, shall we say, very critical this evening and lacking in good faith.

He also said that the Liberals have a plan. The government has a plan, and its plan is even available online at coronavirus.ca. However, the House of Commons has blocked the site in both languages. Madam Speaker, I invite you to look it up on your phone and try to access it.

Where is the Liberals' plan? If we want to debate it in the House, we need access to it at the very least.

• (2310)

[*English*]

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Madam Speaker, there has been a lot of talk about what other countries have done in regard to transparency. I am not aware of another country that has shared as much detail in their vaccine rollout. They have not shared the numbers of weekly deliveries and they have not shared contract details.

By separating out the weekly deliveries for each province and territory our government has done its absolute best to be as transparent as possible from day one. We will continue to do so even though, as I acknowledged, there may be bumps in the road on delivery of vaccines in the future.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I mentioned earlier that I was talking to a friend who is an infectious disease specialist. He is really concerned about the volume of unnecessary international travel that is happening, especially as we have new variants of the virus out there right now, the South African virus and the U.K. virus, which are spreading more quickly and are deadlier. He said that it is critical that as we are reducing the spread in Ontario and Quebec, we use all barriers to keep transmission low. The last thing we need is one of these variants to be even worse or something that we do not have a vaccine for to protect our citizens against.

If we look at what other countries are doing, such as 14-day quarantines in place at hotels that those countries pay for, instead of having a piece of paper with which people are expected to play the honour system, does my colleague not agree that we need to do more to make sure that we are lowering the spread and stopping international travel, or at least ensuring that we are protecting our citizens as people come home?

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Madam Speaker, that is a very important question. Canadians want us to be able to utilize every option at our disposal to make sure that we keep them safe. From day one, that has been our priority, to keep Canadians healthy and safe. In recent days we have heard ministers say that we are willing to use every option at our disposal to do that. That includes the things the member was just stating.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to follow up on my colleague's fine comment about being able to deliver a certain number of vaccines each week as we move forward. I assume at some point that we will be able to see a con-

tract that states there was a delivery mechanism for what I was talking about in my speech earlier tonight and in my replies to questions, such that there would be so much supplied per month as stipulated in the contract. I wonder if he could elaborate whether the contracts he has seen, if he has seen any, would indicate that to Canadians, because I am asked that just about every day.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member, whom I sit with on the health committee, for his earlier speech and his question. It is very clear that he cares about Canadians and his constituents. I appreciate his work on the health committee.

We were releasing weekly rollouts of vaccines as they were coming in and letting the provinces and territories know from day one what they were expected to get based on what we were hearing and the information that was coming in.

**Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure, as always, to rise in the House to represent my constituents in the riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry and to participate in tonight's emergency debate on the vaccine rollout. Nonetheless, the fact is we are here tonight having an emergency debate on an issue that I do not think Canadians wanted us to have. As we watch other countries around the world going on social media, providing their updates every day to their citizens of increased rollouts, increased numbers of vaccines, and increased production, in Canada we are asking ourselves here in the House tonight, "What has gone wrong?"

I want to note that I am sharing my time tonight with my colleague from out west, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

I have been speaking to hundreds and probably thousands of constituents and businesses. This is an extremely stressful time for Canadians.

Locally, I want to acknowledge and thank the first responders and the front-line workers who are doing the work, particularly in our long-term care homes.

My riding and community is heartbroken with the situation at the Lancaster Long-Term Care Residence, where 40 of 47 residents have tested positive for COVID-19. Unfortunately, there have been nine deaths. Numerous staff, I think the number is 16, have been infected. There have also been issues at Akwesasne, where there has been a terrible situation from numerous outbreaks. The Red Cross has been involved. I just want to say how proud we are of their work and thank them all for keeping us safe and doing their work during these stressful times.

Again, this highlights the need for this debate. I have said the line many times, and I know many of us from all parties have said this, that there is light at the end of the tunnel. We can see the light; we just do not know how far away it is. When we get news like we have in the last week from the government that what it had promised to provide Canadians will not be happening this week, will not be happening next week, and will not be happening for the next couple weeks, we start to get worried that the light is slipping farther away and that Canadians are getting further away from the finish line for COVID-19.

The key to getting us back to normal, to opening back up, to getting back, lowering the case count and lowering the unfortunate number of deaths in this country is getting vaccines into the arms of Canadians as soon as possible.

I have been in public life here in Ottawa now for about 15 months and counting. I have talked to many constituents on different topics. They will say that the government announced this last week and it is all good. However, I have to say that when we deal with these things and issues, particularly with COVID-19 in the last year, Canadians not only need to listen to the announcement but also they have to follow up on it and see if the government is actually delivering on what it said it was going to do.

I have said this before. I will give a compliment to the government. It gets an A for announcements. The government is one of the best in the business of politics, having the Prime Minister stand out in front of Rideau Cottage and different ministers making announcements, saying that all is good and that they have done X. However, the devil is in the details. We follow up to see if the government is actually doing what it said it was going to do.

It is an A for announcements, and I will say it is an F for follow-through. The vaccine distribution and rollout that we have seen is showing that the government's plan is not working. The commitments the government made are not being fulfilled, and we are losing confidence and asking a lot of questions.

I want to acknowledge the work of our shadow health minister, the member for Calgary Nose Hill. We have been asking questions, and I have been here many days, pretty well every day throughout the fall, in question period, asking question after question, wanting to get certain answers. We were told to stop being so negative and to stop asking questions, that we were on team Canada and we are all in this together. We were told not to worry, not to be negative and to stop criticizing. The very things, the very questions and issues we were raising months ago, I wish did not come to fruition, but they are right now.

There are a few things in this situation that we find ourselves in that I want to elaborate a little on. We cannot see the details of the contracts that have been signed. We can look at the details of contracts in the United States and a lot of other countries. I can go online and print off the details of their contracts, what deals they signed with organizations and different companies, with what dates, what guarantees, what perhaps what penalties in certain cases, and the order and priority of the work they have been doing for several months.

*S. O. 52*

We cannot do that or get those full details here. It makes us wonder why. Now, when we see that tens of thousands of vaccines went to other countries around the world this week and we got zero, we start to understand why the government maybe does not want to disclose the full information on this.

● (2315)

The other issue we face in this country is we do not have domestic production. I will go back again to following up on announcements made in April. The government said not to worry, we do not have domestic production, but it would spend tens of millions of dollars in Montreal. I believe it was the National Research Council. We were going to expand so we could have domestic production in our country. It was a great, feel-good announcement. Yes, we need domestic production. As far as I know, we have not even seen a shovel in the ground. That facility is not operational.

We are in the heat of the moment. Other countries that are producing domestically have good contracts and are getting their vaccines. We had an announcement but there was no follow-through in actually getting it done in a timely manner. I think there would be unanimous agreement in the House to say, heaven forbid, that if we ever went through this again in my lifetime, we would be more prepared in making sure we could produce vaccines domestically. We have to ask ourselves what the end game is. The Prime Minister has said several times that the buck stops here, and he is right. It stops with the government.

Over the Christmas holidays, I remember the outrage from certain members on the other side when Premier Ford and the Ontario government said they were not going to do vaccinations on December 25 and 26. There were issues perhaps with balancing health care workers who were working their regular shifts at hospitals and long-term care facilities, and not wanting to overwhelm the workforce. The government was attacked and ridiculed for saying it was slowing down. This week, there are zero vaccines coming into the country. Next week, there will only be 86%. We lose track because the numbers keep getting worse. Over the course of the next months, the government has no idea how many vaccines we are going to get.

I often get asked what I would do differently. What bothers me, and part of the reason for this being an emergency, is that the work should have been done months ago. Back in the summer, when other countries were finalizing and signing deals, getting themselves in the priority queue and organizing their logistics, we had a government that was embroiled in scandal. The finance minister resigned, we had the WE Charity scandal and the Liberals prorogued Parliament, trying to shift attention away from the issues. They started talking about beginning to sign deals much later than other countries did. We see what that is causing here at home now.

*S. O. 52*

Last week, tens of thousands of vaccines were received by a wide variety of countries. We are getting nothing. I follow many world leaders on social media. Under Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the United Kingdom last week alone gave the first dose to 2.3 million people. Between 6.2 million and 6.5 million U.K. citizens have received their first dose. They are well on their way. They are ramping up every single week and getting more vaccines. We find ourselves having none this week, barely any next week and we are not sure what the next few weeks are going to bring.

President Biden has said the U.S. vaccines are going up 15% and the government is going to be able to tell the states three weeks in advance how many they can expect and when they are going to be delivered. What did our government do? It took down the website with the number of expected doses, going backward, not forward and ramping things up.

I wish we did not have to have this emergency debate tonight. I had hoped we would have had ourselves organized like other countries are showing we could be. I want the government to do well, because it means Canadians do well and fewer lives are lost. The government's success is Canadians' success, and we need to make sure we get answers about what has gone wrong and do everything in our power to get the vaccination program back on track and get back to normalcy.

• (2320)

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member opposite raised the example of Ontario a couple of times in his speech. My constituents in Parkdale—High Park have commented on the need for vaccines and rapid arrival, but they have also noted that when they are arriving, in some instances we have actually exceeded targets. I am referring to the Ontario government setting a short-term goal for long-term care homes. At homes in “hotspot” areas, such as Toronto, York and Ottawa, vaccinations were given to all of the residents and the professionals who worked in those residences ahead of schedule. When vaccines are delivered on a timely basis, we are able to meet those targets.

Does the member opposite agree with that, and agree to look at this from a long-term perspective, such as after Q1 and Q3, and does he agree with those targets not being jeopardized?

• (2325)

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** Madam Speaker, we are taking a long-term look at this because it is not just starting now. The plans for this should have been done several months ago. Israel has been a fantastic example. The United Kingdom is ramping up. The U.S. is ramping up its planning. This has been months and months in the making. We are seeing them accelerate their plans and grow by the week.

The provinces have had to hit the brakes on their plans, and they are struggling. I mentioned the first doses, but the provinces have had to stretch them out. I have been reading reports that appointments have been cancelled in hot spots like Toronto because we are not sure when we are going to get the vaccines.

At this point, I do not share the optimism, because I think the provinces are in disarray. They do not know when they are going to

get the vaccines, they do not know when they are going to get the second doses and they are trying to keep all that going. We are not getting the answers that we should be getting at this point in the game.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Regions like mine, the Lower St. Lawrence and the Gaspé, administered the doses of the vaccine they had. They primarily vaccinated people in long-term care homes, the CHSLDs. However, as a result of procurement problems, there are no more doses of the vaccine left for people in private seniors' residences.

What is rather unbelievable is that people are not necessarily following the rules and are choosing to travel abroad. I am thinking of those who winter in the United States and who are able to get the vaccine there. The United States has so many doses available that it is able to vaccinate people who are not from there. That country is vaccinating everyone aged 65 years and up who wants to be vaccinated.

Does my colleague agree that, despite everything that can be said about the United States, that country is being more transparent than Canada about how it is managing vaccine procurement?

[*English*]

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague from Quebec. She faces the same situations in her beautiful part of the country. I look forward to seeing the Gaspésie region when this pandemic is all said and done, but it sounds like the situation in eastern Quebec is the same as in eastern Ontario and out west.

The provinces are not sure when they are going to get the first and second doses. They want to get the vaccinations in a certain time frame, and they cannot get them. People are trying to book appointments, but they are getting cancelled because the vaccines are not showing up. The provinces also cannot ramp up, because they do not know anything and do not have confidence.

The government said there would be six million doses by the end of the quarter. Well, the government had a website as of last week that said *x* number of them were coming in, but it took the website down because the numbers are completely shot.

I go back to the same thing at the end of day. Florida is an example, just as the United States is generally. The United Kingdom and Romania are too. There are countries around the world that we are watching with envy given what they are able to organize and achieve. We are certainly not getting that here in Canada.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, like my hon. colleague, I too am losing faith in the government.

*S. O. 52*

However, he spoke about indigenous communities, and I just want to remind him part of the reason we are in this crisis in indigenous communities is because of willful human rights violations, lack of access to clean drinking water and housing. Every time the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is put forward, including with Bill C-262, Conservatives vote against it.

If Conservative members are concerned about the health and welfare of all people living on Turtle Island, I am wondering if the member will support Bill C-15 and fully support the adoption and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** Madam Speaker, I share my NPD colleague from Manitoba's concern about the fate of what is going on with COVID-19 in first nations communities. As I mentioned in my comments, the long-term care home on Akwesasne has had an outbreak, and there have been several cases on Akwesasne, on the island and in the region.

I share her concern, and her desire for reconciliation and a better quality of life. The fact we have boil water advisories and no access to clean water in any community, let alone first nations communities, in the 21st century is concerning. I share her commitment. We are going to get back to discussing that, but I think we are all on the same page with the same goal. We must do better. We can do better, and we will do better with first nations communities in this country.

• (2330)

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a real honour to join this very important debate tonight. As we were heading into the Christmas period, I think many were optimistic. There was a light. We could see the vaccine development that we were so pleased about. What has happened since then has been a real concern.

In the riding I represent, Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, we have come off relatively lightly in terms of actual cases. Certainly people were struggling with some of the restrictions, but we have seen a real escalation in our communities. One of the first nation communities now has 25% of the population struggling with COVID infections. An elder died just recently, and the children are locked down in their homes with no Internet to even do their schooling. Our local hospital also has recently announced that it has an outbreak.

We all know that vaccinations have made the greatest contribution to global health of any human intervention, arguably with the exception of clean water and sanitation. Many have noted today that we thought the vaccination for COVID might have taken longer, and we are so glad that modern science was able to move forward in such an effective way so quickly. This vaccine is critical for the health of Canadians, morbidity and mortality, and it is absolutely critical for our economy in terms of getting back up and getting going.

Canadians are very forgiving. They have forgiven the government for a lot of mistakes. They recognize that it was a very unique and unusual circumstance, but the mistakes are starting to add up. I have to start with pre-pandemic. They got rid of our surveillance system, which was world-class. Liberals never even told anyone it

was shuttered down, so we did not have that surveillance system. They also got rid of warehouse space that housed our PPE and threw it into the dumpster.

In January, we were worried about what was happening, and the Liberals continually insisted the risk was low. They did not take into account some of the reactions of other countries. Even when our military intelligence reports were saying so, we left our borders open. I find it stunning, even to this day, that people could come in internationally and hop on a domestic flight with nothing in terms of any reasonable kind of surveillance.

There was no rapid testing. Finally, there is a little pilot project in Calgary. We were told we did not need to bother with masks, and now we are told that masks are important. There has been some pretty compelling evidence that the rapid testing is an effective tool. It is not perfect, but it is an effective tool.

Now we have the vaccines, and it would be important at this point to compare what is happening in Canada with a few other countries. The Biden administration in the U.S. has 5.2% of the population vaccinated. We are at 1.1%. President Biden has committed to doing a million a day for 100 days, and people are saying that this is feasible for him to do. While he is ramping up to a million a day, we are ramping down to almost zero for the next who knows how long, with a very uncertain future ahead.

In May, the U.K. decided to contribute £93 million to build a super vaccine facility. It is going to be open in the summer of 2021, a year ahead of schedule. They put significant dollars into it. They will open the facility, and it will have the capacity, which will probably not be needed this time, but it will have the capacity to produce all the vaccinations needed for the whole population in six months. I ask members to compare that to \$4.5 million that Canada has put into a few projects here and there.

• (2335)

Certainly, if anyone was listening today to some of the experts in vaccines, some of the CEOs of companies in Canada, in spite of what the Prime Minister said, they said that Canada does have the capacity and the ability. With support we could have been ramping up and perhaps producing our own vaccines here in Canada.

Israel has 25% of its population vaccinated. They started their work, apparently, way back in March with their prime minister phoning regularly Pfizer and making sure that they were at the top of the line. They put a huge priority on this many months ago, both recognizing the importance of vaccines for their population and making sure that they were going to move ahead.

S. O. 52

What about Canada? We know that in May the Prime Minister probably talked about his deal with China. He signed a deal and, of course, we all know the challenges in our relationship with China over the last number of years, so certainly at the time I think many people were a little leery. As has been reported, it turns out that four days later China backed out of the deal and refused to ship the necessary items to Canada. The government, for all of its talk about transparency, did not reveal that to Canadians for a long time.

Then, late last summer the government finally got around to signing a few contracts. If members recall, at the time there was the WE scandal and Liberals prorogued Parliament and delivered a Speech from the Throne, and members have to wonder how distracted the government was from doing what it needed to do. Dealing with the WE scandal was consuming all of its energy and oxygen and the government was unable to do the job it needed to do for Canadians, because it was too busy taking care of its own self interests, moving money toward an organization that really was deeply in bed with it and busy trying to thwart the health committee from getting the information the committee needed.

Here we are in Canada, and, as our leader said, everyone wants the government to be successful. Hopefully this debate tonight will make the government sit up and look inside and say that it could have done better, that it needs need to do better for Canadians and needs to be more transparent to Canadians. We can look at contracts from Australia. We can look at contracts from many countries, and we can know what is happening in those countries. In Canada the government that promised that sunlight was the best disinfectant and that it was going to be open and transparent by default is probably the most closed government we have ever encountered.

We have a crisis. The Liberals talk about doses per capita. Doses per capita do not matter if those doses are not going to come for six months or a year. What matters is when we get these doses, when they are delivered and how they are going to make sure that Canadians can move forward. I say this because members can only imagine that if they were sitting in Canim Lake and their six-year-old or 10-year-old cannot go to school, they would have some problems.

We are being critical of the government tonight, because it deserves some criticism on this. The Liberals have not been transparent with Canadians. They need to look in their hearts and figure out how they can do a better job for all of us. Our economy depends on it. Our seniors depend on it. Our health depends on it.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, in this whole affair, we understand that it is not the government's fault that Pfizer decided to do renovations. However, it is certainly the government's responsibility to explain why Canada will have to wait longer than other countries and why Europe is getting the vaccine out so much faster. The Prime Minister failed to explain that to us. I think we would understand the situation better if we were able to see the details of the agreements that the government signed with the companies.

Does the member agree with me that there is a lack of transparency on the part of the federal government in all of this?

• (2340)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Madam Speaker, it is absolutely a lack of transparency. There are many countries that know exactly how much they paid per dose and that have full transparency in their contracts.

The current government has not been transparent. Even when the health committee asked for specific details, the government blocked them. Again, with a Prime Minister who said they would be transparent by default and that sunshine is the best disinfectant, the Liberals sure do not live by their words.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her speech and for her advocacy around the opioid crisis.

I was just talking to Deb Hamilton, the executive director of the Alberni Valley Drug and Alcohol Prevention Service in Port Alberni. She is deeply concerned about the delay in the vaccine rollout and what the government is doing to ensure not only that the vaccine rollout is timely but also that there is critical access for vulnerable populations who have complex issues, including impacts of the opioid catastrophe. Further, she is concerned about how this delay will impact the front-line service providers who give non-medical support and intervention to these vulnerable people. She cites that the COVID restrictions have impacted face-to-face service and the social services that are left on the ground, and they are burning out in the face of the dual public health emergencies of COVID and opioid deaths. She cites that the collective burdens on these vulnerable populations and the workers supporting them are indescribable.

Does the member agree how important it is that the vaccine rollout happens, so that we can protect these vulnerable populations and their workers? Maybe she can speak a bit about what is happening in her communities.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Madam Speaker, this vaccine is so critical. It is critical for our vulnerable populations and it is critical for everyone. Regardless of how fortunate one's circumstances are, this is taking a toll on everyone, but in particular, if we look at the opioid crisis and the increase in deaths, we see that we have a dual crisis here, and we need to provide a relief valve, especially for the workers. We all have front-line workers in our communities who are dealing with vulnerable populations. They are working in the long-term care residences. It is a real challenge for them, and they need to have that relief in sight.

**Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo's speech was well received and very well presented.

I am sure she has heard from her constituents, as many of us have, in particular in my riding about the confusion that is out there and the challenges they have when they try to listen to what the government is saying.

On the one hand, we have a minister who says we are going to have six million vaccines, and then another one turns around and says we are actually going to have four million. They turn around then and say they are guaranteeing we will have six million by the end of March. The other night we had a parliamentary secretary who said something that totally had to be contradicted by the minister after the fact. These things throw total confusion to constituents.

How does that impact on the assurances that we might want from the government that this is actually going to get accomplished?

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Madam Speaker, if there were ever a time for the government to throw away the talking points and have a real conversation with Canadians, now is the time. It is the time to say that this is our reality and be up front. If things are a real risk with Pfizer, what is our backup plan? Where are we going to go next?

It is time to throw away the talking points, be honest with Canadians, be honest with Parliament and let us move forward in a way that is more together.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time, to the extent I can, with the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park. If he has a chance to speak tonight, he will be superb.

I want to start by thanking the incredible health care workers in my riding, at the Jewish General Hospital, Mount Sinai Hospital and all of the long-term care centres in my riding, which have been at the centre of the COVID epidemic. They have done a wonderful job.

Let us be clear. We all want vaccines as soon as possible. Tomorrow is not soon enough for any of us. This is not a Liberal issue, a Conservative issue, a New Democratic issue or a Bloc issue. We all want vaccines. Everybody is doing their best. Provinces are doing their best and the federal government is doing its best. We should not be blaming one another.

There will be times that provinces will have vaccines in freezers because they were not able to distribute it fast enough. There will be times that provinces are short in vaccines because our supply chain is not working as effectively as we would like. In the end, let us try to accept that everybody is being professional and doing their absolute best.

That is why, before I start talking about vaccines, I want to talk about disinformation. We have a responsibility to not exaggerate. We have a responsibility to look at what happened in Washington a couple of weeks ago and to recognize that the words of politicians have great weight. I penned an op-ed with my friend from Parry Sound—Muskoka about the dangers of politicians spreading disinformation, and I think it is an apt lesson.

Whenever we have an evolution in technology, whether it is the printing press, radio, motion pictures or social media, it gives an opportunity to those who would want to spread disinformation a much greater breadth to do so.

In the United States, we had groups such as QAnon touting conspiracy theories that fed into a president who denied he had lost an election. There were people tweeting that Dominion voting machines had switched votes from Trump to Biden, and that was

*S. O. 52*

retweeted by the president, members of the Senate, members of the House and those whom the public trusted. When those whom the public trusts spread disinformation and fear, and make people believe an election was not legitimate, we have events like we did where democracy itself was attacked at the Capitol.

My plea to all my fellow members of Parliament is that they can be dissatisfied with what the government is doing, but let us all not exaggerate. Let us try to be accurate in what we are saying. For example, it is not accurate to say that the government has no plan on vaccines. People can argue they are not satisfied with the plan, but there is a plan. There is a plan that people have heard over and over. It is a plan that is up on a website.

It is a plan that has 80 million doses coming in from Pfizer and Moderna by September. Every member of the Canadian population who wants to be vaccinated will have a dose in Canada to vaccinate them by the end of September. We know that we will get six million doses, four million of Pfizer and two million of Moderna, by the end of March. We know that starting in April, there will be a great ramp-up where millions of doses will be coming into Canada. We will need to be ready for that.

We know that the vaccine is not everything. We know that even Israel, the country that has been the most successful in rolling out the vaccine, still has many thousands being infected on a daily basis. We still need to continue with social distancing, washing our hands and following provincial government public health measures.

The federal government is absolutely rolling out a plan, and it is a plan that is actually doing better than we even said at the beginning. The Prime Minister originally said he did not expect doses to come in until January. We had almost half a million doses in the hands of Canadians right after the end of December. There are more than a million doses in Canada today. We are fifth in the G20. We are not last; we are fifth. Out of all of the EU nations, as of yesterday, we are doing better than 21, and we are doing worse than six. To argue that somehow we are the worst in the world is completely unfair and untrue. Someone can say we should be first, we should be the best and we should be like Israel. That is fair enough, but let us not exaggerate.

There are professional purchasers who have been out there since last spring preparing for this moment. Originally, Canada did not have PPE. We had to source all our PPE from abroad. Now more than half of our PPE is made in Canada.

S. O. 52

• (2345)

In the same way we sourced PPE and managed to domestically manufacture PPE, we have professional purchasers in the department of procurement who have worked for months and months and months to sign contracts with seven vaccine providers. I heard tonight that because of a deal with the Communist Chinese, somehow we were not preparing to sign with anybody else, but this is utterly false. Moderna has stated that we were one of the first countries to sign with Moderna. We were not one of the last; we were one of the first. The spokesperson for Pfizer, Christina Antoniou, said we were the fourth country to sign an agreement with Pfizer. We were not one of the last; we were one of the first. Again, please let us not spread that type of disinformation.

When it comes to the very, very disappointing shortfall of Pfizer, let us recognize Pfizer has told the world that to ramp up production in Belgium, there will be a four-week shortfall among all the countries being supplied by the Belgian plant.

It is true we received none this week, and everybody is making hay of it. Last week we received 83% of our doses, and some of the European countries that are getting more of their doses this week received almost none.

The Minister of Procurement has clearly stated that over the course of four weeks, as Pfizer has assured her, there will be an equitable distribution of what comes out of Belgium to all the countries served by Belgium. It is clear; she said it. Pfizer said it. If members want to blame Pfizer for retooling its Belgian plant and not having thought in advance that it would need more doses, then fine. However, it is unfair and untrue to claim that because European countries are getting more than Canada this week, Canada is being treated inequitably by Pfizer. We do not have those stats.

I also heard today that the website came down. The website with our plan did not come down. The website is still there. The only part that came down was Pfizer's forecasts, because we do not have the Pfizer forecasts going forward for the next couple of weeks. We want to be accurate. The Moderna forecasts are still there.

I want to make sure that when it comes to these issues, we understand that while it is fair to be critical, it is not at all fair to exaggerate. We need to be calm and prudent and understand that Canadians are looking to us for leadership on this and many other issues. The more we show that we are being rational and clear-headed and the more we are able to show that we can get along and work together as team Canada, the better we will do in rolling out vaccines, keeping Canadians safe and hopefully finding our way out of COVID-19 by the end of September.

• (2350)

[Translation]

I will be very glad to take questions from my colleagues now.

[English]

**Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am quite disappointed with the conclusion the member for Mount Royal drew at the end about being calm and rational. The beginning and end of his speech were totally opposite. In my comments a few moments ago, and in those of my

colleagues from the Bloc, the NDP and the member from the Green Party, we called the government out for certain things. I do not think trying to equate our criticism with the Capitol Hill riots is a calm, cool and collected response from the government.

Earlier, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health said the Liberals have been the most transparent government when it comes to contracts, yet we do not know the details in them. The government took the information off the website. What it should have done is kept the projections and the actuals so Canadians can track the results.

My point is that the opposition is standing up and asking questions we have been asking for months, and the government's true plans and accuracies are now coming out.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Madam Speaker, my colleague said the website came down. He did not say that forecast information related to Pfizer came down and should go back up. There is a big difference between one small section of the website dealing with forecasts from Pfizer and the entire website coming down.

It is fair to criticize, and I have no problem with criticism. However, the point is that when criticism is made, it needs to be accurate and fair. It cannot be exaggerated, because with vaccines, passions are inflamed and people are really worried. While it is fair to criticize, we need to do so accurately.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, to say that my colleague is not leading by example would be an understatement. I think he could have left out the analogy he used at the beginning of his speech involving the events at the U.S. Capitol.

That being said, neither the opposition parties nor I know what the government knows, or why it is so optimistic. Tonight's debate has only highlighted the government's lack of transparency and lack of proactive measures.

My colleague from Beauport—Limoilou has been doing the math since earlier this evening. Let us assume that the six million doses that were promised will be delivered by the end of March. If we really want vaccines to be administered safely to achieve herd immunity, how are we going to vaccinate 1.9 million people each week? The math is a little shaky, especially considering the threat of reduced vaccine exports from Europe.

Does the government have a plan B? Does it have any solutions to address the problem right away? The objectives must be met. By the end of September, everyone—

• (2355)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Madam Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member for Montcalm that the message at the beginning of my speech was meant just as much for me as anyone else. We must all be careful with our words because the public is nervous and afraid. Misinformation can hinder our collective effort to beat COVID-19.

To come back to our plan, we know that we are receiving six million doses in the first three months of 2021. After that, the number of doses entering Canada will increase; we will be getting millions of doses each week. We have to be ready to distribute these vaccines. I hope that we will be able to administer the vaccines within 42 days, as recommended by the national task force.

• (2400)

[English]

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am going to start at the end of my prepared comments in terms of what I have listened to during this debate.

I am going to speak directly to my constituents and to Canadians. What I would say is this. For those watching at home tonight, I understand their anxiety, and our government understands their anxiety. They want to be done with this pandemic as quickly as possible. We want the exact same thing. That is precisely why we are working so hard on the issue of vaccines, because vaccines are the light at the end of the tunnel. We are using every tool available to us to ensure that the contracts we have already signed with companies like Pfizer are respected and honoured. We are also ensuring that the path to getting the Moderna vaccine continues unabated. As well, we are ensuring that a diverse set of vaccines, as many as five others that we have lined up and procured in advance, will be available should we require them.

S. O. 52

The temporary delay in accessing the Pfizer vaccine is exactly that: It is a temporary delay. That has to be underscored and it has to be understood by Canadians watching this evening, including my constituents in Parkdale—High Park. This temporary delay does not and will not detract from our objective of vaccinating three million Canadians by the end of March and vaccinating every single Canadian who wants a vaccine by the end of September.

I would add that we had Canadians' backs when there was concern about securing PPE. We had Canadians' backs when there was concern about vulnerabilities in their income security. We had Canadians' backs when they were concerned about their small businesses, and what kind of supports would be available to help them continue to not only survive but thrive. We will continue to have Canadians' backs on the issue that is most pressing right now, which is how we can get enough vaccines into the country quickly so that we can continue to vaccinate people quickly.

We have heard others comment about where we stand. I would reiterate what we know to be the facts. The fact is that over a million doses have already arrived in this country. The fact is that Canada stands fifth among G20 nations in this rollout. We will continue to keep up that pace because that is what Canadians expect of their parliamentarians from all sides of the House.

On that note I will conclude my remarks. If there is any time for questions, I will be happy to take them.

I thank all of the parliamentarians for participating until this late hour in such a pressing debate for this country.

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** It being midnight, the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[English]

Accordingly the House stands adjourned until later this day at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12 a.m.)



# CONTENTS

Tuesday, January 26, 2021

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### Petitions

#### Farmers' Protests in India

Mr. Vis ..... 3501

#### Spinal Muscular Atrophy

Ms. Vandenbeld ..... 3501

#### Physician-Assisted Dying

Ms. Vandenbeld ..... 3501

#### Human Rights

Mrs. Wagantall ..... 3501

Mr. Genuis ..... 3502

#### Trans Mountain Pipeline

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) ..... 3502

#### Human Rights

Mr. Richards ..... 3502

### Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux ..... 3502

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### Economic Statement Implementation Act, 2020

Bill C-14. Second reading ..... 3502

Mr. Lawrence ..... 3502

Mr. Lamoureux ..... 3503

Mr. Johns ..... 3503

Mr. Doherty ..... 3504

Mr. Gerretsen ..... 3505

Mr. Champoux ..... 3505

Mr. Blois ..... 3506

Mrs. Wagantall ..... 3507

Mr. Savard-Tremblay ..... 3508

Mr. Johns ..... 3508

Mr. Sidhu (Brampton East) ..... 3508

Ms. Alleslev ..... 3510

Ms. Gaudreau ..... 3511

Ms. Gazan ..... 3511

Mr. Bergeron ..... 3511

Mr. Champoux ..... 3513

Mr. Lamoureux ..... 3513

Mr. Barsalou-Duval ..... 3513

Ms. Gazan ..... 3515

Mr. Duvall ..... 3515

Mr. Savard-Tremblay ..... 3516

Mr. McKay ..... 3516

Mrs. Wagantall ..... 3517

Mr. Trudel ..... 3517

Mr. Johns ..... 3518

Mr. Cormier ..... 3518

Mr. Johns ..... 3519

Ms. Chabot ..... 3520

Ms. Harder ..... 3520

Mr. Gerretsen ..... 3521

Ms. Gazan ..... 3522

Mr. Seeback ..... 3522

Mr. Gerretsen ..... 3523

Mr. Johns ..... 3524

Mr. Weiler ..... 3524

Mr. Champoux ..... 3526

Mr. Johns ..... 3527

Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River) ..... 3527

Ms. Alleslev ..... 3529

Mr. Lamoureux ..... 3529

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) ..... 3529

Mr. Turnbull ..... 3529

Mr. Trudel ..... 3531

Mr. Duvall ..... 3531

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) ..... 3532

Mrs. Wagantall ..... 3532

Mrs. Gallant ..... 3533

Mr. Lamoureux ..... 3534

Mr. Johns ..... 3534

Mr. Fraser ..... 3534

Ms. Gaudreau ..... 3536

Mr. Julian ..... 3536

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Terry Fox

Ms. Damoff ..... 3537

### Terry Fox Fundraiser

Mr. Doherty ..... 3537

### Peace Policy Platform

Mrs. Lalonde ..... 3537

### Saint-Eugène School in Mont-Laurier

Ms. Gaudreau ..... 3538

### Violence Against Women

Mrs. Bessette ..... 3538

### India Republic Day

Mr. Seeback ..... 3538

### Business Improvement Areas

Mr. Oliphant ..... 3538

### Agriculture

Mr. Dreeschen ..... 3539

### Mental Health

Mr. Serré ..... 3539

### François Dupéré

Mr. Paul-Hus ..... 3539

<b>COVID-19 Vaccines</b>	
Mr. Berthold .....	3539
<b>Hardest Hit Businesses</b>	
Mr. Johns .....	3540
<b>Drummond Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities</b>	
Mr. Champoux .....	3540
<b>International Trade</b>	
Mrs. Gray .....	3540
<b>London Agriculture and Agri-food</b>	
Ms. Young .....	3540
<b>Nova Scotia Chief Medical Officer</b>	
Mr. Samson .....	3541

## ORAL QUESTIONS

<b>Health</b>	
Ms. Bergen .....	3541
Ms. Freeland .....	3541
Ms. Bergen .....	3541
Ms. Freeland .....	3541
Ms. Bergen .....	3541
Ms. Freeland .....	3541
<b>COVID-19 Emergency Response</b>	
Mr. Martel .....	3541
Ms. Freeland .....	3542
Mr. Martel .....	3542
Ms. Freeland .....	3542
Mr. Blanchet .....	3542
Ms. Freeland .....	3542
<b>Health</b>	
Mr. Blanchet .....	3542
Ms. Freeland .....	3542
Mr. Singh .....	3542
Ms. Freeland .....	3542
Mr. Singh .....	3542
Ms. Freeland .....	3542
Ms. Rempel Garner .....	3543
Ms. Ng .....	3543
Ms. Rempel Garner .....	3543
Ms. Ng .....	3543
Mr. Paul-Hus .....	3543
Ms. Ng .....	3543
Mr. Paul-Hus .....	3543
Ms. Ng .....	3543
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) .....	3543
Mr. MacKinnon .....	3543
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) .....	3544
Mr. MacKinnon .....	3544
Mr. Barsalou-Duval .....	3544
Mr. Alghabra .....	3544
Mr. Barsalou-Duval .....	3544
Ms. Hajdu .....	3544

<b>International Trade</b>	
Mrs. Gray .....	3544
Ms. Ng .....	3544
Mrs. Gray .....	3544
Ms. Ng .....	3545
<b>Natural Resources</b>	
Mr. McLean .....	3545
Mr. O'Regan .....	3545
Mr. McLean .....	3545
Mr. O'Regan .....	3545
<b>Indigenous Affairs</b>	
Mr. Angus .....	3545
Mr. Miller .....	3545
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River) .....	3545
Mr. Miller .....	3546
<b>Foreign Affairs</b>	
Ms. Khalid .....	3546
Mr. Garneau .....	3546
Mr. Chong .....	3546
Mr. Garneau .....	3546
Mr. Genuis .....	3546
Mr. Garneau .....	3546
<b>Government Appointments</b>	
Mr. Berthold .....	3546
Mr. LeBlanc .....	3546
<b>Foreign Affairs</b>	
Mr. Berthold .....	3547
Mr. Garneau .....	3547
<b>Health</b>	
Mr. Savard-Tremblay .....	3547
Mr. MacKinnon .....	3547
Mr. Savard-Tremblay .....	3547
Mr. MacKinnon .....	3547
<b>Public Safety</b>	
Ms. Findlay .....	3547
Mr. Rodriguez .....	3547
<b>COVID-19 Emergency Response</b>	
Mr. Baldinelli .....	3548
Ms. Ng .....	3548
<b>Public Services and Procurement</b>	
Mr. Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis) .....	3548
Mr. MacKinnon .....	3548
<b>Canadian Heritage</b>	
Mrs. Zahid .....	3548
Mr. Guilbeault .....	3548
<b>Natural Resources</b>	
Mr. Barlow .....	3548
Mr. O'Regan .....	3549
<b>Health</b>	
Mr. Morrison .....	3549
Ms. Hajdu .....	3549
Mr. Doherty .....	3549

Ms. Hajdu .....	3549
Mr. Green .....	3549
Mr. MacKinnon .....	3549
Ms. Wilson-Raybould .....	3549
Mr. Lametti .....	3549

**Public Safety**

Ms. Findlay .....	3550
Mr. Blair .....	3550

**Ethics**

Mr. Robillard .....	3550
Mrs. Lebouthillier .....	3550

**Points of Order**

**Statements by Members**

Mr. Johns .....	3550
-----------------	------

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

**Economic Statement Implementation Act, 2020**

Bill C-14. Second reading .....	3551
Mr. Kelly .....	3551
Mr. Lemire .....	3552
Mr. Lamoureux .....	3552
Mr. Masse .....	3553
Mr. Serré .....	3553
Ms. Alleslev .....	3555
Ms. Pauzé .....	3555
Mr. Garrison .....	3555
Mrs. Gallant .....	3555
Mr. Longfield .....	3557
Ms. Michaud .....	3557
Mr. Garrison .....	3557
Mr. Jowhari .....	3557
Mr. Baldinelli .....	3559
Ms. Michaud .....	3559
Mr. Green .....	3559
Mr. Cooper .....	3559
Mr. Gerretsen .....	3560
Mr. Lemire .....	3561
Mr. Blaikie .....	3561
Ms. Lambropoulos .....	3561
Ms. Pauzé .....	3562
Mr. Johns .....	3563
Mr. Manly .....	3563
Mr. Ste-Marie .....	3563
Mr. Lamoureux .....	3564
Mrs. Gallant .....	3565
Ms. Ashton .....	3565
Mr. Van Bynen .....	3565
Mrs. Gallant .....	3567
Mrs. Charbonneau .....	3567
Mr. Green .....	3567
Mr. Longfield .....	3567
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo) .....	3567
Mr. Masse .....	3569
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) .....	3569

Ms. Pauzé .....	3569
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo) .....	3569

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act**

Bill C-224. Second reading .....	3570
Mr. Lamoureux .....	3570
Mrs. Charbonneau .....	3570
Mr. Lawrence .....	3571
Mr. Julian .....	3572
Mr. Bergeron .....	3573
Mr. Gerretsen .....	3574
Mr. Genuis .....	3576
Mr. Ste-Marie .....	3576
Division on motion deferred .....	3577

**EMERGENCY DEBATE**

**COVID-19 Vaccine**

Mr. O'Toole .....	3577
Motion .....	3577
Mr. Gerretsen .....	3579
Mr. Lemire .....	3579
Mr. Davies .....	3579
Ms. Rempel Garner .....	3580
Mr. Lemire .....	3581
Mr. Davies .....	3582
Mr. Deltell .....	3582
Ms. Anand .....	3582
Ms. Rempel Garner .....	3584
Mrs. Vignola .....	3585
Mr. Davies .....	3585
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) .....	3585
Ms. Larouche .....	3585
Mr. Longfield .....	3585
Mr. Thériault .....	3586
Ms. Rempel Garner .....	3587
Mr. Lemire .....	3587
Ms. Kwan .....	3588
Mrs. Vignola .....	3588
Ms. Larouche .....	3589
Ms. Michaud .....	3589
Mr. Paul-Hus .....	3590
Mr. Lemire .....	3590
Mr. Singh .....	3590
Mr. Manly .....	3591
Ms. Rempel Garner .....	3591
Mr. Lamoureux .....	3592
Mr. Davies .....	3592
Mr. Lamoureux .....	3594
Ms. Rempel Garner .....	3594
Mr. MacKinnon .....	3595
Mr. Richards .....	3597
Ms. Michaud .....	3597
Mr. Drouin .....	3597

Mr. Desilets .....	3598	Mr. Johns .....	3612
Ms. Kwan .....	3599	Ms. Rempel Garner .....	3612
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) .....	3599	Ms. Vandenbeld .....	3612
Mr. Paul-Hus .....	3599	Mr. Genuis .....	3613
Ms. Michaud .....	3601	Ms. Larouche .....	3614
Mr. Powlowski .....	3601	Ms. Gazan .....	3614
Mr. Calkins .....	3601	Mr. Fisher .....	3614
Mr. Barlow .....	3602	Mr. Lemire .....	3616
Mr. Lemire .....	3603	Mr. Johns .....	3616
Mr. Powlowski .....	3603	Mr. Maguire .....	3616
Mr. Manly .....	3603	Mr. Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) .....	3616
Ms. O'Connell .....	3604	Mr. Virani .....	3618
Mr. Lemire .....	3605	Ms. Michaud .....	3618
Mr. Johns .....	3605	Ms. Gazan .....	3618
Ms. Larouche .....	3606	Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo) .....	3619
Mr. Lamoureux .....	3606	Ms. Michaud .....	3620
Mr. Kurek .....	3607	Mr. Johns .....	3620
Mr. Thériault .....	3607	Mr. Kitchen .....	3620
Mr. Brassard .....	3608	Mr. Housefather .....	3621
Ms. Gazan .....	3609	Mr. Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) .....	3622
Mrs. Vignola .....	3609	Mr. Thériault .....	3622
Mr. Maguire .....	3610	Mr. Virani .....	3623
Ms. Michaud .....	3611		



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