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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, September 25, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF CONTENTS OF BILL C-7

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a question of privilege concerning the disclosure of Bill C-7, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding medical assistance in dying, which was introduced in the previous session.

In the interest of time, my hon. colleague, the member for Fundy Royal, raised this question of privilege on February 25. I would direct you to the arguments presented at pages 1518 and 1519 of the Debates.

Mr. Speaker, on March 10, you concluded that there was a prima facie breach of privilege, and the House adopted the member's motion to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

On March 12, the committee agreed to suggest dates for inviting the Clerk and the law clerk to appear so that it could begin studying the matter. The next day, the House adjourned because of the pandemic. This meant that the committee never had a chance to get back to its order of reference because of the various Liberal motions prohibiting virtual meetings on this subject. The Prime Minister then decided to shut down Parliament, ending the study before it had even started.

I am asking you to find another prima facie breach of privilege so that the House can once again examine the issue and, if it so desires, send it to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. There are previous rulings in which a prima facie breach of privilege was found when prorogation put an end to an order of reference on a question of privilege before a committee was able to report to the House on it. More specifically, I would refer you to the ruling made by Mr. Speaker Milliken on February 6, 2004, at page 243 of the Debates of the House of Commons, when he said that, for the same reasons that he gave in a ruling he made in the previous session, the question remained a prima facie breach of privilege. He then gave the member leave to move his motion.

Another of your predecessors, the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, who we know well, also made a similar ruling on October 17, 2013, at page 66 of the Debates of the House of Commons. The same circumstances exist as in previous cases and it is appropriate to raise a prima facie question of privilege.

If you agree, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

The Speaker: I thank the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent. I will take the matter into consideration and advise the House if necessary.

[*English*]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[*Translation*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from September 24 consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my whip, the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît, because she told me to. Of course, I am kidding. I am pleased to be sharing my time with her.

On August 18, in the midst of a pandemic, the Prime Minister decided to prorogue Parliament for five weeks even though we urgently needed to study and adopt bills to implement all the support programs and even though committees were meeting and working hard. He did that in the midst of the pandemic in an attempt to make people forget his scandals.

The government sought exceptional powers and drastically reduced the House's role in order to respond to this historic pandemic. Even as the government was managing unprecedentedly enormous programs, the Prime Minister proved that he cannot be trusted. The WE scandal showed that he chose to favour his friends. The same thing happened in a scandal involving the chief of staff's spouse. It happened again with the Canada emergency wage subsidy: the Liberal Party chose to take advantage of the subsidy even though the law does not say it is available to political parties.

The Address

We will not stop digging and poking around, since the pandemic has revealed the Liberal Party's true nature, which has not changed since the sponsorship scandal. The Liberals' true nature is to govern while putting their own interests and their friends' interests first, which is a far cry from exemplary practices. Ethics rules appear immaterial to them, as long as they can apologize after the fact. I really think this accurately reflects the history of the federal government since the beginning of Confederation. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

This brings me to the throne speech delivered two days ago by the Queen's representative, a throwback to the Middle Ages and the rituals Canada just cannot seem to let go of. The speech included absolutely nothing that justified proroguing Parliament for over a month in the middle of a crisis. Instead, we just heard more about the same things that had been introduced in the spring.

Let us not forget the Prime Minister's decision to go on TV that night, taking over prime time airwaves, only to summarize what was in the speech, and just to maximize his media presence. His address confirmed our suspicions: It was absolutely unnecessary, but it did a heck of a good job on boosting his image. Basically, it was grandstanding and electioneering at its finest.

To come back to the Speech from the Throne, the Bloc Québécois was calling for an increase in health transfers and respect for jurisdictions. That is what the National Assembly is calling for and that is what suits Quebec. However, the Speech from the Throne provides the exact opposite of that. The centralist aspirations of the Liberal government managed to garner unanimity at the National Assembly of Quebec, where every party is against the Speech from the Throne, from the Coalition Avenir Québec government to the Parti Québécois, Québec Solidaire and even the Liberal Party. To get everyone on board like that takes special talent.

As La Presse reported, even the leader of the Liberal Party of Quebec says that respecting our jurisdictions is not negotiable. She talks about this speech as a missed opportunity to meet the needs of Quebec. That is the QLP we are talking about and every other party had the same reaction. Why is Ottawa systematically interfering in the affairs of Quebec and the provinces instead of focusing on doing its own job?

It is part of the federal government's role to help fund health care, as Quebec and the provinces are demanding. I do not know if members are familiar with John Micklethwait, the editor-in-chief of Bloomberg News, and Adrian Wooldridge, a columnist for The Economist. They just published a devastating book entitled *The Wake-Up Call*, in which they analyze the differences between countries in terms of how they are managing the pandemic and note the importance of having a robust public health system.

Today, we are paying the price for underfunding our health care system in recent years and decades. In Canada, this underfunding can be traced back to Ottawa, which chose to reduce health transfers in the 1990s and subsequently never corrected the situation, despite calls to do so from Canadians. That just does not generate enough votes. The underfunding has resulted in reduced services, a weakened and vulnerable health care system, and greater poverty and inequality.

Ottawa, meaning this government and those that have held power in the past 25 years, is directly responsible for our health system's precarious situation and its lack of resources to manage the pandemic.

• (1010)

The Prime Minister, acting straight out of a last-century British imperialism playbook, is blaming the provinces for their management of the pandemic. He wants to run things himself, even though he knows nothing about it, and then he announces wanting to bring in criminal penalties. All of this, when he was the one who perpetuated the problem by failing to adequately fund health care. Unbelievable.

The Bloc Québécois wants this government, and especially the Prime Minister, to stop trying to lecture us. He needs to stop trying to be a know-it-all, meddling in others' jurisdictions, and has to start doing his job and adequately fund health care. He needs to stop putting his party and his friends ahead of the public good as he manages the crisis by ensuring that his government programs are run ethically and above reproach.

Interestingly enough, La Presse pointed out on Wednesday that *intergouvernementalisations* has now replaced *anticonstitutionnellement* as the longest word in the French language. This is a contested topic. The adverb, meaning “unconstitutionally”, unfortunately seems to apply to the current government. I will give you an example. The Prime Minister governed unconstitutionally by interfering in Quebec's and the provinces' jurisdictions.

Now that this word has lost its status, the government should stop trying to emulate it and start respecting jurisdictions.

• (1015)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we talk about the throne speech in today's debate and in debates in the future, it is important to reflect on how the federal government has performed over the past six months in terms of taking care of everyday Canadians. There will always be more work to be done. There will always be people who could have been helped more, and we will always search for new programs to do that even better.

One thing that I can say is that, in the province of Ontario, the federal government was there and the federal government continues to be there for Canadians. Just to put it into numbers, of every \$100 that was spent on COVID-19 relief in Ontario, \$97 came from the federal government and only \$3 came from the provincial government.

Does the member know any similar statistics as to what those numbers were in Quebec? How much money did the federal government put on the table versus the provincial government?

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very good question and comment.

Why are most of the support measures coming from Ottawa, from the federal government?

The Address

It is because over the past few decades, as I noted in my speech, the central government has smothered the provinces. I am referring to the fiscal imbalance.

How did Jean Chrétien's government, with Paul Martin as finance minister, wipe out the deficit? By cutting the transfers for health care, post-secondary education and social services. The transfers have never been restored to their former levels.

In 2017, Quebec's Liberal health minister, Gaétan Barrette, accused the federal government of predatory federalism, arguing that it was imposing conditions on health care in exchange for a few extra crumbs. That was not enough.

I want the members of the House to remember that, ultimately, the programs that the government has put in place are basically funded through debt, meaning that taxpayers are going to have to pay for them later. This money does not belong to the government. The money that the government is handling is public money. It is a colossal public debt. We must not lose sight of that fact.

I have a question for the government. In his speech yesterday, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, who is a representative of the government, said that the federal government had a moral authority to intervene in areas of provincial jurisdiction, such as health care.

The government can answer my question later. Where did the government get that so-called moral authority? From the Governor General?

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am so happy to be here in the House today. I would just like to take this opportunity to ask the member specifically about health care dollars. We know both Liberal and Conservative governments have cut funding again and again to public health care. We look at what is happening across our nation, how responsive all the provinces and territories have to be and how limited the resources are because of the decisions that both governments have made during the history of Canada.

Could the member speak to the realities of the people in his constituency? I know so many of mine are struggling profoundly.

• (1020)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very pertinent question. I would have also liked to hear her talk about the reality of her constituents as a result of the federal government's cuts to health care funding over the past number of years and decades.

Before I move on to give specific examples, I would like to remind her of the excellent book entitled *Combating Poverty: Quebec's Pursuit of a Distinctive Welfare State*, which shows how the cuts made to health care in the 1990s—and maintained since—have increased poverty and hardship, particularly for families, single-parent mothers and seniors.

That is unacceptable. The situation is not as bad in Quebec because the Quebec government implemented, with half the funding,

certain measures, such as pharmacare, which of course is not perfect, the Quebec parental insurance plan, and subsidized early childhood and day care centres.

I am also thinking of the people in my riding who live in long-term care facilities. They are going through a horrific and unacceptable situation, right out of the dark ages. There is a direct correlation between their situation and the major cuts that Ottawa has been making over the past 25 years, and this government never did anything to remedy that.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to take part in the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

As whip, I have been deeply involved in all the negotiations to keep Parliament up and running during the pandemic. Parliamentary committees were resuming their full range of activities and four committees were doing important work on the WE scandal when the government decided to prorogue and hit Parliament's off switch, so to speak, to put the brakes on that work because it was the third time an ethics scandal was cramping the government's style.

As a result, we awaited the Speech from the Throne. We wondered what would happen next and how the government would position itself to respond to the pandemic, not to mention all the challenges coming our way after the pandemic. How would the government restart the economy? How would it do a better job of helping people with serious problems? We had high expectations.

Yesterday I was in the House all day and I listened to every speech by every parliamentarian, especially the speeches from the government members. When I was listening to the Prime Minister I was shocked, surprised and upset to see the arrogance, contempt and lack of respect the government has for the provinces.

I felt like I was truly in the right place and that I had truly chosen the right party to represent Quebec because the Bloc Québécois is a party that wants Quebec to be the master of its own destiny. Today what we are seeing and hearing is a contemptuous government that is telling Quebec that it is not up to the task, that it is unable to manage its public services and health care, and that funding would be conditional on certain actions.

The federal government is telling Quebec to provide the support and home care and it will pay for it, otherwise there will be no funding. A Canada-wide standard on long-term care facilities is being brought in and Quebec is expected to comply with it or there will be no funding. We call that blackmail, contempt and arrogance. I cannot support this and neither can many other people.

The Address

Before becoming an MP, I was a manager in the Quebec public health network, so this is in my wheelhouse. I managed public housing. I managed housing spaces for seniors in public facilities. I can say for sure that if you speak to anyone in Quebec who manages CHSLD spaces, whether intermediate resources or family-based resources for seniors, if you ask anyone, whether a manager, caretaker or a recreation leader, no one would say that the solution to the problem in long-term care centres is Canada-wide standards. No one would say that. No one would even think that.

Everyone in Quebec knows what it will take. It will take more staff, more nurses, more PSWs, more maintenance staff and more nursing assistants. That can be achieved only when we have the financial resources to pay consistent, decent salaries.

My colleague from Joliette was clear, as were the provinces, before the throne speech. Health transfers must be able to meet the provinces' needs. The president of the Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec does not call the Prime Minister of Canada to ask for a solution when nurses are exhausted. She calls the Premier of Quebec. The premier tries to do the best he can, with the tools, means and money he has available, but it is not enough. Quebec needs increased transfers on an ongoing basis.

I must admit that yesterday I was insulted to hear the government use the fact that the army came into just a few long-term care homes to justify why it wants to fund specific actions, projects or programs. I want to point out that back home in the Montérégie-Ouest CISSS, we did not have any deadly outbreaks or any soldiers in our long-term care homes.

This approach of funding by program is nothing but mumbo-jumbo. One could just as well call it "health and social services". This approach dictates what to do, how to do it and what the standards are. Anyone who goes along with that gets a cheque.

● (1025)

It is disrespectful to treat the provinces in this way. Each province has its own way of doing things, its own reality and knows how to meet the health needs of its clientele. Since it is on the ground providing services, it knows it is doing its utmost given the lack of tools and the funding that should be coming. Health Canada is already having difficulty doing what it has to do. Therefore, I believe that we should let the provinces do their job and meet the needs of their citizens based on their own realities, as the premiers have requested. In health care, a one-size-fits-all system does not work across Canada. As we are seeing, we are in the midst of a pandemic and each province has a different experience of the crisis. This also applies to the distribution and provision of services.

I am a little emotional when talking about it because this confirms for me my sovereignist convictions. In life, when things are going well for me and my team, I rarely agree to take orders from someone who knows nothing about what I am good at.

Quebec has the tools, the brains and the best practices. For anyone who does not know, Quebec has long recognized aging in place as the best practice. We know that when seniors stay at home longer, they get sick less, they are better supported, and it costs less. Housing them in public institutions is expensive. We know all that, but we need financial resources to help our seniors stay at

home. They want and need to age in their homes, not in a public institution.

We do not need a Prime Minister who announces that he is going to give us money, but only if we spend it on aging in place. We do not need him to tell us that, because it is an insult. I am thinking of my colleagues who do not have time to watch my speech today because they are busy meeting needs on the ground. They are appalled to hear that this government's magic solution is to impose Canada-wide standards on us. The same thing goes for mental health and child care. It is an insult, and I take it very personally.

Curiously enough, this proves that the federal government considers the provinces to be its subjects. It tells them that it will decide when they get money and what they get to spend it on. Otherwise, they get nothing.

How long did it take to negotiate the social housing agreement between Quebec and Ottawa? Three years.

All of the social measures set out in the throne speech and the federal government's encroachments on provincial jurisdictions will take years to negotiate with Quebec. No Quebec premier, regardless of which party is in power in the Quebec National Assembly, whether it be Liberal, CAQ, Québec Solidaire or PQ, will let anyone tell them what to do. No premier will agree for the funding to be subject to specific conditions that infringe on Quebec's jurisdiction.

That means that the measures we are seeing in the throne speech are all hot air. There is nothing there that can be accomplished in the short term, even though the situation is urgent and even though there are things that could have been and could still be done, things that the federal government is not doing.

Businesses in my riding are calling me about the Canada emergency business account. They cannot get in touch with Export Development Canada. They wait for days and days for someone to call them back. They have called up to three times, applied online three times and still do not have an answer. We got a memo from the minister's office that said that the EDC is completely overwhelmed and that the response time is five to six days. However, if business owners do not answer when the EDC calls, then they end up back in the queue and have to wait another five or six days. Is that how the government is restarting the economy and supporting our businesses?

● (1030)

The ball is in the government's court. It is the government's responsibility, but it is not implementing the measures needed to support our SMEs, and that is serious.

The same is true when it comes to immigration. People are waiting for their work permits and their sponsorships, because the immigration department is completely dysfunctional.

The Address

[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last few months, our government, during this most extraordinary and unique time in our country and the world's history, has worked in partnership with the provinces from coast to coast to coast. With the safe restart agreement, we have contributed \$19 billion to provinces, and there is a further \$2 billion for provinces to help restart their educational systems. My two daughters have gone back to school and I am thankful for that.

These partnerships, including with the Canadian Armed Forces, which were asked by the provinces of Ontario and Quebec to assist, have shown how this country works, how it comes together in a time of great need and responds in a very compassionate and diligent manner.

What does my hon. colleague think of the co-operation and partnership that have existed for the last several months and continue to proceed forward?

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I have a feeling that the member and I do not have the same definition of co-operation and teamwork. Co-operation and team work usually imply mutual respect and listening to one another.

Prior to the throne speech, several provincial premiers and the Premier of Quebec asked for increased health transfers because they are being completely overwhelmed by the needs and demands of our aging population. The answer was a resounding no, an arrogant answer.

The army came to the rescue, just as it did during the floods. Our armed forces step up when we call, when we need them. I would point out, too, that we pay our fair share for the Canadian Armed Forces. It is not the federal government's army. The Red Cross is not the "red cross of the Government of Canada". These are citizens who decide to get involved and volunteer.

Yes, we are in extraordinary times. Does that excuse the fact that the federal government refuses to allocate or increase health transfers? Why does the government want to pay on a fee for service basis and tell us what to do and when to do it?

That is not teamwork. That is not co-operation. That is disrespect for equals and an intrusion into Quebec jurisdictions.

• (1035)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît on her excellent speech.

She spoke at length about the contempt and lack of respect for Quebec. The best example is the federal government's language policy regarding Quebec. So far, only the anglophone minority has been acknowledged. Every one of the federal government's financial, legislative and policy interventions on language in Quebec has been geared toward boosting English, when we know that French is the language under threat.

As far as I know, this is the first time that a Speech from the Throne has acknowledged that the federal government has a responsibility to defend French in Quebec. Let's not forget that as long as Quebec is not independent, francophones will be a minority in Canada and will be under the federal government's thumb.

Will that line in the Speech from the Throne read by the Governor General have any tangible impact? As we saw, the briefing that followed the Speech from the Throne was in English only. By the by, I want to acknowledge our Franco-Ontarian friends, since today is Franco-Ontarian Day.

The first thing the Liberal government could do is support our proposal to make Bill 101 apply to federally regulated businesses. I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that.

Does she believe that the Liberal government will finally support this bill, which the Bloc Québécois has been repeatedly introducing since 2007?

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I want my colleague to know that I appreciate his dogged defence of the French language.

We will remain steadfast in our efforts, with the support of Quebec's National Assembly, which unanimously asked the government to make Bill 101 apply to federally regulated businesses.

We expect the Liberals to listen to the National Assembly, which is the highest authority in Quebec and the Quebec nation.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Don Valley West, the parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs.

I will start off by saying that it is great to be back in the House to have the opportunity to speak on the floor. I am extremely pleased to speak to the Speech from the Throne, which was introduced two days ago, primarily because of the vision that it sets moving forward. It reflects on where we have come over the last six to seven months and where we need to go in the future.

It is worth pointing out that these have been incredibly challenging times for many Canadians. The economic impact and personal impact on so many Canadians have been devastating. In fact, the economic impact of COVID-19 is recorded as being worse than the 2008 financial crisis. That is why, as I indicated in a question I asked, I am extremely pleased to see the work that has been done by the federal government.

I am from a riding in Ontario, and in Ontario the federal government has stepped up, as it has in every province and territory throughout the country. It has contributed, and not just in a manner that, as the Bloc would suggest, is top-down, but in a manner that has meant working with provincial and territorial leaders throughout the last six to seven months. As we heard the Prime Minister say yesterday, there have been 16 or 17 first ministers meetings since the pandemic began, in addition to all the individual calls and outreach from the federal government to the provinces.

The Address

Indeed, what we have seen in Ontario is that 97% of the money spent on COVID-19 relief has come from the federal government. That is not to say that the federal government, as the Bloc would suggest, has been top-down, requiring that money be spent on this or that. A massive amount of the money that has gone to the provinces is to be spent at their discretion within specific areas of concern.

As we look forward, which is what the Speech from the Throne is about, we look forward to the actions we are going to see this government take if the Speech from the Throne is adopted. What I am most interested in talking about today is the action we are looking forward to taking on climate change and how that is going to impact our economy, broadband connectivity throughout the country, and long-term care homes and our approach to long-term care more generally. I am glad the Bloc member raised the topic of long-term care in her speech a few moments ago, because I would like to counter some of the claims the Bloc has made on the national care standards. However, I will first talk about taking action on climate change.

This government is proposing to legislate a goal of net zero by 2050, bringing this ambitious goal into legislation within our country so that in everything we do we strive to achieve it. How will we do this? This will be done, as indicated in the Speech from the Throne, through a number of incentives.

First of all, we can create thousands of jobs by retrofitting homes and buildings using cutting-edge technologies to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and reduce costs that Canadian taxpayers and homeowners are experiencing.

We will invest in reducing the impacts of climate disasters. As I am from where Lake Ontario meets the St. Lawrence River, I can tell members that we are seeing erosion problems from the rising lake levels. Both in Kingston and on the islands that I represent, there have been extreme problems. Big Sandy Bay, which is a popular beach on Wolfe Island, an island I represent, has been completely closed on a number of occasions over the last few years because of rising lake waters that have wiped all the sand from the beach.

Another thing we will be doing, as indicated in the Speech from the Throne, is making zero-emission vehicles more affordable. We are at that tipping point where zero-emission vehicles, electric vehicles, are ready to take off as the new norm, and we are seeing that. We have seen massive growth. Something like 7% or 8% of vehicles being purchased throughout the world today are electric.

There will also be a new fund to attract investment for making zero-emission products, and we will be cutting the corporate tax rate in half for these companies to create jobs and make Canada a world leader in this clean technology.

• (1040)

As we move toward this, we cannot be left behind. We need to be at the forefront of this. We need to be at the forefront of these technologies so we can reap the rewards and gains that will come as they become mainstream and the norm throughout the world.

One issue that has become extremely important and apparent over the last six to seven months is broadband connectivity. I live in an area that is considered semi-rural. Kingston has a population of 124,000, but the vast geography of my riding is actually rural, including the two islands in the riding. One does not even have to go that far outside of the city of Kingston to see the issue. In fact, I live off Highway 2, and we immediately start to lose connectivity there.

As more people are working from home, which will probably continue for many people into the foreseeable future, we need to make sure people have a connection to the Internet and the connectivity they need to continue to work. It is not just for entertainment value that we need the Internet in this day and age. It is for getting work done. It is for people working from home and these constant video conferencing calls people are having. It is for the e-commerce that happens.

Connectivity is extremely important, and that is why I was very pleased to see the government announce that it would accelerate the timelines and ambitions of the universal broadband fund to ensure that all Canadians have access to the Internet throughout this country.

I will move now to long-term care homes. The Bloc has mentioned long-term care homes on a couple of occasions over the last day or so. It is important that we develop national long-term care standards, and I will tell the House why. It is not so that the federal government can somehow dictate to the provinces how they have to operate with respect to national standards, because it is never going to happen like that. The reality is that our Constitution clearly states who has jurisdiction and authority over what areas.

What we do know is that the provinces have jurisdiction when it comes to health care, for the most part. The reason we need these standards is not to tell provinces what to do, but to create national standards throughout the country that provinces and jurisdictions can look to for advice. This is a way of working with provinces.

I would argue to my friends from the Bloc that this is not anything radical or new. As a matter of fact, our building code works that way. We have a national building code in Canada. This does not mean that any of the provinces have to take up that particular piece of legislation. In fact, two do not. Ontario and Quebec do not use the national building code. They have their own. However, guess what? If we look at the two documents, they are almost identical. That is because provincial documents are quite often informed by the national document, the document compiled by looking at various different ways of doing things from throughout the country.

My understanding of national long-term care standards is that they should be something very similar to that. We should set national standards that the provinces can then look to for advice on how to go about making sure people in long-term care homes are taken care of. Why is this so important? Very clearly, we know certain facts. I tried to use data in asking the Bloc member a question, but he did not respond, so I will give the House some data.

The Address

What we know in terms of COVID-19 outbreaks is that 30.6% have happened in for-profit homes, 34% in not-for-profit homes and 24.8% in municipally run homes in Ontario. What is most alarming is that, according to a Toronto Star report in May, for-profit nursing homes were four times more likely to have COVID-19 deaths result from those infections.

We know there is a problem, but we also know there is one particular area doing very well: the municipally run homes in Ontario. Why would we not look to develop standards everybody could work toward?

In conclusion, I am extremely pleased with this Speech from the Throne. It sets ambitious goals as to what we can do to protect our environment and grow the economy in this new age, with clean tech.

• (1045)

We have the opportunity to work on our long-term care homes and to ensure they are the best they can possibly be. Of course, as I indicated in my speech, talking about connectivity and connecting Canadians is also extremely important.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about the acceleration of rural broadband and connectivity. The Speech from the Throne talks to accelerating it.

Could the member please provide some clarity on what that means? The current federal government's plan says by 2030. Could the member provide a ballpark timeline? Is 2029 what the government means by accelerating?

The Conservatives put forward a plan, through the member for Calgary Nose Hill, to the government, saying that we should do this in the next 18 months. Could we get a ballpark answer on how fast this acceleration for connectivity will be?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I realize the question is rhetorical in nature, because the member knows I do not have the answer to that. The Speech from the Throne is a guiding document that sets out goals and ambitions over the next course of the legislature.

If it is doable within 18 months, and feasible, we need to see how that can practically happen. Am I in favour of that? If it is practical and feasible to do it, I do not know who would not do it.

The member is asking for a specific timeline. He knows I do not have that. He does know that the throne speech is ambitious in setting its agenda and is highlighting it as one of the most important things to take care of.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I found the speech by my colleague from Kingston and the Islands unsettling. He tried to justify the throne speech's unjustifiable interference in matters under provincial jurisdiction. My colleagues and I consider that interference unacceptable. It is annoying, inappropriate and deeply disrespectful.

How does our colleague from Kingston and the Islands think historians will interpret what followed the prorogation of Parliament?

• (1050)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I was trying to listen but there was a lot of noise in the room. I did not get the first part, but I did get his question.

In my opinion, if we are able to move forward with this ambitious agenda being put forward in this throne speech, historians will look back on this as a time when the federal government was there for Canadians in their time of most need during a global pandemic throughout the world and that we were able to take care of each other so we could build back and continue to see the thriving economic, social, cultural amenities in our great country. That is how I see historians looking back on this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one thing struck me about my colleague's speech. With respect to the environment, he said that we are at a crossroads, and he hopes to reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

If we are at a crossroads, we must act quickly and perhaps do some soul searching. During the pandemic, the Liberal government agreed to give \$500 million to the Coastal GasLink project through the Business Development Bank of Canada.

Does this project meet the criteria for zero emissions? I highly doubt it. The only economic sector aligned with the fight against climate change is the forestry sector.

There is nothing in the throne speech about the forestry sector. There is not one word about it. There is absolutely nothing, even though we know that there is a great deal of promising research on bio-sourced products and the use of forest biomass.

The government decided to ignore this and focus on fossil fuels once again.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, if I said that I hoped we would achieve those ambitious goals, then it was clearly a poor choice of words on my part. I do not think I did, but I could be mistaken.

What I do know, and what I did say, is that it will be legislated that the federal government will meet these targets. Therefore, it is not about hopes; it is about putting it into law. That is my take-away from this. It will be quite ambitious when this goal is turned into actual legislation.

In my opinion, this is the way we need to move forward and the way we will keep this in place. If another government does come along at another time, it will be up to it to remove that legislation and bear those consequences, if it chooses to do so.

The Address

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise today in the House to contribute to this debate on the Speech from the Throne: A Stronger and More Resilient Canada.

I begin by thanking you personally, Mr. Speaker, the Clerk, the staff of the House of Commons and the House leaders from all the parties who have worked incredibly hard to ensure that Parliament could reconvene with representation in person and virtually from every part of this great country, while keeping us all safe.

The world has changed since I last spoke in the chamber some six months ago. No one in Canada or anywhere in the world has been left untouched by the pandemic that has gripped all of humanity. As a neighbour and a friend, I have tried to comfort those most directly affected by this virus as it has taken its toll on people of all ages and from all walks of life, but mostly the elderly, people with disabilities, people with other vulnerabilities, the poor, racialized Canadians and people in long-term care facilities.

Let me take this opportunity to offer my condolences to the families of those in Don Valley West that number among the over 9,000 Canadians who have died thus far as a result of COVID-19.

COVID-19 has shown us human and scientific vulnerabilities, but it has also revealed the tremendous strength of the human spirit and the determined resolve of our health care workers and researchers to beat this virus.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank and commend Canada's front-line workers, who have kept food and other supplies on the shelves, kept transit running, kept our streets safe and, perhaps most important, risked their own lives as they have worked on the front lines of health care.

I want to give a special shout-out today to the tremendous team at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in my riding, including Clarice Shen. Clarice was just three months into her new career as a member of Sunnybrook's acute care nursing resource team when, last January, she volunteered to care for Canada's first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus, which would later become known as COVID-19. She is one example of the incredible nurses, doctors, caregivers, hospital workers and researchers who have led the way in patient care and medical research across Canada.

All around the world people are touched by this disease and while we in Canada certainly have struggled with medical supplies and equipment, we are blessed with an incredible health care system and great professionals like Clarice Shen. However, we must remember that people in developing countries are not nearly as fortunate and they stand on a precipice, hoping that science will catch up to the virus before it spreads to them in ways that will be devastating beyond belief.

This is a health crisis like none other in the history of the world, but the pandemic's health crisis has been matched with an economic crisis like we have never seen in our lifetime.

As the member of Parliament for a midtown Toronto riding, the riding of Don Valley West, I have talked to literally hundreds of people who have lost their jobs, closed their businesses, missed stu-

dent loan payments or have been burdened with costs or debts they have no idea how they will pay or repay.

It is not only an unprecedented health crisis, it is an unprecedented economic crisis. Governments in Canada and around the world have taken great strides to soften the economic blow of this crisis with a host of programs. Many of them are outlined in the Speech from the Throne. However, needs will continue well into the future and I am very pleased the government has not only taken note of this but has devised an action plan that will ensure we, indeed, do take the right steps to have a stronger and more resilient Canada, with stronger and more resilient Canadians.

Our primary concern is the health of Canadians. It is the first foundation of our government's agenda for the foreseeable future. From faster and more readily available testing to the tracing of contacts through new technology; to the support of businesses that may need to shutter themselves, sending their employees home to halt the spread of this tenacious virus; to the support of provinces and territories in their provision of health care and long-term care; and, ultimately, to the development and distribution of a vaccine to halt the spread of sickness, our government will ensure that everything possible is done to ensure the health of all Canadians.

As we have done over these last many months, we will continue to work with provincial and territorial governments, local governments and public health agencies to ensure that our plan is the right plan and the unique plan for every part of the country.

However, even as we undertake this great national health project, Canadians will more than ever need the financial help of the federal government. There is a cost, a huge financial cost, to this virus and our government has chosen to shoulder the largest burden of this cost. This is no time for austerity. This is a time to invest in Canada, to invest in Canadians.

● (1055)

When people lose jobs due to COVID-19, they need support, they need a job. We will create over a million jobs to restore employment to previous levels.

When small business owners are forced to limit or radically change the focus of their businesses, they need support. We will extend the wage subsidy, expand the system for business loans and support some of the hardest-hit industries, including travel and tourism, hospitality, cultural industries and the arts.

When parents have to stay home to take care of their children or their own parents, they need support. We will create a Canada-wide early learning and child care system.

When young people cannot get that first job, they need our support. We will significantly expand the program, providing paid work experiences for young Canadians.

When older employees need training to prepare for a new career, they need our support. We will make the largest investment in Canadian history in training for workers.

Our government has consciously chosen to shoulder the biggest burdens faced by Canadians because we have the largest capacity to do just that. Only the federal government can ensure that these burdens are shared fairly.

As its second foundation for building a stronger and more resilient Canada, the Liberal government has promised to be there to help all Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

While we are protecting and preserving the health of Canadians and while we are helping them through this economic crisis, we will seize this opportunity to build back better. COVID-19 has revealed cracks in our social safety net, in government programs and for particular businesses in the areas of our country hit unusually hard. Therefore, the third foundation of our agenda is to build back better. We will seize the opportunity to create more jobs and build better communities.

• (1100)

The Speaker: If the hon. member would like to finish, he has three minutes coming to him. We can then go on to Statements by Members.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, I will end it there and I will continue, because the best is still yet to come.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

NO. 2 CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recently marked 100 years of the No. 2 Construction Battalion, Canada's first and only all-Black battalion, which was disbanded following the end of the First World War. The battalion was formed in Pictou, Nova Scotia, just minutes from where I live today, and included Black Canadians from coast to coast within its ranks.

At the outset of the war, these soldiers were not wanted. They did not just fight for their country. They also had to fight for their right to do so after being told that the conflict was a white man's war. The battalion was instrumental during the effort. They built roads, bridges and trenches, and they were essential in securing victory for Canada and its allies.

Despite their many contributions, when the soldiers of the battalion returned home, they were not afforded the same hero's welcome that their white brothers in arms received. Racism and discrimination were all too common 100 years ago, and while we have made

Statements by Members

significant strides in the past century, systemic anti-Black racism continues in our communities across Canada today.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize the sacrifices and accomplishments of the No. 2 Construction Battalion and its members and reaffirm their rightful place as heroes in the history of our nation. I encourage all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to acknowledge systemic racism and commit themselves to stomping it out at every opportunity.

* * *

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult for all Canadians. Our lives have changed and no one knows when things will go back to normal or what that new normal will look like. Many Canadians have lost their jobs. Many small business owners have had to close their doors. Too many have lost a loved one to the virus, and I am concerned that the government has not responded well in helping those most affected.

In Wednesday's throne speech, the government made no mention of the deep and worrisome challenge experienced by our friends in western Canada and our world-class resource sector. Electric cars are fabulous, but they are unlikely to keep our country united. There was also no commitment to increase desperately needed health transfers, and provinces were very clear of the need for increased funding.

We are also falling behind our allies when it comes to rapid COVID-19 testing. I am hopeful that we can emerge from the COVID era stronger and more united than ever, but to do this, we need the government to provide real support where it is critically needed, and to do so now.

* * *

[Translation]

FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, the Franco-Ontarian community comes together to celebrate and recognize the unique history of Franco-Ontarians and the key contributions they have made to Ontario and to our entire country.

This morning, I had the honour of participating in a flag-raising ceremony in Orléans with francophone leaders and my colleagues, MPP Stephen Blais and city councillors Laura Dudas and Matthew Luloff.

Since 2010, September 25 has been recognized as Franco-Ontarian Day. This day commemorates the first raising of the Franco-Ontarian flag in Sudbury 45 years ago today.

Statements by Members

As a proud Franco-Ontarian, I want to join my colleagues in calling for everyone to celebrate our culture, our heritage and our French language. Let us continue to promote and recognize how much the francophone community has contributed to Ontario and to our country as a whole.

Nous sommes, nous serons. Here we are, and here we will stay.

* * *

[English]

BLACK COMMUNITY

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, justice delayed is justice denied. The government has had all the power to immediately act on the priorities outlined by the Black caucus and supported by over 150 MPs, senators and cabinet ministers. However, from procurement to policing, the government has failed. From banning street checks to ending racial profiling, it has refused to act.

In my short time here, it has become clear that at every turn and every crisis Liberals make promises they have no intention of keeping. They used words like “equity” and the language of racial justice in the Speech from the Throne, but, when it comes to taking immediate action, the words of Liberals remain empty and meaningless.

To be clear, it was not the goodwill of the Liberal government that forced addressing systemic racism. It was the tens of thousands of Canadians taking to the streets, led by the BLM movement, demanding that the government move beyond performative acts of social justice and just act now.

* * *

• (1105)

TERRY FOX RUN

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 40 years ago a brave young man embarked on a marathon of hope to find a cure for cancer. Terry Fox inspired a nation. On September 20, Canadians from coast to coast to coast celebrated the 40th anniversary by taking part their way. While this year's Terry Fox Run was different and distant, it still remains Canada's largest one-day fundraiser for cancer research. People still get cancer in spite of the pandemic, and the need for cancer research remains just as important.

My colleague, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib., walked in honour of her late husband, Arnold Chan. Survivor Lisa Moody joined her family for a 5k walk in her neighbourhood. Team Darrell raised over \$14,000 this year while logging over 6,000 kilometres. In Oakville, we are hosting an art auction, which members can check out at oakvillechallenge.com.

As Terry said, “Anything is possible if you try.”

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METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems one of the Prime Minister's new buzzwords is “austerity”. I am not entirely certain how he defines aus-

terity, but, at minimum, I think we can all agree that cutting anything, to him, is austerity. In his non-partisan TV speech, the Prime Minister stated that now is not the time for austerity.

I find this puzzling because in my riding, and in 48 other ridings across Canada, the Liberal government wants to kill the automated, 24-hour VHF weather service. The Liberals say that one can get the same information from a smart phone, but there is a problem. Because of the other broken promises from the Prime Minister, there are lakes and backcountry where there is still no wireless signal available, and that can place people in danger.

As the VHF infrastructure is already in place and operating, until the Prime Minister fulfills his promises to ensure that all regions of Canada are connected by the same wireless services, I am asking the Liberal government to continue providing automated VHF weather radio service to my riding.

* * *

[Translation]

JOE CHEAIB

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, we lost a man who had given a lot to Laval in particular and to Canada in general. He was gone too soon. He was only 52.

Joe Cheaib was actively involved with many charities in Canada and Lebanon, including the Canadian-Lebanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Cedars Cancer Foundation, the Cedars Home for the Elderly, Sons of Lebanon and the Red Cross.

[English]

This is a huge loss for the community. I join my family and my constituents in offering our sincerest condolences to his wife, Teresa Soda, and his children, Emilia and Peter, as well as his family and loved ones.

To Joe and his family, know that we will continue Joe's legacy. May he rest in peace, and may his memories be eternal.

* * *

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to represent my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville.

Throughout this pandemic, my community and our country have risen to the challenge with decisiveness and determination to help beat this invisible enemy. Seniors, front-line workers, those with disabilities, young people, vulnerable populations, women, particularly low-income women, businesses and entrepreneurs have been deeply affected. Many individuals and organizations have stepped up to help those less fortunate.

Constituents in my riding, such as Selwyn Collaco, with his team of seniors at the Goan Overseas Association, and David Chant, with his group of scouts, have raised thousands of dollars and donated thousands of meals to The Mississauga Food Bank.

We continue to fight COVID-19 together, providing vital life-lines of support. I was thrilled to hear the Speech from the Throne set the pathway to our recovery. It is an ambitious plan for an unprecedented reality.

We will continue to build a stronger and more resilient country together.

* * *

• (1110)

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Parliament is back after six weeks of prorogation. The Prime Minister hopes Canadians have forgotten the investigations, but his government cannot escape the light that will shine on the truth of his scandals and the failures intertwined. At a time when we face a crisis that is so deep and sinister, the Prime Minister's follies have cost him his late finance minister. While Canadians look on wondering when it will end, Conservatives stand up for Canada to serve and defend.

To my constituents and to all Canadians, I do say that there is hope, hope for better days when trust, sense and patriot love are restored, and we shed this broken government that we have grown to abhor. More than hope, today we must believe that change is needed to vanquish those who deceive. Change that is stronger; change that will get the job done; change we believe in, and change to overcome.

* * *

DAVE SMITH

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I pay tribute to Ottawa restaurateur and philanthropist Dave Smith, who passed away on September 4. Dave opened Nate's Deli in 1959 and transformed it into an iconic Ottawa institution. Through his dedication serving on 50 boards of directors, from the snowsuit fund to the military families fund, he raised over \$150 million for charities over his lifetime.

Dave's greatest achievement is the youth centre that bears his name. The Dave Smith Youth Treatment Centre has helped over 17,000 youth with addiction and mental health treatments.

I am grateful to have known Dave and his amazing wife, Darlene. To know him was to love him. He greeted everyone like an old friend and cared deeply about his community.

Statements by Members

Dave leaves a profound legacy. He touched so many lives and made our city and our country better. We will miss him.

* * *

COVID-19 TESTING

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has now been over six months since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. Residents in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country and Canadians from across the country followed safety protocols, doing their part to flatten the curve and giving health workers time to prepare. Despite this, the federal government's plans continue to fall short.

This summer, my community was unfortunately a hot spot for COVID-19 cases. Numerous hospitality businesses had to close again after just reopening, causing further financial hardship for the businesses and their workers. Taking days to receive COVID-19 test results is stressful for everyone, including families sending kids back to school.

Despite this, Health Canada has been slow in approving different kinds of rapid testing devices and at-home tests, including those that have been improved and used in other highly developed countries. People's lives are on hold while waiting for test results. The process must improve. The government needs to come up with solutions to keep people safe and allow businesses to remain open.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COVID-19 TESTING

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is well into the seventh month of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the government is dragging its feet as if the pandemic just started yesterday.

Several countries have developed rapid testing so they could systematically test workers, travellers and other groups and stop the virus from spreading before it is too late. However, Health Canada is still refusing to approve this kind of test, even though our testing centres and laboratories are swamped. This means that, day after day, Canadians are being turned away, putting their loved ones and co-workers at risk. It is unacceptable that the Government of Canada prefers no testing to a test that is thought to be about 95% reliable.

We demand that the government acknowledge the technological breakthroughs that have been made in the past few months, and we urge the relevant authorities to stop stalling and approve these rapid tests, which have the potential to save lives.

*Oral Questions**[English]***LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES**

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic shone a light on how poorly Canada is doing in taking care of its seniors, particularly seniors who depend on our long-term care system. It showed the backward thinking of many governments, including the Conservative government in Manitoba. One of its first acts after being elected was cancelling an upgrade and expansion of Park Manor Personal Care Home in Transcona and other care homes across the province.

It showed the effect of the creeping privatization of our health system that has been taking place for a long time now. It puts the financial interest of investors ahead of the interests of our loved ones in personal care homes. It has been my honour to serve as a vice-chair of the NDP's building for better task force. We have heard from experts across the country who have highlighted the negative role that the profit motive has been playing in long-term care. We have seen the result with higher rates of death in for-profit personal care homes across the country. It is a call for federal leadership in funding and convening the provinces to have better standards. That is something the NDP is here to fight for.

* * *

• (1115)

*[Translation]***IMMIGRATION**

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have been in touch with the Maksoud family in my riding for months. Their eldest son, Bilal, got married in Lebanon a few years ago.

However, it seems that an interpretation error during a meeting with an immigration officer at the embassy is preventing his wife from immigrating to Canada, even though she followed all the necessary procedures. The Quebec ministry of immigration has recognized her as an excellent candidate. In addition to dealing with the stress of having her application denied, Mr. Maksoud's wife was directly affected by the recent horrific events in Beirut. Following the August 4 catastrophe, the *Journal de Montréal* published an article entitled "Ottawa to facilitate process for the Lebanese" and *La Presse* reported on how Ottawa would make it easier for people from Lebanon to come to Canada.

I spoke to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and I know he is sympathetic to the situation. He must now put words into action. We are talking about the future of a family that deserves to finally be reunited.

* * *

*[English]***COVID-19 TESTING**

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the need for rapid testing for COVID-19 is not a request nor is it something we can negotiate on. Here are the facts: Canada's unemployment surged to 13.7% this summer; Nav Canada announced that it is cutting another 14% of its workforce this week; and hundreds of small businesses across this country have been forced to shut down since March.

We have come to the point in the timeline where we have accepted we will have to live with COVID for the foreseeable future. We must improvise, we must adapt and we must overcome. Despite various pilot programs funding rapid test research across Canada and numerous countries around the world using innovative rapid testing methods, the Liberal government is napping on the possibility of getting our country back to relative working order.

On behalf of the country's airlines; our nation's moms, dads and loved ones who have been separated for months; restaurant owners; workers, retailers; and employees, I urge the government to wake up and signal the green light for rapid testing, not tomorrow, not next week, but now.

* * *

ARMENIA

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the centennial of the Treaty of Sèvres, signed at the end of the First World War. As part of the larger Versailles peace settlement, the treaty made a commitment to try Ottoman officials for perpetrating the Armenian genocide and set the borders of the Republic of Armenia by including the historic Armenian provinces into a sovereign territory under the protection of the allied powers.

Though often overlooked in our history, Canada played a major role in assisting the Armenian population through the genocide. At the time, prominent Canadians, British politicians and intellectuals called for Canada to assume the mandate for Armenia. Unfortunately, that project was never realized.

Today, I join thousands of Armenian Canadians in Don Valley North and across Canada to commemorate this important chapter in our collective history and commit to a just resolution for the Armenian genocide.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[Translation]***INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's job is to bring Canadians together, especially during a national crisis like the one we are going through now.

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister's arrogant approach to dealing with the provinces has reared its ugly head. Rather than unite everyone, he decided to teach everyone a lesson. Yesterday, the Prime Minister of Canada decided to teach the Premier of Quebec a lesson. That was disrespectful and irresponsible. To insult the Premier of Quebec is to insult Quebecers.

Why is the Prime Minister of Canada so irresponsible?

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the excellent Speech from the Throne talks about child care.

Quebec already has its own child care system, and that is what we have been saying all along. Of course we will take that into account. More than that, we are going to use it as a model for the other provinces. Of course Quebec will get its fair share through negotiations.

The other point my friend raised was about seniors. When it comes to seniors, it is not about jurisdiction. It is about human beings who have suffered more than anyone else during the pandemic.

• (1120)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why does Quebec have its child care system? It is precisely because it falls under provincial jurisdiction. It is up to the provinces to decide what to do; it is not up to the federal government to tell the provinces what to do.

Yesterday I asked the Prime Minister about the problems in western Canada. Why are westerners so angry? He said that was “ridiculous”. Not only is he insulting Quebecers, but he is also insulting the folks in western Canada.

Why does the Prime Minister have such an irresponsible attitude toward all Canadians?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne contains elements that are extremely important to all Canadians. If you look closely at the document and read what is in it, it is quite clear that we are in the midst of a pandemic and the government's priority is the health and safety of all Canadians.

Let me extend an olive branch to my colleague. Rather than getting into jurisdictional fights and quarrelling in general, let's work together to help our seniors, our businesses and people who have lost their jobs. Let's do it together.

[*English*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): A Liberal will always be a Liberal. Look who is talking, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the government tabled a piece of legislation a few days ago: Bill C-2. Obviously, we want to work correctly on that. We made a proposition a few hours ago with all counterparts here to be sure to work correctly. We mean to have a sitting House here for committee of the whole this Sunday. Is the government ready to work on Sunday for the good and for the future of Canadians?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is working seven days a week for Canadians. The government is working all the time for Canadians. While I realize what my colleague has offered, through discussions we can do a lot of things and that is why we insisted so much to be here and also present virtually so all MPs could participate. I am glad that the Conservatives finally agree that we can do a lot of things together with goodwill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Health said that she would “rely on the expertise of the researchers, the scientists and the experts to guide us” on the matter of rapid testing. However, experts, researchers and scientists in other developed countries have already approved rapid and at-home testing, so this begs the question: If we are collaborating with these experts, researchers and scientists on things like a vaccine, why can we not use it for rapid testing? When will the review of rapid testing be complete in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I obviously share the member's deep desire to have more sophisticated tools to be able to respond to COVID-19, including more sophisticated testing capacity. Of course, there is not one single rapid-test solution and testing is a complex space, but I will say what I do know: We need to rely on Canadian regulators who will tell us when a test is safe enough and accurate enough to be released into Canadian society because, of course, tests that do not provide accurate responses could make situations much worse.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister needs to realize there are people waiting for eight to 10 days to get their results. It is her job to go into her department and say, “Hey, what is taking so long? Why can we not do this quickly and fulsomely? Make it happen.”

It is not enough to share a desire. She is in charge of this. She has to go and read the riot act to her bureaucrats and get this done.

When will the review be complete?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the member opposite, I am incredibly grateful to the bureaucrats, as she calls them, the researchers, the scientists, the civil service—

The Speaker: You are on mute. We have not heard anything. Could the hon. minister check her connection?

The hon. member for La Prairie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we saw Mr. Trudeau being utterly condescending. Who does he think he is giving lessons to Quebec about the presence of the Canadian Armed Forces in the long-term care centres? Quebec taxpayers pay for the army and its members.

Why are we in this situation? The answer is that for 25 years, the federal government has been making cuts to health. The federal government is responsible for this situation, not the Government of Quebec. If the federal government had listened to Quebecers and the experts, or if it had used common sense, it would have invested in health instead of giving lessons to others.

Oral Questions

Why will the government not increase health transfers?

• (1125)

The Speaker: I know that we have been gone for a while. I just want to remind hon. members that when they refer to another member of the House of Commons, they must use the title of the person in question and not their name.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, my colleague is trying to provoke a squabble between Quebec and Ottawa.

I repeat what I said yesterday, from the bottom of my heart: Seniors are not paragraphs or lines in the Canadian Constitution. They are not a jurisdiction. They are real, live human beings. Seniors have suffered more than anyone in this pandemic, and we will be there for them.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons left out a piece of the story. The federal government was doing the insulting yesterday, not the Government of Quebec or the Bloc Québécois. The federal government tried to lecture Quebec and brought up the notion of a blank cheque.

The government is going on about blank cheques, when it gave \$900 million to WE Charity, his family's employer, in the middle of a pandemic. That is what you call a blank cheque.

Will the government increase health transfers, yes or no?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made significant investments in health care and we will continue to do so, in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada.

We are talking about national standards and dialogue with the provinces regarding our common goals. Clearly, provinces manage their own health systems.

Once again, it is quite offensive to make seniors part of a constitutional dispute. They have the right to life, dignity and quality health care.

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[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Liberal government decided to prorogue government and in doing so had almost two months to plan for a second wave, which we knew was coming. Now we are in the second wave, and the government really has no plan to deal with the crucial questions that people are faced with right now.

What is the government doing to ensure people have access to testing? What is it doing to make sure people who need child care have access to it? What is it doing to make sure that our seniors, those who are at ground zero for COVID-19, are protected? Finally, how is the government going to ensure that it is not everyday families that pay the price for the recovery, but that it is those who have profited off this pandemic who pay the price?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I apologize for losing connection during the last question.

As the hon. member knows, we have been there every step of the way with Canadians, with provinces, with territories and in fact with local communities to make sure that we have a robust response to COVID-19, that we can work together to protect and save the lives of Canadians. We will continue that work in collaboration with all levels of government, and indeed with Canadians, because that is how we will get through this: Together.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government and the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament and in doing so the government has had almost two months to plan a response to the second wave, which we are facing right now.

What is the plan for solving ongoing problems, especially those with testing, long-term health care and care for seniors?

What is the government's plan for ensuring that those who profited, and not ordinary Canadians, will bear the cost of the recovery?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We have worked hard with the provinces, territories and local governments.

[English]

We will continue to work incredibly hard with all levels of government, and indeed with Canadians, to ensure that we can respond to COVID-19 together no matter what the virus throws at us.

This is a rapidly evolving situation, as members know. Of course, the tools and knowledge to defeat COVID-19 continue to evolve, and we will be there for Canadians and for communities no matter what COVID-19 throws at us.

• (1130)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to report a million missing paycheques. That is the number of people who have lost their jobs since February and have not been hired back.

We have the highest unemployment in the G7. The U.S., U.K., France, Italy, Japan and Germany all have COVID too, but they have lower unemployment than we do.

When will the government recognize that its plan to impose austerity on private-sector mines and small businesses is not working?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the economic support we have been providing to Canadians during the pandemic has not only prevented a great deal of human misery. It is also driving our economic recovery, and the member does not need to take my word for it. TD Bank economist Ksenia Bushmeneva said that the "...federal government income support programs...have so far been paramount for averting a delinquency tsunami" and protecting the economy.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Oh yes, Mr. Speaker, the bankers are very happy. They are making all kinds of money these days, but does the member know who is not happy? It is the million working-class people who no longer have jobs, who had to come home and sit at the kitchen table with their spouse and say, "Honey, I no longer have work or a paycheque and I don't know what we're going to do."

No government program can replace the mighty force of our 20 million workers and the power of a paycheque. When will this government get out of the way and let our workers get back into jobs?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the member for Carleton and all Canadians of what he said on March 8 when asked about what support the government should offer to those very Canadians hurt by the pandemic. He said: "...You might want to address [COVID-19] with big, fat government programs. We're Conservatives, so we don't believe in that."

Our government chose to support Canadians, and we are proud of it. I hate to imagine what the Conservatives would have done had they been elected in 2019.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, there it is. They believe that big, fat government programs can replace the dignity and productivity of a job. Everyday Canadians actually want the opportunity to work. That is the only thing that will permanently put food on the table and provide the wealth necessary to fund our cherished social safety net.

This government has the worst jobs record in the G7, and one-third higher unemployment than across the OECD. When will the Liberals acknowledge that their plan is just not working?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member maybe does not understand is that, in fighting this pandemic, we have asked Canadians to make a really big sacrifice: We have asked Canadians to stay home. We are still asking Canadians to practise social distancing, because the best economic policy is to crush the coronavirus. To make it possible for Canadians to do that, our government is there for them, and we will continue to be.

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[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have quite a story for you this morning.

The Prime Minister signed a vaccine development agreement between the National Research Council of Canada and the state-

owned company CanSinoBIO. However, the Chinese government changed its mind and decided to scrap the contract.

I understand that the Chinese communist regime holds a special place in the Prime Minister's heart. However, what Canadians want to know now is how many millions of dollars we have lost to the Chinese regime.

[English]

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been working closely with experts and industry partners throughout this pandemic, which has allowed us to take an evidence-based approach to vaccine research and development. In the context of our continued research and evolving evidence, the National Research Council chose to implement the revised expert advice of the Vaccine Task Force and pursue other vaccine candidates. We will continue to actively pursue every promising option for a COVID-19 vaccine.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not satisfied with that reply.

Canada signed an agreement with a Chinese state-owned company, CanSinoBIO. The Chinese decided to quash the deal. That cost money. To make matters worse, Canadian biological patents were transferred to China. The government still does not understand that the Chinese are detaining our two Michaels, that they veto trade deals whenever they see fit, and, what is more, that they do not give a flying fig about human rights.

Now we would like to know what the Prime Minister thinks about this business.

How can Canada hand over its own intellectual property to the Chinese, knowing that they have no respect for anything?

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome that question because, as everyone in the House knows, Canada has a complex and multi-dimensional relationship with China. Canada engages with China with our eyes wide open. Many of our international partners are facing similar challenges. We actively engage with them constantly to ensure that Canadian interests are upheld, human rights are spoken about and intellectual property is protected.

Oral Questions

Our government has been clear about our principles, our commitment to the rule of law, our deep concern for our citizens, including Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor who have been arbitrarily detained, and our farmers and producers in Canada who seek markets. Canada will remain firm and resolute.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his diplomatic response, but the fact remains that our patents were stolen, we lost millions of dollars, and we trusted the Chinese regime even though we knew it was not to be trusted. That is pretty clear.

Yesterday, I asked other questions about committees here in Canada and matters that are usually under our control, such as the vaccine task force and the COVID-19 Supply Council.

Vaccine developer Gary Kobinger left the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, citing lack of faith in political leaders and experts and lack of transparency. Here is what we want to know.

Can the government confirm that none of the COVID-19 Supply Council members are in conflict of interest?

[English]

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives who defunded science, our federal government greatly values the work of top scientific and industry experts who are volunteering their time to help ensure sound evidence-based decisions, but let me be very clear. The Vaccine Task Force has a robust conflict of interest process in place that embodies international best practices, includes an online registry of declared interests and is consistent with the practices of other volunteer external advisory bodies.

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[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government does not want to hand over a blank cheque.

Its leader says that they have the expertise. Ottawa's health care expertise is a joke. Just ask the first nations who do not have access to safe drinking water or the veterans who have fallen through the cracks.

When it comes to health care, the only expertise Ottawa has is its ability to undermine the system. The second wave is beginning. People are going to get sick. People are going to die. The government needs to stop talking about its expertise and transfer the provinces the money.

What is it waiting for?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, our Bloc Québécois friends are trying to pick a fight and put Ottawa, Quebec

and the other provinces at odds with each other over what they are doing. We have to look at all that.

The fight against COVID-19 is not about the efforts of one group or another but about everyone's efforts, including those of the House. It is about everyone's efforts, as a Parliament and as various governments, including the municipalities.

That is what the Bloc Québécois refuses to recognize. It does not want to recognize that because it likes to argue.

We are capable of working together and we will continue to do so.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa should figure out how to take care of its own affairs properly before putting its nose in other people's business.

Quebec and the provinces are not responsible for the spread of the virus. There were no tests at the airports or the borders. There was no follow-up. Ottawa did nothing about it even though it was a federal responsibility.

Another federal responsibility that the government is falling down on is transferring our money for health care so that Quebec and the provinces can fight this pandemic.

Will it increase health transfers immediately?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier I was looking at the Bloc Québécois' statutes and bylaws. The first item is: "1. The Bloc Québécois is a separatist party".

I wonder if there is a connection between that and the fact that it is always criticizing Ottawa. It is always Ottawa's fault no matter what we do. We helped out the health care sector and the Red Cross. It is always Ottawa's fault. We know full well that the different levels of government can work together, do work together and will continue to work together.

* * *

● (1140)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has literally wrapped itself in a fine speech, but concretely it has done nothing for francophones. That is not surprising, given that it gave a \$1-billion contract to WE Charity, a unilingual anglophone organization. This not complicated. The one thing everyone is waiting for is the modernization of the Official Languages Act.

Can the Minister of Official Languages tell us when she plans to finally introduce legislation, as called for by all the organizations that advocate for francophones across the country?

Oral Questions

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his new responsibilities on the official languages file. I would be happy to review with him all the damage the Conservatives did to official languages. It has taken us five years to try to fix that damage, specifically in relation to the French-language university in Ontario and reduced services to francophones when it comes to court challenges.

That said, I am happy to be working with him on strengthening the Official Languages Act. I look forward to having productive discussions with him.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the minister that the reality is that the Liberals have been in power for five years, and nothing has been done. A few weeks ago, the Liberal government and the minister awarded a sole-source contract to Liberal cronies at WE Charity. Everyone here knows, and this has been documented, that this charity is not able to operate in French. This is a tangible issue that should have been addressed. This is about the WE Charity scandal, which the government is trying to cover up.

I repeat: When will the minister introduce a bill so that all organizations—

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we have been cleaning up the mess that the Conservatives made of official languages. This was necessary not only at the federal level, but also at the provincial Conservative government level, including Doug Ford's government. We are now very worried that Jason Kenney is targeting Franco-Albertans with Campus Saint-Jean.

Will my colleague join us in condemning the cuts that Jason Kenney is making to funding for Franco-Albertans and Campus Saint-Jean?

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[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, long before COVID-19, the Liberals promised to put people first by investing in public transit. Nowhere is the need greater than the Yonge subway extension. With 1.2 million residents and over 636,000 jobs, York Region is one of Canada's largest municipalities but still has no Yonge subway.

This is the top priority for the residents in my riding and for all of York Region, but the Liberals are not listening. When will the government deliver critical infrastructure funds for the Yonge subway extension?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a bilateral agreement with Ontario that sees the federal government investing a historic \$11.8 billion in Ontario over the next decade, including \$8.3 billion for public transit.

We need to be working with the Government of Ontario and with local governments. We have asked the Government of Ontario to

submit business cases on their major GTA transit lines, including the premier's preferred Ontario line, so that we can actually move forward and expedite funding decisions.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Ontario government has already committed to the funding for the Yonge subway extension.

The Yonge subway extension would create over 60,000 jobs and enable housing for 88,000 residents. It would drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions by taking over 3,000 buses a day off the streets. York Region keeps asking but the government remains silent.

When will the government create jobs, protect the environment and fund the Yonge subway extension?

• (1145)

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always nice to hear Conservatives talk about the importance of protecting the environment. That is a top priority for us. That is why we are investing in public transit.

I would certainly encourage the Government of Ontario to bring a business case forward, because I know how much Conservatives care about taxpayer dollars. We need to actually have the details so that we can move forward on an important project that will create jobs, that will reduce congestion and that will improve the lives of people in Ontario.

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CHILD CARE

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that women's careers have been the hardest hit by this pandemic, which has been made worse by the Liberals' failure to follow through on their promises for a universal child care program, which they first promised in 1993. I am not going to hold my breath.

Will the minister tell us the implementation timeline for a universal child care program that properly supports early childhood educators, cares for kids with exceptional needs and helps parents who want to go back to work outside the home confidently go back to work?

Oral Questions

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made the largest single-year investment in early learning and child care in the history of this country this year, through this pandemic, with a \$625-million investment to help get child care spaces secured, expanded and made safe for families right across the country. That was before the throne speech.

The throne speech has now committed to a new national program. We look forward to the NDP supporting it and not defeating the government like it did back in 2006. The critical issue now is to sit down with the provinces and expand the system, protect quality and make sure that child care workers are paid properly. That is the work we are engaged in and that is the work we will continue to move forward on.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from the Nuu-chah-nulth on the west coast to the Mi'kmaq on the east coast, the Liberals have spent millions on lawyers to fight indigenous fishing rights. Time and time again, the courts have upheld indigenous fishing rights.

Now the Liberals are talking out of both sides of their mouths, but by trying to play both sides, they are leaving DFO officials without a clear mandate and they are putting lives at risk.

Will the minister finally back up her claims that she supports self-determination by actually upholding inherent and constitutionally protected rights?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, right now the government's number one priority is making sure people stay safe in southwest Nova Scotia, where tensions are quite high. We are working with first nations leadership as well as with industry partners in Nova Scotia. We believe that the best way forward is through respectful and collaborative dialogue. We are working to make sure that we uphold those treaty rights.

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[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am in constant contact with constituents and business owners in Brome—Missisquoi, and I have witnessed their solidarity and resilience throughout this pandemic. As we prepare to restart the economy, our constituents are only asking for one thing: the creation of better jobs and increased investment in our infrastructure. Starting today, we are looking towards the future.

Could the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities tell us what she is doing to help communities?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Brome—Missisquoi for her question.

Every dollar invested by the federal government must grow our economy, create good jobs and improve quality of life. That is why

the federal government is investing in upgrades to water mains in the regional community of Brome—Missisquoi, which will receive more than \$5 million under the green infrastructure stream for five projects that will improve resilience and quality of life in those communities.

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[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the pandemic hit, financial institutions granted six-month mortgage deferrals to ensure Canadians would not lose their homes. By the end of June, more than 768,000 Canadians used these programs. Next week, those deferral programs end and mortgage payments are due. Economists suggest that 5% of mortgages could default. That is almost 40,000 homes.

Mortgages were not referenced in the throne speech. Why is the Liberal government okay with potentially thousands of Canadians losing their homes? Are we not in the second wave?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is absolutely committed to supporting Canadians and Canadian businesses throughout this crisis. The mortgage deferrals from our banks have indeed been very helpful to many Canadian families. This is an issue that we are going to continue to be working on.

I also want to point out that the extensive support we have provided to individual Canadians and to Canadian small businesses has helped Canadians get through so far. As we said in the throne speech, we are committed to continuing to be there for Canadians as we fight, as the member opposite points out quite rightly, the second wave.

• (1150)

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' national housing co-investment fund was announced with great fanfare in 2017, but over the two- to three-year period it has delivered very little nationwide. Now the Liberals want us to believe they can build 3,000 homes in six months.

Will the government commit, here and now, to operate with transparency and provide a running list of projects as they are allocated funding with regional breakdowns, unlike the opaque approach to the national housing co-investment fund?

Oral Questions

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the rapid housing initiative announced this week with the billion-dollar investment in acquisition and construction of new supportive housing units is one of the most important investments this government and, in fact, this country has ever made in terms of battling chronic homelessness.

The throne speech now commits to ending chronic homelessness in this country. That is an ambitious but a massively necessary target. The issue that the member opposite raises is an important one. We need to show Canadians exactly where these units are landing and how people are being helped.

We will commit to working to make sure he gets the information he needs. I would caution, though, not to rely on some of the language coming out of newspaper articles. The investments in B.C. are 26.8% of the investments we have made. I have made several announcements of projects in B.C., and that is a good news story for people—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the pandemic, I have heard many stories of how the government has left out or left behind indigenous businesses. CEBA and CEWS are just two examples.

Last week, I attended a recovery forum hosted by the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. Many there expressed frustration resulting from the government's failure to meet a target of 5% procurement for indigenous-owned businesses.

When will the government allow indigenous entrepreneurs to share in Canada's prosperity?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that indigenous business owners and their communities face unique challenges and have been disproportionately impacted by the current situation. That is why we took action to support indigenous businesses to respond to the hardships that have been amplified by COVID-19. This includes investing \$423.8 million to support local businesses and ensure business owners have access to the support they need to get through this challenging time.

With this support, indigenous communities and business owners will have the flexibility they need to respond to their unique economic needs through this difficult time.

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NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's throne speech was short on details for the north. Many Canadians in my riding, across the territories and in other parts of northern Canada struggle with housing shortages, transportation difficulties and higher costs of goods and services. The north needs

serious upgrades to infrastructure and transportation routes to ensure food security and lower the cost of living.

Will the government finally step up and commit to those critical investments, or will it continue to leave northern Canada behind?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the support we have given northern Canada during these difficult times. In April, we invested \$130 million for economic and health supports for all of northern Canada. We have also invested significantly in aviation support. Through these difficult times, our government will be there for all Canadians, including, of course, Canadians who live in the north.

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[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is asleep at the wheel. The enemy it should be fighting right now is COVID-19, not Quebec, the provinces or the opposition parties. Controlling this public health crisis is the priority, the only priority.

By refusing to increase health transfers, they are single-handedly creating a political crisis instead of addressing a health crisis.

When will the government wake up? Health transfers need to be increased immediately.

● (1155)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebec reported 637 new cases today. There are 400,000 Quebecers looking for work. We are in the second wave. The last thing anyone wants is a squabble between different levels of government.

We must all be united in facing this enemy known as "COVID-19". We have no enemies in Quebec City. Even if we disagree on certain things, we can still work together. Despite what the Bloc Québécois is saying, there is no quarrel, which is too bad for them.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the premiers of Quebec and the provinces are calling for increased health care funding to tackle the crisis, but the government had nothing to say about it in its throne speech. To hear the Liberals talk, asking for health transfers is a mere whim.

We are not talking about unnecessary spending. The funding requests could not be more specific. We are talking about money for hiring medical personnel and buying necessary equipment. We are talking about getting our own money back so we can take care of people who are sick.

Oral Questions

The Liberals have lost focus. We are battling against a virus. We are in a health crisis. There is nothing more important that the government can do than invest in health care.

When are they going to increase health transfers?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fully agree that we are battling against a virus. That is exactly why we are reaching out to our colleagues: to work together.

However, the Bloc Québécois by definition will never admit that Ottawa is doing anything right, because it would go against their prime objective, which is the separation of Quebec.

When has the Bloc Québécois ever said that Ottawa was doing anything right? Never. It would go against everything they believe in.

What we want is to work together with everyone, even my Bloc friends, to fight COVID-19.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Canadian farmers, ranchers, fishermen and vegetable growers across the country are working hard every day to supply the food we need and to supply the world. Their time is valuable. Three months after CEBA was announced, they are finally being included.

However, in the midst of harvest, my farmers are waiting three to six hours on the phone finally having to leave a message, hoping and praying they can get to the line when the call comes back. They cannot get through to a live person on the CEBA hotline.

What is the minister doing right now to fix this problem?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, farmers, entrepreneurs and businesses are extremely important. We are very committed to making sure they get the support that they need.

The call centre has been changed temporarily to respond to the many calls that have come in, but it can deal with the answers to the questions those very businesses have asked, those very farmers. This is an effort to process those questions a lot quicker. We are working very hard to make sure they get the answers they need.

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HEALTH

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's seniors have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic on all fronts, and the mental health impact of social isolation is immeasurable. We have all heard heartbreaking stories of seniors separated from their loved ones and their communities.

For seniors struggling, the throne speech was a disappointment, with nothing more than repeated ideas that offered them no clear plan to help them through the pandemic and to keep them safe.

Why is the government allowing Canada to fall behind in its response to the pandemic at the expense of our seniors and their mental health?

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague for her appointment as critic. I really appreciate the opportunity to work with her as we move forward on this.

We understand the challenging times that seniors and their families have had. This situation has made it easier for vulnerable seniors to be isolated. To better address social isolation among seniors, we are investing \$20 million in the new horizons for seniors program. It is providing over 1,000 new projects in communities directly supporting seniors at home and providing flexibility in the new horizons for seniors funding that we provided in January. This has helped over 700 projects to be initiated in communities helping seniors. That is also helping seniors with their mental health.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Canadians are experiencing increased anxiety and stress. COVID-19 has had a disproportionate and devastating impact on the mental health and well-being of Canadian seniors. Left isolated and alone, lockdown restrictions have prevented seniors from seeing their friends and families or even hugging their grandchildren.

Mental health is a cornerstone of public health and is critical to our nation's recovery from this pandemic, yet despite this reality, the Liberal throne speech dedicated precisely two sentences to the issue of mental health. Why?

● (1200)

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to continue to talk about what the government has done to support seniors and their mental health and well-being. The throne speech was an excellent throne speech for seniors.

I want to address what we are doing right now to support those seniors. We are doing it through the new horizons for seniors program; through the \$350 million in community support that is being provided to help seniors get the services and supports, including the mental health support, that they need. We also launched a wellness together Canada website portal to help seniors access those essential services they need to stay well and safe.

Steps like these go a long way in helping seniors to know that they are not alone. The government is there with them and for them.

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government understands and appreciates the importance of Canada's forestry sector. Like many industries, the fallout from COVID-19 has hit forestry and its workers hard. The sector is looking for strategies to ensure our forestry sector is resilient and emerges stronger than ever.

During this national forest week, could the minister update the House on how our government is supporting the women and men of our forestry sector?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, national forest week is an opportunity to highlight all of the incredible contributions the forest sector makes to our economy.

Throughout this crisis, our government and the forest industry have stepped up to help fight COVID-19 on many fronts. Companies like West Fraser and Canfor have donated much needed N95 masks. FPInnovations is developing biodegradable masks that are made of wood fibre.

Additionally, in the midst of the global pandemic, our government provided \$30 million to the forest sector so businesses could safely continue operations during COVID-19. The challenges are immense but so are the opportunities, and this industry is stepping up to the task.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government's throne speech rehashed old Liberal promises without even mentioning oil and gas workers or pipelines.

The natural resource sector lost 43,000 jobs in the last quarter alone. Western Canadians have been hard hit by the economic calamity that began under the government long before the pandemic, Bill C-69 and Bill C-48. The Prime Minister is divisive, just like his father.

Why will the government not show it cares about national unity and a real economic recovery by supporting our oil and gas workers?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at one point almost one in three workers in mining, oil and gas were able to stay in their job thanks to the Canada emergency wage subsidy. The Speech from the Throne announced this subsidy would continue through until next summer. This represents hundreds of millions of dollars to support energy sector workers. It also represents tens of thousands of workers who will stay in their jobs in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador thanks to the Liberal government.

We are supporting workers, we are supporting families and we are supporting their oil and gas sector.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Madam Speaker, Albertans are tired of being ignored by the Liberal government. Our energy sector supports 800,000 jobs and it produces 20%

Oral Questions

of the Government of Canada's revenues. Alberta should be a part of this nation's economic recovery.

Imagine the disappointment for the hundreds of thousands of oil and gas workers in Alberta when they were completely disregarded in the throne speech.

When will the government work with Alberta's energy sector and get people back to work instead of the litany of policies that fuel division and continues to punish western Canada?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will reiterate our support for workers in the oil and gas sector. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been put in place to support them with the wage subsidy. I will also reiterate for my hon. colleague the support that has been given over the last couple of months, with over \$1 billion to clean up abandoned oil wells, with the \$750 million that we put in place to help the industry reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

We are there for all workers across the country, including those in the oil and gas sector.

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● (1205)

AVIATION INDUSTRY

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Madam Speaker, we all know the aviation industry has been hard hit by the global pandemic. We now hear that Nav Canada is cutting 14% of its workforce, losing another 720 jobs due to layoffs and closing two flight information centres, including one in Halifax.

The Minister of Transport promised months ago that the government would be supporting the aviation industry, but we are still waiting for its plan.

Could the Minister of Transport tell me how many people will be losing their jobs in Halifax and what is the government's plan and timeline for reopening?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we realize that the aviation sector has been hard hit, not only the airlines and the airports but also Nav Canada, an organization responsible for air traffic control in our country. This is a complex situation, which we are looking at very closely. We want to ensure that when we pull out of this pandemic, the air sector will be able to resume operations.

I can assure the member that we are looking, in detail, at what measures can be put in place to make sure this happens.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today we are celebrating Franco-Ontarian Day. Over 600,000 francophones in the province of Ontario will be celebrating this day. September 25 is a day to celebrate the progress we have made and think about the future of our community.

Can the minister tell the House what our government has been doing to support francophone minorities?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, you are Franco-Ontarian too, so a happy Franco-Ontarian Day to you.

We will always stand by Ontario's 600,000 francophones. We will always stand up for their right to learn, work and live in French in Ontario. Our historic investments, our action plan for official languages, our improvements to the census and our support for the first Franco-Ontarian university, an institution created by and for Franco-Ontarians, show that we will always be their allies.

I would like to wish all Franco-Ontarians a wonderful day.

* * *

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, over 40,000 veterans in Canada are on a wait-list for benefits that they are owed. Some have waited months and some have waited well over a year. How many times were they mentioned in the Speech from the Throne? Zero. Now veterans are reaching out to my office because they have applied for CERB and hope they are eligible as they simply have nothing else.

Could the government finally take some action quickly for these veterans? They stepped up for all of us as Canadians. When will the government step up for them?

[Translation]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will answer the question in my capacity as parliamentary secretary.

[English]

The throne speech laid out our government's plan to fight the pandemic and support Canadians. Of course, that means supporting veterans.

We know that veterans experience homelessness, and investing in ending chronic homelessness for veterans is very important. We know that some veterans are unemployed, and investing in job creation and creating over a million jobs will help veterans. Let us not forget that just a few months ago we invested approximately \$200 million—

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

The hon. member for Vancouver Granville.

JUSTICE

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Vancouver Granville, Ind.): Madam Speaker, we have heard the Speech from the Throne. There was a lot contained therein of repeated promises, but short on details.

With respect to the justice system, we all know that Black Canadians and indigenous peoples are overrepresented. Evidence shows, including through the government's own reports, surveys and extensive consultation, that reform to mandatory minimum penalties will have a significant impact on these numbers.

Specifically, what measures are being referred to in the speech when it says that the government will introduce legislation and make investments that take action to address “diversion and sentencing”, and what is the timeline?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her dedication to the frankly embarrassing issue of overrepresentation of both Black and indigenous peoples in our criminal justice system.

As we have said in the throne speech, we are looking at a variety of different measures and analyzing on best evidence how to move those files forward. It is shameful that this overrepresentation exists in our criminal justice system and we are going to, as a government, do our best to remedy it.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1210)

[English]

JUDGES ACT

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code.

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

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, during question period, we raised the possibility of working on the weekend. We therefore move the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing or special order or usual practice of the House, (a) Bill C-2, an act relating to economic recovery in response to COVID-19, be deemed to have been read a second time on division and referred to a committee of the whole; (b) the House shall meet at noon on Sunday, September 27, 2020, for the sole purpose of resolving itself into a committee of the whole to consider the said bill for a period not exceeding six hours and 20 minutes provided that: (i) the committee be subject to the provisions relating to the virtual sittings of the House; (ii) the Speaker may preside; (iii) the Chair may preside from the Speaker's chair; (iv) the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and the Minister of Labour be invited to appear; (v) each minister be questioned for 95 minutes provided that: (a) the Chair shall call members from all recognized parties and one member who does not belong to a recognized party in a fashion consistent with the proportions observed during Oral Questions; (b) no member shall be recognized for more than five minutes at a time which may be used for posing questions; (c) members may be permitted to split their time with one or more members by so indicating to the Chair; (d) the rotation for questions be the rotation used by the former special committee on the COVID-19 pandemic; (e) the ministers answer the questions; (vi) at the expiry of the time provided to the committee of the whole, the committee shall rise, the bill shall be deemed reported back to the House without amendment and the House shall stand adjourned until the next sitting day; (c) the report stage of the said bill begins Monday, September 28, 2020, provided that: (i) the deadline for notices of motion at report stage be set at 9 p.m. on Sunday, September 27, 2020, and if necessary the Order Paper and Notice Paper be republished for the Monday, September 28, 2020, sitting; (ii) the said bill can be debated at third reading during the same sitting; (iii) no more than one sitting day shall be allotted for consideration at report stage and third reading stage of the bill at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on Monday, September 28, 2020, or until no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier; the Speaker shall interrupt any proceedings and shall put forthwith and successively, without any further debate or amendment, all questions necessary to dispose of proceedings at the said stages of the bill provided that, if a recorded division is requested, it shall not be deferred.

• (1215)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Usually when there is a request for unanimous consent, the Chair asks members to respond in the affirmative to determine whether there is agreement. This being a hybrid sitting of the House, were the Chair to proceed in this fashion, if there were any dissenting voices, particularly for members participating via video conference, they may not be audible. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask for those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement. In this way, the Chair will hear clearly if there are any dissenting voices and I will accordingly be able to declare whether there is unanimous consent to proceed.

[English]

Therefore, all those opposed to the House Leader of the Official Opposition's motion will please say nay.

Routine Proceedings

Some hon. members: Nay.

[Translation]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, the government has no choice but to say no to this motion since we were not aware of it. Everyone knows that I was here with my colleagues so I therefore did not have the opportunity to read it. This is the first I am hearing about this motion on the floor of the House. We will read it and come back to my esteemed colleague later.

That being said, I would prefer that this type of thing not happen again and that we can continue to discuss matters between leaders in private.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois opposes the motion. I do not know whether further discussions with the government will change anything, but we oppose the motion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have already indicated that the motion was rejected and I thank you for your interventions. If there are no other motions, we will proceed to routine proceedings and the presentation of petitions.

The hon. member for Edmonton Mill Woods.

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a petition signed by a number of Canadians of Oromo descent who would draw the attention of the House of Commons to current political violence targeting Oromo people in Ethiopia.

They are asking the government to, among other things, stand up for human rights in Ethiopia, examine Canada's foreign aid to Ethiopia and press Ethiopia to stop torture, free political prisoners and bring perpetrators to justice.

INCOME ASSISTANCE

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to present this petition that was started by members of my constituency, Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

The Address

They are asking the government to implement a guaranteed livable income for all Canadians. This would establish an income floor below which no Canadian could fall and which would reflect regional differences in the cost of living. It would replace the current patchwork of federal and provincial income assistance programs with a single universal cash payment. It would be progressively taxed back based on income level. It would be administered through the existing tax system and require no means testing, thereby dramatically reducing federal and provincial administration costs. It would reduce poverty, thereby reducing demand on social services, law enforcement and health care, resulting in additional cost savings for government and taxpayers, and would provide a financial safety net for all Canadians, especially through major economic shifts, pandemics, natural disasters or industrial automation.

• (1220)

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am rising today to present petition e-2626, which I authorized not for one of my own constituents, but for a constituent in the riding of Ottawa Centre, as unfortunately the MP for Ottawa Centre chose not to authorize it.

The petitioner simply requests that the House of Commons hold a debate around the idea that any MPs involved with the passing of firearms legislation be informed, trained and have completed the Canadian Firearms Safety Courses, including obtaining a restricted Possession and Acquisition Licence, prior to passing any firearms-related legislation or measures.

ABORTION

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am presenting this petition today on behalf of Canadians who signed because they indicate that sex-selective abortion is legal, as Canada has no legal restrictions on abortion.

Sex-selective abortion is antithetical to our commitment to equality between men and women. A 2019 Dart and Maru/Blue poll conducted for the National Post showed that 84% of Canadians believe it should be illegal to have an abortion if the family does not want the child to be a certain sex. International organizations including the World Health Organization, United Nations Women and the United Nations Children's Fund have identified unequal sex ratios at birth as a growing problem internationally, and Canada's health care professionals recognize sex selection as a problem.

Therefore, the undersigned citizens of Canada call upon the House of Commons to pass a criminal code prohibition of sex-selective abortion.

HERRING FISHERY

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to table this petition on behalf of residents of Denman and Hornby islands, Qualicum and Parksville who live on Salish Sea. They are concerned about the unexpected drop in the herring population that has led to overfishing.

They cite that herring is the basis of the food web that support the wild Pacific salmon, killer and humpback whales, cod and halibut, seabirds and other interdependent species on the Pacific coast. First nations have constitutionally protected rights to the herring,

which are an important food source and integral part of their culture.

They call on the government to suspend the herring fishery in the Salish Sea until a whole ecosystem-based plan is developed, to fairly compensate local fishers for any of their economic losses and to ensure that all decisions are made with full participation of first nations and local communities.

* * *

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.): Madam Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[English]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs still had three minutes remaining for his speech.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a great privilege to continue in this debate. I was previously signalling that the first foundation of the throne speech is to preserve and protect the health of Canadians. The second foundation is to support them while the pandemic continues and recognize the economic crisis we are in. The third foundation is to ensure that we seize this opportunity to build back better.

The Address

COVID-19 has revealed cracks in the social safety net and in government programs, particularly for businesses and areas of our country hit unusually hard. The third foundation is to build back better. We will seize this opportunity to create more jobs and build better communities. We will do this through investments in infrastructure projects, like transit and housing, that will create jobs and better communities. We will do this through investments in cleaner and greener society that will create jobs and build better communities. We will do this through investments in a stronger, better-trained workforce who will create jobs and better communities. We will do this through investments in child care and pharmacare, which will create better communities. We will be doing all of this while holding on to the values that Canadians want upheld—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We are just going to stop the time for a second. I know that sometimes we do forget to turn our phones off. I just want to make sure that the hon. member has put that on silent and he can continue his speech.

• (1225)

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, we are going to be doing all of this, including investing in pharmacare and child care, which will create jobs and better communities, while holding onto the values that Canadians want upheld here and abroad.

While the health and economic crisis and challenges we face are daunting, this is no time to let up on what makes Canada Canada. Canadians want us to further reconciliation with indigenous peoples, living out our commitment to their better health and mental health care, invest in infrastructure and clean water, and by implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Canadians want us to persevere on dismantling the structures of systemic racism, including better civilian oversight of law enforcement and a shift toward community-led policing. Canadians want us to reach Canada's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050 and to do that by drawing on the know-how of the energy sectors in Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Canadians want us to ensure women's safety and to stem the tide of gun violence in our cities, by implementing our firearms policy commitments, giving municipalities the ability to further restrict handguns and control the flow of illegal arms into Canada. Canadians want us to protect our multicultural, bilingual society and continue to welcome newcomers and thank them for joining our country and building it better.

Madam Speaker, in case it is not obvious to you, I am pleased to be standing in support of the throne speech and to make sure that we are able to build a better Canada and a more resilient Canada.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have great respect for the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and I want to give them an opportunity to address a major concern for Canada and the world.

Presently there is grave concern regarding the behaviour of the Chinese Communist Party around COVID-19 with its lack of transparency and accountability, genocide against the Uighur Muslims, crimes against humanity against Tibetans and the fact that it exercises debt hostage-taking in weak nations.

Page 30 mentions Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, although Huseyin Celil is not mentioned. He is another Canadian citizen who has been incarcerated unjustly by the Chinese Communist Party. If we are going to build back better, why was there nothing in the throne speech in regard to taking our place in foreign affairs policy and making sure that we defend Canadians against the Chinese Communist Party?

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, my respect is mutual for the member. Raising the issues of human rights and of the very difficult relationship that we are having diplomatically and multilaterally with China is very important to me and it is something that I am working on every day.

The member mentioned consular cases and of course we did mention the cases of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig in our throne speech. That does not mean that we are not seized every day with issues like the cases of Mr. Celil, Mr. Schellenberg and other Canadians who are facing inappropriate detentions, inappropriate sentences and the inappropriate lack of consular affairs. It is something we are working on every day.

We will continue to do that to the best of our ability and want to engage all of Parliament. I am very pleased that we will be bringing back the Canada-China committee and we will make sure that we have a robust discussion on how best to ensure that Canadian interests are upheld as we deal with China.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, members of the governing party are trying to make us believe that what they are doing to support the health care system of Quebec and the provinces is perfect, that it is the gold standard. However, long before the crisis, in December 2019, at the Council of the Federation, premiers were already asking for help. They unanimously asked for an unconditional increase in health transfers. This past spring's crisis was predictable. All federal governments in the past 25 years are responsible for it, and the current government still refuses to acknowledge the blood on its hands.

Will the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs admit that the only members who believe that the government has a good plan for health care are the Liberals themselves?

• (1230)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, I do not think that there is anything I am more proud of our government for during the COVID pandemic than the fact that we have worked very closely with provinces and territories.

The Address

I want to commend the Deputy Prime Minister particularly for reaching out daily, at times hourly, to all of the provincial and territorial leaders to ensure that we had a robust plan that met their needs. That included most recently a \$19-billion transfer for a safe restart. That was negotiated with provincial and territorial premiers, with an additional \$2 billion to ensure that children and young people could return to school safely.

Our encouragement and our ability to work with the provinces and territories are unprecedented and we will continue to do that.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, the government talks about building back better, but it has forgotten a lot of people: students and veterans. Let us not forget the Canadian human rights tribunal ruling to immediately stop racially discriminating against first nations kids.

Cindy Blackstock said that there was an opportunity for Canada to acknowledge its own systemic discrimination toward first nations kids and fix it. It did not. Spending over 13 years fighting a human rights decision shows racism is in Canada's DNA.

When will the government start upholding its domestic and international legal obligations and make sure that all people on Turtle Island can live with human rights, in dignity?

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, the member has raised a very important issue. I was very pleased to see in the Speech from the Throne that we will be introducing legislation before the end of the year to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Also, nothing has stopped. This is a Speech from the Throne that is visionary, lofty and ambitious. We will continue all the programs we have been doing around first nations, Inuit and Métis health. We will continue to work on justice issues, clean water issues, health issues and mental health issues. We will be doing that. We expect and hope that every parliamentarian will share that project with us.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member for Winnipeg Centre that there will be other opportunities for questions and comments, and when that happens, I would ask her to attempt to be recognized. When someone else has the floor, it is not proper protocol within the House to be shouting to the other member. That applies to all MPs, by the way. I believe that we need to keep decorum in the House.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lakeland.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will split my time with the strong, new member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

In their first call, our Conservative leader urged the Prime Minister to address western alienation and national unity. By failing to even mention it in the throne speech, the Prime Minister completely ignored the people I represent, and yesterday he called them crazy, and so it is impossible for me to support it.

Canada is in fiscal peril. The throne speech shows that the Liberals will keep risking Canada's finances so that kids the same age as my nieces and nephews and younger generations will struggle with affordability, starting a business, buying a home and planning for

retirement. They may never experience the same health care, pensions or services their grandparents did.

In 2014, the Prime Minister said, "The budget will balance itself", but his first one was twice the deficit he promised. In four years, he put Canada \$87 billion in debt and now, when Canadians need support most, the Liberals are running a massive \$343-billion deficit. The PBO warns that "we cannot afford deficits of over \$300 billion for more than just a few years. ...it would [be] unsustainable."

Conservatives do not advocate for fiscal responsibility as an end in itself. Instead, our caution is precisely to prepare for days like today so that there is fiscal firepower to support Canadians in crisis, but Canada is doing worse than our European allies. Under the Liberals, in March and April, three million Canadians lost their jobs and more than a million Canadians are still out of work. Canada has the highest unemployment rate in the G7, and the largest industries are sustaining major, prolonged damage, costing real people real jobs and hope for a better tomorrow.

This month, 70% of Canadian small businesses reported lower sales, 60% are not fully staffed and one in three are still fully closed. After six months of the Liberals turning Parliament into a special committee, stripping powers from MPs and opposition parties, spending hundreds of billions of dollars with limited scrutiny while attacking as heartless anyone who would dare to ask questions or ask for oversight and accountability, and after six weeks of shutting down everything to avoid his own scandals, what is missing from the throne speech is a clear post-pandemic road map and a real plan for the private sector to lead Canada's economic recovery.

It is fair to say that Canadians want elected representatives to work together. Conservatives have done so, but it is also our job to speak truth to power. Let us be real about the Liberals' failure to close the borders early, risking health and lives in response to COVID-19, and now to support Canada's front-line medical workers and first responders, who make up 20% of Canada's COVID cases, which is twice the global average. The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions links that reality to a lack of protective equipment.

Last week, I heard from firefighters who cannot source N95 masks in rural or smaller population centres. So many of those first responders across Canada are volunteers. That is inexcusable, given all the early warnings. On January 17, Canadian military intelligence warned the defence minister about COVID-19. On February 7, the World Health Organization warned about global PPE shortages. On February 13, the Public Health Agency warned that Canada's stockpile was inadequate. However, the Liberals did not even try to buy PPE from international suppliers until late March and had already sent planeloads of Canadian PPE to China without any plans to replace it.

To protect public health, obviously, decisions must be based on science, evidence and practices in best-performing countries. Announcements must be clear and accurate. However, the Liberals have confused Canadians who are worried about making ends meet, and worried about their kids going back to school and whether they will be able to go back to work. People just cannot keep waiting for test results.

On August 26, infectious disease specialist Dr. Andrew Morris called Health Canada's rejection of home testing "absurd" and said that rapid testing is the backbone of infectious disease management, but the throne speech had precious little to fix Canada's failure to adopt the most effective models. The U.K., Japan, Germany and even the U.S. in April approved instant and rapid home testing, but not Canada. One single approval trickled in just today from Health Canada—some urgency.

On a personal note, I am grateful to our new Conservative leader to be the public safety shadow minister. It is not just a title or a huge responsibility for me, it is personal. I live on a farm in a rural riding in an escalating crime epidemic. My constituents fear for their families, homes and businesses, vulnerable to increasingly brazen criminals in a slap-on-the-wrist, revolving-door system. It is costing them enormously, financially and in their peace of mind. That is why, in 2018, I pushed Motion No. 167 to combat rural crime as an anxious rural resident and MP myself, and as the daughter-in-law of a proud RCMP detachment assistant for more than 40 years.

• (1235)

I know so many under-resourced officers, administrators and victim services advocates who are at their wits' end, just like rural residents who feel like sitting ducks.

In Lakeland, there are 10 first nation and Métis communities. As a person who happens to be part Ojibwa, my heart aches when they share their worries about pervasive crime, recidivism, safety and their youth. Multiple indigenous communities in Lakeland declared local states of emergency because of out-of-control gang activity and crime since 2015. They worry about the exact same shortages of front-line mental health, addictions and police support and services as everyone else in Lakeland and in Alberta. What a shame the Liberals did not actually act on my Motion No. 167, but Conservatives will not give up.

The Liberal approach to firearms is a complete failure. In Toronto, shootings are up 83% under the current Liberals, with 2020 the worst year on record. In the throne speech, a single sentence promised to control the flow of illegal guns into Canada, as if the

The Address

Liberals have not been in government for the past five years. What is worse is that the public safety minister knows mass confiscation of legal firearms will not reduce crime. Last year, about handguns, he said:

...that would be potentially a very expensive proposition...it would not in my opinion be perhaps the most effective measure in restricting the access that criminals would have to such weapons, because we'd still have a problem with them being smuggled across the border...

He is right. Where are the real resources and political will for front-line law enforcement and CBSA to tackle guns, organized crime and border smugglers, who are the main sources of firearms violence in Canada? Every dollar and every minute spent on this pointless and ineffective firearms ban could instead be used to go after criminals, who are not worried about filing paperwork and do not follow firearms laws already.

As for those who have been crime victims, I have walked their path. My lifelong and childhood best friend, the kind who is family, Dana Turner, was murdered in 2011 by a guy who also attacked an undercover cop and a prison cellmate. It is still seared into my mind: the desperation in looking for her, the hope that we would be wrong or that it was not what it seemed. I struggled through Dana's sister Paula's victim impact statement in Parliament to support life means life legislation, a Conservative bill the Liberals defeated in 2016. Later that same year, Dana's murderer was sentenced to prison for 16 years with no chance of parole. Two years ago, thank God, the appeal court upheld the judge's sentence. Dana was the victim of Mark Lindsay, but so were her parents, her sons, her siblings, every relative and her friends. As Paula generously said, so, even, were his parents because crime ricochets through so many lives and impacts so many people forever.

Canadians should not have to hold their breath and cross their fingers, hoping upon hope for exceptional lawyers, or that they can afford them, and for the grace of individual judges for justice to always be served. That is also why I am proud. Our new Conservative leader is committed to ensuring that even if someone is not criminally responsible they will not be a threat to the broader public. It is why we will keep calling on the Liberals to reverse their reduction of sentences for major offences, and I will ask for more action on dangerous offenders.

The Address

It is not just Canada's domestic security that is vulnerable on the Liberals' watch. The Prime Minister's naive admiration of the "basic dictatorship" of China is also a threat. Canadians are still unjustly imprisoned in China. Whether it was the Nortel hack in the 1990s, the Equifax hack in 2017 or the BlackBerry hack discovered in 2020, they all trace back to one place: the Chinese Communist Party.

China's state agencies are stealing Canada's cutting-edge research and innovation and interfering with critical infrastructure like telecoms. The Five Eyes partnership is Canada's most important international security and intelligence-sharing agreement, but Canada is the only member to not ban Huawei. While the Liberals are dithering, our new Conservative leader is clear: He will not allow the Communist Party of China to spy on Canadians through Huawei. China's state-influenced companies are setting up massive databases to compromise influencers and decision-makers, including 16,000 Canadians, while it is using its financial power to expand and control crucial and physical infrastructure in other countries. Of course, China's state-owned and affiliated enterprises are consolidating control of resources and resource producers, including Canada's, which are all the more vulnerable because of Liberal policies and the severe economic consequences of the pandemic.

In closing, the Prime Minister could have outlined a concrete plan to keep Canadians safe, to create jobs and to restart the economy. He did not, so I will vote no confidence in the government.

• (1240)

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 will say right from the onset that I disagree with what the member is trying to convey through her messaging this afternoon. If the member would take the time to read through the throne speech, I suspect that she would find there are many different initiatives that are very tangible that would continue to assist Canadians through this very difficult time in terms of dealing with the coronavirus and the issue of getting the economy going to its maximum force. I do not think they have to look that far into the throne speech to find that. I plan to speak a bit later and expand upon that.

Would the member not, at the very least, acknowledge that within the throne speech there are numerous measures that deal with what the Government of Canada is proposing to do?

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, I just think that is patently false. Today members of all parties are replying to the Speech from the Throne. We are debating it. Members of every single opposition party and independents have been asking, precisely, for concrete details on whatever issues they might be advocating for on behalf of their constituents.

Over and over, the Liberals stand up and talk about ambitions, desires, intent, strategies, themes and foundations. By their own answers all day today, and I am sure for days to come, they have no details or concrete plan whatsoever.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party's refusal to increase health transfers to 35% is a good example of predatory federalism. When medicare was first in-

troduced, the federal government provided 50% of the funding. This figure was gradually cut back, and now the government funds just 22% of these costs. However, the governments of Quebec and the other provinces cannot cut health services in the same way that the Liberal government has cut its funding.

There are now aberrations in the system, as we have seen with long-term care facilities, which have had various problems. These problems arise because the governments of Quebec and the other provinces do not have the means to hire more staff, and in particular orderlies.

The Liberals are saying that we are trying to stir up trouble, but Quebec is not the only province calling for health transfers to be restored to 35%. All of the provinces are calling for this. We are also calling for these transfers to continue increasing by 6% per year.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

• (1245)

[English]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, obviously we have vigorous disagreements on some issues, certainly on oil and gas and on pipelines, but one area where we agree is that the federal government should be respecting provincial jurisdiction, should actually be listening to the premiers and should be trusting provincial governments to meet the needs of their own provinces.

I would note that the premiers have unanimously come out and said that the top two priorities they had wanted from this throne speech were not addressed: jobs and health care. To the member's point, I am mindful that a previous Conservative government, while it stewarded through the global recession to put Canada in the strongest financial position of any developed country in the world, while it reduced taxes to the lowest level in 50 years, while it lifted more Canadians out of poverty than at any other time since it was recorded, it also, year after year, increased health care transfers to the provinces and left a \$1-billion surplus.

However, Liberals always do what Liberals always do, and they always cut transfers to the provinces.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the major concerns that I have is the lack of mention of this country's veterans in the throne speech. This is very concerning.

It is also very concerning because the Royal Canadian Legion has come forward and talked about the many legions across Canada that are struggling to make ends meet during this time. In my riding there are 11 legions that perform a very fundamental service to the veterans in our region.

I just want to hear from the member whether she shares that concern with me.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, briefly, since most people who know me well would know that I could have three hours of things to say, I absolutely share her concerns. Conservatives will always stand in solidarity with all members who will fight for support for veterans. They fought for us and gave us our way of life, and it is a sacred duty that we owe to the people who have put their lives on the line for our country and to preserve our way of life, and to all their family members and friends who sacrificed with them.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am proud to be the voice for my constituents of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and, now, the new shadow minister of agriculture and agri-food on behalf of farmers and agricultural producers. It is a tremendous honour and responsibility that I do not take lightly.

Over the past several months, we have seen our country go through a lockdown, when Canadians were asked to stay at home and keep safe, except for those who worked on the front lines. I would like to take a moment to thank all of the front-line workers and the farmers for helping us through this pandemic. Farmers stepped up to make sure that Canadians were fed, regardless of the obstacles that they faced and the minimal help that they received through the emergency response programs. How were they repaid? The word “agriculture” does not even appear in the Speech from the Throne. I had hoped that the Liberal government would use this opportunity to recognize the importance of agriculture not only in feeding Canadians but as a critical pillar of our economy.

I am disappointed to see that, once again, the agriculture sector is not a priority for the government. Agriculture should be included as a key component of Canada's economic recovery plan coming out of COVID. To be honest, I was not expecting much, but at the very least, it would have been nice to hear that it is understood that our agriculture sector had been through a lot and that the unique challenges that threatened various farmers' livelihoods must be addressed. This would have gone a long way to tell my constituents and Canada's farmers that their voices have been heard. Admittedly, an ambitious plan that is responsive to the on-the-ground concerns before they metastasized into a food security crisis would have even been better.

Contrary to Liberal beliefs, food does not just magically appear on the shelves of our grocery stores. Farmers, ranchers and producers work tirelessly to ensure that Canadians have delicious, grown and raised-in-Canada food available to them on their grocery store shelves. When the pandemic initially hit, Canadians were caught by surprise and the instinct to stock up kicked in. For some reason, toilet paper was the first product on everyone's list, but the reassurance that farmers and food producers were up to the task of feeding Canadians and that we were not in danger of running out of food was not front of mind.

It did not take long, however, for most to recognize how fragile our way of life is. I am grateful that Canadians do not have to worry about food availability on top of everything else, but it is the government's responsibility to be aware of and to act proactively to ensure that Canada's food security remains unthreatened in the years to come.

The Address

When it comes to actions, the Liberal government's track record of responding to the on-the-ground realities have a lot to be desired. There is anxiety from across the agricultural community about competitiveness, market access, reduced production and processing capacity, just to name a few. I sincerely hope that the government's actions will finally address its accumulating concerns, because if they do not, we may no longer be able to take for granted our current level of food security.

We must ensure that our local food production remains stable in the face of uncertainty. Our domestic demand must also be able to be sustained by local production. Anything short of that would be negligent. This year, 2020, has made it abundantly clear that when times are tough, we can only truly rely on our very own made-in-Canada safety net, so why is it that the concerns and calls for action from those who feed us so often fall on the deaf ears of the government? If the government truly recognized the fragility of our food security and was serious about protecting it, we would have seen it demonstrated with actions or, at the very least, with a promising throne speech.

It is sad to say that the throne speech did not provide much evidence that there was an epiphany on the government's part. Still, I am going to remain hopeful that Canada's food security will not stay in the government's blind spot for much longer and that we will soon witness a determination to do better. I truly hope that is the case and I welcome every opportunity to work collaboratively with the minister and members across party lines to create conditions where farmers can earn a living knowing that their government will have their backs if external factors outside of their control threaten their livelihoods.

The first step, which I am hopeful is a common-ground issue that we can get the ball rolling on right away, is modernizing the business risk management programs. The diversity of the agriculture sector requires a more flexible solution than we currently have. The obstacles are different for different producers.

● (1250)

The agriculture committee completed a study on business risk management and was ready to review the report right before Parliament prorogued. The FPT ministers meeting that was scheduled for October has now been moved to November, leaving time for the agriculture committee to resume its work on this report and get it to the minister ahead of these meetings.

It is important that industry works collaboratively with all levels of government so that we can soon find long-term solutions to better manage risks and provide real stability to a sector that contributes so much to our rural communities and our economy. Likewise, I am hopeful the government will recognize the urgent need to sit down with beef and pork producers and processors and find—

The Address

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Was there a point of order?

Mr. Luc Desilets: Yes, Madam Speaker.

The French interpretation is back online, but it was offline for at least five minutes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is back online. We will not wait five minutes, but any time the interpretation cuts out, go ahead and raise a point of order so you can hear the speeches.

● (1255)

[English]

We will resume. The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex has about four minutes left.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, likewise, I am hopeful that the government will recognize the urgent need to sit down with beef and pork producers and processors to find actionable solutions to solve the processing capacity bottleneck, especially in Ontario.

Aside from the immediate reduction in food output, many farmers are worried that they will be pushed out of business if obstacles are not immediately removed. However, the message that was sent to farmers, with the pennies-on-the-dollar COVID-19 relief package, not only did not convey a sense of urgency, but proved yet again that farmers are not valued by the government.

Canada's farmers are some of the hardest working people I have ever met. They are proud people and would never ask for a hand-out, but during this pandemic they needed a hand-up. Existing programs are not enough. Neither was the so-called relief package, which was a drop in the bucket of what was required. Besides, a big chunk of that was not new money; it had already been budgeted under the existing AgriRecovery envelope prior to the pandemic. Family farms without a business account were not even able to take advantage of the Canada emergency business account loans when they needed them the most. The bottom line is the government was not there for our farmers while they were doing the incredible work of overcoming challenges to feed Canadians.

Unfortunately, the government's relationship with farmers does not stop with inaction. It is one thing to not help our farmers amid external forces of instability, but it is another thing entirely to have our government choose to inflict direct harm with destabilizing policies.

It is troubling that the government continues to add rather than remove obstacles with punitive schemes such as the carbon tax. The carbon tax is already a major cost for grain farmers. It is estimated that it will reduce their income by about 12% by 2022. There are only two options for drying grain: natural gas or propane. There are no alternatives. Whether they are from drying grain or heating barns, these costs are significantly adding up, and things will continue costing more and more, as the tax is scheduled to continue going up.

However, the ultimate impact of trying to phase out oil through these schemes, whether it punishes consumers or producers, is the

inevitable rising costs of Canadian goods. This will make it impossible for our farmers to compete against foreign producers that are not subjected to these costs.

How many farmers will have to go out of business if they are stifled from being able to compete? The availability of food on our shelves today is not an accurate picture of tomorrow's food security. It is paramount that the government recognizes the consequences of the policies that push farmers out of business, because if the can is kicked down the road, the government will only have itself to blame for a failure to act proactively to secure our food supply.

Rural Canadians do not feel represented by the government. That is because they are not. It is, however, the responsibility of the government to at least make an effort to govern on behalf of all Canadians. If the Liberals did, they would not only talk about connecting rural Canadians to high-speed broadband, as they have for the last months and years, but would actually do it. They would recognize the amount of vetting that law-abiding firearms owners go through to get their licences and what hunting and sport shooting represents to our heritage, traditions and community. Likewise, they would understand just how many hoops farmers have to jump through and what it feels like to have a government this far removed from the issues that impact their livelihoods.

I urge the government to self-reflect and consider the long-term ramifications of pushing farmers away from doing what they love to do. I sincerely hope that upon reflection we can all come to the common understanding that the neglect of our agriculture sector and of rural Canadians—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have allowed for quite a bit of time, and I have been trying to advise the member that the time was running out. I am sure she will be able to add to the questions and comments anything in her speech that she was not able to finish. I am sorry to interrupt.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kings—Hants.

● (1300)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize my hon. colleague's new parliamentary role as the critic to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and congratulate her on this.

I listened very intently to her speech, because of course agriculture is extremely important in my riding. As well, we sit on the agriculture committee together.

The Address

People who have just been watching might have thought that this government has not mentioned agriculture at all, but when I look through the Speech from the Throne, I want to correct the record. There is a lot of conversation around food security, local food infrastructure, supporting farmers with a transition to a low-carbon economy, a commitment to maintaining our supply management compensation and the mitigation efforts for those sectors. As it relates to COVID, there is nearly \$500 million of support to the agriculture sector on top of the existing business risk management supports.

I agree with the member that we need to be able to move forward on implementation and restoring the BRM the Harper government cut back in 2013. Will the member at least recognize there was a considerable amount of language for farmers and support for local food security?

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that most of the new money put out by the government was reallocated from other programs already budgeted for under every year's budget.

As for the carbon tax, I have had the opportunity to meet with farmers already from across the country and will continue meeting with farmers. I talked with a farmer from Simcoe county a couple of weeks ago, and he was kind enough to supply me with a copy of his natural gas bill. Farmers' expenses keep going up, and for the period from July 15 to July 18, his carbon charge was almost \$1,300. Then he pays a tax on a tax.

If the government claims to be listening to farmers, it is missing the point. There is no alternative energy source for grain farmers. They have to use propane or natural gas and it just keeps costing more, and it is going to cost Canadians more to put food on their tables.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, before I answer my colleague, I would like to echo other members in recognizing and thanking the workers and volunteers who were on the front lines during the pandemic. Now that the second wave is upon us, much will be asked of them.

What the Bloc Québécois wants the government to do for farmers is uphold supply management.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on calls for supply-managed farmers to get what we hope will be full and fair compensation for trade agreements.

[*English*]

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, this is just another example of how the government keeps telling farmers it is going to do something and we have not seen any actions. Dairy farmers have been promised compensation under some of the trade agreements, such as CPTPP and CETA, and have yet to see any action.

I agree with the member. The government needs to continue to live up to its words and not just keep giving us platitudes. We want to see concrete actions and help for our farmers because we need them to help our economy recover from COVID. Without farmers, we have no food on our tables.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I also want to congratulate my colleague on her appointment to her new critic role. I agree very much with her that stopping work in the committees through prorogation was very unfortunate.

I also wanted to ask her thoughts on compensation and maybe have her add to her previous answer about how important this is, and how long we have had to wait for it. It is really time for sectors to see some concrete action.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, I look forward to continuing to work with the member on the agriculture committee, and hopefully we will be able to have those meetings.

As you mentioned, we also had some emergency meetings planned prior to prorogation to hear from our friends in the supply management sector on chicken, turkey and eggs. Hopefully we will be able to continue to have those meetings, where we can ask the government why it has not paid them what was promised as compensation from previous trade agreements.

● (1305)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind the member to address all questions and comments to the Chair.

Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the leader of the government.

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 House and today is no exception.

It has been a very interesting time for all of us, no matter where we live in Canada. I thought maybe I would share some thoughts with respect to contrast. It is not meant to scare people on what would have happened if the Conservatives were in government, but rather to put things in a different perspective.

First, in the last six months we have witnessed a great deal of cooperation, of people coming together to work. We often use the words "team Canada approach". Led by the national government in Ottawa, we have seen a great sense of need to respond to the pandemic. Provincial governments, municipal governments, non-profit agencies, essential workers, a wide spectrum of people and organizations have recognized the need to work together. The only exception to that would probably be the Conservatives.

The Address

A great deal has been accomplished as a direct result. Millions of jobs have been saved and millions of people have been assisted directly. I thought it might be somewhat advantageous for us to spend some time talking about why it was so important for the government to be engaged so heavily on this file.

If we go back to the very beginning of 2020, the economy was doing quite well. Canada was very successful at excelling in a lot of things. The job numbers were fantastic. Members will recall that in our first four to four and a half years, the Liberal government created over one million jobs. We had the lowest unemployment. We were doing exceptionally well. It was not just because of the things we were doing in Ottawa, but what others were doing in all regions of the country. Some regions were finding it more difficult than others. The impact of the world price on oil did have an impact. Some things we did not necessarily have much control over. However, generally speaking, the economy and our communities were doing quite well.

When the pandemic came, it got to a point where we had to make the decision to shut things down. It was a wise decision. We listened to what the health care experts were saying. Science matters to this government. Listening matters to this government. When the decision was made, we understood that the government needed to step up and provide the types of supports Canadians would need in the coming days, weeks and months, and even beyond.

The Prime Minister has been very clear that we will be there for Canadians throughout this process. From day one, we have been. Remember, there was no such thing as a CERB program back in January. We created a program, with the support of civil servants and with an understanding of what we had been hearing, from virtually nothing. The program was so effective that well over eight million Canadians benefited from it. Canada has less than 37 million people. We can do the math.

• (1310)

It is interesting to hear the criticism coming from the Conservative Party. They are saying that we are not doing enough. There is no doubt we can always do better, and we look for ways we can do better. Depending on which Conservative MP I am listening to, the government is spending far too much money and we should not be doing the things that we are doing, but then others say that maybe we should be doing some of the things that we are doing. The only consistent message from the Conservative Party is that we, as a government, are spending too much money.

Therein lies the difference that we need to highlight. A Liberal government, and this Prime Minister in particular, genuinely believe that the last six months have been a time in which the government needed to step up and support families. It should not be an option, but if we listen to the Conservatives, we would think that there was an option. We believe that we need to put money into the pockets of Canadians throughout the country because of the many hardships caused directly by the pandemic. That is what CERB was all about. The CERB program was there to support Canadians when we had to support Canadians. It was the right thing to do.

Regarding the economy, obviously we are concerned about jobs. As I pointed out, in our first four years we created well over a million jobs. That is about the same number Harper created, but it took

him nine or 10 years to achieve. The wage subsidy program has literally saved tens of thousands of jobs. It has prevented many companies across Canada from going bankrupt. It has allowed companies to keep jobs in their factories and places of employment that otherwise might not have been maintained. It not only protected jobs, but provided the money that was necessary for people to pay their mortgages, buy groceries, get gas for their vehicles or have day-in and day-out necessary expenditures and be able to continue on.

Those two programs affected a wide spectrum of Canadians, directly or indirectly. When we look at the throne speech, it shows us why it is laughable that the Conservatives or others would try to imply that the throne speech does not have a plan. In the throne speech we see the extension of the wage subsidy program. We see more in terms of how the CERB program is going to be incorporated, in a different form, into the employment insurance program. Those are substantial issues. We are talking about billions of dollars, not millions.

• (1315)

Within the throne speech, which was read just the other day, there is a litany of things to provide comfort and assurances to Canadians. This government is going to continue to be there for them in a very real and tangible way. We are going to continue to fight the COVID-19 virus for however long it takes, and we are going to be there to protect our economy and jobs. If we look at the commitments made in the throne speech, we find historic amounts of money allocated for job retraining. We recognize the value of changing skill sets and the need to upgrade one's skill set as the economy has changed.

The Prime Minister made reference to many things that now stand out, both positive and negative, because of the pandemic, and there are some things we can pick up from that.

Canadians love our health care system. In the throne speech, there is a reaffirmation of the pharmacare program. I know some would say we should implement it today. It is not quite as easy as that, because we have to work with the provinces. In order to maximize the benefit of a national pharmacare program, provinces have to work with the federal government.

It is discouraging for me when I hear Conservatives say that we should just give money to the provinces and that we should not interfere in what they believe the federal government should have no interest in. I believe the Conservatives, and their cousins in the Bloc, are wrong. I believe the Bloc does a disservice to Canadians when it advocates for just handing over cash to the provinces and that the federal government should have no role. However, I understand it. The government House leader said it quite well. The Bloc wants to see the destruction of Canada.

The Address

On the other hand, I do not quite understand why the Conservatives do not believe there is a stronger role for the federal government in ensuring that Canadians are getting what they want regarding health care. We have the Canada Health Act. I encourage Conservatives to read it. They will see there is an opportunity for Ottawa to contribute to the debate. It is not just about money, as the Conservatives tend to think it is.

I hope the Conservatives will start listening to their constituents on the very important issue of health care, because I believe a majority of Conservative voters who live in Winnipeg North would disagree with their twisted approach on the delivery of health care in our country. There are Conservatives who will support me because of their stance on health care.

At the end of the day—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that someone has the floor. I am sure other members are anxious to ask their questions and make their comments, but I would ask them to hold their thoughts until it is time to do so.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I need to move on as there are a number of other points I want to make.

An issue in Winnipeg North, which I am sure is universal across the country, arose when classrooms and schools started back in September. There was a great deal of anxiety. Parents were debating whether they should send their children to school or hold them back and wait and see.

A wonderful announcement came from the government of a \$2-billion commitment to assist schools and help to get young people back to school. That went a long way to providing some comfort to constituents, teaching professionals and other stakeholders.

Similar to when we make reference to the issue of health care, the government has a responsibility to be there in that real, tangible way. One of those ways was the very positive and progressive announcement by the government of that \$2 billion to help make young people feel more comfortable in getting back into the classroom as well as to support our teachers. I suspect that is something the Conservatives would have never supported. I do not hear them talking about it.

Initiatives that have been brought forward have had a very positive impact. Ottawa has worked with the provinces in a number of areas, such as supporting children in schools, pharmacare and health care. That is one of the reasons for the \$19 billion safe restart agreement. Ottawa worked with the provinces and came up with an agreement. For example, Manitoba will almost triple the province's ability to test for COVID-19. The government will be there in a very tangible way to support our health care services.

I was quite encouraged when I saw the letter from the Premier of Manitoba, acknowledging how Manitoba would benefit from the restart agreement between Ottawa and the province. That type of co-operation makes a big difference. We have witnessed that virtually from day one.

We have had issues as MPs when we have been encouraged to provide that feedback directly. I have no doubt that MPs on all sides of the House listen to their constituents and ultimately bring forward, in the best way they can, their thoughts to the authorities, whether through a department or minister.

I was appreciative of the system we set up to allow Liberal members of Parliament the opportunity to raise issues every day for a period of time. We felt comfortable knowing that if we raised these issues in caucus, it would filter through to the ministries or the PMO. We were being listened to.

• (1320)

I suspect each party had its own mechanism to allow for that direct input. I appreciated the fact that the Prime Minister made it such a high priority for all members of Parliament, of whatever political party, to bring the ideas and thoughts of their constituents to the attention of the PMO, the ministries or whatever other mechanism an individual MP felt most comfortable with. I like to think that it had a profoundly positive impact on a number of programs that we brought in.

I can see that my time has run out. I will pick up on a couple of those points during questions and answers.

• (1325)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, has the member opposite ever considered the role that his party has?

He said to look at the Bloc and look at the Conservatives who are concerned about invading provincial jurisdiction. When I came to Ottawa in 2011, the Bloc was five members. Why? It was because we had a government that actually dealt with Quebec honourably, gave respect to its areas of jurisdiction and worked with it co-operatively, while this government has created unity issues right across this great country. We see a resurgence of the Bloc. We see a resurgence of western separatism. I do not even want to get into the national debate on whether B.C.'s wine is better than Ontario's. That might just break this country.

However, the member should acknowledge his role and his party's role in the rise of concerns about an invasion by Ottawa into areas of provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I really believe that, as a nation, we are very much unified. All one needs to do is to take a look at the participation and the amount of co-operation we have witnessed over the last six months.

I can appreciate that the Conservatives, for their own political purposes, want to try to cause more division within our great nation, and that is completely up to them. They have to take responsibility for that. Yes, they did lose a lot of seats in Quebec to the Bloc, and I recognize that.

The Address

At the end of the day, I believe that Canada is very much a unified country. We see that in terms of the take-up of interest in working with the national government, not only to fight the pandemic but also in terms of many of the other initiatives we have seen prior to the pandemic, whether it be reforms to the CPP, the Canada health accord or other initiatives that required co-operation from the different regions of our country.

All in all, there is a high sense of co-operation in the land. There may be a bit of division that is promoted—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There has to be time for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I just found out that I want to destroy Canada. I thought that I wanted to build Quebec, but I am being told that I want to destroy Canada.

I would just like to inform my colleague of a basic principle. I used to teach political science, and the first thing I told my students was not to fall into what is known as begging the question or a circular argument.

The best example is a famous ad for Hygrade hot dogs that was around when I was a kid. The slogan was, “More people eat them because they're fresher; they're fresher because more people eat them”. That is a circular argument.

Earlier, during question period, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said that we were picking a fight. That was a circular argument. If we say the opposite of what the Liberal Party says, then we are picking a fight. We cannot say that in the 1990s, the Liberal Party's cuts to health transfers were disastrous and undermined our health care system. We cannot say that, because if we do, then we are picking a fight.

Similarly, Mr. Legault, who found the throne speech unacceptable and said it does not respect provincial jurisdictions, is also picking a fight. The only valid point of view is that of the Liberal government.

Does my colleague think that Mr. Legault is picking a fight? Does Mr. Legault, the Premier of Quebec, want to destroy Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am someone who has grown up in the Prairies and I have always had a very strong passion for Canada. My heritage a few generations ago, probably on both sides of my house, originates from the province of Quebec. I have always had a strong love for the province of Quebec, as many of my friends do. We see Canada as a wonderful nation that is made up of 10 provinces and three territories and of course our indigenous communities. These are things we treasure very much. The Bloc wants to divide and take Quebec outside of Canada. I think that would be a very sad thing for all Canadians, no matter what region of the country they live in.

If the member were to come to Winnipeg North and walk some streets, he would witness some constituents whom I represent who

believe in a national health care system, who want to see a federal government play some—

● (1330)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I have to interrupt because we should be able to get in at least five questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, it comes as a surprise to no member of the House that I am no fan of the Liberal government, and never is the Liberal vision for Canada less compelling than when articulated by the member for Winnipeg North. The Speech from the Throne came a close second. Indeed, for a while I thought maybe it had been authored by the member for Winnipeg North, because it was just a lazy rehashing of what we had heard so many times from Liberals before.

Meanwhile, this was being developed, we presume, over the course of time when the NDP was calling for Parliament to come and meet to deal with the replacement for CERB. We were told that was not possible because a new grand vision was nigh from the Liberals in the Speech from the Throne.

What exactly is it that was new in the Speech from the Throne that justified shutting down Parliament when we had a deadline for the end of CERB? Could he please point to something worthwhile that was worth suspending the work of Parliament just to come back and have Liberal campaign commitments from as far back as 1993 repeated to us as if they were news?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, speechless I will never be.

At the end of the day, we have to put things in the perspective of what has taken place over the last six months. Whether or not members want to recognize it, COVID-19 has had a very profound impact on our society, where, literally, tens of billions of additional dollars were required. I believe that turning the page and coming forward with a new throne speech that is going to help set our tracks for the next couple of years is a positive thing and something that was well worthwhile. If people want to take the time to read the throne speech, I am sure they will agree with what I am saying.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I certainly enjoyed the question from the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, given that he talked about how the former Conservative government had such a great relationship with Quebecers. It certainly did not pan out that way in the election that followed. We would not have known that there was such a great relationship there.

The parliamentary secretary has been here longer than I have and he has more experience than I do in the House. My sense is that it would not matter what was put on the floor. No matter what, the Conservatives were going to be against the throne speech no matter what had been put in there. Can he think of a scenario in which the Conservatives would not be overly partisan and political about this, and actually vote in favour of a throne speech from a Liberal government?

The Address

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I must say to my friend and colleague that, to be completely honest, I would be absolutely shocked if the Conservatives were to vote in favour of the throne speech. They have been consistent from virtually day one. I have used the term “character assassination”. The Conservatives only have one issue, and that is to try to make the Prime Minister look as if he is some sort of evil person. Nothing could be further from the truth, but that has been their sole purpose virtually from the day they lost the last election.

I think they are frustrated because at the end of the day what we want to do is to spend less time on that sort of an issue and focus all of our time on serving Canadians and fighting COVID-19.

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Madam Speaker, I note that the speaker from the government side was on a full 20-minute rant in support of the throne speech. Is that because there are no other Liberals on his side of the House who can stomach the speech or is it because of his ego?

• (1335)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind members to be careful with the language being used. They should not be attacking individuals.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is okay. Having been a parliamentarian for 30 years, I have a fairly thick skin. As they say, sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.

At the end of the day, I am sure many members of the House would like to address the throne speech. Many other Liberals would like to, so if any Conservatives would like to forfeit their spot, we would be more than happy to fill it.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, for the last six months we have faced a global challenge that for many of us is the worst we have ever seen in our lifetime. However, one thing we can say with a lot of confidence is that Canadians can be proud of how they have come together. We have seen examples, in communities in every part of Canada, of Canadians coming together to take care of their neighbours. We have shown that in hard times we take care of each other.

The pandemic has also shown us that when government does not act, there is a cost to neglect and a cost to inaction. Many of the lives lost in this pandemic were in long-term care homes. It is shameful to think that our seniors, elders and loved ones, the people who helped build this country and sacrificed so much, could not retire and live their lives in dignity and respect. They bore the brunt of COVID-19, and that has scarred our country.

We all deserve to know that our parents and grandparents are safe. We were shocked and appalled to see that the military had to be called in to care for our seniors in long-term care homes.

[*Translation*]

The army had to be sent in to our long-term care homes. Conditions were so bad that soldiers felt obligated to write a report on the many deficiencies.

[*English*]

There is no question that there needs to be more funding for long-term care homes to care for our seniors. However, there is a problem. If that funding goes to for-profit, long-term care homes, then it will end up in the pockets of shareholders and it will not end up caring for seniors.

While the Bloc talks about transfers as the only path forward, if profit remains in long-term care and the federal government transfers money into long-term care, would it not be irresponsible for that money to end up in shareholders' pockets, instead of caring for seniors? I will say it again: Profit has no place in our health care system and it has absolutely no place in caring for our seniors.

What COVID-19, this pandemic, has exposed is that our health care system has some serious gaps. It makes no sense that the quality of care received in this country depends on whether one has a job with benefits in order to be able to afford dental care or medication coverage. That makes no sense.

We know the Liberals now talk in the throne speech about accelerating pharmacare. They are not going to break any speed records. The Liberals have been promising pharmacare for decades. Simply putting in the word “accelerate” gives no confidence to the families that cannot find the means to buy the medication they need to stay healthy. This gives them no confidence. This gives them no sense of relief. People need to be able to get their medication without a credit card, but with their health card. People need to get it with their health cards and that is what we believe in.

Over the last several months, we have seen millions of Canadians lose their jobs. We have seen millions of Canadians who cannot go back to work. Through no fault of their own, COVID-19 has stopped their ability to work because there are no jobs left in many areas, such as tourism, hospitality and the service sector.

The Conservatives want these folks to just have nothing, no supports or help, when it is clear they cannot get back to work. The Conservatives would rather these folks just fend for themselves and pull themselves up by their bootstraps. When one does not have a job to go back to, that is not good enough. It will not cut it. When someone is sitting at a kitchen table and has no job to go back to, that is when we take care of each other. Maybe the Conservatives do not believe that, but the New Democrats believe Canadians need to take care of each other when we are down and out, and that is what we are going to continue to fight for.

The Address

● (1340)

I want to remind folks that at the beginning of this pandemic, we were in this chamber and we knew that the pandemic was going to hit. We stood up time and again in this chamber and asked the Liberal government, and the Prime Minister directly, what the plan was to help workers who would lose their jobs. The response at the time was that they would waive some of the week's requirements so that people could apply for EI faster. I came back and said this was not good enough. The New Democrats said that EI only covers 40% of workers; the vast majority will be left behind. We fought and pushed, and we finally got the Liberals to agree to a program that helps all Canadians.

However, then they wanted to exclude people. We fought for a CERB that is universal. We got the CERB, but then they wanted to exclude people. The Liberal government's approach was designing a plan that excludes the people who do not need help, instead of trying to design a plan that does not leave the people who need help the most behind. That is the difference. Our focus has always been on getting help to people who need it and getting it to them as quickly as possible.

New Democrats fought and made a difference for Canadians throughout this pandemic. When the Prime Minister left out students, we fought for them and got them help. When the Prime Minister and the Liberal government forgot about and left out seniors, we fought for seniors and got them help. When the Liberal government left out people living with disabilities, we fought for them. When the government completely forgot and refused to provide paid sick leave, we fought for it and we are very hopeful we are close to achieving that now. Every time the Liberal government threatened to cut help to people, we fought back and told them not to cut help to people.

Even recently, the government was going to cut the help that families receive, families who cannot go back to work, by \$400. Instead of the \$2,000 that people are just getting by on, the Liberals were going to cut it to \$1,600. We fought back and were able to maintain the \$2,000. We fought for a wage subsidy that would ensure that workers would be able to stay at their jobs.

I want Canadians to know that we will keep fighting for them every step of the way.

[*Translation*]

The NDP has been fighting to help everyone in need. When the Prime Minister failed students, seniors, people with disabilities and workers, we fought for them. We fought for a wage subsidy so that people could keep their jobs and businesses could stay open. Every time he threatened to cut off the assistance people needed, we fought back.

[*English*]

We are now seeing numbers increasing. We are up against a second wave of the pandemic, and a lot of people are worried about potential shutdowns. If, in order to keep us safe, shutdowns happen again, it could mean more job losses. In the context of a second wave and the fear of a potential lockdown, people need to know that there will be help for them when and if they cannot work. Despite knowing this, and despite the government having shut down

Parliament for almost two months, we still do not have a clear plan in place to make sure that we have a permanent safety net to support people when they need help.

Our employment insurance should have always been designed in a way that it covered all workers. That is what we are going to continue to fight for. This is not just temporary. We need an employment insurance program. We need safety nets to help all Canadians at any time they need help.

The Conservatives and others believe that to help people get back to work we have to make them desperate to go back to work. People want to work. People find dignity in work. If we make it safe to return and give people paid sick leave so they know they can take the time off they need to get well instead of going to work sick, people will work.

● (1345)

One of the best ways we can create jobs is to make investments that will help build a more sustainable economy, help create local jobs and help to fight the climate crisis. That is a New Democratic vision of how we can invest in an economy that works for everyone.

One of the most important things we can do with respect to investments, which I will continue to ask the Liberal government to do, is to invest in housing. We know this is a massive crisis in the country. Canadians cannot find a place to live. People could not find a place to live before the pandemic and now during the pandemic, this crisis has only become worse. We need to build housing.

The Liberals continue to make announcements about building housing, but the announcements do not make people better off. They do not give people a roof over their head. We need to see the dollars flowing for affordable housing. We know that if we build affordable housing that has a low carbon footprint, we not only help create jobs locally and ensure people have a place to call home, but it also helps fight the climate crisis.

Retrofitting homes is something we have campaigned on before, something we have long called for, and this could be a way for us to have a just recovery. If we, as a country, decided to invest in retrofitting all buildings and homes, we could lower the cost of heating and cooling them, which would make life more affordable. We could create jobs locally in communities across the country. We could do our part to fight the climate crisis. That is a vision of how we could move forward.

The Address

Many of our colleagues have raised this concern when we have talked about housing. They have talked about the impacted communities across our country, people from all walks of life who cannot find housing. We have to highlight our indigenous communities in particular, urban and on reserve, and our northern communities. These are some of the hardest hit communities that have seen the least investment in housing and whose situation right now is so critical. These are people who cannot find a place to live. There is overcrowding and that means the lives of people are being impacted. It hurts their health. We have to do better.

When it comes to housing, the Liberal government and previous Conservative governments have failed indigenous people. Here is an opportunity to turn that around. Let us make the right investments now and lift people up. Let us build quality housing across our country, particularly recognizing the historic injustice faced by indigenous people. Let us build housing for indigenous people in the north, let us support leaders who have solutions for their communities. They need an ally and partner. Let Ottawa be a partner to support the building of affordable housing.

While we are dealing with this pandemic crisis, we still face a number of crises. Despite the fact that we are really focused on COVID-19, as we should be, there are still other crises surrounding us. One of the most prevalent, the most pressing is the climate crisis.

We see climate fires in B.C. They have made the air quality in the Lower Mainland, in my riding of Burnaby South and in surrounding cities in Vancouver and Surrey, so bad that it is among the worst of all major cities in the world. People were faced with the dilemma of opening windows for better ventilation or closing windows because the air coming in made it hard for people to breathe. This is COVID-19 and the climate crisis meeting each other at the same moment. While we fight COVID-19 crisis, we cannot forget the climate crisis.

What has been the Prime Minister's response to the climate crisis? He bought a pipeline. His government has not yet reduced emissions. It has not taken any concrete action to meaningfully reduce emissions nor meet any of the targets. It is meaningless to set targets just to miss them. What is the point of setting a target if no accountability is in place to ensure we actually meet those targets?

We know that for a lot of families one of the biggest concerns in this pandemic is their children. They are worried about their kids. They are worried about them being safe. If we want a recovery, if we want to be able to invest in our economy in a way that people can return to work, then we need to invest in child care. There can be no recovery without child care, particularly given the fact that COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted women.

● (1350)

People have referred to the recession and the loss of jobs as a "she-cession", and the fact that we need a focused "she-covey". It has to be a recovery that acknowledges the gendered impact of COVID-19, and that means investing massively in child care. It does not mean another empty promise.

Those who were kids the last time the Liberals promised child care have now grown up and are having kids of their own, and there

is still no child care. There have been consecutive Liberal governments, majority Liberal governments, that have had the opportunity to do this time and time again. To show members the cynicism of the Liberals, they will cry out and say that they had one chance to make it, and try and blame it on someone else, despite the countless majorities that they have had. Despite the fact that they just recently had a majority government, they will try to blame others. It is the height of Liberal cynicism.

The reality is that people do not want to hear this government blaming others. If the Liberals are in power, it is their responsibility to get it done. Families want to know that they can count on affordable, quality child care that is universally accessible across the country. That is what we need.

[*Translation*]

Quebec has felt the impact of the Liberal and Conservative cuts to health transfers. During this pandemic, we saw how these cuts created a long-term care system in which many private facilities are cutting corners to make a profit. Hundreds of seniors have died as a result.

Women have borne the brunt of this pandemic. Desperate people are struggling to make ends meet while the rich get richer. Small businesses are shutting down while the Amazons and Facebooks of the world are making record profits. This needs to change, and it needs to change now.

Now is not the time for jurisdictional squabbling. It is time to work together to fix these problems once and for all. While people are dying, the Bloc Québécois is going on about petty squabbles and choosing not to work together to solve problems.

If the Prime Minister's Liberals are willing to stop putting their friends and the ultra-rich first, we are willing to work with them to rebuild a better, fully public health care system in which the government pays its fair share and Quebecers have access to fully public pharmacare; to create a society in which safe, affordable housing is available to all; to create a future in which young people have employment and career prospects that are just as bright as their parents had; and to have a federal government that tackles the climate crisis with a will to win, instead of buying pipelines and subsidizing big oil.

That is the NDP's fairer and more egalitarian vision.

*The Address**[English]*

I will wrap up by saying that we have a lot of priorities in front of us, a lot of problems in front of us, but one of the things I want to make clear is that, in the recovery and rebuild, once we get past this pandemic and past the second wave, it cannot be working-class families, small businesses and everyday people who pay the price of the recovery. It has to be the wealthiest, those who have profited off of this pandemic, those at the very top, who pay for the recovery. That is what New Democrats are going to fight for.

The Liberals are afraid to say the words. The throne speech says the Liberals will “tax extreme wealth inequality”. I do not know how one taxes inequality, but I certainly know that we can tax wealth. New Democrats are committed to making sure that the wealthiest pay their share, that there is a wealth tax, that we ask those who have fortunes of over \$20 million to pay their fair share, that we end offshore tax havens, and that we make sure the recovery is paid for by those who have profited and those who have the means to do so. That is what New Democrats believe in.

● (1355)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the leader of the New Democratic Party for his intervention today, and, more importantly, for how the New Democrats have been interested in making lives better for Canadians all along the way. It was indeed throughout this process that reiterations of a number of different programs were changed on the fly. The CERB, for example, was a program that at any other time probably would have taken 12 months to 18 months to create given the complexity of it, yet it was created in less than seven days. A lot of that came from all members of the House.

In light of the member's speech, I would like to reference a quote. It is from a U.S. politician, but I think it is extremely germane to this discussion. Harry Truman once said, “It's amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit.” In this regard, and I see my Conservative colleagues are in agreement with that, I want to thank the New Democrats for the work they have done in working with the government to make sure the CERB program and all programs were the best they could be for all Canadians.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I acknowledge that together we have achieved a lot, but I have to point out that it was not as a result of a collaborative approach. We had to fight every step of the way. While we were able to fight and achieve some victories for people, it did take a fight.

I acknowledge that after fighting and forcing the government, the government did support us in bringing in a more compassionate response to COVID-19. However, it did take a fight, and we are going to continue that fight because Canadians deserve that. They deserve someone on their side.

I want to thank people for supporting the New Democrats so that we can be here for them, fight for them and focus on them every step of this pandemic.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I echo the hon. member's concerns about the lack of targets established for climate change in the Speech from the Throne. We

need definitive targets. We need to know that we are going to meet our international commitments under the Paris accord to ensure a livable future for our children and grandchildren.

Would the hon. member support a ban on gas fracking in Canada? It is one of the most destructive practices for destroying our climate. It releases methane emissions into the atmosphere, which are 85 times more potent than CO₂.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, we know the climate crisis is one of the major crises of our generation, and we can look to immediate impacts. We see that families and young people are worried; they are facing climate anxiety. They see the impacts all around us. We also know it has impacted our way of life, from people who rely on the oceans and the rivers for their sustenance to farmers. They are feeling the impacts. Everyday families are feeling the impacts.

We know we have to do everything possible so we can look young people in their eyes and say that we were there for them and we fought for them. That means making massive and serious commitments to reducing emissions.

That is why we laid out a vision to do that. We cannot set targets unless there is some accountability. We pushed for some accountability so that young people know we are there for them. That means making sure we make the right investments in a future where we reduce our emissions and create jobs that help us fight the climate crisis. We can move forward, but we need to have the commitment to do so.

● (1400)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, in his speech, the hon. member outlined the struggles Canadians are facing. I do not think any community is facing greater struggles than what we are facing in Hamilton. We have some of the highest levels of child poverty and some of the highest concentrations of people struggling through disabilities, yet at every step along the way the government has continued to leave out the most vulnerable.

We have also seen beauty. We have seen beauty in communities coming together to support one another through mutual aid, the Disability Justice Network and caremongering. All of these groups are fighting to ensure that their neighbours, friends and families do not get left behind.

In talking about a just recovery, how would the hon. member suggest to the rest of Canada that we take care of all Canadians regardless of their ability to work and contribute in this economy?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge the member for Hamilton Centre for his work in organizing with the community to fight for the folks who need help the most.

The Address

The help that people need is multi-faceted. People need help in all areas of life. We need to make sure we invest in housing, so that housing is affordable. We need to make sure that health care is there for people, so that people's access to dental care or medication coverage doesn't depend on their job or their benefits. We need to make sure there are income supports going directly to people, so that no one has to worry about how they are going to put food on the table.

We need to make sure we create opportunities for people to work with dignity. We need to re-imagine an economy that is actually centred around people, that creates jobs and opportunities based on people, and that creates opportunities across this country. Then we need supports around people, so they do not have to depend on a benefit at a job to get the health care they need.

That is the vision we have for the future of Canada, where we have a health care system and a social safety net that is there for everyone.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I remember the last time I was in this House, the NDP had a chance with the Kelowna accord for indigenous people, the Kyoto accord for the environment, and the landmark child care agreements that Ken Dryden brought forward with all 10 provinces and the territories. At that time, the NDP chose to work with the Conservatives and we lost all three.

Now is another opportunity to work with the Liberal government. Is the leader of the NDP willing to support this throne speech to help those individuals, the million people who lost their jobs, with the base subsidy and all the help we are giving to small and medium-sized business owners to restore jobs? Is the NDP working with the Liberals, or is the NDP working with the Conservatives to bring the government down?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I want to ask this of the people of Surrey. They have a Liberal government that has been a majority so many times. The Liberals promised them child care. Have they received universal child care? Do the people of Surrey, who have been given promises again and again by the Liberal government, have the ability to afford their medication?

The Liberal government has promised them so many things, and they have broken those commitments time and again. Is their life better off when it comes to accessing medication, getting child care and affordable housing? Is their life better when it comes to those three things? They are probably going to answer no. That is because the Liberals will say whatever it takes to get elected. In Surrey, the Liberals will say whatever it takes to get elected, but they will not deliver for them and their families. The only reason that their families have received help in this pandemic is because we have fought for them, and we will continue to fight for them.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a simple question for the hon. member. I think I know what his answer will be.

Did the member hear anything in the Speech from the Throne that would rationalize the government choosing to prorogue Parliament for the last six weeks? Was there anything new?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, with great reluctance and a lot of trepidation, I have to agree with the member. There is nothing that justifies the government shutting down Parliament for a throne speech. There was nothing in that throne speech that merited the Liberals shutting down Parliament.

As our member from Manitoba pointed out earlier, there is no reason why the Liberals would have done that and timed the throne speech so that it would fall just days before CERB ends and have those families who have no other way to work and no other way to go back to a job, again at the 11th hour, wondering when they would know if there is help on the way. To put families through that again was cruel and completely unnecessary.

For the member who raised the question, it made no sense in that context for the Liberals to have shut down Parliament, giving up the day that we had in August to try to find a solution for families, rather than waiting until two days before their cut-off was going to happen. Absolutely, there was no reason for this throne speech.

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Laurent.

As we safely restart our economy in the midst of a global health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to transform Canadian society. Since a vaccine is probably still a few months away, the fight against this virus is far from over, and we simply cannot afford to lose any ground. The Speech from the Throne clearly stated that the federal government's number one job is to keep Canadians healthy while building a more resilient economy. Those two priorities go hand in hand.

[*English*]

As the Speech from the Throne indicated, our government's first priority will always be the health and well-being of Canadians. We must crush COVID and breathe life back into the health of our economy.

Our government continues to focus on limiting the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis by maximizing our chances of defeating the virus and to do this, we need Canadians to be ever more disciplined, to be even more respectful of public health guidelines. We all have a role and we are all key players in the team Canada approach.

The Address

We need our government to keep doing what we are doing: supporting Canadian research and biomanufacturing, working closely with researchers and scientists to better understand the COVID-19 virus, investing in the development of several promising vaccine candidates and ensuring that we can manufacture and distribute enough vaccine to as many Canadians as possible, as quickly as possible. This is what we have been doing and that is a key focus of the Speech from the Throne. We have signed agreements in principle with so many leaders in vaccine development, following the recommendations from the non-partisan COVID-19 vaccine task force.

The late John Turner once said that life is like a trust and everyone has a fiduciary obligation to give back what one has received from it. Our government knows that now is the time to give back to Canadians, to give back to Canadians particularly who are suffering. It is our fiduciary obligation to secure access to safe vaccines for Canadians, vaccines that will be subjected to rigorous Health Canada assessment and approval processes. We are fulfilling this fiduciary obligation to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister also announced funding for the creation of a new biomanufacturing facility at the Human Health Therapeutics Research Centre in Montreal. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, I am delighted that this will guarantee our country's ability to produce enough supplies of vaccine for Canadians who need them, such as front-line workers, those working in long-term care and the most vulnerable.

A COVID-19 vaccine is vital if we are to put an end to this pandemic, fully restart our economy and build our resilience. We will move forward by adopting a sustainable approach to our economic recovery. We will work tirelessly to achieve our goals.

Many Canadians have gone back to work, but others are struggling and do not know whether they will keep their jobs if the crisis continues. We understand these fears and we are determined to help Canadians keep their jobs while addressing the many inequalities faced every day by people of colour, indigenous populations and other vulnerable groups.

• (1410)

[*English*]

This is exactly why the Speech from the Throne makes clear our intention to extend the Canada wage subsidy until the summer of 2021 and to reform the employment insurance system to protect all Canadians. We must, we are and we will continue to support all Canadians through this dual health and economic crisis. This is precisely what the Speech from the Throne states.

We must govern with a laser-like focus on the present every day for Canadians, but we also owe it to present and future generations, especially to our children, to the youngest generation, to govern through COVID-19 and rebuild with a view to the reality of climate change. Our government's Speech from the Throne does just that.

We will not fall victim to what some have called the tragedy of the horizon by losing sight of that other global crisis: climate change. We can, and will, govern with both eyes focused simultane-

ously on the present COVID-19 crisis and on building back a cleaner, more competitive and inclusive Canadian economy. As the Prime Minister recently commented, just because we are in a health crisis does not mean we can neglect an environmental crisis: a climate crisis for which we all know there is no vaccine.

Canadians are looking to our government to build back in a way that considers human and economic health in light of the impacts of climate change. As the Speech from the Throne clearly indicates, we are doing just that. We are building on important measures to cut greenhouse gas emissions, maximize efficiency and energy conservation, and we are driving the transition to a clean economy, offering job opportunities for Canadian workers and businesses in every region and every industry. For five years, while public debate was consumed with polarized, partisan rhetoric on carbon prices and pipelines, our government implemented many low-carbon industrial policy shifts and ramped up clean technology investments by 50% at Sustainable Development Technology Canada. It is one of our government's most positive climate action stories that no one seems to have heard about. From phasing out coal-fired electricity and moving toward banning single-use plastics to preparing national building code reforms and offering a \$5,000 electric vehicle rebate, more changes are on the way to deliver a path to net zero emissions by 2050.

Of course we need to do more, and we will. We will continue to invest historic amounts in both basic and applied scientific research, including COVID and climate science, within the federal government and post-secondary institutions. As the Speech from the Throne clearly commits, in the upcoming parliamentary session we will deliver on our commitments to enact climate legislation with binding five-year targets to meet and exceed our Paris targets for 2030. We will also legislate Canada's goal of net zero emissions by 2050. This is climate action. We will also table legislation to tighten federal regulation of toxic substances.

I look forward to the right to a healthy environment being enshrined in Canadian law once and for all. We will keep putting a price on pollution while putting that money right back in the pockets of Canadians. It cannot be free to pollute. The government will ban single-use plastics, as previously mentioned, and we need to make sure we have the best science behind it so the decisions to do so will not be overturned in Canadian courts. All of this will drive market opportunities and job creation in the green economy, further enabling our economic recovery.

[*Translation*]

As part of the plan we announced in the throne speech, the Government of Canada will take the following measures: It will create thousands of jobs retrofitting homes and buildings, cutting energy costs for Canadian families and businesses; invest in reducing the impact of climate-related disasters, like the floods that affected my constituents in Pontiac, to make communities more resilient; help deliver more public transit and active transit options, which will help the tourism and recreational tourism industries in the Outaouais and across Canada; make zero-emission vehicles more affordable and accessible; invest in more research infrastructure across the country; and support investments in renewable energy and next-generation clean energy and technology solutions.

Our government will ensure Canada is the most competitive jurisdiction in the world for clean technology companies.

• (1415)

[*English*]

In conclusion, the Speech from the Throne has charted a solid path forward. We will protect Canadians' health, preserve jobs and focus on the crisis of COVID here and now, while not losing focus on the climate crisis we must tackle for the future.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 2:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth with every question necessary to dispose of the amendment to the amendment before the House.

The Address

The question is on the amendment to the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment to the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I propose that the division be deferred.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Monday, September 28, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House you would find unanimous leave to call it 2:30 p.m. at this time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to see the clock at 2:30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:18 p.m.)

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