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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, December 3, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to seven petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

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UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUE IN MONTREAL

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are times when we all wish we could go back in time and change the course of history. Everyone wishes that December 6, 1989, had been just another normal day at the École Polytechnique in Montreal for the 14 brilliant young women who were violently killed and the other victims of this heinous, cowardly act that we still remember today.

On Sunday, it will be 31 years that they have been in our thoughts, 31 years since the following individuals died unjustly: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, Annie Turcotte and Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz.

Unfortunately, we cannot change the past, but we can still change the future. It is our duty to never forget the misogynistic, anti-feminist nature of this attack that shook Montreal, Quebec and the entire country. It was a blow to the very heart of our values. These women and girls, women and girls across Canada and around the world should not have to be afraid to succeed, to be ambitious or to advocate for a better future. Gender equality is non-negotiable, now and forever.

• (1005)

[*English*]

No parent should have to mourn the loss of a daughter as they did 31 years ago in Montreal. No family should have to hold each other in grief as they did in Portapique last April. The gun lobby does not like it when we use the term "assault weapon". They say it is a meaningless term. Let me say what is not meaningless: the lives of the people we have lost to these weapons.

Canadians know that there is no place in our country for weapons designed to kill the largest number of people in the shortest amount of time. They know that these weapons were not designed to hunt deer. That is why in May, we announced a ban on 1,500 models of assault-style weapons including the Ruger Mini-14 used by the killer in Montreal on December 6, 1989. It is now against the law to buy or sell these weapons in Canada.

Furthermore, we will be moving forward very soon with legislation to implement the rest of our commitments to protect Canadians from gun violence. We need to address violence no matter where it happens, in public or at home. Women, girls and people of diverse gender identities deserve to be safe and to feel safe. During the pandemic, Canadians have been asked to stay home wherever possible to protect themselves and others. It has been difficult for everyone, so imagine how much harder it has been for those who do not feel safe at home, but do not feel like they have anywhere else to go. It is a simple fact. Gender-based violence has been made worse by this pandemic. That is unacceptable.

In the past months, we have accelerated investments in shelters and transition housing as we continue to advance on a national action plan on gender-based violence. We have made important progress, but there is always more to be done. We are ready to do that hard work alongside advocates, volunteers and all those who are fighting for change.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

In May, we banned 1,500 models of assault-style weapons, including the Ruger Mini-14 used in 1989 at the Polytechnique. These weapons are tools designed to kill people, and they have no place in our society. We will soon be introducing a bill to implement the rest of our commitments on this issue.

As we work to take these firearms out of circulation, we also have to tackle the root cause of the violence. We must be vigilant. We must fight misogyny, discrimination and hate everywhere, including online, in schools, in workplaces and everywhere else in our lives. The violence and racism that indigenous women and girls experience is unacceptable, and we must put an end to it. We must find a way to provide a safe environment with equal opportunity for all.

[English]

Today, the percentage of women studying engineering in many schools all over the country is higher than ever before. That is great, but I know we can do even better. It is important that we continue to take concrete steps to encourage women and girls to pursue careers in STEM fields and it is important that we never forget why this is something to stand up for. We owe it to the victims of École Polytechnique, and we owe it to all Canadians.

[Translation]

Our commitment to equality and to keeping our communities safe must remain strong. We must continue to stand by the girls and women, the minorities, the survivors and the allies who are fighting all forms of violence.

Life is fragile. In recent years, far too many tragedies like what happened at the Polytechnique have reminded us of that. Life is fragile, so we need to make sure our values are not.

● (1010)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House on behalf of the entire Conservative Party to honour the memory of the women who were killed in the massacre at École Polytechnique in Montreal.

On December 6, 1989, a misogynistic murderer driven by deep hatred shattered the dreams of young women who had their entire lives ahead of them. Let's call a spade a spade: that day, Canada suffered a terrorist attack, a femicide, an anti-feminist killing spree. This man was a terrorist, but although he wanted to make our country pay for its commitment to gender equality, although he wanted revenge against the women's movement, although he wanted us to pay for the values we hold most dear, his heinous crime failed to achieve those goals.

The murders at Polytechnique showed our entire country how fragile our progress can be. It showed how easily our progress can be attacked. However, our country has never bowed down to terrorism. The women who were tragically killed that day live on in all the little girls who dream big and aspire to a good life. They live on in every female engineer who receives her iron ring. They live on in the women who are elected to the House of Commons. They live on in the hearts of the families who have so unfairly lost a loved one.

As we approach December 6, I rise in the House to read those women's names aloud, for they will never be forgotten: Geneviève Bergeron, Héléne Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault and Annie Turcotte. These names are forever etched in the memory of our country. They are symbols of the freedoms we cherish and, 31 years later, their names echo across the country as we remember the sacrifices, the pain and the tragedies that these women experienced in the name of equal opportunity and equal respect between men and women.

These seem like basic concepts to us today because of the brave women who fought long and hard to change our country's history. The women who died at École Polytechnique were no exception. As our country confronts a public health crisis, it is more important than ever to care for our loved ones and to be there for people living alone. During this pandemic, we must take action against another shadow crisis, the rise of violence against women. Far too many women are still experiencing intimidation and domestic violence. We must do everything we can to prevent a tragedy like École Polytechnique from ever happening again. As we remember these victims, we remember that we must never let our guard down. I remember you. Canada remembers.

● (1015)

[English]

Thirty-one years ago, 14 young women were struck down in a horrible massacre at École Polytechnique in Montreal. As we remember them today, we can tell Canadians that they live on every time a young woman receives her iron ring as an engineer; every time we cross a threshold, as we did last week with 100 women in the chamber; and every time their friends and communities remember them. They live on, and 31 years later, our resolute defence of our values that were attacked that day stands strong, as does our commitment to fight even harder for equality and opportunity, and live up to the values our country holds dear.

On sombre days like this when we remember the victims, let us recommit to ending violence toward women and those vulnerable in our society. In a pandemic, when worry and mental health are touching every corner of our country and every family within the Canadian family, let us make sure that no one is isolated, no one is forgotten and that there is zero tolerance toward violence in our society.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I too want to recognize this difficult anniversary, the Polytechnique massacre.

Routine Proceedings

Year after year, a kind of fog sets in when we think about the young women we lost in that tragedy. Those young women would perhaps be mothers today; they would be the ones now moving Quebec forward. Time always creates this fog. I therefore invite all my colleagues in the House and on Zoom to join me for a moment as we close our eyes and walk through this fog of time together. Let's close our eyes.

Now let's imagine that we are at École Polytechnique in Montreal on December 6, 1989. It is 5:05 p.m., and the day is almost over. It is already dark outside. There we are. We are walking down the hall. We go into a classroom on the second floor. There are about 60 students in the class listening to one of their own discuss mechanical engineering. The class is of course primarily made up of young men, but still, there are nine women who are also listening. It is 5:09 p.m. and a student is speaking.

Let's keep our eyes closed. Imagine a young man giving a talk about mechanical engineering. Imagine that we are students, young men and women, looking forward to the end of the presentation and the end of the day so we can go home.

Then, all of a sudden, someone enters abruptly, unannounced; we can feel a lot of stress. He goes up to the student giving the presentation and tells him to shut up. "Stop everything", he shouts. We hear him and understand that something is seriously wrong. We stop. It is not as though we have a choice.

"Guys on one side, girls on the other", he says. There is some nervous laughing, no one moves, it is a joke. Do my colleagues still have their eyes closed? Bang! A shot is fired into the floor, not in the air. It is awful. This is not a joke; something serious really is happening.

Just imagine. The women are separated from the men, and the men are told to leave; they leave, almost relieved but feeling guilty. Imagine that we are one of those men. We can feel the uneasiness, right? We also feel relieved. We tell ourselves that we have to go get help, but we no longer know what is happening in that classroom.

The man is there, in the classroom, talking to the nine young women. "You know why you're here," he says. One of the young women says, "No." Then he says, "I am fighting feminism." One of the young women speaks, and when she does, everyone senses the fear and the hope that it will all stop. She says, "Look, we're just women studying engineering. We're not necessarily feminists about to march in the streets in a tirade against men. We're just students trying to live normal lives."

It is all for naught. The man has already made up his mind, and he says, "You're women; you're going to be engineers. You're all a bunch of feminists. I hate feminists." Then he fires on them from left to right, like reading words on a page, and they fall from left to right, like reading words on a page. He leaves the classroom.

Let's keep our eyes closed. It is safer that way because he does not stop there, and if we open our eyes, we will see blood, despair and fear. More carnage ensues as he makes his way to the cafeteria on the first floor. Then he returns to the third floor and enters one last classroom.

• (1020)

Everywhere he goes, from the mechanical engineering class to the very last classroom where he will take his own life, he leaves a trail of blood, despair and fear. Thirteen people are wounded and 14 women have been murdered because of their killer's hatred for feminists. Let's close our eyes one last time and think of Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault and Annie Turcotte.

Now, let's open our eyes. We must not let the memory of the women of École Polytechnique fade over time. We need to keep their memory alive, keep them alive in our memories in some way. Yes, let's open our eyes and continue our fight against violence against women, our fight against misogyny and our fight for better gun control.

Mr. Speaker, I remember the women of École Polytechnique.

• (1025)

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, it will be 31 years since 14 women were killed at École Polytechnique because they were women. They were victims of misogyny. They were victims of men's violence against women. It is important to recognize that it was about hatred of women.

In the days after the massacre, there were many debates about why these women were killed. Even though the gunman was clear, saying that he hated feminists, many wanted to portray his actions as those of a madman. However, these killings were planned. They were calculated to terrorize women.

[*Translation*]

In the months that followed, calls to action were made to recognize another pandemic, that of male violence against women. This pandemic continues today. Throughout COVID-19, women have had to deal with an additional threat, that of domestic violence. The overcrowding of shelters and the additional strain on other resources has made it harder to get help.

[*English*]

Women are more likely to have lost their jobs and income during the pandemic, making it even harder for them to leave violence. Lack of affordable housing keeps women in dangerous situations because there are no safe options.

We know that indigenous women and girls are more likely to face violence and are more likely to be killed, yet the calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls were delivered 18 months ago today and action on those calls for justice have been too slow in coming.

Routine Proceedings

Transgender women, especially if they are racialized, also face terrible levels of violence and abuse. They are often victimized again by justice and health care systems that too often question their identity.

Women and girls with disabilities are far more at risk for violence and abuse. As many as 60% will experience violence in their lifetime. That is a staggering figure. Many will never tell anyone or reach out for help.

[*Translation*]

It was not just the families and friends of these 14 women who suffered a loss 31 years ago. We all lost women who were destined to have brilliant careers, who today would have been leaders in their field and could have taught another generation of engineers.

[*English*]

Every day, women and girls are told to protect themselves from violence. If we asked any woman, we would know. She would give a list of ways she tries to stay safe from men. Women shoulder this burden because men still have not taken up our responsibility to end it. It is not up to women to protect themselves from men by worrying about what they wear, where they walk or who they date. It is up to men to stop hurting women.

Almost 40 years ago, Margaret Mitchell, the NDP MP for Vancouver East, stood in the House of Commons to ask a question about violence against women. The response from other parties at the time was laughter and heckling. In that moment, she brought an issue that remained hidden into the spotlight. Laughter did not stop her from fighting for the help that women needed, and fear of what others might think should not stop men from fighting sexism and misogyny wherever we find it.

[*Translation*]

This weekend, as we remember that horrible night, I call on men to make a commitment to combat male violence against women. Let's take responsibility for putting an end to sexism and misogyny any time we see it happening. Let's tackle the racism and transphobia that fuel violence. Let's honour the memory of those 14 young women by building a world that is safe for everyone.

• (1030)

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I believe the member for Fredericton was seeking unanimous consent or was already on the orders of the day to respond to the Prime Minister's statement.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We need unanimous consent for the member for Fredericton to make a statement. Does the House give its consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleagues for allowing me to speak today.

The first words I spoke in the House were on December 6, 2019, in remembrance of the massacre at École Polytechnique. Today I think of the victims and the families of those lost, and indeed I think about Canada and what this day means for us as a nation.

I reflected then, as I do now, on the frame of mind of the individual who carried out the heinous act, and what could have possibly motivated a person to tear down the pillars of a community and snuff out bright lights.

Then, and now, I will say it was anti-feminism and misogyny. Violence against women and 2SLGBTQia+ peoples continues to steal from us as a society. We lose aunts, sisters, friends, teachers and students. These words we share are important, our remembrance is essential and our actions must be immediate.

Since last December, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated the realities for women at risk, particularly marginalized women including trans women, girls, femme-identified and non-binary people, racialized women and women of colour, indigenous women and immigrant women.

We see article after article about record numbers of calls to women's shelters for those fleeing violence. We see survey after survey describing the increasing severity and frequency of the violence and torment women are facing in their own homes during lockdowns. We see the oozing growth of online vitriol and hatred.

In April, we saw another terrible massacre in Nova Scotia that began with intimate-partner violence. That day 22 people lost their lives, 13 of them women. I am also haunted by Chantel Moore's story. This young indigenous woman was shot in her home, alone, by municipal police in my home province in June, without an explanation.

Two weeks ago, the final report on the implementation of the Merlo Davidson settlement agreement shocked many of us, with revelations of systemic and horrific misogyny and violence within the ranks of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The Hon. Michel Bastarache, independent assessor, describes Canada's national police force as having a toxic culture, and recommends nothing short of an independent external review to reform policing in Canada. We absolutely must undertake this work immediately.

When indigenous women disappear from their communities, their families cannot trust that their lives will be valued. As long as our policing institutions are fraught with misogyny and racism, police cannot possibly hold citizens accountable for their gender-based hate and violence.

Today we remember the women whose lives were taken on December 6, 1989, at École Polytechnique by a man who hated the women who dared to study. We must also remember Chantel Moore and those lost in Nova Scotia.

As each week passes we lose more. In 2018, there were nearly 100,000 victims of intimate-partner violence. Four out of every five were women. That year, 87 people were murdered by their intimate partners.

Amid this pandemic, we have come together in the name of health. The year 2020 has proved that when we are united with a common goal, and when we tackle a societal crisis with intensity, albeit desperation, we can move mountains. We know change is hard, but we have seen progress. Bill C-3 is a testament to moving the needle by legislating training on sexual assault for judges.

I challenge my colleagues in the House and I challenge Canadians. What will it take for us to come together and to recognize gender-based violence as the crisis it is? We need to move this mountain. May we always remember this day.

• (1035)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence.

[*Translation*]

I invite members to rise and observe a minute of silence in memory of the victims of the tragic event that happened 31 years ago at École Polytechnique in Montreal.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

* * *

[*English*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-258, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers).

He said: Madam Speaker, it is my honour to introduce a private member's bill that would protect workers in the event of a strike or lockout. I would sincerely like to thank my colleague for Edmonton Strathcona for seconding this bill.

This bill would offer workers the protection the Liberals have been promising for years, but have failed to deliver. When employers hire scab replacement workers during a strike or lockout, it is unfair to the workers and undermines their right to collective bargaining.

This bill would cover federally regulated employees, which would allow the government to implement the same kinds of provisions that already exist in provinces like Quebec and British Columbia, and show leadership at the federal level. It is time to protect Canadian workers and their right to bargain collectively.

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

* * *

BANKRUPTCY AND INSOLVENCY ACT

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-259, An Act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the

Routine Proceedings

Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985 (pension plans and group insurance programs).

He said: Madam Speaker, it is my honour to introduce a private member's bill that would protect the pensions and benefits already earned by Canadian workers and retirees. I would sincerely like to thank my colleague for Hamilton Centre for seconding this bill.

Pensions and benefits earned by workers are deferred wages, plain and simple. Anything that denies workers what they have earned should be illegal. Under current legislation, employers are using Canada's inadequate bankruptcy laws to take money meant for workers' pensions and divert them to pay off their secured creditors. This bill would stop that practice and ensure workers get what they have worked hard to earn.

The Liberals have promised for years to change the laws, but have failed to follow through. It is time for the government to stand up for Canadian workers and their families.

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

* * *

• (1040)

PETITIONS

SALMON FISHERY

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today and support petitioners from my riding. They are calling on the government to work with the Province of B.C., coastal first nations and the fish farm industry to develop a strategy to transition open-net pen salmon farms out of B.C. waters by 2025.

The following measures would be included: legislation such as my Bill C-257, which is aimed at immediately stopping the transfer of PRV-infected smolts into open-net pen fish farms; completing the transition of open-net fish farms to closed containment by 2025; dedicating funding and financing to training fish farm workers; transitioning workers out of the aquaculture industry in regions that have no land-based closed containment; and supporting remote first nations communities currently dependent on revenues from the fish farm industry.

They are calling on the government to legislate the removal of open-net fish farms from B.C. waters by 2025 to help protect wild Pacific salmon.

Business of Supply

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition this morning from petitioners who are concerned that federal dollars are being spent on the purchase and expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline, also known as the Kinder Morgan pipeline. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to halt plans to support the expansion and the spending of upward of \$12 billion on the Trans Mountain pipeline.

* * *

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 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.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—STATUS UPDATE ON COVID-19 VACCINES

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, Government Orders will be extended by 32 minutes.

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

That, given that a vaccine represents an opportunity to turn the corner of the COVID-19 pandemic and that the successful deployment of a vaccine is essential to the health, safety, and economic security of every Canadian, the House call upon the government to table, electronically, pursuant to Standing Order 32(1), by Wednesday, December 16, 2020, a status update on: (a) how each type of vaccine will be safely delivered to Canada, stored, and distributed to Canadians; (b) the date on which each vaccine type will first be deployed in Canada and the rate of vaccinations anticipated by month; (c) any intended federal guidance with respect to the deployment of the vaccine by priority group, such as front-line health workers and seniors; and (d) the plan for distribution of the vaccine to Indigenous communities, members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and veterans.

He said: Madam Speaker, I will be dividing my time with the very passionate and capable member of Parliament for Calgary Nose Hill, who has been helping make sure Canada gets a better response throughout this pandemic.

After 11 months, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Through painstaking work and collaboration, western pharmaceutical companies have managed to produce safe and effective vaccines in record time. Access to vaccines will help jump-start our economy and will ensure that main streets can finally start breathing a sigh of relief. We will round the corner of COVID-19 after a very difficult year.

● (1045)

[Translation]

Several countries can finally see a light at the end of the tunnel. Vaccines have been developed in record time, and many countries have prepared a vaccination plan.

[English]

The United States is planning to have 100 million people vaccinated by the end of February, and its entire population vaccinated by June. The United Kingdom is starting vaccinations next week. France is rolling out a national vaccine plan to vaccinate the country by June.

Canada is nowhere to be seen. Just this past week, the Prime Minister and two of his senior ministers were proud to announce vaccine deployment dates. The problem was they were each confidently talking about different dates. These mixed signals from the very top of the federal government have real-world implications, both for the rollout of the vaccine and for the well-being of Canadians.

Let me be clear. We know the end game. While our neighbours to the south will be revving up their economy again, Canadians will be told to remain in lockdown or limited economies. While restaurants in Europe spring back to life, Canadian business owners will be told to wait and get on the CERB or bust. While seniors in the United Kingdom will be free to see their grandchildren again, Canadian families will be forced to continue to see loved ones on FaceTime, Zoom or through windows.

The government has set September as a possible vaccination objective. Members should think about that. That is 10 more months of business closures or limitations, rising mental health issues, domestic violence and drug abuse. We all have learned the tragic costs of a shuttered economy. All Canadians want their lives back.

[Translation]

As entire countries come out of lockdown, Canadians will watch in bewilderment. Why are we so far behind? There will be uncertainty in Canada. Our economy will continue to suffer while our neighbours begin to rebound and, more importantly, Canadians will have to continue visiting their family members in hospital and fearing for their health. This is profoundly unfair.

[English]

This is unacceptable. Why are we so late? What happened?

Simply put, the government dithered. With everything we know about communist China, and after our intelligence officials exposed the lies we were fed about false COVID numbers, and after seeing the PPE market cornered in a concerted Chinese state-led effort, our Liberal government still decided to partner with China on developing a vaccine. This was despite the fact that China was imprisoning our citizens and attacking our exports.

In the spring, when journalists and opposition MPs challenged the Liberals on China's data, they accused us of spreading misinformation. All of our issues were factual, and all have been confirmed. It is this government's incompetence that is alarming.

As was to be expected, Chinese officials likely benefited from early Canadian advances in vaccine research, and when the time came to ship samples to Canada, China broke off relations. After months of this government putting all of our eggs in the China basket, the government was left out to dry. Even then, after the catastrophe, the government still took its time. When its joint venture with China fell apart, it was already too late to get rapid access to vaccines.

[Translation]

This government was naive and now all Canadians are paying the price. The Prime Minister insisted on working with China when we all knew that country does not have our interests at heart. As a result, we and our families will not get vaccines for 10 long months.

Without a plan for vaccines, our businesses will not have the confidence to reinvest in the economy and the border with the United States could remain closed, all because of the Liberals' incompetence.

• (1050)

[English]

Canada now finds itself delayed, behind most of our G7 and G20 countries, countries with a total population of 2.7 billion people. Will all of these people receive vaccines before Canadians do? We do not know because of the government's secrecy, lack of clarity and incompetence.

In the G20, Canada seems to be the only country not putting out a detailed plan for vaccine distribution. Without a concrete timeline for vaccines, businesses will not have the confidence to reinvest in their operations or to rehire Canadians who were laid off over the last 11 months.

Without a concrete timeline for vaccines, businesses are left out to dry. Provinces have the impossible task of establishing complex supply chains with no lead time, no details and no delivery date. The Canadian Armed Forces has been told to stand ready. As we see today, it is saying to the government that it needs details, the same details we have been asking for for months. The military should not be used as props in photo ops. They should be used for what they do well. Give them the details and let them execute them.

Simply put, Canada still has no plan for receiving, storing and distributing a vaccine, and without a plan for vaccines, there is no plan for the economy. This is why, today, the Conservative opposi-

Business of Supply

tion is putting forward a motion that Canadians deserve. We are pushing for clarity, certainty and competence on a vaccine plan.

[Translation]

Our party is moving a motion calling on this government for clarity and a plan. It is time to protect Canadians.

[English]

We ask the government to put the health and safety of Canadians first and start sharing when each type of vaccine will be safely delivered to Canada, how each vaccine will be stored and the plans for distribution. We are not just asking for this, the Canadian Armed Forces and General Vance are asking for this. The provinces are asking for this. Why is there secrecy?

Canadians also deserve to know the date on which each vaccine type will first be deployed in Canada and the rate the government expects vaccinations to be done by. How many vaccinations per month? Every other country in the G20 is releasing this information. Why is the Liberal government not releasing it?

As for a plan, provinces and health partners across this country need to know any intended federal guidance in terms of prioritization of groups, such as front-line health workers, the military and our vulnerable seniors. The Prime Minister talks about these things in press conferences, but refuses to detail a plan amidst the worst health crisis in over a century. Canadians deserve to come into Christmas knowing there is a plan to provide them with certainty. Families are struggling. They want their lives back.

The government also needs to indicate the plan for indigenous communities, many of them remote; Canadian Armed Forces families, at home and abroad; and veterans. These are three areas of exclusive federal health responsibility, and they deserve a plan too.

This motion is common sense, and it is presented in good faith. This detail is being asked for by the military, so we are asking the government to table it before Christmas. Let us show that this country will be ready. We may be later than some countries, and when it gets here, let us show them we are more ready. I hope the government can finally step up, after being late on the border, late on rapid tests, and now late with vaccine deliveries, to at least have a plan to show Canadians that 2021 will be a better year for our country.

Business of Supply

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on the one hand, I am really pleased to see that the opposition seems to believe in vaccines and seems to care about the health and safety of Canadians. Certainly on this side of the House, the health and safety of Canadians is our top priority, which is why we trust the world-class global regulators we have here at Health Canada to ensure a vaccine is safe for Canadians.

I am wondering what the Leader of the Opposition is doing when members of his own caucus are supporting conspiracy theories, suggesting that a vaccine is unsafe and, I believe, using the words “human experiment”.

• (1055)

Hon. Erin O’Toole: Madam Speaker, it should trouble Canadians that when the opposition asks some reasonable questions, whether it is in respect to spending during the WE scandal, rapid test deployment or why Canada is always behind every other country in the world, rather than answer those reasonable questions, even ministers of the Crown engage in quite frankly ridiculous smoke screen tactics. I would rather they say what date will we have the Pfizer vaccine and if we have enough freezer capacity to store that vaccine. I would rather see a plan.

A lot of Canadians have concern about the five months wasted with China. I challenge the minister, with her seat at the cabinet table, to push for better. We want real action, not political games. The minister can do better than that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, just recently, the Government of Quebec complained about the lack of information provided by Ottawa, particularly information about the possibility of getting more doses than promised for 2021. The governments of Quebec and the Canadian provinces are the ones who will be distributing the vaccine.

I would like to know if my colleague has heard the same thing from the other Canadian provinces.

Hon. Erin O’Toole: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. It is a good question.

Who will distribute the vaccine? We asked that question three months ago, and that is why we moved this motion today.

Quebeckers have the right to a plan, as do all the provinces. Canadians deserve better after 11 months with this government, which was slow to act at every stage, whether it was closing the border, emergency programs, rapid testing and, now, the vaccine.

In the middle of a pandemic, Canadians need information and certainty. Why is the vaccine deployment date a secret? The provinces and the National Assembly of Quebec deserve an answer.

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadians need certainty on how we are getting out of the COVID-19 crisis, and we have not received that certainty from the government. We have received scandal, with the WE Charity scandal. We have received political gains, obfuscation and, frankly, panic from the government.

The Leader of the Opposition has been advocating for three things. He has been advocating for better information, for rapid testing and for vaccines. Could he tell the Canadian public about his plan to deliver certainty for Canadians?

Hon. Erin O’Toole: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Calgary Nose Hill for her tireless efforts. In fact, we have heard from stakeholders. We have heard from people in the private sector, thanking us for pushing the government for a faster response. The member has been a key part of those efforts.

We are tired of Canada being late. We are a G7, leading bio-science country. Why did this Prime Minister partner with China after being told for several years that CanSino Biologics was actually a national security risk?

As the member knows, tests and vaccines are tools and so is information. Our goal with the motion today is to give Canadians the certainty of information before Christmas, so that we have a better and successful year with vaccines in 2021.

• (1100)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has ably outlined the necessity of the motion, in terms of what it means to deliver a plan for Canadians, for us to see a way out of the COVID-19 crisis.

What I want to do with my time is to talk for a minute about why it is so important to support the motion. The Leader of the Opposition has outlined the gaps in the government’s response, the panic that we have seen in the government and the need for certainty. He has done a wonderful job of that.

However, I need to explain to members of the government what is happening. There is a story that came out today, and a quote from a man named Doug Manuel, a physician epidemiologist at the Ottawa Hospital. Here in Ottawa, we are actually seeing lower numbers of COVID-19, and I give credit to public health officials and to people, but Doug Manuel says that this is because of the high number of government employees who can afford to work from home.

What I worry about is that here in Ottawa there are a lot of people making decisions and a lot of people who are scrambling around who might not feel the urgency that is being felt in other parts of this country. There are millions of Canadians right now who had stable incomes, who had businesses, who had hope 11 months ago and who do not have that hope now.

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I am not saying that there is anything wrong with public sector employees. I thank them for their work. However, the reality is that there are people suffering. When the Prime Minister comes out of his cottage and says that businesses will be better off with extended lockdowns, that is a comment from somebody who is so privileged that he cannot understand the stress that millions of Canadians have been going through this year because of the lockdowns, because of the lack of certainty and because of the flailing that we have seen from the government.

This is why the motion is in front of the House today. It is compelling the government, in good faith, to give Canadians a way out, to give them a plan, to give them certainty.

I asked Canadians, about a week ago, to send me stories of their experience. This is one stack. Hundreds and thousands of stories have poured into my office. I want to read one email.

It says, "I returned to my full-time job from maternity leave at the end of March, during a time when I had no access to consistent child care and had three children at home, two requiring online schooling. My family struggled until our child care reopened. Life has not stopped because of COVID-19, all of the challenges that families usually face have only become more difficult to juggle. In addition to raising three children and working a demanding full-time job remotely from home and navigating the never-ending, shifting messages and restrictions and reopenings and closings that came between spring and fall this year, I also got the additional hit of having to navigate a legal custody battle in a confusing virtual setting that threw all the checks and balances of the old system out the window, all of which have led to a massive increase in my stress and anxiety for my family. I can say with certainty that my health and well-being, and that of my family, have been impacted by government lockdowns."

She continues, "Here is a quick summary of how we have been affected: loss of child care, loss of income from companies making staff forced to take pay cuts due to the energy sector downturn and COVID, massive increase in anxiety related to school reopening, guidelines changing literally by the day, causing stress and anxiety for my children, loss of charter rights, freedom of association, limits placed on visitors in our own homes, loss of freedom of peaceable assembly, limits placed on gatherings, loss of freedom of mobility, loss of travel plans and cancellation of much-needed trips and meetings, increase in stress and anxiety, inability to see friends and family who need my help and are isolated due to travel restrictions, loss of ability to participate in our faith community."

This is what is actually happening. This is what is at stake here, not to mention the fact that we have seen thousands of Canadians die from COVID. We are seeing dire situations in our nursing homes. That is what is at stake here when the government cannot tell us basic information about how we are moving forward.

● (1105)

Then, at the same time, when these Canadians are writing to my office, they are seeing the United States deliver their vaccines. People are going to be getting the vaccine in New York state within hours or days. The United Kingdom has been deploying it today. Where is our plan? The current government has spent hundreds of billions of dollars, has shuttered Parliament and has abrogated our

democratic institutions, all under the guise of stopping the spread of COVID but it has not stopped the spread of COVID. It is worse than it was when we started. We cannot stay on this course. We cannot.

Person after person has written to me with medical conditions that they have not been able to get treatment for because of the lockdown. People have written to me with severe mental health issues. People are desperate. We sit in here fiddling while Rome burns. The fiscal economic statement, the quasi-budget, that the government put forward last week had no plan. It was a bunch of guesswork, saying we are going to spend our way out of a virus. We need to have a plan on things like basic public health information, rapid testing and vaccines. That is why the motion is here in front of the House today.

Why does it take the opposition party to push the government to do what is right? Frankly, I think it is an issue of competence at this point in time. We have seen flailing from the health minister on masks and closing the border. She said it does not transmit person to person but then maybe it does, and that we shut down our early warning system for the pandemic but do not worry we have the data, but we are not sure if it is three-ply or two-ply masks.

It is enough. People cannot get their kids to school. They cannot access mental health support. They are separated from their families. I sit here in a position of privilege, pushing for these things. I have not seen my kids in over six months. Do members know what that is like? Do they know what it is like to go home to an empty condo every day, knowing I cannot see my kids?

I sit in a position of privilege. I have a paycheque. I want to know these things on behalf of millions of Canadians. When can I see my mother-in-law, who has stage four breast cancer? My story is not unique. I am privileged. When the government stands up and says maybe it will be September or maybe January and that the opposition is playing games, the government is playing games. It is enough.

All we are asking for today is some basic information. When can we possibly hope to receive this vaccine? How many days after receipt is it going to be deployed into the provinces? What is the federal government doing to deploy it? The government needs to be held to account. It has failed.

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The motion today is very simple. It would compel the government to give Canadians a plan with clear direction before Christmas, given that countries around the world have already done what is in here. They have been working on this for months. This is not asking for something that is unreasonable. This is asking for something that is vital to the lives of every single Canadian, millions from coast to coast and across party lines.

The government has to get it together, and we are going to make it happen.

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can say that all members in the House share the concern, share the desire for certainty and hear from our constituents on how they are suffering every single day. When the member talks about the fall economic statement and our not having done anything, I question it, because we have sent billions of dollars in direct support to individuals and businesses to bridge them through the worst health crisis in over a century.

When it comes to vaccines, I would like to ask the hon. member if she believes in science and believes that we should allow our public servants, whom she commented on and said she supported, to do the vital work to keep Canadians safe.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, for people who are watching this today, and I know there are thousands on my live feed right now, what they just heard was an answer from a minister of the Crown. This is somebody the Prime Minister has tasked to come up with a plan to get people who are listening out of this. They did not hear anything from her on information on when that vaccine is coming out. All they heard was that there is no plan at all.

It has taken the Conservative Party to push them on the need for vaccines and rapid tests. Every step of the way, the only things the government has done were because of the actions of the people on this side of the House. The people on this side of the House are on the side of Canadians, across opposition parties: NDP, Bloc and Conservatives. This is what we see. It is political gamesmanship at a time when we need leadership, and we will not stand for it.

• (1110)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to work with my colleague on the health committee.

I would like to ask her opinion on where Canada sits in relation to other countries. We know that Brazil has released its contract with AstraZeneca, pretty much totally unredacted. We know that Australia has published a 12-page detailed plan laying out how it plans to vaccinate. The United States established November 15 as a vaccine readiness day, and it has received Pfizer vaccinations, pending FDA approval, where Canada has refused. We have seen that many countries of the world negotiated the right to produce vaccines in their countries, accelerating the receipt of vaccinations by their populations. The Prime Minister even acknowledged that last week, and Canada did not negotiate that right.

With respect to our global allies, where would the member place Canada in our response to prepare for vaccinating Canadians against COVID?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, what should encourage Canadians is the fact that opposition parties are working together to push the government for a response.

I want to take this moment in the House to put partisanship aside and thank my colleague. He has been excellent to work with on the health committee. He is pushing for the same answers, because this should not be a partisan issue. He sees it in the health committee. We have seen it every day.

The government has provided Canadians, at a time when they need stability and certainty, chaos and incompetence. If the government is so confident in its plans, then it should be able to comply with this simple motion.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

The government has already announced that priority groups such as seniors, health workers, firefighters, police officers and indigenous peoples would be the first to receive the vaccine. Dr. Tam has already said that we may not have enough doses for that many people. We already have that information.

Could the government share with us who it intends to vaccinate first? What are the member's thoughts on that?

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, the reality is that we do not know who is getting the vaccines and in what order. The government talks about some interim guidelines, but given that other countries are already deploying the vaccine, why do we not have more detail? As little as a week ago, provincial governments were decrying the lack of direction or certainty from the federal government, and provinces like Quebec should have that information.

Provinces should have a clear partner with the federal government, but what we have seen is ministers of the Crown basically guessing on national television, like vaccine distribution date bingo. That is not how we should be deploying a vaccine. That is not how we should be choosing who gets it and in what order. That is why this motion needs to pass.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise today to speak to the Government of Canada's work to ensure that Canadians have timely access to a safe and effective vaccine for COVID-19. There are now more than 200 COVID-19 candidate vaccines in various stages of development around the world, with dozens in different stages and phases of clinical trials.

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[Translation]

This week, the vaccine manufactured by Pfizer became the first to be approved in the United Kingdom. Many other manufacturers are expected to submit their final data to the regulatory bodies in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union soon.

[English]

As things stand now, we expect vaccines to become available in Canada in early 2021. After a long and very difficult year, this is welcome news and news for which we have been preparing for many months.

Canada's vaccination programs and regulatory approval systems are among the best in the world. We have well-established systems to deliver vaccines to Canadians and we have a long history of delivering vaccines for diseases like influenza, measles and polio. We will benefit from this experience as well as the infrastructure that we have built up over many decades.

Over the past several months, there has been a lot going on behind the scenes to ensure that Canada is well positioned to obtain and deliver a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine to Canadians in 2021. From the earliest days of the pandemic, we knew we had to start to lay the groundwork for success. We acted quickly to put the mechanisms in place to ensure that when a vaccine was ready, Canada would be ready. One of those mechanisms is procurement.

• (1115)

[Translation]

Based on the recommendations of the COVID-19 vaccine task force, Canada has signed agreements with seven different companies to reserve COVID-19 vaccine doses for Canadians.

We still do not know which vaccine will be most effective at preventing transmission. That is why we have pre-ordered the most promising vaccine candidates, with the possibility of increasing our order to have enough for all Canadians.

[English]

Also, the government has committed \$220 million to the COVAX Facility. I want to thank my colleague, the Minister of International Development, for that work. The COVAX Facility and its advanced market commitment is designed to guarantee rapid, fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for every country in the world to slow the pandemic.

This agreement includes the option of acquiring doses for 20% of Canadians and a commitment to invest \$220 million supplementary to provide vaccines to countries that are developing.

With these purchase agreements in place, the next step is to ensure that the new vaccines are safe and effective.

Vaccine development is highly complex and is a long process. Now in normal times it can take years to carry out extensive research needed to produce safe and effective product. However, these are not normal times and we are fighting a pandemic and human lives are hanging in the balance. The clock is ticking and scientists and researchers have leapt to the challenge. They have been

working all around the world to accelerate development of a vaccine. This includes collaborating and taking advantage of the latest innovations.

[Translation]

Health Canada is the regulatory body that reviews new vaccines to ensure that they are safe and effective and approves them. These reviews normally take place once all clinical trials are complete and the results have been released.

[English]

However, given the urgency of COVID-19, we recognize the need for flexibility early to expedite this process without compromising safety, quality and efficacy. That is why this fall I signed an interim order to import, sell and advertise drugs during COVID-19. This interim order allows us to accept rolling submissions for drugs and vaccines. This means that manufacturers can submit data as it becomes available.

Once an authorized vaccine is in use, Canada continues to monitor its safety through post-market surveillance. This system allows public health authorities to respond quickly to changing trends or unusual, adverse events. So far, Health Canada has received submissions for authorizations of vaccines for COVID-19 from four companies: AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Moderna and, most recent, Janssen.

As these submissions are carefully reviewed, we are preparing for a successful rollout and distribution of the vaccines to Canadians. This will be an ambitious and complex program.

Vaccines are typically sent directly from the manufacturer to provinces and territories. However, with certain COVID-19 vaccines a different approach is required. Due to their novel nature, they will have different sets of logistical considerations.

For example, ultra-low temperature vaccines need to be kept at very cold temperatures, up to -80°C and these will need to be delivered directly from the manufacturer to the point of use and transport will be controlled by the manufacturer. Other frozen vaccines will be transported by a federally contracted logistics service provider from the manufacturer to the point of delivery, as identified by the provinces and territories.

Of course, this requires deep collaboration with provinces and territories. The Government of Canada is working closely with all of them as well as other public health partners to ensure the process is timely, fair and well coordinated.

*Business of Supply**[Translation]*

As I mentioned earlier, we expect vaccines to become available in early 2021. Initial supplies of vaccines will be limited, and just three million Canadians will have access to them.

Since the number of vaccines will be limited in the early stages, we will have to strategically determine who will be vaccinated first.

• (1120)

[English]

In Canada, we look after the most vulnerable among us. That is why the Government of Canada is working with external advisers to identify the high-priority groups that will benefit the most from being vaccinated.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization is a standing body, an external advisory body that provides the Public Health Agency of Canada with independent, ongoing and timely medical, scientific and public health advice in response to questions from the agency relating to immunization.

On November 3, the committee released its preliminary guidance on key populations for early COVID-19 vaccination and outlined a targeted vaccination program. The committee identified several key populations including those that are at high risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19, such as the elderly and others with high-risk conditions; those who are most likely to transmit COVID-19 to those at high risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19; and workers essential to maintaining the COVID-19 response, such as health care workers and caregivers in long-term care facilities and people whose living or working conditions put them at an elevated risk of infection or where infection could have disproportionate consequences, including indigenous communities.

[Translation]

These recommendations will help provincial, territorial and federal authorities decide how to distribute the vaccine. It is also important to note that we are working actively with national indigenous organizations to determine how to distribute the vaccine properly and respectfully in indigenous communities.

[English]

Although the initial supply will be limited, I want to be clear that there will ultimately be enough vaccine for every Canadian who wishes to be vaccinated. However, as our country is geographically large, we will face some logistical challenges, such as the need for ultra-cold storage, reaching remote communities and coordinating between levels of government to name a few.

[Translation]

In the face of such challenges, no one is more effective or has more experience than the Canadian Armed Forces. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Canadian Armed Forces have been fully involved in the Government of Canada's action.

[English]

Last week, Major-General Dany Fortin was named vice president of logistics and operations at the Public Health Agency of Canada, and he is overseeing logistical planning. He joins the 27 Canadian

Armed Forces personnel who are already seconded to the agency, including logistics experts, operational planners, pharmacists, health care administrators, engineers and information technology experts. We thank the Canadian Armed Forces for their assistance and expertise.

In addition, the Public Health Agency is also taking action to prepare for the rollout of the vaccine. The stockpile has sites all across the country and has already started sharing necessary supplies with provinces and territories. This includes millions of needles, syringes, alcohol swabs as well as freezers for vaccine storage.

It is important to note that each provincial and territorial government is responsible for deciding how to deploy COVID-19 vaccines within their jurisdiction as well as who will get vaccinated first. The Government of Canada is working closely with provinces and territories, first nations, Inuit and Métis partners to help them get ready. This includes ensuring they have the necessary supplies and equipment as vaccines need to be managed safely and securely while ensuring rapid and efficient delivery.

I know Canadians are encouraged by the progress that we have made. Vaccines are on the horizon and they are almost within reach. We are about to embark on a future that is safer, healthier and, indeed, more secure for all of us.

[Translation]

In the meantime, we cannot let our guard down. We must continue our efforts and continue to practise physical distancing, wash our hands and wear a mask. That is all the more important now that the cold weather is forcing us inside and the holidays are approaching.

[English]

We need to stay vigilant as we wait for a vaccine to be ready. We need to support our seniors. We need to support our neighbours with high-risk conditions. We owe it to our health care providers and essential workers. They are counting on us to protect them. I know people have been trying really hard and we need to keep trying for the next several months.

The government is taking every step necessary to authorize safe and effective vaccines quickly and to distribute them to everyone who wants them. We will be ready. Until then, we have to stay focused and steadfast in our public health measures, because, together, we will see a brighter future, one where everyone is protected from COVID-19.

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• (1125)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, a failure to plan is a plan to fail, and time is of the essence.

The minister has clearly stated that the logistics, distribution, storage and approval of this vaccine is highly complicated. The speed and effectiveness of Canada's plan will be measured in deaths prevented and livelihoods saved.

Will the minister share with all Canadians, as quickly as possible, by next week, the national COVID vaccine distribution plan?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, we have been working with provinces and territories since May to ensure they are well situated to deliver on vaccinating Canadians. I would like to remind the member opposite that, in fact, provinces and territories are not new to this work. What is new and complicated is the distribution of these ultra-cold temperature track 1 vaccines.

We have been transparent with Canadians. Each week, we are providing a tech briefing to the media so we can get that information out to Canadians. In fact, today, at noon, there will be more information from Dr. Njoo and General Fortin. This will be an update on the work that has been happening with provinces and territories to ensure they are ready to embark on this immunization program.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the Minister of Health for her speech.

We understand that the vaccine is going to arrive in dribs and drabs and that certain target groups, such as seniors and health care workers, will be vaccinated first.

If a large number of doses of the vaccine become available as of a certain date, for example, January 15, what is the capacity of the system and how many people could be vaccinated per week or per month once things really ramp up?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his interest in the provinces' work to plan how to vaccinate Canadians. As I mentioned in my remarks, it will not be the Government of Canada vaccinating Canadians, except for the federal populations that we have responsibility for; but, it will be provinces and territories that will be doing the vaccination, and that is the plan that they are working out right now.

Of course, the federal government is there to support provinces and territories in the logistics of getting the vaccine to the deployment sites, making sure that the vaccine is stored in a way that it can retain its integrity, and making sure that the provinces and territories have the supplies that they need, like the syringes and the swabs and other medical equipment that will be necessary. That is the work that has been ongoing since May.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, given that Canada has the lawful authority to receive promising vaccines on Canadian soil pending Health Canada approval; and given that, in the United States, officials have done exactly that and the U.S. has received Pfizer vaccines even though the FDA has not yet approved it, can the minister explain why Canada has not taken

possession of promising vaccines, like the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, on Canadian soil pending Health Canada approval as the law allows? In light of the fact that it would easily speed up the delivery of vaccination, if and when those vaccines are approved, why is that?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, the member opposite is right. The interim order does allow, if possible, early placement of vaccines that have not been approved by Health Canada. Usually vaccines and any other medical product that are not approved by Health Canada are stopped from entering into Canada, but, in this case, companies can apply for an exemption to that rule and place it early.

I want to thank the Minister of Public Services and Procurement for doing the incredible yeoman's work of ensuring that we have such a diverse portfolio and such good relationships, on top of that, with the manufacturers of seven promising candidates, including Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, Janssen and all of the others that are in the queue.

What is really promising is that four of those companies have applied for regulatory approval. In fact, we were one of the first countries to receive all four applying to Canada. It is an indication of just how positive that relationship is between the minister, our government and these manufacturing companies.

• (1130)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, the travel, tourism and hospitality industry has faced economic ravage as a result of the border closures and the economic shutdown globally. Countries like the U.K. and the United States will have people getting vaccinated, and some of those people will receive a vaccine that Canada may be getting.

If somebody has been vaccinated in the U.K. or the U.S. or another country and that vaccine is approved in Canada, what will her response be at the cabinet table in encouraging people to be able to travel across the border safely and get our economy back on track, especially, in the travel, tourism and hospitality industry?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, vaccines are not 100% certain as of yet. In fact, we are talking about a potentially 95% effectiveness rate. At the border, Canadians expect us to do our absolute best to protect against importation of the virus.

That is why the study with Alberta is so important in terms of looking at importation of cases, how long a quarantine has to be and whether we can shorten the length of quarantine and combine it with tests. That evidence is gathering, not just from the Alberta study, but also the study on the west coast and in the east with McMaster University.

This is something all countries around the world are trying to figure out. I know that we are working with our international community as well, to understand the implication of vaccines and whether that might add another tool at the border to protect from importation.

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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, the minister and Prime Minister often talk about the portfolio of vaccines and why that is so important in ensuring Canadians are going to be covered when the time is right is and we are not just dependent on one vaccine.

Could the minister expand on why that is so important for us?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, the short answer is because we were not sure, especially in the early days when we were purchasing these vaccines, which ones would be successful. On top of that, we do not know if a particular vaccine is going to be indicated for use in a particular population.

Early on, we knew we would need guidance as a federal government to place our bets, if you will, on promising vaccines. That is why we struck the vaccine task force. It is composed of experts in virology, pharmaceutical companies and vaccine development, and they have ably advised us in the diversity of our portfolio, which situates Canada in a very ideal spot.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, we are talking about vaccines as if they are sort off the shelf and we have been late getting them. I then go and look at science journals and realize we still do not have a vaccine for SARS. This is complicated stuff, and certainly we would not have been able to predict one vaccine in the pipeline would need -70° refrigeration.

In response to opposition parties' demands, I certainly support we get as much information out to Canadians as fast as possible. I object to politicizing this. Is the Government of Canada still considering at all the use of the Emergencies Act, which I think would deal with the expectations of people who want to know why we are not coordinating better, why we are not moving faster? In a federation like Canada, would we move faster if the government went to the Emergencies Act as a way of moving forward?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, thanks to the member opposite for acknowledging that vaccine technology is complicated and that Canadians expect whatever we approve here in Canada, whatever we distribute here in Canada, will go through the utmost rigour in assessing its safety and its effectiveness.

I also want to thank the member opposite for acknowledging that these ultra-cold vaccines use a novel technology, so it is especially new and it is especially important we understand its safety and effectiveness.

In terms of the Emergencies Act in the context of distributing vaccines, at this point I do not think we need to use the Emergencies Act. We are having incredible collaboration with provinces and territories.

In fact, I reject the opposition's assertion that we have not been talking to the provinces and territories. Just this week, we conducted a tabletop exercise with provinces and territories to go through a dry run of what the delivery would look like and assess any kinds of complications. Provinces and territories at all levels, technical tables, medical tables and political tables, have been meeting to talk

about vaccine deployment for months and we are very thrilled we are as far along as we are.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois will give its consent and vote in favour of the motion introduced by the leader of the official opposition because we believe that accountability is key in any issue. We believe that Quebec and the provinces, which will have to manage the distribution and administration of vaccines, require more specific information. The minister cannot claim that all the necessary specific information is available, since the people responsible for these issues in Quebec have been expressing a certain amount of dismay about the lack of information on a daily basis.

The government has a strong tendency toward denial. For example, when we ask the government questions about health transfers, the Prime Minister tends to respond, with unsettling obstinacy, that it is working hand in hand with the provinces, which are certainly not saying the same thing. Some provinces, civil society, Quebec's National Assembly and Parliament, as we heard yesterday, are saying that there is a problem with the health transfers, but the Prime Minister stubbornly says that everything is fine and that he is working hand in hand with people with whom he has no constructive contact.

For example, when we mention the French language in institutions under federal jurisdiction, he stands up and says loudly and clearly how much he loves the French language, while the facts, the behaviours, the delays, and the white papers conveniently pushing any action to after a future election clearly show his obstinate refusal to take any action at all in favour of the French language.

When we ask when the vaccine will be available, we are given one or more explanations that do not always make sense. The people have the right to decide whether or not they find the answer valid. The media have the right to question the validity of the answer. The official opposition and the Bloc Québécois also have the right to ask these questions, because it is our job, and because we hear the stakeholders who will have to manage the administration of the vaccine saying that they do not have the information they need.

Before publicly improving a situation and saying that it will do better, the government has to admit something. The government has to say that it would have liked to get the vaccine at the same time as everybody else, but that it did not succeed in getting it at the same time as everybody else, and then explain why it did not succeed in getting it at the same time as everyone else. Then, it needs to say what it is going to do to get it as soon as possible after everyone else gets it first.

Business of Supply

There is something very basic about this admission, because it is not a partisan stunt. It is a process for getting out of an unprecedented health crisis that costs dozens of lives and affects thousands more every day. How can we take such an important matter lightly?

The admission is crucial. Our political issues notwithstanding, I think that the population of Quebec and Canada would not react so badly. They would say that it is unfortunate, and that the government could have done better, and then they would ask what it is going to do now. Quebeckers and Canadians would react better than they will when, in the coming days, they start seeing people in the United Kingdom get the vaccine, then people in the United States, Germany and India, while they are still watching the press briefings of the Premier of Quebec and Dr. Arruda telling them how many new cases there are, what they will not be allowed to do at Christmas and, unfortunately, how many more people have died.

The comparison will be hard to ignore, and the government will not emerge triumphant under full sail in the glory and enthusiasm of its great success. It will become obvious that it should have admitted its failure sooner.

We understand that the matter is going to be stretched out until next weekend, because then the government will not have to account for its actions in Parliament until the end of January, hoping that its faults, errors and bad deals will go unnoticed.

• (1140)

The delay is by no means trivial. In Quebec alone, we are talking about 1,000 to 1,500 new cases and several deaths a day. The government needs to admit its mistake in order to make amends and mitigate the negative effects of its false discourse.

I suppose that the government is negotiating in private with vaccine manufacturers to try to shorten the delay. It should be negotiating, but not in private. However, it said something rather astonishing: it does not want to reveal how much it paid for the vaccines it has purchased so far because that could hinder its negotiations for future purchases.

That concerns me. Why does it not want to tell us how much it paid? How could that hinder future negotiations, unless it overpaid? If it overpaid because it had no bargaining power, any future supplier will want the same amount the other company got. I will get back to this. This will have an adverse impact on the government's bargaining power.

There are things like this that we do not know about. The government could have done any number of things, not to control the result, since people all over the world were waiting, but to improve the chances that we would achieve the desired result. Since we do not know exactly what was done, we are obliged to fill in the blanks, just like the media, commentators and analysts are doing.

The government had options. One was to manufacture the vaccines here in Canada, which would have been dependent on a number of variables. We understand that it wanted to upgrade a production facility at a cost of over \$40 million. Delays have now built up, and that will not happen before next summer. We understand that another facility can be used to produce RNA vaccines, a relatively new technology, but that that will also have to wait, this time until

July. Could the government have acted sooner or managed the production facility option differently?

It could also have obtained patent licensing; in other words, it could have negotiated with the patent holders to pay a royalty to get the authorization to manufacture, replicate or copy patented technology. This principle also applies to industry and the arts. Some countries procured patent licences to produce vaccines. Canada did not. If it had, it would probably have been better able to speed up the process.

It could also have produced vaccines without a licence. Producing vaccines without a patent licence may not be entirely appropriate, but it was an option under the emergency measures adopted in March, one which lapsed at the end of September. The government did not bother to extend these measures and retain Canada's right to manufacture what it needed to protect and save lives. It could have made subsequent arrangements with the patent holders. It gave itself the right to do it once, then waived that right.

That would have been a success factor for several reasons, not the least of which was that it would have given the government some negotiating leverage. When the government negotiated with the various manufacturers, it could have told them that, if it was not happy with the agreement, it would still manufacture the vaccine. That would have been quite conceivable.

Although the government will not answer our questions, it is our duty to make these assumptions. If the government had told the various manufacturers that it was going to manufacture the vaccine no matter what, the manufacturers would undoubtedly have been more accommodating when it came to the delivery date. However, the government did not use the leverage it once gave itself, having decided to forgo that leverage in September.

It could also have synchronized its own approval process with that of the countries producing the vaccines. I understand that Canada has certain powers to ensure the safety of products used in Canada, but the Canadian process is relatively long, not to say very long or even too long.

• (1145)

In this case, in an unprecedented emergency, could the government not have decided to make an exception and to synchronize our approval with what was happening elsewhere in order to proceed at the same time as everyone else, at least in terms of authorization?

None of these measures would have provided a certain or absolute solution to the problem, but each of them would have improved the likelihood of more rapid delivery and administration of the vaccine, which is the government's fundamental responsibility.

Business of Supply

When the government talks about 400 million doses, we see that it is just a political smoke show. We understand that the number of doses we will get in the first quarter of 2021, based on current guarantees, is probably not enough to cover the base, meaning, of course, those mostly likely to die or to spread the disease. I presume that negotiations are once again under way to accelerate delivery and obtain a larger supply of vaccine.

I also understand that pharmaceutical companies in Canada are not very excited—or would not have been very excited—about the government forcing them to produce a vaccine created by a competitor. I understand that, but does that justify a delay in treating Quebecers and Canadians for a disease that is too often fatal? Probably not. However, these companies want to keep their facilities for themselves because they think they too will be able to develop a vaccine.

Is the government capitulating? I am asking the question; I do not know if it is. It is a good question, and we are here to ask questions. Did the government acquiesce to pharmaceutical companies in Quebec and Canada that did not want to make their facilities available to their competitors, even though they are in a better position than pretty much anyone else to retool their equipment? There is no way of knowing when that would have happened, but now we know it can never happen because it has not started. Did the government go along with what they wanted? Claims of having done the right thing will soon be revealed as mere pretense because people will notice that some people are being vaccinated and others, here, are not.

As with health transfers, there are also significant economic impacts. The provinces and Quebec need some flexibility to contribute to their own economic recovery. For example, the hundreds of millions of dollars in health transfers required are hundreds of millions of dollars that Quebec is using to invest in its economic recovery.

In this case, we are talking about workers. There are thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, even millions of workers employed by hotels, restaurants and the industrial sector. There are also teachers and mental health care workers. There are many factors that influence the economy directly or indirectly.

I want to remind members that every unemployed worker represents an expense for the government. Every time we make it possible for a worker to return to work, it represents tax revenue for the government. Yesterday, I called that a four-point game. You take someone out of the expense column and put them in the revenue column. That is not neutral, it is better than neutral. A delay of six, eight or twelve weeks in obtaining the vaccine will delay the return to work and the economic recovery. That is a consequence that is all the more serious when we have a government that says, “to hell with expenses”.

Of course, this is just the beginning. The post-COVID-19 mass distribution and pre-election budget will be presented in March. There is something rather irresponsible about willfully ignoring the economic issues.

• (1150)

I think the Prime Minister is in a state of denial. This obstinacy is harmful, just as it is when it comes to health transfers. Everyone is against him: the Quebec National Assembly, all the premiers across Canada, the Premier of Quebec, the Quebec finance minister and civil society in general. Polls have even shown that the public shares this point of view. However, the Prime Minister continues to say that he is working hand in hand with people who are looking at that hand and saying they want nothing to do with it.

This is pure denial and we can also see it when the topic of French comes up. I mentioned this earlier. The Prime Minister likes to talk about how much his government loves the French language. We might have believed him at first, but very little has actually been done. I much prefer to hear the Leader of the Opposition say that he has changed his mind on this issue, after having voted in the past against applying the Charter of the French Language to federally regulated businesses. I personally have no problem with that and welcome his change of heart. However, when someone scoffs at us, in a sense, when they say they love us but their actions suggest otherwise, that smacks of denial.

As for the vaccine delays, this denial is detrimental to people's health, and the Prime Minister's responses are appalling.

Again, as with health transfers, we have to keep up the pressure to prevent this from becoming a partisan spectacle of 20-second sound bites on the news. If Parliament, if the other legislative assemblies and if civil society put enough pressure on the Liberals they will realize that this will hurt them the only place that seems to matter to them: the pre-election polls.

All of us together have the power to put pressure and use good arguments to make the Prime Minister and his government realize that they have to do better and be accountable for their actions. They have to take much more decisive action and get the vaccine delivered sooner. They have to provide predictability to patients, people who fear for their life, the families of those people, those who want to return to school in person, and those who want to return to work in person. They also have to give a sense of security. They will not achieve any of these things by being in denial and sooner or later that will become clear.

I offer the government my collaboration and I am sure that everyone in Parliament will do the same. I invite the government to be transparent, clear, lucid and compassionate and vote in favour of the Conservatives' motion. Then we all might make progress together on a real strategy for getting out of this crisis.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague and his party for their support of the Conservative motion seeking to give Canadians the straight goods on the pandemic and the need to procure vaccines as soon as possible.

Business of Supply

First, I would like to know whether it was a good idea for the Liberals to put all their eggs in one basket, a Chinese communist basket, which has now left us in the lurch.

My second question has to do with vaccination delays. My colleague gave a good explanation of how people who cannot work because of a lockdown actually cost the government money. Could he share his thoughts on what impact the vaccination delays will have on public finances, which are a complete mess because of the Liberals' mismanagement?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, in answer to the first question, it is understandable for the government to consider a variety of solutions when it is facing a difficult challenge. It was not necessary to rule out a Chinese solution, but it was dangerous to give it too much weight.

The government will say that it purchased 400 million doses from seven suppliers. When it says that, I think that it is covering up something else that I would like to know more about. I do not want to make any accusations. However, did companies in Canada get special privileges in the fight against the pandemic because they wanted to win the race to develop a vaccine? If that is the case, and they do not find a vaccine soon, Canada's manufacturing and innovation capabilities will not be used to get us out of this crisis when the time comes to produce, manufacture or copy vaccines. I think that that was a grave mistake on the government's part. Diversity is important.

As for spending, I think it is understandable that it is so high. All the western countries have spent a lot of money. In most, if not all, cases, the central banks purchase government bonds, which is a way of printing money without causing damage, since it maintains the competitive balance between countries. However, that does not mean that we can spend whatever we want.

Sometimes it is a matter of symbolism. I am eager to see what the Conservatives are going to do. I gather that they intend to pay back the money they received under the Canada emergency wage subsidy. I am shocked, though, that the Liberals will not do the same, and I am offended that the Green Party and the NDP will continue to collect money that should be going to businesses.

• (1155)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, virtually from day one, the government has recognized the necessity of vaccinations. In fact, we had experts, civil servants and others engaged on the issue. Today, we have a wide spectrum of ways to provide vaccinations, which is providing a great deal of hope to Canadians.

I was here during the summertime, and I am trying to get an understanding of something. Out of the hundreds of questions I sat through during the summer inside the chamber while listening to opposition parties, I am trying to recall when they started to talk about the vaccination issue on the floor of the House.

Can the leader of the Bloc indicate when his party was first aware of this and when they started to talk about the issue of vaccinations on the floor of the House?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, I find it rather interesting that my esteemed colleague is saying that we should have been wary of them and started asking questions much earlier, because even they knew they were out to lunch.

We did not ask because asking about a vaccine in March was not an accomplishment. The whole world was talking about a vaccine. I think people on the moon were talking about a vaccine in March. It was not an accomplishment.

The other problem is that we are not asking about the 400 million doses or the seven different potential vaccines. Our question is about when. We want to know when.

How much longer will we be counting the number of people who contract COVID-19 or, even more sadly, who die because of what turn out to be some ill-advised decisions?

That is what the Conservative Party's motion is getting at.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, yesterday, the leader of the NDP called for the creation of a Crown corporation that would produce vaccines and essential medications in Canada. Of course, all Canadians were greatly disappointed to see the Prime Minister acknowledge in November that we do not have the capacity to produce vaccines in this country. That leads us to be vulnerable. Other countries produce vaccines and drugs, accelerating access to vaccines for their citizens, as opposed to Canadians.

Does my hon. colleague agree that Canada should cure this defect and ensure that we have the domestic capacity to produce life-saving vaccines and essential medication here in Canada for Canadians?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, I have nothing against the idea of ensuring that Canada and Quebec are able to manufacture vaccines right here.

The facilities exist, and the government has invested in other facilities that will increase our vaccine manufacturing capacity.

Is a Crown corporation the way to do it?

I am not a fan of big centralizing bodies. However, the pharmaceutical industry has evolved a lot in recent decades. Canada's pharmaceutical industry is hurting because it has fallen behind and now relies on the innovation of independent laboratories and academic institutions. Pharmaceutical companies then purchase the rights and manufacture them.

This is something that the government should be investing in, not taking charge itself.

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

I am a Conservative and you are a member of the Bloc Québécois, but we have one thing in common: we both live in Quebec and we both have the same problem, and that is the impact that COVID-19 is having on the Government of Quebec.

Now, I would like to know what you think about the fact that the Prime Minister often tells all of the opposition parties that we are fearmongering when we ask questions about the current government's management of the COVID-19 crisis.

What do you think?

• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask the hon. member to address his comments to the Chair.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, Quebecers know as well as anyone else that fear is a political tool that has been used against them many times. I could name two or three of those fateful dates.

The best weapon against fear is always information. If the government wisely agrees to provide clear, specific information through the media, which also has a strong sense of responsibility, fear will no longer be an argument because it will be replaced by knowledge and science.

That is the way to get through a crisis like this one.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, my eyebrows went up when the government's parliamentary secretary said we had not asked any questions about vaccination, because we spent much of the summer talking about Medicago, a company working on a vaccine that the government was not stepping up to fund.

I know my leader is a modest man, but I would like to ask him to explain what steps we took with regard to Medicago.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, I am not sure I can be that modest.

I myself met with the people at Medicago. That is one example I can give in relation to the previous question. Innovation is happening, and it is often led by the private sector, by entrepreneurs, by researchers from well-respected educational institutions who decide to get involved in research so they can bring a product to market. Medicago is a very good example of that.

Will the people at Medicago come up with a viable vaccine in time while we are making our way out of the crisis? Nobody knows. However, we do know they have been working on it, because we met with them. They told us about their process, and they eventually got funding. That deserves a lot of respect because Medicago is making a real name for itself in Quebec's pharmaceutical sector.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

I want to begin by talking about the situation that we find ourselves in right now.

[Translation]

These are obviously difficult times. Many people are worried, and we understand why. The Liberal government has totally failed in its responsibility to create a plan for this pandemic. Generally speaking, the fear we are seeing is related to the fact that successive Liberal and Conservative governments have always forced families to bear the burden by cutting the services they needed. That is the history of those two parties.

The other problem is that the Liberal and Conservative parties are too close to big business. In this case, it is clear that the Liberal government is too close to the pharmaceutical companies. The Prime Minister and the Liberals gave \$1 billion in contracts to big pharmaceutical companies and did not ensure that the vaccines needed to protect people against COVID-19 could be produced here in Canada. Canadians are having to wait even longer to get the vaccine because of the Liberals. As a result, more people are going to become ill and potentially die from COVID-19.

In the United States and the United Kingdom, vaccines will be available this week. However, in Canada, the only thing we know for sure is that we are receiving six million doses in March, which is enough for three million people. The problem is, that is not even enough to vaccinate everyone over 70. There are 4.5 million seniors in Canada over the age of 70, not to mention high-risk individuals such as health professionals, essential workers and indigenous peoples. The government must ensure that we have the capacity to make our own vaccines and essential medications for Canadians.

This pandemic has shown that we must not rely on production from other countries during emergencies. As a result of the Liberal government's lack of preparation, Canadians will have to wait even longer to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Past Conservative governments privatized labs and vaccine manufacturers, effectively preventing Canadians from having access to a vaccine and essential medications. Despite being in power for decades, Liberal governments have not restored this capacity to produce vaccines and medications here in Canada.

• (1205)

[English]

The fact is that the Liberal government has completely failed to lay out a plan. It does not have a plan to address the major question of the pandemic, which is about rolling out the vaccine. The Liberals are going to talk about the fact that they have the best access to vaccines and have some of the best plans, but they have not published their plan.

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Australia, a country very similar to Canada in resources and size, has the entire plan for its vaccine rollout on its website. The Liberals might say that they do not know which vaccine will be successful. Australia factored that in. It has included all potential scenarios. If one vaccine is successful, it has a plan; if another is successful, it has a plan. It talks about who will get it and when they will get it. That is what a government should do.

The Liberal government has completely failed to lay out a clear plan. There is no question about that. What is even worse is that the most we know about the plan the Liberal government is proposing is that the first round of vaccines, coming possibly in March, will only be enough to cover three million Canadians.

We know, based on Canada's census, there are over four and a half million Canadian seniors over the age of 70. There is certainly not enough medication to cover all of the vulnerable seniors, let alone all of the front-line workers and the indigenous communities at high risk. What is the plan? This is a simple request that the government has failed to answer.

It has failed to roll out a clear plan of when everyone will be vaccinated and who will be vaccinated. People want to know the answers to these questions. This will give hope to Canadians who are worried, who are wondering what is going to happen and what the future looks like. The fact that the government could not lay out a clear plan with clear details is a failure in leadership.

Another problem that we saw at the beginning of this pandemic was that we could not produce some of the most important essential equipment that we needed. It came to light that the protective equipment we needed to provide to our front-line workers was in short supply. We relied on a supply chain that was broken, and Canadians were not able to access protective equipment.

People were outraged that the 10th largest economy in the world did not have the ability to produce masks, gowns and sanitizers. I am very proud of the fact that Canadian companies mobilized and were able to turn that around and start producing these locally, but it is a clear failure in policy if a country is not able to produce the medical equipment it needs.

What has become even more troubling is that we do not have the capacity, as the 10th largest economy in the world, to produce our own medications or vaccines. Here is where we have to be very clear about who is to blame. There is absolutely no question that Conservative governments in the past privatized our public companies, the companies owned by us that produced vaccines in Canada. Their policies effectively eliminated all the production capacity to make vaccines in Canada. That is their responsibility. By the same token, the Liberals were in power for decades and failed to restore our capacity to manufacture and produce vaccines and medications.

Let me give a really clear example, one that should startle people. One of the prides of Canada is the fact that Connaught, owned by Canadians, was where insulin was made. The medical breakthrough on insulin was made in Canada and we owned it. We created it and owned the ability to produce it, and we produced it at an affordable rate. As an example, which is not a public or private example but strictly Canada versus the U.S., one vial of insulin, the homologue version, costs \$32 in Canada and \$300 in the U.S.: 10

times the cost. People from the States come to Canada to get medications because they are so much more affordable here. We not only discovered but made insulin in Canada, and the Conservatives privatized Connaught.

Connaught was also the key player in many vaccines that were discovered. In fact, the reason why Connaught was developed in the first place, and I am sure the irony will not be lost on members, is because a diphtheria outbreak meant that people needed a vaccine. Canada found that it was far too expensive to buy: private companies were charging too much, so it was decided to make it here in Canada. History has a habit of repeating itself. We are now faced with a pandemic, and we do not have the capacity to make the vaccine in our own country. We need to make it in our own country.

We need to be able to restore our capacity to make this here at home. We need to be able to make vaccines in Canada, so New Democrats are proposing the creation of a public Crown corporation: a company owned by us. Just as we own electricity and roads in many jurisdictions, we should own the ability to make vaccines and medications in our country. It is a question of sovereignty and the ability to protect our citizens. We are the 10th largest economy in the world and should absolutely be able to make critical, vital medications and vaccines in our own country. That is our proposition. To undo the wrongs of the Conservatives and the Liberals, we need to move forward and restore our ability to manufacture medications here in our own country.

• (1210)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with the member that we need to recognize the phenomenal efforts of the industries in Canada that really stepped up. He pointed out such things as hand sanitizers and masks, and it was truly amazing how industry in Canada turned it around and started to produce those very important products. I just wanted to mention that.

My question is more related to vaccinations. We have been focused since before June on how we are going to ensure that Canadians will be vaccinated. We need to recognize that not just the national government is in charge of the administration of that. It also involves the provinces and territories, so there needs to be a high sense of co-operation and collaboration between the national government and provinces and territories.

Can he provide his thoughts as to why that is so important?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I anticipated a question like this, and that is why I gave the example of Australia.

Business of Supply

As the hon. member knows, Australia has a very similar setup, with a national government as well as state governments. It has very similar responsibilities of co-operating together. Despite that same challenge, the Australian government has laid out a clear plan. We can Google it right now and find out exactly what is going on. The Canadian government has failed. There is no other way to put it. It has failed. We knew that vaccine delivery and production would be vital for us to get out of this pandemic. The fact that we cannot, right now, find out what that plan is, and that people clearly do not know what the plan is, what the doses are, which companies are involved, who is going to get vaccinated or when, or have answers to other basic questions, is very clearly a failure of leadership on the part of the Liberal government.

● (1215)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his leadership in addressing what is, I think, a profound failure in public policy by successive Conservative and Liberal governments.

As he pointed out, it was the Conservative government in 1986, the Mulroney government, that privatized Connaught Labs, which had performed a valuable public health service to this country by producing essential vaccines and insulin for millions of Canadians. Of course, the Liberals have had 18 years in government since then, 16 of those in majority, to reverse that policy. Instead, both governments presided over the slide in Canada's pharmaceutical production capacity.

Can he tell us in the House what the impact would be on Canadians' public health if a Crown corporation had a drug manufacturer, going forward?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I want to first thank the member for Vancouver Kingsway for the idea itself. We were having a discussion about what we could move forward on, and the member is a big part of why we are making this announcement.

This would be vital. Members can imagine the outrage that Canadians felt when we could not produce basic masks, gowns and protective equipment. Canadians feel that same outrage right now. They think about the fact that a country as wealthy and as advanced as Canada cannot make vaccines and medication for its own population and the fact that, since we do not have capacity, we are going to have to wait until other countries produce for us to receive.

The ability to make it here in Canada, and to have our own company where we can make medication and vaccines in Canada, would be life-changing. It would open up the door for us to have national universal pharmacare that is fully public. It would make it easier. It would make sure that millions of Canadians who are struggling with the cost of medication would not have to worry, and right now in this pandemic, it would have meant that we would have gotten through this more easily.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I certainly agree entirely with the thrust of the remarks from the member for Burnaby South. My colleague, the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, has spoken frequently in the House about Connaught Labs and the terrible mistake in privatizing it.

I wonder if the hon. member has any thoughts as to what we can do now to ensure that the billions of dollars of public investments in developing a COVID vaccine do not immediately convert themselves into private profits for big pharma.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, that is a very legitimate question. Much of the research that was done was publicly funded, but the outcomes are going to be private profits. That is wrong. One solution is to ensure we have a public manufacturer, but there are other ways to ensure that public research does not become privatized and that it is used for the public good.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to speak to the important motion introduced today by my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill. I think I speak for all of us in the House when I say 2020 has been an incredibly challenging year, not only, of course profoundly, from a health point of view but also from an economic point of view. It is a fair comment to say 2020 has been unprecedented, really one year in a century, when it comes to the intersection of a public health crisis with a massive economic shock.

On a personal level, there has been incredible suffering and sacrifice by Canadians in every community in our country. Over 12,000 families have lost loved ones. There has been incredible isolation, with family members being separated and kept apart: children from their aged parents, sometimes spouses from partners and sometimes grandparents from grandchildren. Seniors have been left alone, isolated, sometimes in long-term care centres separated from their closest family members, and some have died alone without the comfort of family members around them.

We have had incredible job losses, income challenges and displacement, and the economic devastation many businesses have felt across this country is something that will be felt for years to come.

However, there is hope. The global search for an effective vaccine is showing great promise. Along with a potential treatment, this is really the only way we will restore Canada to some semblance of normalcy. Hopefully that is a new normalcy that is better than the one it will replace.

Canadians across this country are awaiting access to a vaccine with excitement, anticipation and great optimism, but of course a vaccine has to be safe, effective and delivered as broadly and as swiftly as possible. To do this, not only parliamentarians but Canadians need transparency and information. In fact, the public is entitled to it. The public needs it. Besides it being a right for Canadians to have the most current, accurate information possible from their federal government, it is also critically important to allay fear and suspicion and to build trust and confidence.

The NDP has worked throughout the COVID pandemic to be a positive, constructive and evidence-based voice in Parliament and in our communities. We have one goal, and that is to help Canadians stay healthy and supported in the best way possible. Economically, the NDP has been responsible for at least a dozen improvements to support Canadians, ranging from increasing the CERB to \$2,000 a month, to extending support to part-time and seasonal workers, and increasing the wage subsidy for small businesses to 75%. There are many other ways we worked hard and productively with the government to improve those supports.

Regarding the health side of the equation and vaccines, what do we know right now about the government's response? First, we know the Liberal government has refused to make a single vaccine contract public. In fact, it voted against a motion in the House to disclose even redacted contracts.

Second, after promising Canadians in August that we would be able to manufacture vaccines in Canada, the Prime Minister admitted in November that we have no such capacity. Worse, he had to acknowledge that this meant Canadians would get vaccines later than citizens would in countries that are producing vaccines.

Third, the Liberal government failed to negotiate in a single contract, of any of the seven contracts it signed with potential vaccine manufacturers, the right to produce a vaccine in Canada.

Fourth, as of this day, December 3, we have no detailed vaccination plan that reveals how vaccinations will be administered, by whom, or who will have priority.

• (1220)

Fifth, the government failed to receive promising vaccines on Canadian soil pending Health Canada approval, as Canadian law specifically allows and as is being done in other countries, like our neighbours to the south.

Sixth, the best information that we have is that Canada has secured, at most, six million doses of vaccines by April, which is enough to vaccinate only three million Canadians or about 8% of the population of our country. As the leader of our party has pointed out, we have over four million Canadians over the age of 70, so that is not even enough to vaccinate every senior over the age of 70, who are obviously in a vulnerable position.

Seventh, to this day, we do not know when vaccines are expected to arrive, how they will be distributed, which province will get them and in what amounts.

Eighth, we have no real date for herd immunity. We have a vague assurance by our Prime Minister that he hopes to immunize 50% of the population by September, but we have absolutely no evidence or data to suggest why that date has been chosen.

I know that vaccine science is complex. I acknowledge that there are things that are not yet known. We agree that some plans must await Health Canada approval. However, let us compare how the current government performs, compared with other countries, to see what is actually possible.

In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention established a vaccine readiness date of November 15 with a

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24-hour rollout. It released a 75-page playbook detailing everything, including vaccine provider recruitment, vaccine storage and priority groups. The U.S. has received Pfizer vaccine to pre-position it, pending FDA approval. I will pause there. FDA has not approved the Pfizer vaccine, just like Health Canada has not approved the Pfizer vaccine. That did not stop the United States from receiving the Pfizer vaccine and having it stored, so that if and when it is approved it can roll it out immediately. Canada has not done that.

The U.S. aims to vaccinate every American who wants it by June 1, 2021. In fact, its plan is to vaccinate 20 million Americans in December and 30 million Americans every single month, meaning the U.S. will have vaccinated 110 million people, or one-third of their population, by the time we have done 8%. Finally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the U.S. signed agreements with major pharmacy chains like CVS and Walgreens to assist with vaccinations in long-term care centres.

I will turn to the U.K. It has already designated 1,250 local health clinics as vaccine sites, with targets for the number of vaccinations each week. The U.K.'s NHS has already started taking vaccine appointments, starting with long-term care residents, those over 80 and health and social workers. The U.K. government approved AstraZeneca, and the U.K. is receiving 800,000 doses of vaccine this week.

In Germany, the health minister has asked states to have vaccination centres ready by mid-December and had a national vaccination strategy ready by early November. In Australia, the government has a 12-page vaccination plan released and there are 30 million AstraZeneca doses being manufactured in that country. Brazil, India, Japan, Indonesia, China, Russia, Australia, Belgium and many other countries are producing vaccines in their countries. In Canada, our Prime Minister says we cannot.

What do we need? We need action and transparency. We need a detailed strategy and timeline for vaccinations. This does not need to be delayed until Health Canada's approval. It can and must be decided and released now.

Canadians deserve to know when the first doses will arrive, who will get vaccinated first, how vaccinations will be delivered and when they will be available to every Canadian. We would like the government to release at least basic details of our vaccine contracts. After all, Canadians paid for them.

Finally, we want to establish a public drug and vaccine manufacturer, a Crown corporation, to fix Canada's unacceptable vulnerability, so that never again will Canada have to wait for China or the United States to deliver essential medical equipment, supplies, medicine or vaccines to Canada.

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We support this motion. Let us get transparent information to Canadians, so that they can know what is going to happen and we can get started with the process of vaccinations as soon as possible.

● (1225)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have enjoyed working on the health committee with my colleague a great deal. Right now at committee, we are studying the mental health impacts of the COVID pandemic. I think both of us would agree that the vaccine is a more critical and timely issue, but listening to our constituents who are having issues with mental health and opioid addiction, I would like to hear the member's comments on the impact of not knowing for Canadians who want to see that there is a clear path to accessing vaccines, rapid testing and home-based testing, which this Liberal government refuses to provide to Canadians.

What impact is that having on mental health, on the opioid crisis and on Canadians who are just being left in the dark when it comes to a strategy to access vaccines?

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for Foothills for his wonderful and very intelligent discussion and contributions to the health committee in all its matters.

It is an excellent question. As I referred to in my speech, to gain public confidence and allay fears and suspicions requires transparency and information from this federal government. I must say that other than the Liberals saying that they have the best portfolio is the world and to just trust them, they have been remarkably reluctant to release basic information. Frankly, I do not understand it. These are not state secrets. Nobody is asking for detailed commercial information. What we are asking for is the basic information that is necessary for the Canadian public to have confidence that there is a way out of this crisis, and that they will get access to a safe and effective vaccine.

For instance, like the disease of addiction, it is often said that the sickness is in the secrets. When we have secrets and a lack of transparency, it leads to anxiety, suspicion and false information. That cannot be good for the Canadian public. I cannot be good for Canadians' mental health. That is why I think that the Conservative motion today is very helpful in helping to allay those concerns.

● (1230)

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, the member just said that no one is asking for detailed information, yet in his speech he said that he wanted to see the contracts.

We need to recognize that the Government of Canada is not acting alone. There are experts and civil servants on a vaccination committee who have done their homework to ensure that Canadians will be well served with a vaccination. There are seven companies with which we have contracts. They are leading companies. At the end of the day, I believe that Canadians will, in fact, be well served by the work of the civil servants and the experts, by the implementation and by working with the provinces and territories.

Would the member not acknowledge that the administration of the units is not going to be by Walmart and Walgreens, but the provinces and territories doing what they have done well? We can look at this flu season, with 16 million vaccinations administered during a pandemic.

Could the member provide his thoughts in terms of the role that the provinces and territories play?

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, first, to clarify for the member, what I said was that we are not looking for detailed commercial and sensitive information from the contracts. We just want the basic details that Canadians want to know. When will the vaccines come? How many vaccines will be administered in January, February and March? Who is going to do the vaccinating? What are the priority groups? To this day, December 3, there is not a document from this federal government that says conclusively what the priority order of target populations to be vaccinated is. That is unacceptable on December 3, if we are going to be starting to vaccinate in early January.

To speak to the member's other point, Canada is not unique. The United States has a federal government with many states and many complex administrative relationships. Australia is a country very similar to Canada. It is a mid-sized country with a federal government and states just like Canada. Those countries are producing vaccines domestically. They are releasing detailed vaccination plans. They are telling the population what the details are.

What my hon. colleague basically says is that we have all these people working on all of these plans, and I agree with that. What we are asking for is to tell Canadians what those details are. It is time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

I am pleased to rise today in the House to speak to our motion. It is an important one, but it would not have been moved if the Prime Minister and the government had just answered the questions that the opposition parties have been asking for weeks and even months.

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Canadians are worried, and we are too. We are worried about the virus and the pandemic, but we are also worried about how this government is handling it. I will name just a few examples of this government's poor management since the beginning of the pandemic. The Minister of Health allowed our pandemic alert system to be shut down just a few months before the outbreak of COVID-19. The government sent hundreds of thousands of masks, gloves and gowns from Canada's main stockpile to China. A month later, health care professionals and first responders were asking us to ration our PPE because our supplies were running out.

I was a member of the emergency health committee that was struck in January, and we were already talking about the importance of restricting entry at the border. At that time, we were told that there was no problem and that everything was fine. There were all those questions, and then there was also a lot of dithering around masks. At the time, the Minister of Health even said the risk was low. Everything was managed very incompetently. It must be said that all the opposition parties raised good points and proposed solutions at various committees and here in the House. We were not there to cause conflict with the government. We were there to try to protect Canadians and prevent the virus from having a negative impact on their health and our economy. Most of the time, however, our proposals were rejected out of hand on the grounds that we did not know anything.

Now we have very urgent questions about the infamous plan that everyone has been talking about since this morning. We know that there is no way of knowing the exact date. People in the media are asking questions, but we do not know the exact date. However, just because we do not have an exact date does not mean that the government cannot put a plan in place. It could develop a plan that includes phases and a model that could be applied. The plan could explain what will happen as of the first day approval is received from Health Canada. It could explain how the vaccine will be distributed, who will get it first, where people will be vaccinated and how. Canadians deserve answers from the government to those kinds of simple questions.

This week, I watched a report on Radio-Canada about the situation in Germany. Germans are known for their precision. Just think of German cars and German technology. Germans are very detail-oriented, and their government lived up to that reputation by preparing a plan. The Germans also do not know the date when they will get the vaccine. They do not know that yet, but they know exactly where and when those vaccines will be distributed. What is more, they know that it will take less than two minutes to vaccinate each German citizen. That is how detailed their plan is.

Other countries like France and Great Britain are starting to administer vaccines and have already told their citizens what to do. We do not understand why, here in Canada, all we are told is that we have the best vaccine portfolio in the world. The Prime Minister told the House that other countries were envious and wondered why Canada had ordered so many. The Prime Minister is saying that we have 10 doses of vaccine per person. That is a talking point that was invented to get him out of trouble.

The former environment minister was once filmed in a bar telling people around her that, in the House of Commons, if you keep repeating the same thing, people will eventually believe it is true, and

it really drills your message into the collective consciousness. For weeks now, the Minister of Health and the Prime Minister have been telling us that Canada has the biggest and best vaccine portfolio in the world. That is what the government wants to put into everyone's head. In the army, that is called a psychological operation.

• (1235)

Psychological operations, or psy-ops, are campaigns conducted by various countries to influence their citizens. We recently found out that the government wanted to create a psy-op cell here in Canada to influence Canadians. It was lucky that we found out, because the idea was dropped. That is serious.

No one is here to score political points. We are in the middle of a global pandemic. Economies have ground to a halt. Back home in Quebec, restaurants and gyms have closed. Stores are even being forced to tighten their rules. People are being asked to stay home, and if the trend continues, they might not be able to see each other at Christmas. There is nothing funny about that.

As I mentioned, we are not here to score political points. We are not trying to win anyone's vote in the next election. We want to solve the problem. The people, our constituents and our voters are asking every party for answers, and indirectly, the provincial premiers, who have the heavy responsibility of managing their citizens, are also asking us for answers. The Quebec premier and his government are the ones having to establish rules, and he is being lambasted by people who are understandably upset, fed up and exhausted.

The federal government has the major national responsibility of providing the best information available. We need this information, and it has to be accurate. If the government says that it signed the vaccine agreement later than expected and that it will receive the vaccine on February 1, we will do what we must to get through the next two months knowing that we will get the vaccine on February 1. The government really does not want to provide that information, because it does not want to suffer a political backlash now and be told that it was too slow and mismanaged its contracts and agreements, so we are going to have to suffer longer.

This reminds me of a speech I made recently about courage. The Prime Minister and the government will eventually need to muster the courage to tell it like it is. Canadians are not dumb. People want to know what to expect so that they can act accordingly.

When the public is left in the dark, that is when we start to hear alternative theories, like conspiracy theories. That starts when people do not know what is going on. However, the government does not seem interested in communicating information, other than repeating that it has the biggest vaccine portfolio in the world.

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Judging from what the Prime Minister says, it sounds as though we could vaccinate about 40 countries, but that is not what we need. There are 38 million Canadians, so we need 76 million doses to vaccinate everyone. It is as simple as that. We want to know exactly when we will get the vaccines.

The government might not know the exact date, but I am sure it has a pretty good idea. We know that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the FDA, is about to approve the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, and Health Canada has already said it would follow suit, so that will obviously happen sometime in the next two weeks.

However, we know the Americans signed their contract on August 5 and gave Pfizer \$1.9 billion U.S. to reserve the first 100 million doses, which will then be distributed across the U.S. It is right there in black and white in the contract and in the U.S. government's official documents. They also asked Pfizer to distribute the vaccines on the ground itself.

Obviously, the Americans will get Pfizer's first 100 million doses. That is why we are waiting in line. We say that and the Liberals tell us it is not true, but facts like that confirm it.

What I am asking of the government today, December 3, is that it provide us with a clear plan explaining exactly what is going to happen after the holidays. It needs to give us a date, whether it be January 15 or February 1, for example, so that the provinces can make arrangements accordingly and so Canadians know that, unfortunately, they will have to wait. This could have been done better, but on the political side, evaluating the government's performance will come later. What we need right now is a plan so we can see where we are headed at this very moment. That is what Canadians and everyone else are waiting for.

• (1240)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since day one, this government has been focused on the coronavirus and minimizing the damages it has caused. The vaccine plays an absolutely critical role in that regard. That is why, once again, the government has been focused on ensuring and providing accurate information to Canadians through press conferences and other methods so Canadians can feel confident that the government knows what it is doing and will be serving them well.

The question I have for the member was put to the leader earlier by a minister.

A headline in the Toronto Star is interesting: "Anti-vaxxers find their champion in a Conservative MP". The member made reference to misinformation and how it plants fear. He said this in his own speech and mentioned the impacts of misinformation.

Why does the member believe the Conservative Party and the leader of the official opposition, who had an opportunity earlier today to address this headline, fell silent on the importance of sending a consistent message about the importance of having vaccines?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I understand my colleague's question and I can tell him that the Conservative Party values freedom of expression.

If my colleague chooses to support a petition, that is his business. As for me, my work and my position have been clear: I want a plan, and I want to know when and how the vaccine will be distributed across Canada.

If my colleague has a question regarding my position, I would be happy to answer it.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, last spring, we spent countless hours helping people get back to Canada.

What those people were telling us was that they were not getting any information and that they felt abandoned and unimportant, even though they were Canadian citizens and they just wanted to come home.

At-risk populations include the first nations, who often live in remote, hard-to-access areas. How does my colleague think the first nations feel right now, given that they do not have any information?

• (1245)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for her very good question.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government mentioned that technical briefings are being given. We attend those briefings.

This week, at a technical briefing given by the Department of Health, we were informed of the categories of people with priority. For example, seniors, people with certain illnesses and indigenous people are all on that list.

Priority is being given to certain groups of citizens, and the government is saying that three million of those people will be vaccinated by March 31. However, the government is not telling us how many millions of people those groups represent or giving us the breakdown by group of the three million people who will be vaccinated.

The government said that indigenous people are a priority. That sounds good, but they do not know whether they will have access to even one of those three million doses.

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[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I recently met with local firefighters in Port Alberni who are members of the International Association of Fire Fighters. They are concerned that, with the COVID-19 pandemic threatening their key fire and emergency medical service response, the risk of exposure is much higher for firefighters than the general population since they provide emergency medical response as part of their duties. Right now they are urging the government to ensure that firefighters, as emergency health care providers, are included in a priority group for health care workers for the available COVID-19 vaccines so they can get enough to ensure firefighters are healthy and remain available for duty in order to protect Canadians.

This did not happen during H1N1. Unfortunately, firefighters were not included in the same group as health care workers then. Rather, they were categorized in the same tier as the general public. There is a ton of anxiety right now and a lot of unknowns. They want to know they are going to be protected.

Can the member speak about the importance of getting this information out to the first responders who are putting their lives on the line and the impact this could have on small fire departments like those in the city of Port Alberni?

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I hope the response from the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles will be brief.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

That is part of the reason why we are calling for a clear plan. We are calling for clarity. As I mentioned in my speech, what Germany is doing is clear. That is what has been lacking from this government since day one.

Firefighters and police officers are right to be concerned, because they do not know which end is up.

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to talk about this very important issue. I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this motion forward today, as we try to get some answers that Canadians desperately want to know about what is happening in the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. I thank our shadow minister for health as well, the member for Calgary Nose Hill, for her incredible advocacy on behalf of all Canadians in trying to find out exactly what the government's plan is to make sure that we get vaccines in our arms.

In my speech today, I want to talk about the involvement of the Canadian Armed Forces in all this and why they have been brought in at the very last minute. Really, this is a public health issue that should be handled through the Public Health Agency of Canada, but because of a lack of leadership from the Liberal government, we now have, in the final minutes, a call-in-the-army scenario.

There is no doubt that the Canadian Armed Forces are an amazing organization with some of the best and brightest men and wom-

en in the country. They have a motto, which they pretty much live by: Failure is not an option. I can therefore see why we are so attracted to making use of their expertise, logistical capabilities, kit and equipment, and their ability to move personnel, products and all sorts of different materiel across the country. We know they have the greatest Canadians working for them, so we first and foremost salute them for their incredible service. However, unfortunately, they are being brought in to clean up the Liberal government's mess.

How did we get to this point where the government could not figure out how to get vaccines rolled out across the country?

We need to work with our provincial and territorial partners to ensure vaccines are in place in communities to make sure we get treated and cured so we will not have this virus any longer and can get back to opening up our economy. Instead of having people locked down, we should get back to business and back to our jobs. That is what Canadians are asking for, but they are not seeing any leadership from the Prime Minister and the Liberal government.

We learned in the news this morning that there is a directive from the chief of the defence staff. The operation the military will be doing on behalf of the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Liberal government is called Operation Vector.

The document itself brings to light a lot of the information we have been asking for. It shows there will only be three million doses of vaccines available in the first quarter of 2021, so only three million Canadians are going to be administered the vaccine. We see through the planning that the government does not expect all Canadians to be vaccinated until the end of 2021. It will be 13 months from now before every Canadian is vaccinated.

We know the government is trying to plan out how to deal with the challenges the Canadian Armed Forces have to deal with, but how are they going to be out there deploying troops and equipment and making sure we are moving the vaccines in a timely manner? They are very sensitive and need to be in super freezers and kept under 70°C.

Furthermore, how is the government going to manage the rollout of the vaccine while dealing with Operation Laser? It has the Canadian Armed Forces backfilling in personal care homes and long-term care institutions across the country to care for our loved ones and our seniors.

How is the government going to deal with Operation LENTUS? It is a domestic operation by the Canadian Armed Forces that supports emergency measures at the provincial level regarding forest fires, floods and ice storms. We never know if there is going to be an earthquake or a hurricane, but they are called in often to provide a backstop to the provinces when volunteers get tired out on the front lines and when first responders can no longer keep up.

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We have a number of international obligations as well: Operation Impact in Iraq; Operation Unifier in Ukraine; the enhanced forward presence initiative in Latvia, a NATO mission; and NATO staffing on missions across the globe, including the maritime task force that ensures we always have at least one or two of our frigates in patrol in the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Baltic Sea. There is personnel required to do these roles, yet the government has decided to throw even more work at them to try to cover up its mistakes.

• (1250)

The other good part that came out of the CDS report was that they were going through the hard planning now. This only started on November 27. They will plan to be ready to start handling vaccines by the end of this month, December 31. However, they still have a lot of questions and they need answers from the government, just like opposition members have been asking the government. When are the vaccines going to show up? Who are going to be the suppliers? What are the logistic capabilities? Who is going to procure or contract the private logistics team that is familiar enough and capable enough to deal with vaccines in this type of format?

We are still sitting here. We were expecting the Canadian Armed Forces to come up with a plan, but it cannot finish its plan until the Liberals answer some questions. That is what they keep refusing to do. They have been dithering, delaying and been completely undecided for months now. We have been dealing with this since March, when we were in lockdown. We knew about this virus back in December 2019. Here we are 12 months later and the Liberals still cannot answer the critical questions we need to ensure that vaccines get into the arms of Canadians safely and timely.

We keep hearing the Liberals say that they have been working with the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces for months planning this. We had government officials at both the public accounts committee and the national defence committee only a couple of weeks ago.

On November 19, General Cadieu, the director of staff of the Strategic Joint Staff, was before the committee. I asked him if there was a named operation for rolling out vaccines. He said there was not, that it would be happening under Operation Laser. Two weeks later and we have a name, Operation Vector. He did not know about it because this was made up in the last few days.

We asked if National Defence was procuring super freezers so they could help with the distribution. They were not. Deputy Minister Jody Thomas said that they were looking at some storage capability, but that was for internal Canadian Armed Forces use when we got to the point of vaccinating our own troops. Again, they did not know they would have to buy super freezers until just recently.

General Dany Fortin is now the commanding officer of Operation Vector and is in charge of it on behalf of the whole of government. He has great credentials. In his comments to the national defence committee, he said that the CDS and deputy minister would give directions to the CAF and the Department of National Defence to adopt robust risk mitigation, protect the force and stand ready to conduct operations in support of their nation. They are standing ready, but still no direction. That was on November 20. He said that if the requirement came from Public Safety and the Minister of Na-

tional Defence considered they needed to be prepared, then the chief of the defence staff would give his best advice possible. Again, no advice was given by November 20.

Then we have discovered this morning that the chief of the defence staff's strategic directive on Operation Vector, November 27. This just came out. I want to point out page 3. This is what the Canadian Armed Forces are expecting:

...the following national-level decisions will be made and communicated by PHAC no later than early-December 2020

(1) Apportionment of Track 1 vaccine doses by province/territory and select Canadian populations living outside Canada;

(2) Advice to provinces/territories on priority populations that should receive the Track 1 vaccines;

(3) Designation of the points of delivery for the Track 1 vaccines;

Public health was asked if it would procure the logistics service provider to get these vaccines delivered where it could and then backfill that using the Canadian Armed Forces heavy lift capabilities.

Again, the Canadian Armed Forces are looking for some leadership. They need some answers if they are going to finish their plan to be ready by the end of December. However, they get nothing but radio silence from the Liberal government.

• (1255)

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 disagree with the member. When I listen to what the member is actually saying, it sounds as if the Canadian Armed Forces are a part of the plan. At the end of the day, we can take a great sense of pride in our civil servants, health care experts, scientists and members of the forces who have been involved virtually since day one.

The forces were brought into the provinces to assist with health care. They have all sorts of logistical capabilities. We know how a chain of command works. I was a member of the forces for only a few years, but I am very familiar with their capabilities. I am very confident, as are Canadians, that they will be very effective at doing they are asked to do.

What the member cited, it seems to be somewhat reasonable. I suspect they will be getting the results for which they are looking.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, all of us are proud of our Canadian Armed Forces. As I said in my speech, there are no better people on this planet to do the job with which they are tasked. They will not allow this task to fail, because failure is not an option.

The armed forces will continue to move forward on this, but they need the support from the federal government. We are not seeing that from the Liberals. We are now 12 months after the pandemic started. The Canadian Forces medical intelligence first raised the red flags about COVID-19 in Canada, yet the government is still not providing them with all the information they need to build a plan to distribute vaccines across the country.

When is the member going to force his health minister to finally provide the answers? It is not just Canadians who need and want them, but it is critical to the operations of Operation Vector under the Canadian Armed Forces. When will he do that and get some answers for Canadians finally?

• (1300)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member's questions and comments are very important and very meaningful. He will know that my province of Alberta has the highest number of active cases of COVID-19 in the country. We have more than provinces that have much higher populations. In fact, today we have learned that the provincial government has asked for field hospitals in our cities to help with the COVID-19 stresses in Alberta.

Could he talk about what the federal government needs to do to ensure that Albertans are protected in the absence of its provincial government doing the job it needs to do?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, the Canadian Armed Forces have been preparing to provide assistance to civil authorities under the National Defence Act forever. Nobody was quite anticipating we would have a pandemic of this scale. The need for field hospitals and to provide staff to backfill in long-term care facilities is something no one ever expected. The Canadian Armed Forces has stepped up every time they have been tasked. They do it with grace, honour and compassion, especially in our long-term care facilities.

My father is in long-term care. My wife is a nurse in a long-term care facility. I know her colleagues, all medical practitioners of all levels, from health care aides right up to the doctors, are working overtime and trying to ensure we keep this virus out of our institutions so we can keep our populations safe. The Canadian Armed Forces will always be there to stand with them shoulder to shoulder.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to the defence committee and the study of COVID-19 on the military. In the initial day of testimony, before we knew they were going to be the entity rolling out the vaccine execution, what was his impression of the people who testified? Did they have any knowledge whatsoever of the fact that there was a plan and that they would be involved?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, the member's long tenure on the defence committee for almost 20 years now has been just an amazing contribution to ensuring that us, as Parliamentarians, are standing up for our troops.

Part of the discussion we were having around COVID-19 is, how do we protect our troops? How do we support them in what they are doing in Operation Laser in supporting long-term care facilities in Quebec and Ontario, now Manitoba and elsewhere?

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They were prepared to continue on doing that role. They were thinking about potential work in vaccines, but mainly as it applied to members of the Canadian Armed Forces in Canada and around the world. What they got tasked with by the government was completely out of the blue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased and proud to share my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Milton.

Eight months after the beginning of Canada's response to COVID-19, we are all feeling the burden of the pandemic. That is just as true in my riding, Gatineau, which is where I am speaking from today, as it is across Canada.

Many Canadians have lost a loved one and our hearts go out to them. Families have been separated in the wake of strict, but necessary, restrictions, and many livelihoods are at risk.

The majority of Canadians are co-operating to flatten the curve and even though we are all weary of the restrictions, we must continue to be diligent as we deal with the second wave.

From day one, our government has acted swiftly to help the most vulnerable Canadians, especially those having difficulty making ends meet, and small businesses trying to survive these tough times. We will continue to do so, and, as a member of Parliament, I hear testimonials about this every day.

The support provided by our government to individuals and businesses ensures that local authorities do not have to choose between Canadians' health and the economy. That is a decision that no one in our country should have to make.

• (1305)

[*English*]

We know the only way out of this pandemic is through a viable vaccine. This is why we have made that pursuit our absolute top priority. Our approach to acquiring vaccines is deliberate, strategic and comprehensive.

I must pause to thank the men and women, not only of the department with which I have the honour of working, Public Services and Procurement, but also those right across this government who I know, because I represent many of them, are working day and night to help Canada and Canadians get through this pandemic.

Our goal is to ensure early access to diverse portfolios of vaccines so Canada is well positioned to receive doses of safe and effective vaccines early. That is precisely what we are doing.

Our government has negotiated agreements with the manufacturers of seven promising COVID-19 vaccine candidates. This work is complex and is taking place at rapid speed in a highly competitive global marketplace.

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[Translation]

I am going to explain the process followed by the government's procurement experts to carry out this absolutely crucial work.

The COVID-19 vaccine task force guides the procurement of vaccines in Canada. This task force comprises leading Canadian experts in the fields of vaccines and immunology, and industry leaders, who provide scientific and technical advice on the most promising experimental vaccines.

In order to move forward as quickly as possible, in the initial phases, the majority of our agreements with suppliers of potential vaccines were agreements in principle. We began signing these agreements in July. This guaranteed doses from vaccine suppliers while we were negotiating details for a final purchase agreement.

Today I can announce that we have agreements with six of seven vaccine suppliers: Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, Janssen, Sanofi—GSK and the flagship of Quebec industry, Medicago.

Negotiations on a final agreement with Novavax are going well and should be concluded soon. With these seven agreements, Canadians will have access to at least 194 million doses of a potential COVID-19 vaccine. These agreements also give us the possibility of buying up to 220 million additional doses. This ultimately means that we have the possibility of getting more than 400 million doses for Canadians, as well as 15 million additional doses through the COVAX global initiative.

Regardless of what the opposition members are saying—and I have heard all kinds of outrageous things—our government has signed a record number of agreements with potential vaccine manufacturers. We now have one of the best vaccine portfolios in the world. The opposition wants everyone to think that Canadians will be the last in the world to get vaccinated, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Earlier this week, Noubar Afeyan, the co-founder and chairman of Moderna, which is producing one of the most promising vaccines, said unequivocally that not only is Canada not last, but that it was one of the first countries to pre-order the Moderna vaccine. More importantly, he said that Canada is guaranteed to receive a certain portion of the company's initial batch of vaccine, subject to all required approvals, of course.

[English]

In terms of timelines, the first deliveries of a number of COVID-19 vaccines are anticipated to start in the first quarter of 2021. That is what we have been saying for some time and that is what remains the case. What we need to understand is that timelines for delivery for each candidate are dependent on the company's clinical trials timeline and results, and of course, regulatory filings and regulatory approvals.

Before it can be received, delivered and administered to Canadians, any vaccine candidate must first receive Health Canada's authorization. It is a gold standard in authorization, and I once again thank the professionals who have been working overtime at Health Canada. I would like to think that all members of this House would agree that, in all that we do, we must put the safety of Canadians first.

We have seen some promising news lately and we anticipate approval of some of the more advanced vaccines, such as those from Moderna, Pfizer and AstraZeneca, to happen shortly. Once they are approved, deliveries will start as soon as possible.

● (1310)

[Translation]

Vaccine distribution and administration is another challenge. Our government is working to ensure that items such as needles, syringes and freezers are available and ready for shipment as soon as manufacturers are ready to ship vaccines, and we are making significant progress in this area.

I can confirm that we have received enough of those supplies to administer nearly 25 million doses of vaccine, and more supplies will arrive every month. Our government is also seeking a logistics service provider to ensure the efficient distribution of vaccines to Canadians, including transportation and storage. At the same time, we have purchased and received several freezers that can operate at extremely cold temperatures to store vaccines.

We launched a competitive procurement process for the purchase of dry ice in order to ensure the proper distribution and storage of the vaccine across the country.

The time has come for Canadians to unite, as they did at the beginning of the pandemic to flatten the curve. Effective immunization against COVID-19 will be one of the greatest achievements in the history of this country. Even though this will not be accomplished overnight, there is now an end in sight to this pandemic. Our government laid the groundwork, and we know that it is only by working with others and mobilizing all of our resources that we will succeed. We are already working with the provinces and territories on the subsequent distribution of vaccines throughout the country and we will ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces play a visible and important role in that distribution.

We are continuing to make progress by working with others who are fully dedicated to the well-being of Canadians. All Canadians can be assured that we will get to work as soon as a vaccine is approved thanks to a strong vaccination strategy that they can and should be proud of.

We did the necessary work and we will be ready to vaccinate Canadians effectively and efficiently so that we can put this pandemic behind us once and for all. When a vaccine is ready, Canada will be too, and we will get through this together.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, the question is that, for Niagara Falls and ridings like it, COVID is having an impact on tourism. It is having a devastating impact on tourism. There are 40,000 people in my community who work in that sector, and 4,000 of those are in the two casinos alone. Those employees have not been back to work since March. This talk from the government and failure to present a plan is impacting those people.

For now, we are hearing that September is a possible date for vaccinations. If that is the case, are we putting the tourism season for 2021 at risk? We need a plan, and we need it now.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, I too have an important casino in my riding, and it is an important tourism generator and employer. Of course we are all committed, and recommit every day, to the task of ending this pandemic. Everyone can be sure that I am no exception to that rule, and that the hundreds of thousands of employees of the Government of Canada, who are working day and night on not just acquiring these vaccines, but also approving them, distributing them, and making sure the provinces and territories are in a position to administer them to the population, are doing the same thing.

I want to assure my hon. colleague that the Government of Canada has this as an absolute top priority, not only for our tourism operators, but also for small business people everywhere. We want to make sure that we put this pandemic behind us.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Again, the speech is long on good intentions but short on concrete facts about what Canadians want to know: When will we be vaccinated?

I heard a public health representative say that, once 70% of the population is vaccinated, we can start thinking about lifting restrictions. That is what everyone is looking forward to.

The Prime Minister told us vaccination would be complete by September. How can the Prime Minister tell us when it will be done when he cannot even tell us when it will start?

● (1315)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, I can assure my hon. colleague that the haze and confusion around this issue was not created by the government. The government is providing clear, simple answers.

In my speech, I listed the Government of Canada's purchases, procurements and measures for not only acquiring the vaccines, but also distributing them for general public immunization.

This will take time. It is a generational challenge, in my estimation. It will take the entire country and every level of government coming together and collaborating. We will continue to operate in that way.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is a tremendous amount of anxiety and concern about when and who is going to get the vaccine. I just met with Port Alberni firefighters here in the city of Port Alberni and they were saying that during the height of the H1N1 pandemic in 2009 they were excluded from being prioritized in sequencing for getting the vaccine. Health care workers were categorized ahead of them, and certainly they should be a priority, but firefighters were categorized as tier two, which is the same as the general public.

Right now, they are on the front lines dealing with this, and 65% of the calls in my city are first responder calls. I want to make sure we get information out and prioritize firefighters, who are on the front lines, especially with the opioid crisis. I want to ensure they are sequenced with medical health officials and seen as priority essential workers on the front lines of this pandemic.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, I want to join with my hon. colleague in honouring our first responders, and notably the firefighters in our communities, who of course take extreme risks and protect us day and night. I know first responders will be high on anyone's list.

Public health authorities will of course be the driving expert opinion on this. I know first responders will be high on everyone's list in terms of a priority to get vaccinated, because of course they are exposed to multiple risks and multiple people, through no choice of their own. They require immunization, not only so they are protected, but also so others are protected against spread. I want to thank my hon. colleague for advocating for firefighters.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise in the House and speak to this government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of procuring safe and effective vaccines.

As winter approaches and the number of COVID-19 cases reach record highs in most regions of the country, Canadians are becoming more and more concerned about how their families and communities will make it through the next few months while remaining safe, secure and healthy. Our government has been focused on containing the spread of COVID-19 since the very beginning of this pandemic, and I am sure that all members of this House can agree that this has been our most pressing mutual priority.

Public Services and Procurement Canada has a role to play by procuring personal protective equipment, and our government is ensuring this equipment is getting to our front-line health care workers and other essential workers. However, the long-term solution has been and remains to be having safe and effective vaccines, and ensuring all Canadians will have access to it. In that regard, as the Prime Minister said recently, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Business of Supply

Much of that hope is based on the potential vaccines on the horizon, and Public Services and Procurement Canada, as the government's central purchaser, has been leading the process of securing access to vaccine candidates. Today we have the most diverse portfolio of vaccine candidates in the world, with access to more doses per person than any other country, and this did not happen by accident. It took the hard work of public servants, and science-based approaches, to be in this enviable position. This government is determined to continue this work as long as we need it, until this pandemic is finally over.

As Canada formulated its process for securing vaccines, we have been guided by the COVID-19 vaccine task force. The members of this task force include leading vaccine and immunology experts, and industry leaders in Canada. These experts have been giving us the best scientific and technical advice available on major vaccine candidates, including which ones were the most advanced in their trials and, more importantly, which ones would be the safest and the most effective for Canadians.

Our government took that advice and began engaging with the leading COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers in the summer. Right away, we began complex negotiations to secure access to vaccine candidates by signing agreements with these manufacturers. We had the first agreement with Moderna in place in July, and the others have followed. Through continued negotiation with manufacturers, the government has agreements in place with seven manufacturers: Moderna, Sanofi, GSK, Pfizer, Medicago, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson and Novavax.

Altogether, these seven agreements will give Canada access to 194 million doses. These agreements also provide Canada with options to purchase up to 220 million additional doses. On top of this, we have access to 15 million additional doses through the international COVAX initiative. This means that we have the potential to access up to 429 million doses, and that will give us the flexibility to make future decisions, once we know which vaccines will be the best options for Canadians.

It is an affront to our hard-working public services workers to say we did not work hard enough or fast enough to procure these vaccines. I can assure members that these procurement officers work day and night to ensure that Canadians would have a vaccine as soon as possible. The Conservatives are clearly more concerned with their own narrative than they are of the health and safety of Canadians. Thankfully, our public service workers have Canadians' health top of mind when negotiating contracts with potential vaccine suppliers.

I am sure Canadians understand that such agreements come with complex terms and conditions because of the global growing demand and the limited supply of these vaccines. However, unlike what many members opposite have been putting forward in recent days, Canada is far from being last in line to receive vaccines.

In fact, it was validated recently by the co-founder and chairman of Moderna that we are very close to the front of the line, but instead of providing support in this time of extraordinary need, the Conservatives would rather sow doubt and confusion. On this side of the House, we believe in working together and propping up our hard-working public service instead of putting it down.

Members from the Conservative Party have been comparing the COVID-19 pandemic to the seasonal flu on the radio. Members of the Conservative Party have been shamelessly minimizing the number of COVID-19-related deaths in Alberta, and then just recently a member of the Conservative Party sponsored an anti-vax petition, signed by 22,000 people who do not believe in vaccines. The sponsoring member, when questioned, said that the petition raised some really good points. People in my riding rely on our elected representatives for good, timely and reliable information, not this misinformation, this anti-science rhetoric that has been all too common coming from the Conservative caucus.

As the House knows, an effective vaccine is the path forward for Canada and the way out of this pandemic for the world over. Canada has laid the foundation for deployment of a vaccine from coast to coast to coast. We have a thorough, diverse and large portfolio of vaccines, and we are in a great position. Of course, any vaccine candidate must first receive Health Canada's authorization and be proven to be safe and effective before it can be administered to Canadians. Once those approvals are in place, we expect to have the first deliveries of COVID-19 vaccines arriving in the first quarter of 2021, which, I note for the members opposite, is essentially the same timeline as many other countries.

● (1320)

As the Prime Minister has said, once a vaccine is ready, Canada will be ready. As the deliveries of approved vaccines arrive, the Public Health Agency of Canada will be on hand to distribute them to provincial and territorial health authorities; and, we look forward to the contribution of Major-General Dany Fortin in leading the logistics of getting vaccines into the arms of Canadians ASAP.

However, it is not enough just to have vaccines delivered. I would like to remind the House that we do in fact have a plan for distribution and administration. PSPC has been working to ensure that access to these critical goods and services that are needed to administer vaccines are on hand as well, and ready to go as soon as manufacturers are ready to ship vaccines. In fact, this government began procuring supplies such as needles and syringes over this past summer. We now have enough of these supplies to administer nearly 25 million doses of the vaccines, and more supplies are arriving every month. As well, PSPC has been working with the Public Health Agency of Canada on a competitive process to engage logistics services to ensure that vaccines can be transported, stored and effectively distributed to Canadians. Those contracts are set to be in place in the coming days.

Business of Supply

We are working to ensure that vaccines can be stored at the correct temperature so that they can remain effective up until the time that they are administered. That is why we have purchased 26 freezers with -80°C capability and 100 freezers that can operate at -20°C to store these vaccines. Some of those have already been delivered, and we will also be purchasing additional freezers very soon. In addition, we plan to purchase dry ice for distributing and storing vaccine doses across the country.

At each step, we will coordinate our efforts with the provinces and territories to bring safe and effective vaccines to all Canadians. We will not cease in our efforts until we can ensure that, when a vaccine is ready, Canada will be ready.

I will close by reiterating how important it is that we continue to do our hard work in ending this pandemic, just as we have asked all Canadians to do their part in slowing the spread of this coronavirus. Canadians have always been able to withstand our winters because we know that spring is just around the corner. This government wants to ensure that our fellow citizens can maintain that resolve and that hope. Through our efforts in negotiating and planning and keeping Canadians informed about the true progress we have been making, we will get ever closer to ending this pandemic.

I ask all members in this House to be a part of this solution, and end the misinformation for the good of all Canadians.

• (1325)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I find it rich that the member would talk about misinformation when all that today's motion is about is simply asking a simple question that is common sense: What is the plan to ensure that all Canadians understand what their government is doing to ensure that they have access to these vaccines when they are available?

I find it rich that the member seems to think that it is necessary to add the political spin about misinformation, when it is the Liberals who are refusing to provide that information.

Mr. Adam Koeverden: Madam Speaker, the reason that I bring it up is that misinformation is actually incredibly damaging to the Canadian rhetoric. It is very dangerous. I had a call with seniors from my riding, just last night. They were really worried because they are listening to this anti-vaccine rhetoric and these notions that the number of deaths in Alberta has been inflated somehow.

Misinformation is another pandemic, and we have to be very mindful of what we put out there. People rely on us for good information. People rely on us for quality information and not to misinform them with political spin. That political spin is coming from the Conservatives, and it is damaging the Canadian conversation around how we are approaching this pandemic, which has been exemplary and, by all standards, according to the international media it is the gold standard for vaccine procurement.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will change the tone a little bit because I cannot stand hearing people being used as political pawns. We are talking about human lives and vaccines.

We often hear the government say that when the vaccine is ready, Canada will be ready. Obviously that means that there is a plan for approving and distributing the vaccine. However, that is all we know. I realize it is hard to put a finger on a specific date. Even though the Conservatives' motion is entirely legitimate, there are some questions the government is likely unable to answer, but at this stage, I think it could provide the bare minimum.

If it cannot, why not simply admit that it does not have these answers?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her excellent question.

I am sorry about the quality of my French. I will have to answer in English.

[English]

I share the eagerness of the member opposite for early and quick deployment of this vaccine. I would also love to see some dates, but the absolute first step in that line of questioning is Health Canada approval. These vaccines need to be approved by Health Canada and that is a process that we must respect.

Members of this House are politicians. By and large, we are not doctors; we are not vaccine experts or epidemiologists or immunologists. Let us rely on the expertise of Health Canada and the experts in Canada who have always ensured that we have access to great vaccines, including for the seasonal flu. I am not comparing this horrible pandemic to the seasonal flu, because it is not similar, despite some of the arguments and radio interviews of members from the Conservative Party. I am just as eager as my friend and colleague across the way to have a better plan, and we are working on it.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, the chief scientific adviser for the U.S. Operation Warp Speed said:

Our plan is to be able to ship vaccines to the immunization sites within 24 hours from the approval. I would expect maybe on day two after approval, on Dec. 11 or Dec. 12...the first people will be immunized across the U.S., across all states, in all areas where the state departments of health have told us to deliver the vaccine.

Here in Canada, Dr. Kerry Bowman, a bioethicist at the University of Toronto said:

So many of the people in Canada and the provinces, if they're going to be prepared for this they do need dates and they do need numbers. How do you prepare without that? ... We really, really need to build trust with Canadians right now. ...whether [we vaccinate] this month or that month [that we get the vaccine] is not irrelevant—it's highly relevant... People will die and other people's lives will continue to be ruined until [we establish that].

Does my hon. colleague not agree that we should be doing what the U.S. is doing, pre-positioning the Pfizer vaccine, telling Canadians when the vaccination dates are going to happen and giving Canadians the details? Does he not trust Canadians to handle that information?

Business of Supply

• (1330)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hard work from my hon. colleague. We were on a panel together last night, and the collaboration was appreciated.

However, I will, in fact, take our response to COVID-19 over that of the United States any day of the week. I am proud of our response and the plan. I am especially proud of our procurement abilities. Our reaction and strategy has been far and above one of the best in the world.

I take the comment regarding the pre-procurement of the Pfizer vaccine, as did the Minister of Health earlier today. It is a good recommendation, and that is the type of collaboration that we rely on in this House to serve Canadians.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to rise to speak to this important issue today. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

I am pleased to rise after the member for Milton so I can correct the numerous amounts of misinformation we just heard in his speech, which was written by an expert, I am sure, in the Prime Minister's Office. He talked about how the government has been so great at providing information, and how it has led the world in its response.

This is a government has been wrong or late every single step of the way, and it has resulted in pain, suffering and even death for Canadians. The Liberals were late to close the border, weeks behind other nations, like Australia, which saw the pandemic coming, which did not rely on information coming out of other countries, like China, but relied on its own experts, something the Liberal government did not have the opportunity to do because it had shut down the early pandemic warning system months before.

The Liberal government destroyed PPE that we could have used, and it shipped PPE off to China when we desperately needed it here at home, leaving us short-handed. It gave bad advice on masks. They told us at the beginning not to use a mask, and that it was more dangerous to use a mask than to not wear one. The Minister of Health said that COVID-19 does not spread person to person, and that if we wanted to close the border, then we were actually racist.

This was the rhetoric that was coming out of the government. It is no surprise that Canadians have no confidence in what the government is putting forward now, and when they see the government now saying “Just trust us, we have your best interests at heart”, it is a little hard to take when every piece of advice that has been given for the last 10 months has either been wrong or late.

The Liberal government was wrong on the border. It was late on rapid tests. It has been, quite frankly, incompetent during the period between the two waves. We are no further ahead now than we were back in March, when we locked everything down.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: It is a good thing we legalized it for you.

Mr. Mark Strahl: He will get his chance. That member always does get a chance to speak, even though he wants to heckle when we are talking about something this important.

The Liberals want to be patted on the back when all we have seen is incompetence and failure. That failure, quite frankly, has a grave impact on some of our most vulnerable citizens. Twelve months ago, the military alerted the cabinet that this pandemic was occurring in China. Ten months ago, we had a major shutdown of our economy, because we did not really know much about COVID-19 and we needed to take that step at that time.

Now, we find ourselves, 10 months later, still facing the same restrictions. This is particularly acute in long-term care facilities. It is heartbreaking. It is tragic, what is happening to our seniors in long-term care. We saw this early on, the devastating impact that COVID-19 had in long-term care. The government has tried to react to it by locking seniors away in their own bedrooms for months at a time. This has been the response, locking seniors away from their loved ones.

This is why this is so critical, when we talk about the importance of rolling out a vaccine now, when other peer countries are doing it. It is because that will allow us access, once again, to our family members in long-term care, who have been locked away, who have been suffering mental anguish and physical suffering. They are being told that while people they know in the United States, Australia, Brazil, and going down the list, 2.7 billion in countries that will have access to a vaccine before we do.

Why does it matter? It matters that we are not getting it now, we will get it months from now. A lot of these people do not have a lot of time left. That is the tragic reality here. They are being locked away from their families and the people they love at a time when they need them the most. That is why I am upset about it. It is not because I am looking to score political points here. It is because we are 10 months past the start of this, and we are no further ahead. People are no closer to being able to go see their aged parents or grandparents. They are locked away.

• (1335)

Then an outbreak comes to their long-term care facility and maybe they die alone or can FaceTime their family, instead of their being able to hold their hands at the end. That is why every day matters. That is why this delay matters. That is why putting all of our eggs into one basket at the start of this matters. We are taking months and time away from people who do not have a lot of time left. That is unacceptable.

People can get money. We have supported the supports given to Canadians who have lost their incomes, business opportunities or have had to shut down again, and for much longer, because there will be no viable vaccine here in Canada after other countries get it. We cannot give people \$2,000 a month and have it make up for lost time. We cannot put a price on lost time. That is what we are talking about here today.

Business of Supply

The government wants us to believe it has a diverse portfolio of vaccines available, but just not now, while other countries are rolling out their vaccines. Other countries are being very open on the dates the vaccine will be available, how it will be deployed, who will get it first and how they will determine which people need it the most. What we get from the government is that we should trust it. It was going to be the most open and transparent government in Canadian history. It got an A for announcement and an F for delivery.

Time and time again, every opposition day motion that is brought to the House is a requirement for the government to share information with Canadians, because it will not give it to us. It is hard to believe the government is giving us good information when it is giving us no information. The Government of Australia published its distribution plan on its website for all of its citizens to see. The government loves to compare itself with Donald Trump, as though that is some sort of bar it is very proud to have beaten.

We want to be better than that. We should be looking to other countries that have done much better in similar situations to us, those that have responded in a way that will allow their senior citizens in long-term care facilities to see their kids and grandkids, that will allow their families to be reunited and that will allow people of faith to once again gather together in corporate worship, something that is so important and integral to who they are. We should be doing all of this, yet we delay month after month. By the government's own admission, the first quarter of this year will only see three million doses available. That does not even cover our over 70 population let alone other vulnerable Canadians.

Once again we are asking for information so Canadians will know when they can receive the vaccine if they want to get it. The government should have that information, although it seems like there is a bit of a back-of-the-napkin approach. We heard today that two weeks ago the military did not know it would be involved in this and now it has stood up a rapid deployment force. That is fantastic. The military will always do what it is called upon to do.

However, this is something the government has been late on because it made bad decisions at the outset. Instead of focusing like a laser on this issue, it was focused on getting money to Liberal-connected firms. It was focused on the WE Charity scandal and getting money to people with connections to the Liberal Party. It has been focused the entire time on the wrong things and has given Canadians the wrong information.

The government does not like to hear that and wonders why it is helpful to be reminded of it. It is helpful because this is how we got here. This is why we are not where some of the other Commonwealth countries we would compare ourselves to are today. We are behind the eight ball. What do we do now? We need to get the information to the provinces, which will deploy the vaccine when they know how many doses they will get and who they will be giving the vaccine to.

• (1340)

For too long the government has taken the wrong approach. It is time it started to give Canadians the information they need so that we can get our lives back and get our families back together, something that we have been waiting for too long to do.

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member does not seem to realize that it is Health Canada that actually licenses the vaccines. There are no vaccines to distribute as I speak.

From the beginning, we have invested billions of dollars in individuals and businesses to make sure they can cope through this very serious pandemic. We have provided testing, contact tracing and personal protective equipment to the provinces and territories. We are working very closely with Health Canada.

Unlike the party opposite, we are not going to politicize this decision. We believe in science. Yesterday, the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington actually disputed the vaccine science. Does the member's party believe in science?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, of course we believe in science. That is why I talked about the Minister of Health saying that COVID-19 did not spread from person to person. Did she not believe in science? When Liberals said that the border should remain open and that anyone who wanted to close it was a racist, that was wrong advice. Did they not believe in the science there?

We will take no lessons from the Liberal government on believing in science. We will say that it is time to act. It is time to do so with data that is available to all Canadians and it is time to finally, for once, be open and transparent with Canadians.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I note that the motion today essentially just calls for the government to provide an update to Canadians on December 16 of some very basic information. I want to contrast that with what is happening in the U.K.

The National Health Service has designated 1,250 local health clinics as vaccine sites, where staff will be on hand to administer the vaccine over 12-hour shifts, seven days a week, and it has specified that each clinic is expected to inoculate at least 975 people per week. They have already started booking vaccine appointments, designating blocks of priority groups and have identified the priority groups: those in long-term care homes, those over 80 years of age and health care and social care workers.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague can comment on that. Even though we do not have a vaccine approved here yet, is there any reason he can see that the government could not at least tell Canadians where the vaccine sites will be, what the target for vaccinations per week will be and what the priority groups will be?

Business of Supply

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member that the government has a responsibility to the provinces and all Canadians to provide this information so that they can be aware of what the plan is. The Conservatives have been calling for that for months. The government's plan is just for us to trust it, and it knows what is best for us. We have seen that it does not. It actually has not had a very good track record since last March or before.

We want to see the data, the information and a plan. That is all we are asking for, which is provoking such a visceral reaction from the government. It does not like to share its information with Canadians because it thinks it knows best.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, in thinking about vaccines, I looked at Canada's history. I think about what happened in our experience with polio, in particular. With the first child passing away in 1910, we had a vaccine from Salk in 1955 and again from Sabin in 1962. It resulted in continuous waves, until eventually it was brought under control in the 1970s.

There are three things we can learn from this experience. Number one is how incredible it is to have domestic production of vaccines in Canada. Number two is that the adoption of the vaccine was slow and uneven, so we do in fact need a plan and we need to combat misinformation. Number three is that the idea that we can call a vaccine a silver bullet needs to be combatted because, long after even the initial vaccine is given to our most vulnerable, there will still be the need for increased health protection measures for some time to come.

I would like to know what the member would say to these three points.

• (1345)

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, they are excellent points from the member for Fredericton. They show that truthful information and trusting Canadians and the provinces to be able to interpret and act on that data is something we are asking the government to do. The member's points are well made. The government would be wise to listen and trust Canadians with the information that other countries around the world are providing to their citizens.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, this year Canadians have been faced with much adversity. Our seniors have been particularly hard hit, and today we are asking the Prime Minister and his government to give them confidence that their government has a plan. We are asking the government to be honest and clear with them and to demonstrate it has the competence to navigate them through this pandemic. They deserve as much.

This week's fall economic statement was an opportunity to do just that, but it did not offer Canadians a clear plan on vaccines or even a clear plan for testing in the meantime. In fact, the government has had the opportunity to offer Canadians that assurance every time it is asked for a plan. Instead, it responds every time with the same non-answers.

The Minister of Health was not pleased when I asked her if seniors would have to wait until September 2021 to see their grandchildren again. The reality is that the government has not provided

Canadians with that answer. There is no readily available plan on when vulnerable populations will have access to a vaccine.

The Liberal government cannot expect us to offer it blind trust because it certainly has not earned it, not when the health minister allowed our pandemic early warning system to be shut down just months before the pandemic, not when the Prime Minister sent hundreds of thousands of personal protective equipment from our reserves to China only to leave our front-line health care workers without, and not when the government refused to close our borders, allowing the virus to spread, flip-flopped on mask use or delayed on approving rapid tests. These failures have not earned the government the trust of Canadians, so it should understand why we are asking for a vaccine rollout plan.

Still without adequate access to rapid tests, Canadians are missing an important tool to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19. Testing is crucial to treating and isolating COVID. The government delayed approvals to rapid testing and now Liberals proudly stand in the House to tell us they have delivered rapid tests to the provinces. Those numbers are wholly inadequate. Those numbers are not anywhere in the vicinity of what is needed to be effective. Regular and mass testing would be a game-changer for our seniors, vulnerable populations, front-line health care workers, essential workers and all Canadians. It has the potential to significantly safeguard our long-term care homes, which have been the hardest hit by this pandemic.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information did a comparison in the spring of the impact of COVID-19 in long-term care homes in OECD countries. In that report, Canada had the highest proportion of deaths occurring in long-term care. Fatalities in long-term care accounted for around 81% of COVID deaths in Canada compared with an OECD average of only 38%. Those numbers are shameful. We have to better protect our seniors in care.

Now well into the second wave, the majority of deaths in Canada continue to be in long-term care homes and outbreaks in care continue to be on the rise. It is absolutely shameful that we do not at least have adequate access to rapid tests in our tool belt. Rapid tests could help isolate COVID in these homes and even help prevent outbreaks in the first place. To do that effectively though, we need rapid tests to be readily available. We are just not there.

Long-term care residents, their families and the workers who care for them deserve better. Supports for them are needed in the immediate term. Staff in long-term care need access to PPE and resources to do their jobs. As well, the staffing crisis in long-term care needs serious attention and not just a band-aid solution. We need a plan for family reunification. Some of our seniors have been physically and socially isolated for months on end, separated from their loved ones, friends and in some cases from their neighbours down the hall.

Business of Supply

• (1350)

Last night during the debate on the government's bill on medically assisted death, I talked about Nancy Russell, a senior who reportedly opted for medically assisted death instead of facing another lonely and isolated lockdown in her care home. Her story is truly heartbreaking. I have no doubt that she is not the only Canadian to experience feelings of loneliness in the face of COVID. We cannot expect our seniors and our vulnerable populations to endlessly isolate from their loved ones. They have already missed birthdays, holidays and many important gatherings. We have to be aware of the serious mental health toll this pandemic is having on our seniors, our vulnerable populations and, in essence, all Canadians. We need to offer our seniors hope. All Canadians need hope.

At the outset of this pandemic, the government talked about temporary restrictions and lockdowns to help buy time. Now, more than 11 months after we first heard about COVID, there has to be a better response. We know that mass testing is key to isolating COVID infections, and that the delivery of a safe and effective vaccine will be the real light at the end of the tunnel. We know that a safe and effective vaccine will also be vital to our economic recovery. It is certainly not unreasonable for us to expect the government to have a plan, to tell Canadians who want a vaccine when they can expect to receive one that is safe and effective, and how many doses each province will be receiving, or to be clear on the details of negotiated contracts.

We are hearing reports and details from other countries on their vaccine delivery plans and timelines. Other countries are starting to roll out a vaccine in the coming weeks, and we still do not even have a clear plan, or have not heard of a clear plan. The United States and Britain are talking about mass access to the vaccine in December and January. December is here, and now our Prime Minister is throwing around September. He needs to tell Canadians why this is, and what the plan is between now and then. It is not just opposition members asking for clarity. Team Canada is asking. Canadians are asking.

The provincial premiers, who will be tasked with delivering the vaccine, are asking for clarity. Premier Scott Moe, from my home province of Saskatchewan, has said that he is concerned and troubled to hear that Canada is at the back of the line when it comes to receiving a vaccine. The premier has said that he has not received confirmation from the federal government that a vaccine will be distributed on a per-capita basis, nor has he received clarity on when it will be received by the provinces. He is not the only premier asking questions.

Earlier this week, Premier Doug Ford of Ontario said:

I have to get answers. I've been asking the federal government. We need to know when we're getting it, how much we're getting and what we're getting. There's different vaccines out there so, to be perfectly frank, I'm not any more comfortable than I was last week.

Premier Sandy Silver of Yukon is asking for a national distribution strategy.

Dr. Robert Strang, Nova Scotia's chief medical officer, has said he is waiting on federal guidance on issues ranging from priority groups to transportation and logistics.

The provinces cannot move ahead with their planning without clarity from the government, and the more it protests against providing details, the more concerning it is. It is even more concerning when we hear conflicting dates and timelines from those front benches. Canadians want their lives back, and their jobs and businesses. More important than that, human life hangs in the balance of the government's response to this pandemic.

We are now into December and the Christmas holidays are fast approaching. Canadians do not need more empty promises. They are worried about their loved ones and their livelihoods. They need a real team Canada approach. They need a timeline. They need a plan for distribution. They need to know who will get first access. They need answers. They need a clear path forward.

That is what Conservatives are asking for today: a clear path forward. We are asking that the Liberal government give Canadians the certainty, the clarity and the competence that they deserve from their government.

• (1355)

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 find the debate interesting thus far. I do not know to what degree the Conservatives are prepared to acknowledge that the provinces administer health care. When they are critical of personal care home facilities and the high rates of deaths in our personal care homes, the member needs to recognize there are limitations that Ottawa has. We sent in the forces and the Canadian Red Cross to assist with the issues related to home care services. It is the same thing in terms of distribution. The federal government, using science, experts and civil servants, is getting this country ready.

I am wondering if the Conservatives truly understand the provincial role in this matter.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, I really do not need mansplaining from the member opposite. If he was listening to what I said, I absolutely understand and we, on these benches, understand that health care is a provincial issue and it is distributed.

Premier Scott Moe, Premier Doug Ford, Premier Sandy Silver and Dr. Robert Strang have all been asking and asking, and not getting answers. They feel the government is hiding the plan and not keeping them informed. The government needs to do a better job.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, like the member, I am very concerned about the care our seniors are receiving across the country, and certainly would welcome national standards that ensured that all seniors across the country receive the care that we know they deserve. One of the things that I think would provide the hope that she so desperately would like our seniors to have is knowing that, going into another pandemic, we would not be in this situation.

Would the member opposite agree that the federal government should establish a Crown corporation to manufacture vaccines and medicines for Canadians for future pandemics that we know are coming?

Statements by Members

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, at this moment in time, what we need is transparency and accountability. We need the Liberal government to be transparent. We should not have had a prorogation for six weeks. We lost six valuable weeks knowing that we were going into a second wave.

We need the Liberals to come forward. When they are asked for help by the provinces, they need to step up. At a minimum, they need to listen to what they are saying and give the information to the premiers that they are asking for.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to focus on one part of the member's speech. A report from the Canadian Mental Health Association that came out this morning had stats that I think all of us in this room would agree are soaring. More than 40% of Canadians surveyed have said that their mental health has deteriorated since March, while 18% of Canadians have had suicidal thoughts and 13% of parents have said they are worried about domestic violence and abuse. These are frightening numbers. A lot of that mental health deterioration is because Canadians do not have answers to important questions. They want to know. They want hope.

Would my colleague agree that having access and knowledge of the numbers of, and dates when, vaccines would be available would help in the mental health recovery of Canadians?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, mental health is actually something that is definitely being overlooked, especially when we tell people they need to stay in their homes. I just spoke about Nancy Russell, who wanted to die. She died. She followed through with her MAID because she did not want to be lonely. She did not want to be locked alone in her long-term care facility in her residence with nobody.

Humans were created for relationships and interaction with other humans. The government said it needed everybody to lockdown so we could have time. We needed to buy time, and then we saw some six weeks thrown away because there was a scandal that government was a part of, which was absolutely ridiculous. The government needs to be transparent with Canadians so they feel less anxious and have less anxiety.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

VETERANS

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a government, we are responsible for protecting our most vulnerable citizens while we continue to fight the pandemic.

That is why our government proposed measures to support our veterans in the fall economic statement. During the pandemic, the veterans emergency fund has been a lifeline for those at risk due to an urgent or unexpected situation. The additional funding that was announced will let us continue to provide financial support to cover things like food, rent and many other expenses. The statement also

contains additional investments in health, skills training and the fight against homelessness.

We know that much more needs to be done. The contributions of veterans have made Canada a great country. We will continue to support our veterans.

* * *

[*English*]

JUDY GORDON

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is with profound sadness that I rise in the House today to announce the passing of Judy Gordon. Judy was a devoted daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, mayor and MLA, and an incredible woman.

She loved politics and for more than 20 years she dutifully served the people of Central Alberta. She was passionate about her community and worked tirelessly to improve the lives of the people she served. Her accomplishments would take far longer than the 60 seconds I have today. Needless to say, they were many, they were vast and they were impactful.

Most of all Judy loved, as we all do, the small victories: the opportunity to be a champion and get results for the people she represented. I had the privilege of serving with Mayor Gordon. She was tough but fair, and I will forever be grateful for her counsel and her friendship.

According to her son, Greg, it was not about the title. She just wanted to serve people and be in a position to help them. She was very proud of the work that she did. While Judy has left us here, the actions of her servant heart live on in her accomplishments, in the people she touched and in her family.

Rest in peace, Judy.

* * *

LONDON NORTH CENTRE HONOUR ROLL

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to recognize the recipients of the 4th Annual London North Centre honour roll. This initiative highlights individuals who inspire us to build a strong, supportive and inclusive community.

A remarkable number of nominations were received from a wide variety of individuals, and our volunteer selection committee completed a comprehensive review. Many of our honourees helped Londoners during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Congratulations to the following individuals who make up this year's extraordinary class: Major Jay Hancock, Charles Knott and Emily Jackson, Bev Zaifman, Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) John William Pattison Cook, Cheryl Miller, Susan Toth, Troy Leishman, Dr. Adam Dukelow, Maissae El-Sayegh, Leroy Hibbert, Father Michael Bechard, Ken Sewchand and Nazih Elmasri, Mario Circelli, Constable Evan Harrison, Karen Perkin, Dan Flaherty and Yola Ventresca.

Congratulations again to them all. They are an outstanding example of what Londoners can do.

* * *

[Translation]

SAINT-EUSTACHE

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 2020 marks the 175th anniversary of Saint-Eustache, a city I am proud to represent in the House.

The first settlers arrived in 1739, and in 1768, the parish of Saint-Eustache was officially established. This city was the backdrop of major battles during the patriots' rebellions in 1837 and 1838, and it was partially destroyed in a clash between the patriots, led by Jean-Olivier Chénier, and British troops on December 14, 1837. Traces of that battle can still be seen on the facade of the Saint-Eustache church, where many dying patriots took refuge. We will never forget them.

Today, this beautiful city, known for its architecture, history and culture, is home to more than 45,000 people. I urge my colleagues to come for a visit.

Happy 175th anniversary to my dear Saint-Eustache.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

ETOBICOKE NORTH COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the wonderful people of Etobicoke who work in health care, essential services and everyone who is doing their part to stop the spread of COVID-19. Thanks to the William Osler Health System and the Rexdale Community Health Centre for their lifesaving and life-changing work. Thanks also to the Rexdale Community Hub, Ernestine's Women's Shelter and Youth Without Shelter, as well as our churches, gurdwaras, mandirs and mosques and our many community organizations for the care they provide during these difficult times. We are a compassionate and kind community. Our neighbours help neighbours. We lift each other up and we are generous with our time, skills and volunteering.

Let me wish everyone the joy of the holiday season, a very merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah and a happy Kwanzaa, and let us give thanks for everything that unites us. I wish much love to all, and here is to a brighter, happier, healthier and more prosperous new year.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, December 3 is recognized as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Canadians living with disabilities know that it has been over seven years since I introduced private member's bill, Bill C-462, restricting the fees charged by promoters of the disability tax credit.

Statements by Members

Canadians with disabilities should not have to pay huge fees to some third party to access a federal government program I am proud to say Conservative members of Parliament provide for free. These fees can be as high as 40% of the tax credit.

The Liberals have refused to enact my bill to protect those living with disabilities. The fact is that the Prime Minister, as an opposition MP on the WE charity speaker circuit, voted in support of my legislation, as did all members of Parliament.

On International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we are reminded of our responsibility to better understand issues facing people living with disabilities.

I call on the government to bring Bill C-462 into force and have its virtue-signalling mean something.

* * *

CP HOLIDAY TRAIN

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for over 20 years, communities across Canada and the United States have welcomed the CP Holiday Train. It is 1,000 feet long, with every car and locomotive brightly decorated with seasonal symbols.

The train has travelled across our two countries, bringing the holiday spirit and supporting local food banks. At every stop, people enjoy the train and its live music show on a specially designed rail car stage. They bring food and cash donations and the railway presents a large cheque to the local food bank, over the years, raising almost \$18 million and 4.8 million pounds of food.

The president and CEO, Keith Creel, promises that the tradition will continue virtually this year, with a holiday train concert online on December 12, and CP will donate \$1.24 million to the 201 food banks along the route. When it is safe to do so, the train will get rolling again.

Hamilton has proudly welcomed the train with huge crowds and so many needy families have had a better Christmas. We thank CP Rail.

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BRAVERY AND HEROISM

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize an outstanding display of bravery and heroism that occurred at the Coca-Cola bottling facility in my riding of Humber River—Black Creek.

After a team member suffered a serious heart attack, rendering him unconscious and unable to breathe, four of his colleagues bravely jumped to his aid. They jumped into the situation without hesitation, administering CPR to the individual and stabilizing him before the first responders arrived on the scene. Without the courageous actions of these employees, this man would not be alive today.

Statements by Members

I want to recognize these brave individuals and thank them for their heroics: Ernest Ashwood, David Murray, Inhuoma Onuoha and Shirlene Peddie.

On behalf of the House, the people of Humber River—Black Creek and myself, we thank them for their courage and life-saving actions. They are truly heroes. I also want to give my best wishes to the family of the patient and offer my prayers for his speedy recovery.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, small businesses are the backbone of our economy. They provide communities with the goods and services we need in good times and bad.

I recently hosted a round table with business owners from across North Okanagan—Shuswap and heard how the current government had failed small businesses, hurting business owners. One business operator shared how she spent more than three hours on the phone with CRA, but still could not access the CEBA program, and she is not the only one.

Small businesses do not need the government's "please hold" messages or the mounting debt. They need programs and services that they can actually access. We know the government listens to Bay Street, but it is time it started to listen to main street.

During this giving season and, indeed, all year long, we can give back to our local small businesses by choosing to shop local. I hope all Canadians will make that choice to support their local small businesses now and throughout the year.

* * *

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Sunday marks the 31st anniversary of the tragic events at École Polytechnique in Montreal.

Although the events of that day were a wake-up call for Canada, we have not yet been able to end violence against women. Efforts to raise awareness must continue on a daily basis, and the support of our allies is still just as vital in this struggle.

In spite of the challenges posed by this pandemic, many organizations back home in Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe and across Canada have continued to offer a lifeline and an escape route to so many women looking to escape the nightmare of daily violence. I commend these organizations for this important work, because as a former social worker and advocate for victims of violence, I know how much they sacrifice to bring eternal salvation to these women.

[*English*]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, small businesses are defined as having fewer than 100 employees. Of all businesses in Canada, 98% are small businesses. Again, 98% of all businesses in Canada are small businesses.

Small businesses are responsible for the majority, or 57%, of net employment growth in the private sector. They employ 70% of the total private labour force in Canada. These are incredible statistics that show the tremendous contribution to our country.

It is clear that small businesses are the engine and the heart of our economy. Hopefully all governments across the country remember these statistics as they make policy decisions that impact small businesses, especially now during the pandemic. Let us help them get through this pandemic, not close them while multi-billion dollar chains stay open. At the end of the day, the success of small businesses is clearly vital to Canada's prosperity.

It is all about fairness.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to draw members' attention to the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Unfortunately, the society we live in is still rife with barriers for people with disabilities. Today, like every day, we need to be aware of the reality of people with disabilities and improve our infrastructure to meet their needs.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the work of all the organizations that help people with disabilities. I want to thank the Association des personnes handicapées de Portneuf, which provides services for people with disabilities and their families. The help that organization provides is invaluable.

I also want to recognize the perseverance of William Alain, a young man from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier who was left quadriplegic as a result of an accident in 2015. Despite his physical limitations, he has continued to pursue his passion, which is hunting. I have good news. William killed his first deer. William, like many others, achieved one of his dreams. Keep believing in yourself, and I can assure you that we will always be there for you.

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the pandemic has hit so many Canadians really hard, there are some who have done quite well.

We should consider that while Winnipeg food banks have seen a 30% increase in demand since the pandemic began, Galen Weston of Loblaws has seen his personal wealth increase by \$1.6 billion. Why does this matter? Because we need to ensure that Canada's recovery lifts everyone up. That means investing in health care, housing and a green economy. Working Canadians should not have to foot the bill for that, while billionaires and big corporations, which saw record profits during the pandemic, get off the hook.

We have already seen that some governments, like the Conservatives in Manitoba, are chomping at the bit to use the pandemic as cover to shut down important services, like the community IV Clinic in Transcona and the Cancer Care site at Concordia Hospital. We can stop those cuts by establishing a wealth tax for millionaires, shutting down tax havens and taxing the extra pandemic profits of big corporations. That is the way we will help working Canadians get their lives back, instead of helping the people at the top protect their fortunes.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, December 12 is the fifth anniversary of the Paris Agreement, a historic agreement to fight climate change.

I was there in 2015. People were very hopeful, but they were also cautious. Canada said it was back in the fight, and countries pledged not to let warming exceed 2°C, and ideally to cap it at 1.5°C. We now know that those promises, made not so long ago, and the vision for transition back then will not be good enough.

Countries need to reconsider their commitments. Today's health crisis should not distract us from the crucial issue of the environment. Instead, we should use it as a springboard for bigger, better solutions because small ones will not cut it. There are solutions, but we need to make a great leap forward, as Naomi Klein put it. As an oil-producing country, is Canada ready to make the leap?

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every year, as the holidays approach, we are reminded of a tragic incident.

On December 6, 1989, 14 young women were killed in cold blood for one single reason: because they were women. These 14 bright young women had their whole lives ahead of them, but instead they met a tragic end that day: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz, Maryse

Oral Questions

Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, Annie Turcotte.

We have a duty to remember their names, not only today but every day. Every time a hateful remark is made, every time a violent act is committed against a woman, we must remember them and condemn it, so that this kind of tragedy never happens again.

We all have a duty to do this.

* * *

[English]

YORK CENTRE

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to join the House as the member of Parliament for York Centre.

Especially during a pandemic, I could not have done it without the support of the incredible community volunteers who stepped up, despite the circumstances. I am committed to returning their hard work and determination by serving the diverse community of York Centre.

My riding is home to a large and active seniors community and rooted in small businesses that have all been hit hard by the pandemic. As I called and knocked on doors, listening to constituents, the message was clear: People need our support. I will always work alongside the government to ensure that its support is there.

What has become clear during this pandemic is our ability to help one another and be there for each other, whether it is organizations like UJA's community food share program, supporting the most vulnerable or the Rhema Foundation, empowering seniors and newcomers to adapt to today's realities, that is the strength of our communities.

I thank the residents of York Centre. As their neighbour and member of the community, I am honoured to serve as their MP.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, leaked military documents reveal that only a small number of Canadians will be vaccinated by March. It is no wonder the Prime Minister is hiding this information, because 100 million Americans will be vaccinated over the same period. The secrecy of the government is adding to the uncertainty and stress on families.

I am asking a simple question: How many Canadians is the government planning to have vaccinated by the end of March?

Oral Questions

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians can be assured by the fact that Canada has been aggressive in putting together the most comprehensive vaccine portfolio in the world, with the most doses per capita in the world. Four of the manufacturers have submitted to Health Canada for regulatory approval. We are reviewing this as quickly as possible, using a rolling approach. Canadians can be sure that when we approve a vaccine for use in Canada, it will be safe.

• (1420)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, she said “aggressive”. The American program is called “warp speed”. The best this could be called is “impulse power”.

Earlier this week, the health minister said multiple times that the provinces are able to handle the vaccines. The military report said that the provinces and indigenous communities are not prepared with the infrastructure required for vaccination.

Premiers and first nations leaders have been asking the government for a plan so they can prepare. Why is the government waiting until the very last minute to provide a plan for the provinces and first nations across this country?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for months now we have been working hand in glove with the provinces and territories to prepare vaccinations for Canadians. As the member opposite knows, two of the seven vaccinations that potentially will be available here in Canada require significant logistical support. We are so grateful to the military for providing that support.

Rather than being a prop, as the member opposite mentioned in his news conference this morning, the military is an incredibly integral part of distributing vaccines to the provinces and territories, ensuring, through dry runs, that the provinces and territories are ready to receive them.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an integral part for six days now. The military's own documents say it does not have the information we have been asking for. They also say that vaccinations could end in the U.S. and France six months ahead of Canada.

The Prime Minister has said repeatedly it is not about when things start; it is about when they end. We now know that Canadians could face six extra months of lockdown, six extra months of seniors in isolation, six extra months before life can get back to normal.

Does the government not realize that if it does not have a plan to vaccinate, it does not have an economic plan?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is this government that has known that health and the economy are deeply intertwined. That is why we have been so aggressive to support people, businesses and communities through this pandemic, so they can make the decisions to protect each other and can protect their communities and the economy of Canada. That is also why we have worked aggressively on ensuring that we have the most robust vaccine portfolio, with options in case one vaccine is not successful or another one is indicated for different populations.

We are proud of the work we have done. Canadians can be assured they are well situated to get a vaccine.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised that vaccines would arrive but without giving a specific date. The health minister is also giving us likely dates. There is a lot of uncertainty around the vaccines because we do not know when they will arrive, how they will be distributed, or who will have priority.

When will the Prime Minister decide to tell Canadians the truth to reassure them?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member opposite had an opportunity to watch the tech brief today that happened for all Canadians. We provided even more details on the planning and preparation that is under way with the provinces and territories to deploy vaccines when they become available. On Health Canada's side, Dr. Sharma, who is the head of our regulatory body, said that it will be in a good position to provide a decision within eight to 10 days or so. These are all good, promising signs that vaccination is on the way.

I want to thank Canadians for their optimism and courage during this difficult time.

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[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have two national languages that are the foundation of our country's linguistic duality.

The use of French is declining. It is an alarm bell for Quebec and for francophone minorities across the country.

We want a clear answer on the modernization of the Official Languages Act and the application of Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses.

When will the Prime Minister protect the French language?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to tell the opposition leader that we have two “official” languages. I want to clarify our position on protecting the French language. It is one of our priorities. It is not just talk, we are taking action.

What have we done over the past five years to protect the French language and both official languages?

We have invested another \$500 million in our organizations across the country. We saved the CBC/Radio-Canada. We doubled the contribution for the Canada Council for the Arts. We even appointed bilingual judges to the Supreme Court, which the Harper government always refused to—

• (1425)

The Speaker: The hon. member for La Prairie.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec National Assembly is unanimous. The Government of Quebec is calling for the Charter of the French Language to apply to federally regulated businesses in Quebec, and I think most members of the House agree with that. Today, civil society added its voice to the consensus.

What does the government not understand? Everyone agrees. Everyone understands that. What will it take for the government to wake up?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that we need to protect the French language in Quebec and across the country. It also goes without saying that we recognize the legacy of Bill 101. As the member for Ahuntsic-Cartierville, I see it every day when I talk to children who come from around the world and who attend our elementary and high schools.

That being said, we are in discussions with the Government of Quebec. Just recently, I spoke with my counterpart in Quebec, Simon Jolin-Barrette—

[English]

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask you to remind the hon. member that when she speaks in French, to switch to the French channel so the interpretation does not overlap with her speech. It is awfully difficult to hear the interpretation.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I would like to remind members that they must speak in the language they have selected in the system.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we are there to protect the French fact in Quebec and across the country. We are in discussions with the Government of Quebec, and we are waiting to see its bill to reform the Charter of the French language.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, still no answers and no meaningful action.

Everyone wants this: the mayors of Quebec City, Gatineau, Lévis, Laval, Montreal and Longueuil, union leaders, the Union des artistes, farmers, elected representatives and former ministers, everyone. They stand united, a *front uni* as the Journal de Montréal put it. At this point, a no is a no to all Quebecers.

Will the government finally stop hurting French and apply Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses?

It is simple. That is what people want.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we stand with francophones, as we have shown ever since taking office.

There is opposition talk, and then there is our action, which proves we stand with francophones. Radio-Canada is crucial to the French language in Quebec and across Canada, and we saved it from budget cuts. To help artists produce and promote the French

Oral Questions

language, we doubled the Canada Council for the Arts' budget. To save the Royal Military College Saint-Jean, we give our soldiers the opportunity to train in French.

We will continue to stand with francophones.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Dr. Tam has said that the list of priority populations to receive the COVID-19 vaccine needs to be refined. She said this because the Liberal government dropped the ball. It is clear that we do not have enough vaccine doses to cover one of our hardest-hit populations, namely people over 70.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he dropped the ball? Why is he not protecting the most vulnerable populations?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly in this House, it is quite the opposite. We have aggressively purchased vaccines. We have seven of the most promising candidates in our portfolio, which is the best portfolio in the world. We will have more doses per capita than any other country.

The member talks about prioritization. That work has been done at the national level. Provinces and territories will further refine their prioritization. We are confident that when a vaccine is approved for use in Canada, we will be able to deploy.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it would give Canadians more confidence if the government would accept the facts.

Dr. Tam has said that she has to refine the priority list for those who will receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The reason she said that is very clear. We do not have enough vaccine to cover everyone who needs it most. We certainly do not have enough vaccine in the first round to cover all seniors over the age of 70. Will the Prime Minister admit he did not do his job to ensure there was enough vaccine in the first round for people who need it most?

• (1430)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, and as I have said repeatedly, we have been aggressive in the purchasing of vaccines. In fact, we have been noted around the world for having the most doses per capita expected here in Canada.

As the member opposite knows, we are working with provincial and territorial partners to ensure people get vaccinated with the goal of stopping the spread and saving lives. That is what is happening. It is happening through planning. It is happening through practice runs. As of yesterday, the provinces and territories participated in a dry run. When a vaccine is approved here in Canada, we will be ready to go.

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Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 19 at the public accounts committee, government officials denied the existence of a named operation for COVID vaccine distribution. They told the committee that the Armed Forces had not been tasked with doing any vaccine rollout at all.

Now, leaked documents show the government finally tasked our military with exactly that rollout, but only on November 27 under Operation Vector.

Why did the government wait until the final hours before calling in the military to clean up its mess?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe if my word is not good enough, he would take Major Fortin's word, who cleared that up today at the media conference, indicating that in fact the military has been integrated in our response from the very beginning.

Major Fortin pointed to the integration of military personnel in PHAC for months. We are very grateful for the Canadian Armed Forces, not just in the vaccine deployment, but certainly for the support in long-term care homes in the spring.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has known for months that vaccines were coming, but it failed to make any plans to roll it out. Now the military is being sent in to pick up the pieces at the very last minute.

However, the Armed Forces still need more information from the Liberals, but all they are getting is radio silence. Basically, the military is being asked by our government to build a plane while flying it.

Will the defence minister provide more resources to our Canadian Armed Forces and guarantee they can roll out vaccines without compromising core operations?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have confidence General Vance and the many people leading the Canadian Armed Forces can manage their responsibilities appropriately. That is not for me to say.

I am grateful for the Canadian Armed Forces, not just now but certainly during the spring when they leapt into action to protect seniors' lives in long-term care homes. They are logisticians by trade. They are helpful in helping plan, with provinces and territories, how best to get, especially, these fragile vaccines in place and ready to deploy.

Canadians can be grateful and confident that the Canadian military is helping in this important task.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we ask questions in the House of Commons, we are usually told to listen to the technical briefings.

We do listen to the technical briefings, but what we know so far is that less than 10% of Canadians will be vaccinated by the end of March.

Certain groups known as “designated priority groups” have also been identified. I would like the minister to tell us how many people are in those priority groups and whether there will be enough doses to vaccinate them.

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, we have worked with provinces and territories to make sure that we can deploy vaccines successfully.

In fact, yesterday there was a dry run held with provinces and territories to identify gaps in the plan and strengthen them before the vaccine is approved and arrives on Canadian soil.

I can tell Canadians with confidence that when a vaccine is approved for safety here in Canada, we will be ready to deploy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always the same answer: no answer.

We have asked repeatedly why our allies will be getting the vaccine before we do and why Canada will be getting only enough for three million people by the end of March. No one can answer those questions.

Are they refusing to answer our questions because the Prime Minister does not know what is going on with this file and really does not want us to know that?

I am going to ask a question that directly concerns the federal government and does not concern the provinces.

Can the minister explain her plan for distributing vaccines to indigenous communities and members of the Canadian Armed Forces? They fall under federal jurisdiction.

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me read a quote from General Vance. He said, “We are as well poised as any country...And when the vaccines arrive, we'll be able to support the federal-provincial-territorial rollout plans. The actual logistics of rolling it out, we are in the same position that our allies are in.” What that says is that the military has been working with the Public Health Agency of Canada. He has been working with our teams, he has been working with Canadians, with provinces and territories.

Let me just say this. Canadians can be confident, they can be optimistic that Canada is at the front of the line and we will make sure, as soon as a vaccine is safe, that we can deploy it.

• (1435)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at today's technical briefing that was supposed to give Canadians some clarity on the vaccine rollout, one of Canada's top public health officials said the following, "I think we shouldn't be so [obsessed] with the...delivery of the vaccines themselves, the dates and so on." Really?

Does the minister think that families with family members in long-term care facilities should not be so obsessed with the details of the delivery of the vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have utmost confidence in the public health experts, the scientists, the researchers, the logisticians who are helping not only to deploy vaccines, but to get us through this pandemic every step of the way. Unlike the opposition party, we have confidence in public health officials, we have confidence in public health guidance and we certainly have confidence in vaccination.

We are going to be there for Canadians with optimism, with courage and with planning. Canadians can be confident that when a vaccine is safe for use in Canada, we can deploy.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier of Alberta said that vaccines would be received on January 4, but today the same public health official that I just quoted refused to confirm that and, in fact, said, "I think we shouldn't be so [obsessed] with the...delivery of the vaccines". I cannot believe this. It is ridiculous. We are seeing other countries around the world deliver these vaccines today, yet we have no details about this and the government is telling us to just be optimistic and trust it.

When are Canadians, who are obsessed with getting this information, going to be able to get a vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect that whatever we deploy in terms of vaccines in Canada will be safe for Canadian use and that is why I am so proud of our gold-standard regulators. In fact, around the world, countries look to Canada for approval of vaccines, drugs and medical equipment. Do members know why? It is because of the integrity of our system.

Canadians can be confident that, when a vaccine is approved for use here in Canada, it is safe and we are ready to deploy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously agrees.

A significant and sustainable increase in health transfers is needed by the end of 2020. The Government of Quebec and the provinces have been calling for just that. The House voted in favour of that yesterday, including the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, yet this government still refuses. It is no longer just being stubborn; it is being harmful.

Will the government listen to the will expressed by the House of Commons yesterday and increase health transfers?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows full

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well that we are working very closely with all the provinces, including Quebec.

We were collaborating with Quebec on several plans well before the pandemic, we have done so during the pandemic and will continue to do so after the pandemic. Soon, on December 10, there will be a meeting where we will address several topics, including this one.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, health transfers mean more money for our long-term care facilities.

Health transfers mean Quebec and the provinces having the capacity to hire health care workers. I am talking about doctors, nurses, orderlies, experts and paramedics.

Transfers mean sending people a message that we want them to have good care. Do the Liberals have a problem with that? I do not get it.

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been there for provinces and territories since the beginning of this pandemic with historic amounts of funding, including \$24 billion in transfers for things like personal protective equipment, testing, contact tracing, data, long-term care and mental health supports.

We will continue to be there for Quebec. We will work with the provinces every step of the way.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government wants to impose pan-Canadian standards on long-term care facilities under Quebec's jurisdiction.

I suggest it imposes standards on federal long-term care facilities. Oh, that's right, there are none. Perhaps it is not pan-Canadian federal standards that the provinces need, but transfers to help them get through this health crisis.

Every party but the Liberal Party understands that. Why are they refusing to transfer money, as everyone is asking, to support our long-term care facilities? What is the problem?

• (1440)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said several times in the past, our seniors are not a jurisdictional matter, or a comma, paragraph or line in our Constitution.

They are human beings made of flesh and blood who have suffered more than anyone else from the outset of this pandemic. Instead of coming here to pick a fight, as the Bloc is currently doing, why not figure out how all of us, including our friends in the Bloc Québécois, can work together to do better for our seniors across the country?

*Oral Questions***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we, the Conservatives, recognize that the French language is fragile and that we must do everything we can to support it.

That is why, in one of his first announcements, our Conservative leader, the member for Durham, stated that Bill 101 must be applied to federal institutions. That is important, and only the Conservatives can do it.

Today, the mayors of Quebec's six largest cities agreed with our position. In fact, everyone agrees, except the Liberal government. Why is the Liberal government afraid to apply Bill 101 to federal institutions?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can see that my colleague is sincere in his good faith.

However, the reality is that in all the years they were in government, the Conservatives never recognized the vital importance of the French language. Given the cuts to Radio-Canada, their opposition to saving Ontario's French-language university, the cuts to culture and to organizations defending the French fact in this country, I have to wonder about their good faith—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the good faith of all Quebecers. The official opposition, the Quebec National Assembly, the Legault government, big-city mayors, and a number of grassroots, cultural, agricultural and labour organizations are calling for federally regulated businesses to be subject to Bill 101. The Prime Minister is becoming increasingly isolated. He talks a lot but refuses to do anything. For my question to the Prime Minister, I want to quote a letter published in the papers this morning.

Does the Prime Minister agree that “Quebeckers should be able to work in their language, French”, and that “Quebec laws should be enforced on the entirety of the Quebec territory”, yes or no?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Conservatives for their late-breaking interest in the French language. For the first time in history, we talked about the importance of supporting French in Quebec. This is historic. All members of the Liberal Party of Canada, not just those from Quebec, agree that we need to strengthen French in Quebec through our institutions and through all the work that we are going to do with the Minister of Official Languages to make French stronger in Quebec today, tomorrow and always.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not hear the member say that the Liberals are going to apply Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses. I did not hear him say that the Official Languages Act will be modernized by Christmas.

What is more, the Liberals are not even able to get their own government to comply with the Official Languages Act. Given the message that Quebec sent us today, how can the President of the Treasury Board explain the fact that COVID Alert messages are being sent in English, that Zoom meetings are being held in English

and that he did not require an official languages impact analysis to be conducted for the WE Charity contract?

I am asking the Prime Minister to reprimand the President of the Treasury Board and ensure that his own government complies with the Official Languages Act.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly have a great deal of sympathy and affection for my colleague.

I would like to remind him, however, that he once told our unilingual francophone Minister of National Revenue that it is unfathomable that she cannot speak English in the House of Commons. That is my first point. My second point is that I want to reassure the hon. member that the Official Languages Act is important and must be enforced, not only in spirit but also in letter. That is why it also needs to be modernized. We must strengthen our linguistic obligations. We recognize that the French language is facing a decline.

We will protect it, and we will modernize the legislation.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Shamattawa First Nation now has a COVID test positivity rate of 50%, 106 confirmed COVID cases, a TB spread, overcrowded housing and isolation. This is an unfolding nightmare. I appreciate that the Minister of National Defence is aware and responding, but this situation is getting worse by the hour.

Will the government ensure that every possible step is taken to save the lives of the people of Shamattawa First Nation?

• (1445)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be absolutely speaking to Chief Redhead later today to help support and be on hand to combat and prevent further spread of COVID-19. A rapid response team has been deployed, along with BLU-MED shelters that have been in operation since last week. We will remain in active communication with the community and stand ready to provide additional support, including CAF, as needed. We will be there for them and the community of Shamattawa.

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HEALTH

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, patients in ICUs in Alberta are being forced to share rooms, the use of oxygen is being limited and now the Red Cross has been called in and field hospitals are being set up: field hospitals in Edmonton, in Canada. Yesterday, the Ontario health minister defended the Ford government by saying, at least it is not as bad as Jason Kenney.

Oral Questions

Conservatives are failing Canadians, but so are Liberals. Canadians are depending on the federal government to show leadership and share a plan with the provinces. When will it?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we have been there for provinces and territories to deliver on their health care responsibilities, and it will be no different with Alberta. I spoke with Minister Shandro last night and offered him a variety of supports in addition to the field hospitals that he is asking for.

However, let us be clear. This demonstrates how deadly of a disease this is and how we all have to work together and adhere to the public health measures that keep us safe.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Marci Ien (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, gun and gang violence is a lived reality for far too many people in Canada, including residents in my riding of Toronto Centre. I have heard concerns from constituents, many of them parents mourning their own children, that we need to provide essential resources for prevention, diversion and exit programs.

Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness please update the House as to what additional measures our government will be providing to cities and marginalized communities to keep them safe from this violence?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Toronto Centre for this very important question, and welcome her voice to this very important discussion.

Far too many Canadians and communities across Canada have been traumatized by gun violence, and we are taking action. As we announced just this week, our government will be investing \$250 million in municipalities and marginalized communities to support community-based programs aimed at prevention, diversion and supports for those seeking to exit gangs. This will complement the \$327 million that has been provided to provinces to support law enforcement, the significant investments we have made at the border and our ongoing efforts to strengthen gun control.

We welcome the support of mayors such as John Tory and Naheed Nenshi for this essential funding, as we work together to keep our communities safe.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, brave whistleblowers in the public service alerted the media to some literally terrifying spending. Other public servants told the media that they were ordered to send cheques even if fraud was suspected.

Then, the deputy minister of finance suddenly resigned the day after an economic statement.

Did the deputy minister of finance suddenly resign because he too was terrified by this government's out-of-control spending?

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first let me thank Deputy Minister Rochon for his years of service across different governments.

I want to turn my attention to the argument the hon. member has made. This morning, he distastefully compared our government's emergency measures to a rich kid smoking drugs on his parents' money. The reality is that the programs we have advanced have been to protect the lives of Canadians and to ensure that households and businesses could survive this pandemic. The fact is that we have to do everything, as long as it takes and as much as it takes, to get Canadians through this pandemic.

If that member takes an opposite view and disagrees with that fundamental tenet of our approach, I look forward to seeing a Liberal MP representing the good people of Carleton after the next election.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they have tried that six times in a row, and six times in a row they have failed. Apparently the people of Carleton do not agree with the member.

I was talking about the current government being like a spoiled brat inheriting a great fortune from the earlier government, which left it a great balance sheet, one that it has worked hard to blow as time has gone by.

Since that time, we have public servants saying they are literally terrified of the government's spending. Now we have the sudden resignation of the deputy minister of finance the day after the economic update. Is he, too, terrified of the out-of-control spending of his own government?

● (1450)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, seventh time may be the charm. Canadians do not want to have politicians who have been on taxpayer-funded salaries for six election cycles tell them that the government has been spending too much to make sure their kids can eat and they keep a roof over their heads.

If the hon. member is concerned with the cost of doing too much, I would ask him to consider the cost of doing too little. If we had failed to extend the supports Canadians needed during this emergency, we would have seen more of our family members perish, we would have seen more Canadians lose their jobs and we would have seen more businesses close permanently. That is not an outcome our government will accept, and I would encourage the hon. member to give his head a shake and get on board with the program.

*Oral Questions***EMPLOYMENT**

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made a campaign photo op stop at Evraz steel just last year. He looked members of USW 5890 square in the eyes and told them he had their backs.

Now 591 of those workers will lose their jobs on December 17, just a week before Christmas. They will be looking through the help wanted ads instead of enjoying Christmas with their families.

What does the Prime Minister have to say to these 591 families he has turned his back on?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been there for workers and families from the very beginning in 2015, but since the pandemic let us look at some of the measures we have put in place. There is the emergency response benefit. Nine million Canadians have accessed this benefit. The wage subsidy helps keep the relationship between workers and employers strong. For federally regulated employees, there is unprotected leave because we know it is not only the financial support but it is also ensuring jobs are there. We have made it easier to access by waiving the medical certificates, and we are keeping workers safe with investments in health and safety. We are always going to be there for Canadian workers' families.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the 591 families do not want CERB, they want jobs. Four jobs are created in Regina for every one job at Evraz. This is devastating for Regina's local economy and is a direct result of anti-energy bills, Bill C-48 and Bill C-69, and the Liberals' ever-increasing carbon tax.

These layoffs are not an unintended consequence. They are a desired outcome. The Prime Minister promised to phase out our energy sector, and apparently this is the one promise he intends to keep.

When will the government stop attacking western Canadian families?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one in every three workers in mining and oil and gas is how many workers were able to stay in their jobs thanks to the Canada emergency wage subsidy. That is tens of thousands of families in Alberta, in Saskatchewan and in Newfoundland and Labrador who continue to be able to go to work and put food on the table, thanks to the Liberal government.

In the fall economic statement, we announced we would maintain and expand this crucial program to keep Canadians working. The question for the opposition is this: Will they support oil and gas workers and will they vote in favour of our fall economic statement?

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[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week Quebecers learned that the government is unable to tell us when vaccinations will begin.

We know millions of doses are reserved, but we do not know where Canada is on the list or how many countries are on it. How many doses will we be getting between now and March?

Will there be enough doses in early March for health professionals and vulnerable people?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have the best vaccine portfolio in the world, with more doses per capita than any other country in the world. We have been working closely with experts, researchers and scientists, and listening to the advice of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization. It has provided general guidelines for the country. Of course, the provinces and territories will take those guidelines and refine them in their own jurisdictions.

When a vaccine is safe for use in Canada, we will be ready to deploy.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are asking simple questions, questions that everyone is asking. We need answers. The only thing we are getting is ridiculous political spin. That is not reassuring. I am simply asking for an answer.

Can the government assure us that there will be enough doses of vaccine in early March to be able to vaccinate seniors, health care workers, workers in essential services, and members of the most vulnerable communities, such as indigenous peoples, as stated and urged by Canada's chief public health officer, Theresa Tam?

• (1455)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague on one thing, and that is that the Bloc asks questions. Does it ever ask questions. It is the only party that campaigns on a promise to ask questions. That is the key plank in its platform.

In the meantime, we are signing agreements with vaccine companies. We are signing agreements with a bunch of them, and we are working with the provinces so we will be able to distribute these vaccines to as many people as possible as quickly as possible. When a vaccine is ready, we will be ready.

[English]

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we keep seeing the results of short-term thinking from the government. Every announcement seems designed for a photo op, with no real plan for actual follow-through. It is an A for announcement, F for actual follow-through.

Liberal MPs are now sharing a graphic that brags about their vaccine plan. It is really simple: We will get the vaccine when it is ready.

Canadians want details, and eight months into this, there is no reason why they should not have them. Where is our detailed plan?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, we have been transparent with Canadians, sharing information and helping them get through this pandemic, whether it is with resources, with information or, now, with plans for the vaccination plan.

As the member opposite knows, vaccinations are delivered by the provinces and territories. The federal government is supporting them in their health care obligations by ensuring that we supply the logistics to get vaccines in place in the provinces and territories, and that we have a plan. Yesterday, we stress-tested that plan with the provinces and territories.

Canadians can be optimistic that when a vaccine is ready, we will be ready to deploy.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Oscar Wilde once said, “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay to greatness.” We, I must say, are quite flattered that the Liberals adopted the Conservative leader's proposal to increase the child care benefit. Perhaps the Liberals can embrace another novel idea: getting Canadians access to a COVID vaccine.

While Canadian families make plans, unfortunately, to spend Christmas away from their love ones, can the Prime Minister tell the House on what date Canadians will have access to the COVID vaccine?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working hard to make sure that Canadians will be able to get a vaccine when the time comes. Work is already under way with the provinces and territories and the military to create a distribution plan so that Canadians can get vaccinated. Our approach has always been informed by science and evidence, and this is no different. Working with experts like the National Advisory Committee on Immunization and other public health experts, we will make sure that Canadians are safe from COVID-19.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nearly 600 steelworkers at Evraz will lose their jobs just before Christmas. These well-paying union jobs support families and help build their communities, and the government insults them by telling them they should just collect EI or be grateful for the CERB. The Liberals talk a big game when it comes to standing up for workers,

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but they refuse to support the nation-building energy projects that keep them employed and put food on their tables.

Why has the government helped to phase out 600 members of United Steelworkers Local 5890 by failing to stand up for the projects they helped build and working against the energy sector that they rely on?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. The opposition can keep asking time and time again about why we fail to support the energy sector. Let me remind members in the House that the wage subsidy covered the wages of roughly half of the employees in the oil and gas industry for untold months.

We will continue to be there for that sector and continue to look at ways in which we can lower emissions and make sure workers are left looked after and that the competitiveness of this sector is upper most in the minds of Canadians. Oil and gas is our biggest export. It is one of the most important industries in this country. It must be treated as such. We have done so in this federal economic—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sydney—Victoria.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a historic day for indigenous people: 13 years ago, the United Nations General Assembly voted to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Many scholars across several nations, including my father, Sákéj Youngblood Henderson, worked for decades on the UN declaration.

Will the Minister of Justice update the House on the Liberal government's commitment to introduce a bill on the UN declaration before the end of 2020?

● (1500)

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I honour the member's father, the great Professor Sákéj Henderson, for his scholarship and his leadership in the training of young indigenous lawyers, particularly at the Indigenous Law Centre in Saskatchewan.

Today, in partnership with indigenous peoples, we have taken another step on our shared path of reconciliation. Building on former private member's bill, Bill C-262, the Romeo Saganash bill, we have introduced legislation to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The declaration affirms the rights of indigenous people to self-determination, self-governance, equality and non-discrimination. It is an essential part of building a more just and fair Canada for the future.

Oral Questions

HEALTH

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the use of fentanyl and street drugs is on the rise, while the measures designed to prevent the overdoses are on the decline. Lack of oversight will contribute to the greatest increase in deaths since the highest peak of the opioid crisis. This is a serious public safety concern for indigenous communities, like the Shuswap, which continues to be disproportionately affected.

Will the minister commit to providing funding and work with the Shuswap to help address the opioid crisis?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opioid crisis is the most significant public health issue in Canada's recent history. Our hearts are with all of those who have lost a loved one.

We have responded. We have invested over \$425 million in emergency responses, restoring harm reduction, approving over 40 supervised consumption sites, cutting red tape and removing barriers to treatment. We will continue to tackle this epidemic by expanding access to safe supply of prescription opioids, committing over \$700 million toward treatment in the next decade. We will continue to fight the stigma around opioids.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely nothing for workers in the shipbuilding industry in the Liberals' economic statement, even though there is a need. The Royal Canadian Navy needs a modern icebreaker to ensure Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic Archipelago.

It is time for the Liberals to award the *Diefenbaker* contract to a Canadian shipyard. What are they waiting for?

They should stop hemming and hawing, take action before Christmas and award the *Diefenbaker* contract.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have established a good partnership with two major shipbuilders in Canada, and there will be a third, as we have initiated talks and are negotiating with the Davie shipyard.

That was something that the hon. member opposite was unable to do when the Conservatives were in power. They completely abandoned and forgot Davie shipyard when they chose two major shipbuilders under the national shipbuilding strategy.

We have no lessons to learn from the Conservatives when it comes to shipbuilding, and we will continue to build ships in Canada.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the strength and well-being of our Canadian tourism economy depends

on international visitors coming to Canada. In this age of COVID, it will also depend on international visitors arriving safely and in good health.

Rapid testing is desperately needed in this country. Other countries are light years ahead in rapid testing, and Canada lags far behind because of the Liberal government's slow actions and incompetence.

As the U.S. and European nations take actions to reduce their quarantine periods and deploy rapid testing devices, when will the government finally catch up?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reject the premise of the question because we have already delivered over 5.5 million rapid tests, with over 2 million to Ontario, 1.3 million to Quebec, over 600,000 to B.C. and almost 600,000 to Alberta.

We get that testing is one of the most important tools we have to respond to COVID-19, and our officials are working around the clock to review and approve new testing technologies all the time. We have already authorized six of these tests, and we can expect more as the technology develops.

* * *

● (1505)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no community in Canada should be without access to clean water. I understand that we have lifted over 60% of long-term advisories on first nations reserves since 2015 and that short-term advisories have been reduced to 10. However, I also understand that we will not see all long-term advisories lifted by March 2021, as we had promised.

There are few issues more urgent, so when does the government now expect to see all advisories lifted?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I would like to say to all Canadians is that we are not backing away from our commitment to ending all long-term drinking water advisories for first nations on reserve, but are instead making a more profound commitment for the long term.

Yesterday we announced over \$1.5 billion to accelerate access to clean water in the short term and ensure stability in the long term, something that communities demanded of us. While we cannot underestimate the impact of COVID-19 on the long-term drinking water timelines, we are confident that by spring 2021, the number of communities under long-term drinking water advisories will amount to 12.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during their five years in government, the Liberals have allowed the levels of climate pollution in Canada to remain as high as ever. Their economic update on Monday promised only more delays and half measures. For instance, there is no money for permanent transit funding and their home retrofit program is a copy and paste from Stephen Harper.

In their throne speech in September, the Liberals promised a climate plan immediately that would exceed Canada's Paris commitments. Will we see that plan by the end of this year?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government committed to exceeding our Paris target and getting Canada to net-zero emissions by 2050. We have already put together the most comprehensive plan, which will see the biggest emissions reduction in Canadian history, but we know we have more work to do. We have said that we would announce a new target before the next COP, and we still plan on doing so.

* * *

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, on April 6 of this year, UN Women issued a statement calling violence against women and girls the shadow pandemic. Last week, the Minister for Women and Gender Equality said, "The issues of sexual violence and gender-based violence will not be solved easily. It will take generations of work".

We do not have generations to address this crisis. Every day that passes equates to the well-being and the lives of more women being put at risk. Girls are growing up in a world where they are still not safe. I believe that our generation has the power to put an end to the gender-based violence. Does the minister believe this?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning in the House, the Prime Minister and the leader of every party stood up and unanimously agreed that awareness of misogyny, sexism and the need for supporting feminism have to be at the centre of this country's response to addressing and preventing gender-based violence. This progress did not happen naturally. It did not happen on its own, nor did it happen easily. It happened because generations before us pushed for this change.

We are here now. We have made tremendous progress over the past five years, but every time a woman or a child experiences violence is one too many times. We will work to prevent this from happening and ensure that survivors have the supports they need to heal.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, during question period I asked the Prime Minister if he could reprimand the President of the Treasury Board and ensure that the government complies with the Official Languages Act. Unfortunately, the Minister of Official Languages did not respond to that in her answer.

Government Orders

I am therefore seeking the consent of the House to table a document entitled "Official Languages Requirements and Checklist".

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

Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member's request will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1510)

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from December 2 consideration of Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: It being 3:08 p.m., pursuant to order made on Wednesday, December 2, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motions at report stage of Bill C-7.

Call in the members.

● (1545)

[*English*]

[*Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:*]

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order related to the vote. The hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk had to leave during the vote, so we would ask that her vote not be counted.

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 26*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultiaf	Albas
Alleslev	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Calkins	Carrie
Chiu	Chong
Cooper	Cumming
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
d'Entremont	Diotte

Government Orders

Doherty	Dowdall	Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Dong	Drouin
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Dubourg	Duclos
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Gallant	Duvall	Dzerowicz
Généreux	Genuis	Easter	Ehsassi
Gladu	Godin	El-Khoury	Ellis
Gourde	Gray	Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Hallan	Harder	Fillmore	Finnigan
Hoback	Jansen	Fisher	Fonseca
Jeneroux	Kelly	Fortier	Fortin
Kent	Kmiec	Fragiskatos	Fraser
Kram	Kurek	Freeland	Fry
Kusie	Lake	Garneau	Garrison
Lawrence	Lehoux	Gerretsen	Gill
Lewis (Essex)	Lloyd	Gould	Guilbeault
Lobb	Lukiwski	Hardie	Harris
MacKenzie	Maguire	Holland	Housefather
Martel	Mazier	Hughes	Hussen
McCaulley (Edmonton West)	McColeman	Hutchings	Iacono
McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Ien	Jaczek
Moore	Morantz	Johns	Joly
Morrison	Motz	Jones	Jordan
Nater	O'Toole	Jowhari	Julian
Patzer	Paul-Hus	Kelloway	Khalid
Poilievre	Rayes	Khera	Koutrakis
Reid	Rempel Garner	Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Richards	Rood	Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Lametti	Lamoureux
Saroya	Scheer	Larouche	Lattanzio
Schmale	Seeback	Lauson	Lebouthillier
Shields	Shin	Lefebvre	Lemire
Shipley	Sloan	Liepert	Lightbound
Soroka	Stanton	Long	Longfield
Steinley	Strahl	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Stubbs	Sweet	MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Tochor	Uppal	Maloney	Manly
Van Popta	Vecchio	Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Vidal	Viersen	Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
Vis	Wagantall	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon
Warkentin	Waugh	McDonald	McGuinty
Williamson	Yurdiga	McKay	McKenna
Zimmer— 113		McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
		McPherson	Melillo
		Mendès	Mendicino
		Michaud	Miller
		Monsef	Murray
		Ng	Normandin
		O'Connell	Oliphant
		O'Regan	Pauzé
		Perron	Petipas Taylor
		Plamondon	Powlowski
		Qualtrough	Ratansi
		Regan	Robillard
		Rodriguez	Rogers
		Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)
		Saini	Sajjan
		Saks	Samson
		Sangha	Sarai
		Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
		Schiefke	Serré
		Sgro	Shanahan
		Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
		Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
		Simms	Singh
		Sorbara	Spengemann
		Ste-Marie	Tabbara
		Tassi	Thériault
		Therrien	Trudel
		Turnbull	Van Bynen
		van Koevorden	Vandal
		Vaughan	Vignola
		Virani	Webber

NAYS

Members

Aitchison	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baker	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bessette
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bratina	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Champagne	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chen
Collins	Cormier
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets

Weiler
Young
Zann

Yip
Zahid
Zuberi— 204

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 2 defeated. I therefore declare Motion No. 3 defeated.

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: If a member of a recognized party present in the House wants to request a recorded vote or request that the motion be passed on division, I invite them to rise and so indicate to the Chair.

[*And one or more members having risen:*]

● (1625)

[*English*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 27)

YEAS

Members

Aitchison	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bessette
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bratina	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Champagne	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chen
Collins	Cormier
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	Desbiens
Desilets	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser

Freeland
Garneau
Généreux
Gill
Guilbeault
Harris
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Jaczek
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Kent
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Larouche
Lauzon
Lefebvre
Liepert
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacGregor
Maguire
Manly
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
McDonald
McKenna
McLean
McPherson
Mendès
Michaud
Monsef
Murray
Normandin
Oliphant
Paul-Hus
Perron
Plamondon
Ratansi
Regan
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota (Brampton North)
Sajjan
Samson
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Spengemann
Tabbara
Thériault
Trudel
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Webber
Yip
Zahid
Zuberi— 213

Government Orders

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Holland
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Hutchings
Ien
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Jones
Jowhari
Kelloway
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
Lebouthillier
Lemire
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Martel
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Melillo
Mendicino
Miller
Morantz
Ng
O'Connell
O'Regan
Pauzé
Petipas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rayes
Reid
Rodriguez
Romanado
Saini
Saks
Sangha
Savard-Tremblay
Schieffe
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Tassi
Therrien
Turnbull
van Koeverden
Vaughan
Virani
Weiler
Young
Zann

NAYS

Members

Albas

Business of the House

Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Calkins	Carrie
Chiu	Chong
Cooper	Cumming
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	d'Entremont
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Gallant	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Harder
Hoback	Jansen
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kmiec	Kram
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore	Morrison
Motz	Nater
O'Toole	Patzer
Poilievre	Powlowski
Rempel Garner	Richards
Rood	Ruff
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shin	Shiple
Sloan	Soroka
Stanton	Steinley
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tochor
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Williamson
Wong	Yurdiga
Zimmer— 103	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

When shall the bill be read a third time? At the next sitting of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 75 minutes.

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased to learn that this day will be extended by 75 minutes. It being Thursday, as per tradition, we would like to know what the legislative agenda will be for the days leading up to the Christmas break.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Monday will be the last supply day for the financial cycle ending on December 10. At the end of that opposition day, we will proceed with the consideration of and votes on the main estimates and the supplementary estimates (B).

I would also like to mention that, on Monday, the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development will give a ministerial statement to mark the 50th anniversary of the report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

With regard to legislation, tomorrow we will resume debate on Bill C-7 on medical assistance in dying. We are in this position because our Conservative friends continue to filibuster the passage of this important bill. I get the impression that they do not really care about the deadline imposed by the Quebec Superior Court, which I think is unfortunate.

[English]

If the Conservatives stop filibustering and allow a stand-up vote on Bill C-7—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[Translation]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, may I finish talking? We can debate afterward. I have the floor right now.

The Speaker: Order. I would remind members that they must address the Chair and not speak directly to their colleagues.

The government House leader.

[English]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, once again, if the Conservatives stop filibustering and allow a stand-up vote on Bill C-7, then next week the government expects to call the following bills: Bill C-8 on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action number 94; Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act; Bill C-12, the net-zero legislation; and Bill C-13 on single-event sport betting.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you because December 5, two days from now, marks one year since the House elected you and placed its trust in you. You oversee House proceedings fairly, impartially and with dignity. Thank you on behalf of all members.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent on a point of order.

Business of Supply

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, we applaud the government House leader's acknowledgement that you will soon be celebrating the first anniversary of your election as Speaker, and I echo his sentiments.

However, I vehemently disagree with what he said about our parliamentary work. With respect to Bill C-7, we have followed parliamentary rules. Our work has been rigorous and thorough. Parliamentarians never filibustered in any way, unlike Liberal MPs who filibustered systematically in every committee where they faced ethical questions related to WE Charity.

With respect to Bill C-7, if the government had not prorogued Parliament this summer, we could have immediately continued our work, since it was at second reading. If that had been done instead, we would have had at least 25 more sitting days than we have now.

If we are rushing to meet a court deadline, the Liberal government has no one but itself to blame.

• (1630)

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

There is a court order before the House. It is something that is extremely serious. I would have liked my colleagues to treat this issue as seriously as the government and the other opposition parties do. That could still happen. We have debated the bill at length, and we can continue to debate it. We offered to extend the sitting hours to satisfy the official opposition and debate the bill even longer. However, without continuing in this vein, it is valid to point out that the official opposition may be filibustering.

The Speaker: Before I continue, I would remind hon. members that the purpose of the weekly Thursday statement is to tell us what is happening next week, not to start a debate. If other hon. members want to rise on a point of order, I invite them to do so, but I wanted to remind hon. members what the purpose is.

Order.

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Ethics; the hon. member for Edmonton Riverbend, Natural Resources; the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, The Environment.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—STATUS UPDATE ON COVID-19 VACCINES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough Centre.

[Translation]

Today's debate touches on an issue that is extremely important to all Canadians. We truly understand the difficulties that the pandemic has caused so many Canadians, which have been made worse by the uncertainty of how long the crisis will last. However, we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. We are no longer so far away.

Contrary to what some opposition members are saying, we know that our scientists are working very hard to develop a safe and effective vaccine. It is the only way that we will be able to begin overcoming the challenges that the pandemic has caused over the past months.

[English]

This has obviously been a very difficult time for Canadians. It is the challenge of a generation that we are facing, and yes, it is a marathon. It is a marathon that is not over yet. We are still in the second wave of the pandemic and now is not the time to let our guard down.

I know we have already given up so much time with our loved ones and our family. Some have lost their job, and others, their health. However, I am here today to reassure Canadians that there is light at the end of the tunnel. We are nearing the end of this marathon. There is a way out of the hard times we are currently in, and it is coming with the distribution of a vaccine. We have just a little further to go.

Let me be clear: All Canadians will have the opportunity to be vaccinated for free, but we must ensure that there is no political interference in the scientific process that is being undertaken by Health Canada researchers right now. We must ensure that all Canadians have the utmost faith in the vaccine that will ultimately become available.

That is why I very much take issue with the approach of opposition members, who are essentially demanding that politicians in this chamber decide on dates for the rollout of a vaccine. Perhaps the opposition is suggesting that we pressure Health Canada to move more quickly than it can in order to conduct its review, but I do not know. What I do know for sure is that for Canadians to have full confidence in the results, we need our independent scientists to do their work.

I could go on for hours about my deep respect for researchers and scientists. My father is a medical researcher at the University of Montreal. He has spent the last 45 years trying to find a cure for cancer and diabetes. I can tell the House that he would want politicians as far away from researchers as possible in order to allow the results of their work to be as sure as possible so we can be as confident as we can in the results of their research and work.

For the remainder of my time, I would like to describe the robust and very clear plan that our government has put in place to date so that Canadians can once again find hope in the coming months. Let me begin by discussing our approach to the acquisition of the vaccine.

Business of Supply

We knew that the quickest way for Canadians to get access to a vaccine was for Canada to buy internationally from vaccine companies and secure quantities of those vaccines before other countries. That is exactly what we did. Our government has secured the best portfolio of vaccine candidates possible.

We have been hard at work developing a comprehensive vaccination plan, and we are working with seven different companies to make that happen. Here are the facts. Canada has agreements in place with seven of the world's leading vaccine candidates: Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, Sanofi, Medicago, Novavax, Oxford and AstraZeneca. Those are the seven we have currently in our contract portfolio. This represents access to approximately 10 doses of the vaccine for each and every Canadian if all of these contract options are exercised. This is more than any other government around the world.

Our Health Canada scientists are currently evaluating four different vaccine candidates. Our Canadian Armed Forces are working right now and stand at the ready to distribute the vaccine as soon as one is approved.

● (1635)

[*Translation*]

None other than Major-General Dany Fortin, of the Canadian Armed Forces, a Quebecker who has the confidence of the entire country, was appointed to be in charge of the vaccine distribution effort, together with the Public Health Agency of Canada and, of course, provincial and territorial public health authorities. We have already purchased an enormous amount of the supplies we will need. For example, we have purchased 34 freezers, which brings the federal government's capacity to 33.5 million doses of ultra-frozen and frozen vaccines. That is on top of several tens of millions of syringes, needles, compresses and other supplies.

[*English*]

Now that I have gone through those facts and numbers, I will point out that the co-founder and chairman of Moderna recently stated that Canada is one of the very first countries to pre-order its vaccine, which has shown so much promise. We are guaranteed to receive a portion of the company's initial batch of vaccine doses, pending, of course, approvals by Health Canada.

The goal here is obviously to have as many options at hand as possible so that as soon as vaccines become available and are approved, Canadians will get safe, effective doses that will help us end this pandemic. We know, however, that biomanufacturing capacity has declined in Canada over the last number of years. That is why we have been rebuilding our capacity and our capability to produce new types of vaccines in the future right here at home.

This requires significant investments today. We have announced hundreds of millions of dollars in investments in, for example, the Quebec company Medicago, which has a potential Canadian vaccine candidate, and in the National Research Council's facilities in Montreal. This investment will ensure that we have a much more robust domestic biomanufacturing capacity in the future than exists at the moment.

When it comes to Canada's COVID-19 vaccine plan, we are ready with a diversified portfolio of vaccine candidates, which are undergoing regulatory review and approval processes as we speak. We have secured access to tens of millions of vaccine doses that, as we said earlier in this chamber and I will repeat again, should be arriving in early 2021. We are working with our partners in the provinces and territories and with our partners in first nations in order to ensure that those vaccines can be delivered to everybody in this country as quickly as possible.

The bottom line is that Canadians want a safe and reliable vaccine, and that is what the Government of Canada will secure. For this to work, we need to come together across party lines and all across our country to ensure that all Canadians have the utmost confidence to take the vaccine once it is ready. It is unity, not division, that we need now more than ever, as we enter the next critical phase of this exhausting marathon that is and has been the COVID-19 pandemic.

● (1640)

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, what I find so frustrating from members of the government is that they use buzzwords like “secured access”, “should be arriving”, “robust portfolio” and “work together”. That is what we get for answers.

It is not complicated. We should not wrap ourselves in the approval process. The Liberals should say, “If the Moderna vaccine is approved on this date, we will have x number of doses delivered by this date.” These are not complicated questions. Their refusal to answer them tells us they do not have a plan.

Why can they not answer the simple question and say, “When this vaccine is approved, it will be rolled out on this date with this many doses”? It is not complicated.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, I take issue with the word “buzzwords”. What I outlined in my speech were numerous facts and statistics on what our government has procured for Canadians. Once again, the member is accusing the government of saying that vaccines should be arriving in the first quarter of 2021, something we have repeated often. As I explained, it is our independent researchers who will decide when the vaccine is ready and when it will be safe for Canadians to receive.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's speech. There is much to agree with in it, but when she says the goal of opposition members is to interfere with science, she is way off the mark.

What we are talking about is not interfering with science. We are talking about the government's decisions and its decision-making process to get the vaccines on order and get a distribution system in place. When I tell people in my riding that we are likely looking at having only 8% of Canadians vaccinated by April, they simply say that is not good enough.

Business of Supply

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, I do understand that Canadians would like the certainty of knowing how many Canadians will be vaccinated and the exact date they will have access to the vaccine. However, it is not something we can predict at the moment, as our scientists are still reviewing vaccine candidates, a number of them. If several vaccines are approved at the same time, perhaps more Canadians will have access sooner. It is not possible for us to give a number or a date because we have so many different options on the table at the moment that are undergoing investigation.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the briefing that was provided to MPs from officials indicated that priority for the vaccine would be given to individuals who are advanced in age, health care workers, first responders and indigenous people. Based on the numbers we know so far, which is to have 3 million vaccines available, this is not going to cover seniors, for example. It is not going to cover the number of people who need it.

From my perspective, in Vancouver East we have many vulnerable people, and front-line workers in service agencies are not part of this bracket. Should front-line workers also be included as a priority?

• (1645)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, it is the role of the federal government to procure vaccines, and obviously the role of Health Canada, which is a federal agency, is to review them. However, it is my understanding that the provinces will play a very important role in deciding for whom and how the rollout will be done.

I appreciate the member's question and her comment with respect to front-line workers. I agree front-line workers are critically important and should certainly receive access to vaccines as soon as possible. However, I do not want to interfere with decisions of the provinces and territories at the local level.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, listening to today's debate on our readiness to roll out COVID-19 vaccinations, the opposition would have us believe Canada is languishing right at the back of the line. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Conservatives have thrown out intentionally inaccurate timelines of vaccines not getting to Canadians by 2030. That is completely misleading to all Canadians.

Allow me to reiterate what this government has done and continues to do every day to ensure that Canada is in fact very well positioned when it comes to receiving the initial batch of approved COVID-19 vaccine doses. Many challenges need to be addressed in talking about the rollout of any COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccines will only be offered to Canadians when they are proven safe, when they are proven effective and when they have received Health Canada regulatory approval.

Last week, Dr. Sharma, the chief medical adviser at Health Canada, confirmed for us that if the trial data proved accurate, they would be on track to approve the Pfizer vaccine around the middle of this month. That is the same timeline we are seeing in the United States as well as in Europe. The first deliveries of COVID-19 vaccines are anticipated to start in the first quarter of 2021.

The House heard my colleague quote the chairman of Moderna, saying that far from being at the back of the line, Canada was among the very first countries to pre-order that company's vaccine candidate. Alongside Pfizer, Moderna's vaccine candidate would receive regulatory approval very soon. We have continued to inform Canadians about the work we are doing to ensure a viable vaccine is made available to Canadians.

The Conservatives are trying to change the narrative to suit their own political agenda, but Canadians can rest assured that their rhetoric is just that and that we are doing what we need to do to protect them.

Since the start of the pandemic, this government has worked to ensure that when a vaccine is ready, Canada will be ready. From day one, this government's strategy has been to secure agreements with the developers of vaccine candidates so Canadians are well positioned as clinical trials advance.

We have been operating in a highly complex and intensely competitive global market for vaccine procurement, faced with a myriad of differing vaccine types, dosage requirements as well as manufacturing and finishing needs. Working day and night, this government has been dedicated to procuring the very best vaccine candidates for all Canadians.

These efforts have paid off. Canada has invested in one of the most diverse COVID-19 vaccine portfolios in the world. We have arrangements with seven potential vaccine suppliers. We have access to more vaccine doses per person than any other country in the world. That is not the story of a country lagging behind; it is a country looking after its interests of every citizen.

Our portfolio contains seven leading vaccine candidates: Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Novavax, Sanofi, GlaxoSmithKline and Medicago. Already we are hearing very promising clinical trial results for several of these candidates. Canada has seven leading vaccine candidates in our portfolio, four of which are currently under regulatory review.

Far from standing at the back of some notional global queue, Canada is in line with other countries in receiving the vaccine as early as the first quarter of the new year. To ensure that we are moving quickly, we are working in partnership with the United States and European Union so we can share our data and accelerate the vaccine approval process.

This is a team effort. Canada is a leading team member. That team mentality has been in evidence from the very early days of this global pandemic. This government has worked non-stop to procure vital PPE and other medical supplies for our front-line health care workers. More than two billion individual pieces of equipment have been secured, with more than half of that already delivered. Additionally, our government has delivered to the provinces and territories more than three million rapid test kits in the last few weeks.

Business of Supply

As we continue to aggressively pursue our vaccine candidates, we know that logistics associated with vaccine distribution can be very complex. Contrary to what the Conservatives have been saying for many months, alongside our efforts to procure vaccines, we have been preparing for the administration and distribution of vaccines.

• (1650)

We are ensuring we have the supplies that will be needed in the manufacturing and packaging steps of vaccine production in Canada. Just one example of this preparedness is that during the summer, we procured three fill/finish vaccine systems from Vanrx in Burnaby, British Columbia. These systems are the last portion of a vaccine production line that allows vials to be filled and finished without human intervention, thus allowing a rapid roll out of vaccines while minimizing waste.

Allowing rapid roll out does not sound like a country at the back of the line. The Conservatives would have us believe we have not done anything to prepare for vaccine distribution. We know that could not be further from the truth. We are ensuring that when a vaccine is ready, we will have the materials needed to support safe and efficient immunization, such as syringes, needles and alcohol swabs.

We have already received enough deliveries of syringes and needles to administer nearly 25 million doses of vaccine and we have tens of millions more en route. We know vaccine distribution will be complex, especially in light of the need to transport and store vaccines at specific temperatures.

Canada is prepared. We already have the capacity to store up to 33.5 million ultra-frozen and frozen vaccines at any one time. We are ready to meet additional needs based on the Public Health Agency of Canada's requirement for more capacity.

We know making vaccines available will be a team Canada effort. That is why we continue to work with provinces and territories to ensure we are prepared to securely and efficiently deploy vaccines to Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

We are ready for when the rigorous, efficient and not political but scientific Health Canada approval process is completed. The House and all Canadians can rest assured that we will not cease in our efforts to ensure that when a vaccine is ready, Canada will be ready.

Nobody in the House underestimates the pain, anguish and grief felt by Canadians, the terrible losses felt by our friends and families across the globe during these past distressing months. It has been many months and we are all living with pandemic fatigue.

This government is steadfast in its commitment to the health and safety of Canadians. I know I speak for members of the House when I say our top priority remains keeping Canadians safe and healthy. From procuring vaccines to PPE to testing, the government will continue to do whatever it takes for as long as it takes to get Canadians through this crisis.

We are indebted to every single Canadian for doing everything possible to keep themselves, their families and their fellow Canadians safe. This government is working alongside all of Canada to

equip the country with PPE, vaccine candidates, tests and treatments so together we can all get through this pandemic.

• (1655)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's optimism. With the optimism and the language she has used, saying that the Liberals are in fact ready, would she then not agree it is time to share with Canadians their plan, so we can see exactly the work that she says has been done and so Canadians can trust that the government has a plan and their best interest in mind when the roll out of these vaccines does come?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives want a plan, so here is the plan. To date, Canada has secured up to 429 million doses of seven COVID-19 vaccine candidates: AstraZeneca, Sanofi, GlaxoSmithKline, Novavax, Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, Medicago and Moderna. That is the most extensive and diverse vaccine portfolio of any country in this world. Health Canada is in line to approve the first vaccine candidate on the same schedule as U.S. and European authorities.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberal government has rightly pointed out that the Conservatives seriously eroded Canada's pharmaceutical capacity. Perhaps most starkly is when the Mulroney Conservative government privatized Connaught Labs, a publicly owned laboratory that helped produce vaccines and low-cost prescriptions for Canadians. That was in 1986. Since then, the Liberals have made no move to create a public drug manufacturer despite many years of being in government.

Does the member acknowledge that this is a huge problem and, in fact, if we have our own manufacturing capacity that is publicly owned by Canadians, then we would be able to produce the vaccines locally and ensure we get the supply first?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, I know it is very important that Canadians have the vaccine when it is ready. I know that countries producing the vaccine might have it first, but Canada is ready for the vaccines as soon as they are available.

The Globe and Mail's André Picard is one of the most respected journalists covering health care in Canada. He said, "[The Leader of the Opposition]'s hindsight is 20/20. His demands that the federal government produce a precise timetable for vaccine distribution are equally fantastical."

The government has secured access to more vaccines per capita than any other country in the world. We are ready. We have experts like Major General Dany Fortin to lead the national logistics effort. I have faith in the experts and in Canadians. Canadians will have the vaccine as soon as we have one that is safe for Canadians.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to follow up on the last question.

Business of Supply

For 70 years, Canada was a world leader in vaccine production through Connaught Labs, through a public model of vaccine development and production. Knowing what we know now, do you think it is a good idea to go back to this public ownership model, which would do the research and manufacturing, and not just leaving it up to big pharmaceutical companies? Should we have a public lab in Canada again?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member that he is to address his questions and comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for Scarborough Centre.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, I know Canadians need assurance that the vaccine will be there when there is a safe one available. Canada is in line. Canada has one of the best portfolios in the world for vaccine candidates. We have agreements with seven leading candidates. I am sure Canadians will have the vaccine as soon as we have it available.

• (1700)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured today to seek clarity on an issue important to so many Canadians, that of vaccine distribution. I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Kenora.

I fully support the premise of this motion. A vaccine represents an opportunity to turn the corner on the COVID-19 pandemic, and the successful deployment of a vaccine is essential to the health, safety and economic security of every Canadian.

The motion before the House today calls for the government to provide a simple status update by December 16 on four things, but it really gets down to three simple questions: when, how, and to whom will vaccines be distributed in Canada? I might be taking a slightly different approach to address these important questions during the debate from some of my colleagues, but there are three main points I want to get across: first, some thanks; second, the importance of, and factors involved in, crisis management and planning; and finally, the importance of clear, transparent communications.

First, I would like to thank the constituents of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for putting me in this position to represent them in these hallowed halls, and to represent all Canadians, especially in a time of crisis.

As well, I would like to thank the government for selecting Major-General Dany Fortin to be vice president of logistics and operations at PHAC, and for requesting 27 additional Canadian Armed Forces members for secondment to PHAC. I had the honour of serving with General Fortin, including during my last few months in uniform in Baghdad, Iraq. He is a phenomenal leader and a great communicator, and possesses all the necessary skills and experience to succeed in this important position.

I acknowledge that today in a press conference, interestingly enough on the same day as we debate this motion asking for more details on vaccine distribution, we heard that approximately three million Canadians should be vaccinated by the end of March, and that suitable cold storage for the 14 distribution points nationwide should be in place by December 14, 2020. This is good news and

should make it much easier for the Liberal MPs and the government to vote in favour of this motion.

Next, I want to focus on what I believe are some important factors and considerations required in crisis planning and management. From 2014-16, I served as the deputy director of planning for all Canadian Forces operations within the Canadian Joint Operations Command. If I were still in that role, I am sure I would be pretty busy today.

What are some of the most important elements in crisis management? Leadership, speed of response, a robust plan, adequate resources, a caring and compassionate response, and an excellent communication plan. If we look at the government's vaccine response to date, I think many Canadians would agree that the government has been lacking in many of these areas.

Leadership and speed of response are all about making quick and effective decisions while managing the time that is available. However, the government has been slow to close the borders, slow to procure PPE and slow to order these vaccines. Now, despite the latest announcement, the majority of Canadians still do not know when they can expect vaccines.

I acknowledge the government's decision to sign procurement deals with multiple vaccine companies. This was prudent. However, prior to today, it was not clear whether Canada had the necessary storage capacity or means of distribution for these vaccines. I am glad to see that we have some additional clarity today.

On November 27, the CDS planning directive for the Canadian Armed Forces in support of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout was released. It is an excellent planning directive, which I think all Canadians expect from the military, but it raises some very concerning questions.

First, why is there no reference to recent strategic political guidance or direction? Without political guidance and direction, the Canadian Armed Forces are required to make planning assumptions. Some of these assumptions within that directive include, first, that the initial shipment will not be on the ground until the first quarter of 2021, and that it will only be enough for a small percentage of the Canadian population. Next, national-level decisions need to be made by PHAC, and those decisions are expected no later than early December, including the need for PHAC to procure the services of a logistics service provider that will be uniquely experienced with the handling of vaccinations.

When are these decisions going to be made? Who is this logistics service provider that PHAC has to tender and get out there, or is PHAC going to sole-source that contract as well?

Business of Supply

As well, it is important to note the assumptions are over two pages long. What is fascinating about that to me, as a military planner, is that if there are two pages of assumptions, that means there is not clarity and clear direction coming from our government.

• (1705)

The question is, why are we so late in the procurement process? Why are there are so many assumptions and a lack of government direction? When will the Canadian military and Canadians receive answers to these questions? Regardless, I am extremely confident in the ability of the Canadian Armed Forces to react accordingly, and they will rise to the occasion in support of all Canadians.

Let us talk about communications. The importance of clear, consistent and timely communications is vital during a crisis. The reason this motion has been introduced, and is being debated today, is because there has been no clear, open, transparent communication on when, how and who will receive vaccines. This lack of detail is creating angst and stress among Canadians across the country. Small businesses, families, seniors and long-term care homes are just looking for clear, consistent answers to these simple questions of when, how and who.

The government has a record, throughout this pandemic, of being consistent in making lots of program announcements but with vague details on when and how Canadians can apply. If we look at the CEBA loan, for example, multiple announcements were made, but it was weeks and months later before Canadians could actually apply for it.

Let us look specifically at the pandemic. I will go back to August, when the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry said that the vaccine rollout would be starting in the fall. An August PMO news release stated it would be in November 2020. Then we got into September, with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement saying early 2021. The Prime Minister, on October 23, said “sometime in the new year”. This goes on and on until even a couple of days ago, when we had the Deputy Prime Minister saying before summer and the Prime Minister saying in the coming months. Today, in the PHAC press release, General Fortin was talking about three million Canadians within the first three months of 2021. Finally, there is some level of detail.

This lack of detail and consistency is increasing stress and impacting the mental health of thousands of Canadians. At a time of increased fear, anxiety and uncertainty, the government should be making clarity and transparency the priority. Canadians have endured enough. We need to get this country working again. We need this country healthy again.

The impact that this is having on mental health alone is astounding. A July 2020 policy advice paper by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health cited a recent poll that found that 50% of Canadians reported worsening mental health since the pandemic began, with many feeling worried and anxious. One in 10 Canadians polled said that their mental health had worsened a lot as a result of COVID-19. In the same policy paper, substance use was also shown to be on the rise because of COVID-19. A recent poll found that 25% of Canadians aged 35 to 54, and 21% of those aged 18 to 34, had increased their alcohol consumption since social distancing and self-isolation measures due to COVID-19 began. Further, a re-

cent Centre for Addiction and Mental Health study found that women, people who had lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic, those who were worried about their personal finances, people with children at home and young people were more likely than others to experience symptoms of anxiety and depression at this time. This data is extremely concerning. It is important that we see all the health impacts that COVID-19 is having on individuals, children, families, businesses and schools, as well as the impact it is having on the economy.

Our motion is simple. It is asking the government to plan and provide clarity on when, how and to whom vaccines will be rolled out to Canadians. I have highlighted so far in this speech that, in crisis management and during pandemics, it is all about leadership, information and sharing that information, which gives truth to power, and providing clear, open, transparent communications. This government must do better on all these fronts for all Canadians. Canadians deserve these answers, and we deserve them now.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention today, and I am glad to see that he is so keen on a vaccine. Unfortunately, I cannot say that this is the case for all members of his caucus. In particular, my neighbour in Hastings—Lennox and Addington is currently the sponsor of a petition that questions vaccines. As a matter of fact, it goes on to call vaccines “human experimentation”.

I wonder why the Leader of the Opposition, when he was questioned by the media today, refused to denounce the petition or even comment on the fact that the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington was sponsoring this petition. He refused to even engage with media on it. I cannot help but wonder if it has something to do with the fact that he is relying on the tens of thousands of potential voters who also are against vaccinations in this manner.

I wonder if the member could comment on that petition. Does he denounce that petition? Does he encourage all Canadians to be vaccinated when Health Canada approves this vaccine?

• (1710)

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, that is an interesting question. Obviously, we live in a free society, so it is up to individual Canadians to decide whether they want to be vaccinated or not.

The last time I checked, we were here today to debate the motion that is in front of the House. If the member opposite has a question on whatever this petition is, I suggest he talk to the member who authorized the petition, not me.

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Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, first and foremost I want to thank my friend and colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for his incredible service to this country over the years. He brings particular knowledge of how we are going to deal with the logistics and organization of the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine across the country.

I would like to ask him this. Could he explain in further detail how the lack of information flow from the Liberal government to the Canadian Armed Forces could hamstring the actual rollout of the vaccine?

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, one of the rules in military planning is a one-third, two-thirds rule: we take one third of the time to do our level of planning and give two thirds to our subordinate organizations. We have a government that has taken arguably 11 months to give direction to the Canadian military to help with this rollout or its procurement. If it is following the one-third, two-thirds rule, is it going to be another 18 months before this plan gets put into place?

My point is this. It is all about time. In my speech I talked about the importance of a timely response, especially in a crisis. It is all about flattening the chain of command, getting information out to all levels of organizations, across all government departments, in order to best support Canadians across this great country.

[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that excellent speech. I know he is very familiar with the workings of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Does he think it would be prudent to avoid raising people's expectations given that Health Canada has not yet approved the vaccine and that it might be irresponsible to give a precise date at this time?

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, and I will try to answer in French.

As I said, in a crisis, it is very important to give all Canadians lots of information.

[English]

Therefore, I personally think we need to get the information out there. If the government does not want to create false hope and disinformation, it needs to get the information out there as quickly and consistently as possible and stay on message. Unfortunately, it has not done that.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to join the debate today in honour of our opposition day motion.

The Conservative Party is asking the government to put forward something and accomplish something that it has been avoiding since this pandemic began, and that is to show Canadians a plan. We are asking the Liberal government to table, by December 16, an update on how each type of vaccine will be safely delivered, stored and distributed to Canadians; when each vaccine type will be deployed in Canada; what rate of vaccination we can expect for each month; how different segments of the population will be prioritized

for vaccines; and how vaccines will be distributed to indigenous communities, armed forces members and veterans.

There is absolutely no reason why the government should not be able to provide this information to Canadians within two weeks. Frankly, I believe the fact that they are not able to provide this information today is incredibly worrisome.

The Liberals know, and all of us in this House know, that Canadians have been waiting with bated breath for a vaccine. They have been reviewing the news and looking for updates on the development of one. They have been speculating on what they might do once they receive a vaccine. The government is well aware, of course, that this is key to defeating the virus, keeping Canadians safe and keeping our economy going.

In fact, this past spring, the Prime Minister himself said, “Normality as it was before will not come back full-on until we get a vaccine”. I believe the Prime Minister said this in April, yet all this time has passed and the government has done very little, if anything, to procure a vaccine, plan for its distribution and ensure that every Canadian who wants one will be able to get one.

The Liberal government has been caught completely unprepared and it is truly showing. Canada has ended up behind the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Mexico, Brazil, India and Indonesia for vaccine procurement. There are over 2.7 billion people in line before Canadians.

What is really troubling is that the Liberals not only do not have a plan to procure vaccines, but they also seem to have no plan on what they will do once we finally do receive them. They have no plan for distributing vaccines to Canadians, and they have no plan for prioritizing who will be able to have access to vaccines first. In fact, in response to a vaccine procurement plan, the Minister of Natural Resources tweeted out a graphic stating this supposed plan. It said, “Every Canadian will have access to an effective and free vaccine once ready.”

That really is not a plan. It, frankly, was not that good of a graphic either, if I do say so myself, but those are the non-answers that Canadians are incredibly frustrated with. As people in the United States and the United Kingdom will begin receiving vaccines as early as next week, the Liberal government is talking about having vaccinations available to most Canadians by September.

As I said, our neighbours to the south and many around the world will be getting their lives back. They will be seeing families again. They will potentially be reopening some of their businesses and returning safely to their jobs. They could be having weddings, graduations, and holiday celebrations. However, in Canada, we will be missing many of those moments, and we will be missing time with our families and our loved ones.

At this pace, Canadians will still be postponing events well into the summer. They will be having to do head counts at weddings and funerals to ensure there are not too many people present.

Business of Supply

The emotional toll of this pandemic is also impacting mental health, as those struggling with mental health issues and addictions will continue to be isolated from many of their support systems. Further, remote first nation communities, like many in my riding, will likely have to keep their borders closed to stop the spread. Many Canadians with loved ones living abroad, or even in other provinces, will remain separated.

Seniors will be expected to content themselves with virtual get-togethers at a time when they could use support from friends and family more than ever. Parents may worry every time they send their kids to school, and students, who are unable to attend in-person classes and who lack reliable Internet, may fall behind or fall through the cracks. Businesses will continue to lose revenue, lay off employees and may potentially close their doors permanently. More workers will lose their jobs, and more families will struggle.

● (1715)

Students and young people will see their careers put on hold, as they graduate into a job market that is one of the worst in history. Tourism operators across the Kenora riding, northern Ontario and Canada will potentially lose yet another season. Many of the airlines that service remote northern communities will not be able to provide that critical service.

Canadians are rightfully concerned. They are rightfully frustrated and disappointed with the Liberal government. Citizens have complied with public health guidelines and regulations, and they have really done their part to combat the virus, but people want their lives back, and they want a plan with some hope from the government on how we can get back to that place.

I do not understand how the Liberals can expect us to be content with the knowledge that we may have an opportunity for a vaccination in 10 months' time. Unfortunately, this is not coming as a surprise to me, many members on our side of the House and many Canadians. After all, the Liberals have bungled this pandemic response since day one.

We know they dropped the ball with rapid testing, where an effective rollout could have avoided some of the pain that Canadians have faced over the last few months. Canadians could have potentially been safely visiting with loved ones. Businesses could have stayed open or reopened, and students could have been feeling safe back at school. The Liberals also dragged their feet on closing the border until it was too late.

In September, the health minister claimed that she had been "fully briefed" on the risk of COVID-19 by December of last year, yet her government sat by and did nothing for months. If the Liberals had implemented travel restrictions or recommended mask wearing when the minister and the government first knew about the severity of this pandemic, lives could have been saved. We could have avoided the economic shutdown that has devastated businesses and families across the country.

Instead, we got nothing but mixed signals and lectures from the government. As I have said, the Liberal government was clearly unprepared for COVID-19, and after all this time, it is clear that it has not learned from its mistakes, because we are still to see an all-important plan.

Canadians should be looking ahead to a recovery right now, but instead we are facing increased restrictions. Many businesses that have invested thousands of dollars in health and safety upgrades to help reduce the risk of transmission and keep everyone safe are not even sure if they will be allowed to operate come the spring time, or if it will be financially possible for them to do so.

The government's approach to this crisis can truly be summed up in a quote from the finance minister in the House. In the chamber a few weeks ago, I stood up and asked the finance minister when we could expect to see a budget and a plan from the government. Her response was that we needed to have patience, but I believe patience is a very privileged position to hold during this crisis.

It is easy for politicians to be patient when our livelihoods have not been impacted, but small business owners watching their lives' work slip between their fingers cannot afford to be patient any longer. Workers who have lost their jobs cannot afford to be patient. Vulnerable Canadians who are afraid to leave their homes cannot afford to be patient.

Canadians have been patient for nearly 10 months. It is time for the government to be transparent, be accountable and bring forward a real plan to guide our country through the next phase of this health and economic crisis. Today's motion would give the government an opportunity to do just that, and I encourage all of my colleagues in the House to support this important proposal.

● (1720)

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am a little puzzled, because the sense I got from the member's presentation was that Canada is suffering badly. Everyone is suffering from COVID, but in terms of per capita mortality and many measures, we are way down the list of countries, so we must be doing something right, as much as it is difficult to handle all of the complex issues that we are struggling with right now.

What would my friend have to say about the fact that, compared to most other countries, Canada seems to be doing very well?

● (1725)

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I would have to respectfully say to my colleague that when we talk to Canadians whose lives have been impacted by this, who have lost family members to COVID-19 or who perhaps have lost their jobs or lost their businesses, I do not think any measures from the government really give them a sense of hope or a feeling that things are going all right.

People's livelihoods have been impacted. They have been stressed about the pandemic. They have been facing an incredibly difficult time. That the government clearly has not been able to bring forward a plan when many other countries already have shows how unprepared the government has been and continues to be. That is why we are bringing forward this motion today, and I encourage that member, everyone on that side of the House, and everyone in this House to support our motion.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, early on in the pandemic, in phase one, it was obvious that we ran into problems because we were not able to produce personal protective equipment. It was a glaring issue with respect to Canada's lack of capacity. Now we are into the vaccine stage, and it has once again shown up as a major issue that we are not able to produce our own vaccines.

In fact, it was the Conservative government that privatized Connaught Labs, which caused this problem and which has exacerbated this problem. Of course, the Liberals did not fix it in all the years that they have been in government.

Given what we have learned today, would the member support the NDP's call to have a public Crown corporation that would make vaccines and critical drugs for Canadians?

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I am somewhat disheartened when I hear from other members in this House who like to spend time criticizing past governments. It really does not matter whether they were Conservative or Liberal. I know that when I talk to constituents in my riding, they do not really care what past governments have done. What they care about right now is what the current government is doing, what current MPs are doing and how we are fighting for them.

That is where my focus is, and I think I speak for everyone in my party when I say that is where our focus is, moving forward. That is why we are bringing forward this important motion, to ensure that the government brings forward a plan, is transparent about that plan, and is moving forward to help combat this virus to keep Canadians safe, get Canadians back to work and keep our economy going.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I tried to ask the previous speaker a question, and I am going to try to get an answer from this member because the previous one would not answer.

The member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington is a sponsor of a petition that refers to the vaccine as a human experimentation. Can this member comment on whether he thinks the vaccine rollout is a human experimentation?

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I do not, and I do not support the premise of that petition.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member said he does not want to talk about the past, but he has just talked about the past 10 months. We cannot learn from history unless we realize what our history is.

Coming back to the question from the hon. member for Vancouver East, does the member regret the privatization of Connaught Labs? We had a lab for 70 years that produced vaccines for people

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around the world at a very low price. It would be doing very well for us right now, if it had not been privatized by the Conservative government. Does the hon. member think that we should be going back to that kind of a model?

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I have been an MP for only one year, but I definitely do not regret any of the decisions I have made in this House, or any of the great work our opposition has done to hold the government to account. We are going to continue to do so, and I hope that all members of the opposition and government members will join us in bringing more accountability and transparency by voting in favour of this motion.

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, we are having an important debate today. I am reflecting on the last little while, after listening to the official opposition stir the pot. Conservatives will often throw out different numbers and dates to try to turn it around and make the government look bad. I guess to a certain degree that is their job as the official opposition. However, having said that, I want to talk about the bigger picture, recognizing just how important this issue is.

If I had been asked four or five years ago, when the Liberals became government with the current Prime Minister, what the number one most important issue was, I would have said, hands down, it was all about Canada's middle class and those aspiring to become a part of it. That was job one. The Prime Minister was very clear on that issue. It was about the middle class. We had to work hard to encourage, promote and support Canada's middle class. I was not surprised because even back when the Prime Minister was the leader of the Liberal Party as the second opposition party in the House, he was advocating for Canada's middle class.

We were doing relatively well. I could go through a litany of policies, from tax breaks for the middle class to supporting the middle class through the Canada child benefit, supporting seniors with increases in the GIS and investments in our infrastructure, all in support of Canada's middle class. That is what I would have anticipated that we would continue to do throughout the years. It is not to say that we have forgotten about the Canada's middle class, as we still focus our attention on it, but in the last 10 months or so, we have had to recognize the impact the coronavirus is having on our society, not just here in Canada but around the world.

As a direct result of the pandemic, we made this the central focus of the Government of Canada. We focused on minimizing the negatives of the coronavirus from day one, and we have not done it alone. We have been looking for partners and to collaborate with whomever was prepared to work with the government in order to battle the coronavirus. It has proven to be exceptionally effective. I do not have a problem doing comparisons between Canada and other nations. I wish all nations well in combatting the coronavirus, but whether it is the leadership of the Prime Minister, the cabinet, the Liberal caucus or any members in the chamber at different points in time, we have seen a lot of good work by working with Canadians.

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The Government of Canada knows that we cannot do it alone. We have worked with provinces, territories, indigenous leaders, non-profit organizations and the private sector from day one in order to minimize the negative impacts of the coronavirus. It has been really encouraging. We have seen some of the results. We saw industries in Canada that did not produce protective gear or the alcohol necessary for hand sanitizers make adjustments in order to produce those things in vast quantities.

• (1730)

Because of the actions of the Government of Canada, working with the different provinces, municipalities and all the other stakeholders, we were able to stay under the first wave that came to Canada as it was crossing the world. We held under that line for the longest time. That enabled different levels of government, including the national government, to be better prepared going into the second wave. Throughout this entire period, we have seen phenomenal efforts in certain areas, which have put us in the position we are in today.

We realize how important the vaccine is. Those who are following or watching this debate can know that when the vaccine is ready we will be ready. Every day, seven days a week, the government is working with a wide spectrum of individuals to make sure that, when we can get our hands on a vaccine that has been approved for the safety of Canadians, it will get distributed. That is of the utmost importance. We recognize that.

I reflect back to March and April and recall some of the discussions that were taking place inside the chamber and the genuine concern with respect to how we would stay under the line. I remember it well. There was a great deal of collaboration. We have seen all sorts of input coming into different departments, departments that were able to make some of those critical changes to programs. We can talk about the CERB program, where literally eight-plus million Canadians benefited as they became unemployed or lost wages. We could talk about the business programs, from leveraging money through banks to the rent assistance program, to one of my favourites the wage subsidy program. These are the types of things we were working on at the very beginning.

Even back then, we knew the importance of the vaccine. We have been working on the vaccine for many months. This should not surprise anyone. After listening to the health experts and looking at the science with respect to what was happening, as a government, we entered into negotiations well before most countries in the world. We are in a far greater and better position as a direct result of a lot of the work that was done back during the early months of the summer, and I would even argue before that.

We often hear about the seven vaccines. Tens of millions of vaccines from seven companies were negotiated by this government. We are starting to see some of the rewards of those negotiations, as we finally see some light at the end of the tunnel.

Members should look at what the Hansard has to say with respect to the whole vaccine debate. It would be interesting to see how many members of the opposition, when they had the opportunity during the summer to ask thousands of questions, actually asked questions, such as what we were doing with respect to vaccine contracts. That is the nice thing about the Hansard.

• (1735)

I suspect Canadians might be a little disappointed in the collective opposition. Hindsight is a wonderful thing. As we get closer and start hearing about the vaccine, now the Conservatives are saying they want the vaccine and want us to give them the date.

How can a date be provided when it has not been approved? Are they trying to say we should set a date and then mandate Health Canada to say that is going to be the date? Do they say politics are more important than the health and well-being of Canadians? It sure sounds like that is what opposition members are saying, because they are saying they want dates. That is what they are arguing for.

Madam—

• (1740)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I'm sorry. There is a point of order.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Speaker, it is common practice in this room not to impugn the reputations of other members. I am listening to my colleague spreading misinformation in regard to what Conservatives may or may not have been thinking and he is talking about whether they need a date—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is actually debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, my friend across the way should read some of the things that his fellow members are actually saying, instead of trying to give the impression that the Conservatives have not been pushing for a date. They have been pushing a great deal for a date.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing to have. One my colleagues made reference to hindsight in a story. The government has been consistent from day one. We were not going to make political decisions, but would rely on experts and on the science. Those are the individuals who are going to put our country in a good position going forward, as they have in the past.

Opposition members say that we were late on recommending masks and ask why we did not recommend masks earlier. The simple answer to that is that we were following the advice provided by health experts. When the health experts said that we should have people wear masks for x, y and z reasons, that is exactly what we said.

At the very beginning masks were not emphasized. Today, they are emphasized. It is not because of politics. It is because of what health experts were saying at the time.

Going back to hindsight, now that we say masks are important, the Conservatives are saying, "Those darn Liberals, they did not say we should have been wearing masks, and we should have been." At the end of the day, we are listening to the science. It is not just Canada.

There is a community around the world that supports fighting the coronavirus, and Canada plays a very important role in that, whether it is the World Health Organization or Health Canada. They provided the necessary information. The departments of health and procurement continue to work together, as does the defence department, the Prime Minister's Office and other departments. All are concerned and all are playing an important role in combatting the coronavirus.

Members have talked about the impact of the coronavirus. We all know the impacts. The previous speaker was talking about the impact on weddings and funerals. I just lost a very close personal friend, Lito Taruc, host on CKJS, who was well loved in the Filipino community and outside that community in Winnipeg. I suspect hundreds, if not thousands, would have showed up to pay their final respects to the family. It was a very difficult time. Lito was only a few years older than myself.

We all understand the impacts. Back in June, we did not have graduation ceremonies. I am used to going to Sisler High School and Maples Collegiate and participating either directly or indirectly, as well as with the Children of the Earth High School, St. John's High School and R. B. Russell Vocational High School.

We had hundreds of graduates, back in June, who did not get the same sort of treatment that they would have received, in terms of those ceremonies, without the coronavirus.

We all know about the weddings that have been put off, cancelled or in some cases that went ahead with much smaller numbers.

• (1745)

It is not just the economy and the money, there is a strong social component to this. All of us, I believe, understand that. We are all anxious to see the defeat of the coronavirus, and the vaccine plays a critical role in that. The government benches understand the importance of getting it out there as quickly as we can, and that is one of the reasons we did not limit our options to one or two suppliers. We secured seven suppliers, with tens of millions of doses, more than enough, cumulatively, to cover our entire population.

We do not know for fact, but we have a good idea today and we will have a better idea tomorrow, which ones are going to get approved and how soon they will actually be able to come to Canada. All that will happen. What is important is that, when it starts to happen, we have something in place that is going to ensure its distribution. We have announced relatively recently, but everyone knows, that members of the Canadian Forces have been participating in fighting the coronavirus for many months. No one is surprised that we would once again turn to our forces to ensure that we have a distribution that is going to be effective for Canadians.

I listen to many of the discussions today, and I do not know to what degree members seem to want to be focused on being critical of Ottawa and the federal government. That is fine. That is fair. They are in opposition, but they also need to realize that it is more than the federal government that ultimately sees the injection into the arm of our constituents. We need provinces, territories and indigenous leaders to also be at the table and a part of the discussions. They are, and they have been there for months.

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The opposition parties say they want to know who is going to get it and when, and which ones are going to be the priorities. Those are very good questions, and provinces have that responsibility. Ottawa continues to work with provinces to ensure that there is some dialogue on the issue. We all have our personal opinions in terms of who should receive it first, but Ottawa will continue to work with provinces and recognize the provinces. There is reason to be optimistic. Members should take a look at the flu vaccine; 16 million doses, during the pandemic, were administered through provinces.

We have good reason to be optimistic that we are going to be able to get the job done and get it done well.

• (1750)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, budget 2017 granted the Minister of Health new fee-setting authorities. Unlike any other department, Health Canada does not have to justify the fees it sets for items that need drug identification numbers or approvals. Health Canada actually must be making a killing with all the times it has been sending applicants back to the drawing board. Maybe that is why it took so painstakingly long for the millions of gallons of hand sanitizer to be approved for distribution to Canadians. We are waiting for rapid testing, and it keeps getting sent back to the drawing board.

Is it because Health Canada is making so much money delaying the approval of these drugs and other items and devices, or is there some other reason the Prime Minister and his government do not want Canadians getting back on their feet and back to work?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Speaker, there is another reason. The member opposite might be okay making political decisions on issues of that nature. We are more confident that Health Canada has the expertise to make good decisions that are in the best interest, from a health perspective, of people who are going to be using these products. We are more dependent on science and health experts to do this.

When they talk about the vaccine, the member makes reference to the fees. One of the nice things that we have been very clear on is that every Canadian who wants and receives the vaccine for COVID-19 is going to be getting it for free.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, we all know this is the season when the wind blows hard in Winnipeg, and I have found a certain parallel in the member's speech.

We heard lots of talk about portfolios of vaccines. We heard lots of talk about bringing people to the table. We heard lots of talk about everything except when people in my riding could expect to get a vaccine.

I am hearing from families who have seniors in long-term care. They want to know when they are going to get vaccinated.

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We have front-line health care workers who work with my partner. They are asking, “When are we going to get vaccinated?”

We have the grocery store workers, who want to know when the vaccine is going to be available.

When we hear figures like 9% or 8% of people being vaccinated by April, it is not good enough for the people in my riding. They do not want to hear more about portfolios of vaccines. They want to hear a plan to get those front-line workers and those seniors at high risk vaccinated in short order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let us just use one of the candidates that has been very successful to date and is looking very promising: Pfizer. We have a contract with Pfizer for millions of doses of vaccine. What the member is implying in his question is that we can say to Pfizer and Health Canada, “Here is the date that we want to tell our constituents”. The member has it wrong.

We have to allow Health Canada to do what it does best and is recognized around the world for doing, and then ensure that we have the proper distribution so that when it gets here it is circulated, and then the provinces have to play a role. Once we get it to the provinces, they have to determine when and who are going to be the top priorities. The member's question could equally be asked from the department of health of British Columbia, for example, as we work with provinces to try to get that vaccine out to people as soon as we can.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech and I see that he is still quite skilled at acrobatics and making it seem as though the government is doing great things.

I will, however, give him two facts on this good working relationship he claims the government has with Quebec and the provinces.

First of all, Quebec has been waiting for two months now for a meeting with the Prime Minister about increasing health transfers. Oddly enough, the meeting that was meant to be on December 5 has been pushed to December 10. Maybe the Prime Minister had a scheduling conflict. However, if the meeting is held on December 10, we will not be able to question the Prime Minister on it before the end of January. It is not a very good example of working together to make the Government of Quebec wait for two months during an unprecedented pandemic. There was a breakdown of that working relationship.

Second of all, the government has not kept up with increases to the health transfers. This is an encroachment on the provinces' and Quebec's jurisdictions. Furthermore, Quebec's health minister sent the federal government a letter to get information about the plan, but he has heard nothing but radio silence.

Does my colleague consider this to be an example of the federal government working together with the provinces and Quebec?

• (1755)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would remind the member that back in August there was a restart program with over \$19 billion. That \$19 billion came through discussions that were taking place between the federal government and the provinces. It was provincial restart money. The Prime Minister, in working with the premiers, continues to take an interest and ensure that there are communication lines.

What the member is specifically asking about is health care transfers, which is a very important issue, there is no doubt about that. I can tell the member that when it comes to the health care transfers, this government has been far more sensitive than the previous government, where there were no first ministers meetings on the issue of health care. Under this administration, there has been dialogue. That dialogue will continue, but our focus today is primarily the coronavirus. There are ongoing discussions through departments of health and first ministers at different levels.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just listened to our colleague across the way, quite loudly, for several minutes, and he had admonished Conservatives ad nauseam for daring to ask for a plan for some certainty before Health Canada possibly approved these vaccines.

I wonder if my hon. colleague can answer this. What was the plan when the Liberals approved the purchase of ventilators from Baylis Medical before Health Canada approved them or will he just yell at me some more?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what happens is the Conservatives will often look under every little pebble, every little rock. However, what they are not interested in is the hundreds of companies that are retooling, getting contracts and helping Canadians get through this crisis. I can assure the member that Conservative businesses have received contracts by this government.

I wonder if we should do some sort of investigation to look at all the Conservative contractors, all the for New Democrat contractors and all the Bloc contractors who have received contracts. We should get them all before a committee and go at them.

Is that the attitude coming from the Conservative Party?

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member just went off on some weird tangent, but I will focus our conversation on the debate.

The reality is that Canada used to have a world-class, publicly owned entity that produced vaccines and prescription drugs, Connaught Labs. It was privatized by the Mulroney government. We can now do something about the future, which is Canada going back to having a publicly owned Crown corporation to produce vaccines and prescription drugs for Canadians.

Is that something the member would support? Is that something to look at in the future to prepare Canadians should there, God forbid, be another pandemic?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member raised a good point. One of the things we have seen with the pandemic are the areas we can improve upon with respect to our industries. We have seen that with PPE or hand sanitizers, as I cited. Canada used to do quite well with respect to the local production of vaccines. Over the last number of months, the government has been looking at a wide variety of options on how we could increase the potential for vaccinations being produced in Canada. That will be an ongoing discussion in the months ahead.

• (1800)

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

I am participating in this debate tonight from my hometown of Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. Right next door to me is the Flying Dust First Nation, one of nine members of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. On the east side of my riding is the Prince Albert Grand Council, which is comprised of 12 first nations. There are also many Métis communities across my northern Saskatchewan riding along with a huge agricultural sector and tourism.

The reason I highlight this is that all our communities, including the first nation and Métis communities in northern Saskatchewan, are looking to the government for a clear and competent vaccine plan, but they are not finding one.

The text of today's motion indicates that “a vaccine is essential to the health, safety, and economic security of every Canadian.” My constituents are now observing countries around the world as they detail their vaccine plans, with real tangible timelines, and are asking where Canada's plan is.

The Prime Minister naively announced on election night in 2015 “Canada is back.” Now we understand just how true those words were. Canada is indeed at the back of the line, behind one-third of the world population, in getting vaccines.

The attack from the Liberals on this is easily predicted, that we as Conservatives are playing politics. It may come as a shock to the Liberals, but as Canada's official opposition, it is indeed our job to push back, to hold government accountable and, in some cases, even oppose and criticize it. Without the great work of my colleagues in the Conservative Party, Canada and Canadians would be much worse off than they are today in the face of this pandemic.

What do I mean by that? In my role as shadow minister for indigenous services, at many times throughout this pandemic I have identified gaps and serious issues facing indigenous people. This began with many indigenous businesses not being able to access the government's wage subsidy program because of the way it was structured. After weeks of fighting, finally the government modified its program and allowed these businesses to access the wage subsidy.

Next was the issue of elections on first nations. As Canada was dealing with the first wave of this pandemic, elections were scheduled to occur, while many first nations were developing public health measures to ensure their people were kept safe. As members can imagine, contrary to what the Liberals clearly want, the height of a pandemic is no time to hold an election. Therefore, I, with the

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help of many, pushed the minister and his department to find a solution. They did. They found the ability to delay these elections in regulations created under the Indian Act.

A few months into the pandemic, I was made aware of a major gap in the government's CEBA loan program, thanks to the excellent advocacy of Tabatha Bull of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, Shannin Metatawabin of the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association and many others. Indigenous businesses do not often use traditional banking systems. Instead, they make use of the many aboriginal financial institutions, AFIs, across Canada. Alongside many stakeholders, we advocated for the government to create the emergency loan program administered through NACCA. It was eventually announced at the end of April, but still businesses could not access it until over two months later.

Let us not forget that it was the Conservative Party that first raised the idea of closing our borders to international travellers. Our concerns were met with scoffs and suggestions of racism from the health minister. Then what happened? The government eventually listened and closed our borders.

In addition to that, it was our party that fought the government to investigate rapid tests after countries around the world started to introduce them for use. The Liberals at the time, which I predict they will again do today, accused us of being too partisan. What happened? Within weeks of us raising it, the government started looking into and approving rapid tests.

It is clear that if it were not for our strong, principled opposition, Canadians would be far worse off than they are today in the face of the second wave of this pandemic. Here we are today once again identifying a major gap in the government's handling of the pandemic, hoping to receive all-party support and finally receive some semblance of a plan from the Liberals.

Getting back to the motion, the Conservatives, and I believe all Canadians, want to know how each type of vaccine will be safely delivered to Canada, stored and distributed to Canadians; the data on which each vaccine type will be first deployed in Canada and the rate of vaccinations anticipated by month; any intended federal guidance with respect to the deployment of the vaccine by priority group, such as front-line health workers and seniors; and, finally, the plan for distribution of the vaccine to indigenous communities, members of the Canadian Armed Forces and veterans.

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• (1805)

For the remainder of my time, I want to focus on the importance of a plan for rural and remote indigenous communities, urban indigenous people and indigenous businesses.

During the first wave of the pandemic, indigenous people experienced far lower positive and mortality rates for COVID-19 because of strong local leadership. While the Liberals were playing politics about closing borders, many first nations did exactly that and were able to control who came into their communities in order to keep their people safe.

It is no secret that there are many unsafe living conditions in many of these indigenous communities across our country. In the face of such adversity, indigenous people weathered the first wave better than any other demographic across the country.

As Canada has experienced the second wave, indigenous communities are now dealing with increased COVID fatigue, leading to people to let their guard down and sometimes make poor decisions, thus increasing the risk to their families and communities. With no plan from the government on when these communities may receive a vaccine, how it will be transported to them and how many doses they will be provided, the leadership in these communities cannot provide hope that this will soon be over. This is precisely why we need a plan from the government.

Eight months ago, I raised the issue of collecting accurate and comprehensive data on urban indigenous people with the Minister of Indigenous Services. The purpose of this would be to reduce jurisdictional wrangling. Unfortunately, as we saw last week, instead of action, the minister decided to point the finger at the provinces and municipalities. Without accurate and comprehensive data on urban indigenous people, how can the government plan to vaccinate this vulnerable population and learn from this pandemic?

My office has been in close contact with the Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan as well as its national organization. These groups have been providing much of the care for urban indigenous populations throughout the pandemic and they also have been advocating for better data so they can continue to provide these high-quality services. Without a plan that includes answers on the how, when and who, these organizations are left to fill the gap on which the government should be providing leadership.

An issue that has become near and dear to me, as I have served in the capacity as shadow minister over the past year, is indigenous businesses. I strongly believe that without true economic reconciliation, Canada's relationship with indigenous people will continue to be one of dependence. We need to put our effort and focus on supporting indigenous entrepreneurs who remain so connected to their nations and allow them to reinvest in their communities to provide real and lasting positive outcomes. That means the Liberals making good on their promise of a 5% procurement target for indigenous businesses.

The government cannot continue to operate in silos. This need to be a whole-of-government approach across all departments. Out of all the contracts awarded to businesses across Canada to produce PPE, the fact that indigenous businesses made up less than 1% is

unacceptable, especially when hundreds of indigenous businesses lined up to be providers.

Indigenous businesses, like all businesses, need a level of certainty in order to successfully operate and make continued investments. As I pointed out, the government has done a poor job in supporting indigenous businesses throughout this pandemic and now, as these businesses are again looking for a plan, they are seeing a government with no plan.

In speaking with indigenous business stakeholders this week, we heard concerns regarding the lack of a mention of indigenous entrepreneurs in the fall economic statement. This has led them to be very disappointed and concerned with their ability to even survive a second wave, instead of focusing on the critical role they could be playing in the economic post-pandemic recovery.

That is why it is so important today that we pass this motion to provide these businesses and all Canadians some semblance of certainty during this difficult time.

• (1810)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, in light of what is happening with the pandemic, we know that we are going to be short on the vaccine in the beginning. So far, what we have learned from the government is that approximately about three million vaccines will be made available to Canadians. Of course, in meeting the basic needs, whether it be seniors in long-term care facilities or health care providers, that is not going to be sufficient.

In addition to that, I am gravely worried about those who have other pre-existing conditions, such as the people in the Downtown Eastside in my riding, the people who are underhoused and homeless at the moment. Many of them are very challenged. In fact, the Downtown Eastside now has the highest rate of COVID infection in the entire city.

To that end, I wonder whether the member will support a call for action for the federal government to ensure that front-line workers and those who are most vulnerable, including those with pre-existing conditions, have access in priority to the vaccine.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Madam Speaker, I find myself a little bit surprised that I agree with the hon. member in this particular case. We have been working with many groups representing urban and indigenous people over the last 10 months and I fully agree.

In my comments in my speech, I talked much about getting the data, about trying to remove the jurisdictional quagmires that we find many of these people in. The government likes to point to the provinces and say that those people are their responsibility, so what we end up with is people falling through the cracks. We have been advocating for the data to ensure that these vulnerable people do not fall through the cracks. I 100% agree that applies to the distribution of vaccines as well.

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, in Winnipeg North, I would estimate that there is probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of about 20,000 people of indigenous background.

When my colleague talks about jurisdictional responsibilities, what are his thoughts about administering the vaccine in regard to that component? It is a very personal question for me, as there are just under 20,000 indigenous people who live in Winnipeg North.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Madam Speaker, that is an important question. What I would suggest to the member is that it is important for the federal government to have that conversation with the leaders at the provincial level to ensure that, as part of the plan, there is an exact clarity on who is going to take responsibility for some of these people who sometimes fall through the cracks due to jurisdictional wrangling.

It would be imperative that the federal government initiate conversations with the leaders at the provincial level and bring clarity to that as part of the planning process before it happens. We need to be proactive, not reactive.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague touched on a few very important issues regarding this debate. I would just ask for his comments in regard to why it is important that Canadians have certainty in regard to vaccines and their distribution, and clarity on how we go forward for all Canadians, including many of the communities that he represents in northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Madam Speaker, that is an important question.

I would frame it really very simply. People are at a place in their journey with COVID fatigue and frustrations with lockdowns where they need to be given hope so that they can see the light at the end of the tunnel. They need to be given hope so that they will maintain diligence in ensuring that they take the proper safety precautions and adhere to the measures that are put before them to keep their families safe.

The certainty and clarity resulting from what we are asking for today in this motion would actually provide hope to those people. That hope will be what keeps them going through the rest of this.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech. He spoke very eloquently about what is happening in his region.

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Today, I will try to provide an update on the situation we are facing, particularly in Quebec, nine months after the beginning of the lockdown and nearly a year after the start of this pandemic that has completely changed our lives and the lives of people around the world.

Let us remember the first images that we saw on television of Wuhan, China, when the virus first appeared. We were watching that from afar, from our living rooms or kitchens. We were wondering what was going on. It seemed outrageous. We never thought, at that time, that the virus would make its way across oceans and infect people all over the world. It was far away and we were not worried. They were just images on TV.

While the world was watching what was happening in China, we would have expected our leaders, here in Canada, who knew a little more than the rest of us, who were watching what was happening in China from our living rooms and kitchens, to look ahead and take action to protect Canadians living here in Canada and around the world.

Let's recall what actually happened. Canadians were stuck on cruise ships. Canadians could not get home to Canada. How many cases involving Canadians did we have to deal with in our constituency offices when they were unable to return to Canada because there were no planes? Let's remember everything that happened early on. Plants closed and people started working from home. Who would have imagined that, overnight, downtown areas would empty out and people would start working from home? Let's remember the outbreaks, the closures of long-term care centres, the deaths at long-term care centres, the deaths in hospitals.

We really got to know our first ministers, both of the provinces and of Canada, through daily press conferences. The Prime Minister of Canada held a press conference on his front steps every day. We hung on his every word. MPs and all Canadians were wondering what was going on. We were waiting for news. We wanted to know what was happening.

Information is important in a pandemic. People fear uncertainty. They want to trust their elected officials and their leaders to make decisions. They want to know that someone, somewhere, is in control. They want to know that someone, somewhere, is taking the reins.

Let's not forget that schools and day cares closed. Parents did not know what to do with their children and ended up forced to stop working to take care of their children at home. It is not that the parents do not like that, but when they cannot earn money to take care of their children, that is a problem.

Let's not forget the travel restrictions, everyone who had booked trips, the harm done to travel agencies.

We all remember the images of the toilet paper shortages and people who were running around to get toilet paper because someone somewhere said that there might be a shortage. That caused a rush on toilet paper. It was worth more than gold at the time.

Business of Supply

Seniors were confined to their homes. Students were learning remotely. Proms were cancelled. That may not seem like much, but a prom comes around once in a young person's life. Their entire high school education leads up to the prom, which was cancelled, postponed until fall, then cancelled again. Finally, there were none. Students are waiting for their diploma, but at least they will get one. No one really knows how. Nonetheless, there will be no event to mark the end of their high school education.

We learned to keep our distance, wear a mask, and wait and wait and wait. Nine months in, where are we at?

Today, the Premier of Quebec announced that family gatherings will not be allowed in Quebec this Christmas. Restaurants, movie theatres and gyms are closed. There are no more group activities. Health measures were more relaxed for several months, but now they are getting stricter because, unfortunately, the COVID-19 case count is rising.

I would like to take two minutes to applaud the resilience of business owners. Restaurant, bar and movie theatre owners, and business owners in general, have had to go through this whole crisis without really knowing what would happen next.

● (1820)

One day, they are allowed to open. They invest, they do more to protect themselves, and then they are forced to close again. They do not know what is going to happen. Fortunately, MPs did the right thing and voted for measures to help them. That does not change the fact that these people do not want to be helped. What they want is to serve people. They want to do what they are good at. That is what they want, and that is what keeps them alive. Unfortunately, it is not working. I want to salute the people who work for these businesses and sometimes have to deal with people who are not all that patient. These employees have to enforce mask-wearing, and that is not always easy, but that is the situation we are in right now.

Quebec's numbers are frightening, with 150,000 confirmed cases and nearly 7,500 deaths. There are red zones everywhere, and people are experiencing mental health problems.

In a recent poll by the Ordre des psychologues du Québec, 86% of psychologists said they have seen a rise in psychological distress and an exacerbation of their clients' symptoms. Anxiety and depressive symptoms are more pronounced in psychologists' clients, and domestic violence is on the rise. With statistics like these, we would have expected the Liberal government to take the lead from day one and make Canadians' health this government's top priority. Unfortunately, that was not so, and the government was slow to react.

The Minister of Health allowed the pandemic early warning system to be shut down a few months before the outbreak. The government sent hundreds of thousands of masks, gloves and gowns from government stockpiles to China. Within a month, we had a shortage here. The government refused to close our borders, allowed the virus to spread across the country and dithered about whether or not masks should be worn in Canada. At the very outset, the Minister of Health declared several times that the risk was low. Tell that to the regions in the red zone today, where everything is closed.

The government was slow to implement federal assistance programs and, above all, to fix them when the opposition parties called for major changes that would help everyone. We are on the ground, and we know what is happening in our ridings.

Now our allies are going to get the vaccine before we do. That is the reality. From the outset, the Liberals put their trust in a partnership with China. While other countries were getting organized, we were waiting for our vaccines. We found ourselves no further ahead. Canada was left out to dry because the agreement with China failed.

This was to be expected, since the writing was on the wall. However, the government put all of our eggs in one basket. While other countries were signing multiple agreements and securing their place at the front of the line for vaccines, we had to go to the back of the line and wait. Sure, we managed to buy millions of vaccines. The government is constantly talking about a portfolio of available vaccines and saying that there are 50 or 100 vaccines per Canadian. I do not know what today's number is. The first and second vaccines are the most important ones, not the 10th or 25th. When will we get the vaccines?

The motion we moved today is simple. It calls on the government to give us and Canadians some information. Since a vaccine is the only way to put an end to red zones and social distancing, the only way to give Canadians their lives back, it makes sense that they would want answers from the government about the vaccination plan. It would also make sense for the government to give us an approximate date and answer our questions.

If the government does not answer our questions, the only thing it could mean is that it is trying to hide something. It means that it is hiding something from Canadians.

I invite everyone to read the motion. There is nothing partisan about it. We are just asking the government to answer the questions "when", "where" and "who", so that Canadians are better informed. This is not about creating false hope. It is simply about giving us the facts so that we know what to expect and can make arrangements accordingly.

If the Liberals vote against this motion, it is surely because they have things to hide from Canadians. We are just asking them to do the right thing, give Canadians the facts and vote in favour of the motion we moved today.

Business of Supply

• (1825)

[English]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, we heard during some of the other speeches today that premiers across Canada are very concerned with their lack of information. We have heard quotes from Scott Moe in Saskatchewan and Doug Ford in Ontario, and certainly from the Premier of Quebec and premiers in the Atlantic provinces as well.

With the lack of information, does it not seem that the Liberal government is setting up the provinces to fail? They do not have access to the important information about when vaccines are going to be available and how they will be distributed.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: I hope not, Madam Speaker.

[English]

If that is the case, it is scandalous.

[Translation]

I cannot believe that the government thinks that way, but that is what all the signs point to. Why is the government not answering the provinces? Why is it not answering the legitimate questions from the provinces, which are the ones responsible for administering the vaccine through nurses and doctors? The health care system is provincial.

These people all deserve answers because they need to get organized and decide how to administer the vaccine. If they do not know how many doses they will get or when, they cannot get organized. That will lead to failures, but they will be the Liberal government's failures, not the provinces'.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I assure the member across the way that the Government of Canada, through its departments, in particular health, is in constant dialogue with the provincial jurisdictions. It is absolutely critical that territories, provinces and Ottawa work together, because ultimately that is how vaccines are going to be delivered.

Could he provide his thoughts on how important it is that this sort of ongoing collaboration continues in a positive fashion?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I want to ask the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader why the provinces are complaining in the media that they do not have information if those discussions are indeed taking place and if there is so much communication between the federal and provincial governments. Why are the premiers saying they are not getting answers from Ottawa? That is the real question.

The government keeps saying that there are channels of communication and they are working seven days a week, 24 hours a day, but the provinces do not seem to know that. There is a substantial gap between the rhetoric and the action on the ground.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. I would like to ask him about the federal government's vision and the Conservative vision. Allow me to explain.

Canada and Quebec were once scientific research hotspots. Sadly, that is no longer the case, and that is one reason we find ourselves in the unfortunate position of having to wait for a vaccine.

More specifically, there used to be federal programs for partnerships with the pharmaceutical industry, including technology partnerships Canada, the TPC. Who abolished it in 2005? The Liberals. Who wiped it out completely in 2007? The Harper government. That is why I want to ask my colleague about the Conservative vision. Are the Conservatives saying no to science and yes to casting aspersions on science?

There is more. In this morning's Toronto Star, the member for Durham, the Conservative Party leader, avoided questions about the antivaccine e-petition sponsored by the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington, who seems to want to make sure there will be no vaccine. I am laughing, but I am trying to be serious about this. What is the Conservative stance on science?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks of today's motion, namely that we are calling on the government to tell us "how each type of vaccine will be safely delivered to Canada" and when. Will it be 2020, 2021, 2022?

Unfortunately, I am not interested in knowing today what happened in 2005, and I really do not care. I want my constituents and Canadians to be the first or among the first to receive the vaccine. Why am I saying this? It is because if they do not receive the vaccine, there will not be an economic recovery. That is what matters. Therefore, I invite my colleague to read the motion properly and to support it, because it is important to all Canadians.

• (1830)

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue

Before I begin, I would like to talk about what appears to be the government's attempt at communication. Every time that we ask the government a question, we are told that we are looking to pick a fight. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons used that logic again today, during question period, saying that we were trying to pick a fight instead of working together.

All I want to say is that the motion our Conservative colleagues moved today is about working together, because it is seeking more information on vaccines, and this information is vital to keeping everyone safe. I say this simply as a little warning. I am not trying to pick a fight with my speech. I am looking to point out the blind spots that the government unfortunately missed.

Business of Supply

In that respect, I could begin by saying that I heard the parliamentary secretary to the government leader say to the leader of my party when he gave his speech that we have never asked questions about vaccine development. That surprised me because one example of the government's inaction is the case of Medicago. I remember making many representations in that regard because Medicago received a letter of intent from the Liberal government in March, but we had to make many representations before the government finally sent Medicago the confirmation of its financial support in July. It took four months.

Today, Medicago, the only company conducting pharmaceutical research in Quebec, is four months behind. That is symptomatic of what we are seeing today. It is a form of inaction on the part of the government with regard to the vaccine and the consistency needed to support the vaccination process.

Earlier, my Conservative colleague talked about something that I also wanted to bring up. He talked about a lack of information. If there is one thing that is key to making people feel safe in a pandemic, it is information.

There are two dimensions to this crisis. As we see it, the first is to keep workers safe. That is what was done in a collaborative effort when we created the Canada emergency response benefit and the emergency wage subsidy. We got lots of calls at our offices from people who were worried and wanted to know how it was supposed to work. The work we were doing was about keeping them safe. Now we are getting the same kind of calls because there is another dimension—

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I believe poor sound quality is making interpretation difficult.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is the member on the French channel? Would he please check that his headset is properly plugged in?

Mr. Mario Simard: Yes, I am on the French channel. I unplugged my headset and plugged it back in. Is it working now?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Yes, it is working.

The hon. member.

● (1835)

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, there are two dimensions to this crisis. The first is to keep our workers safe, and, with our collaboration, the government managed to do that by introducing the CERB and the wage subsidy.

The other dimension concerns health infrastructure, including the search for a vaccine. During the first wave, we received many calls from our constituents who wanted information on the CERB and the wage subsidy. Unfortunately, when it comes to vaccination, we have a big problem, because we cannot properly inform our constituents, who have very legitimate concerns.

Another rather crucial element is the fact that, without clear guidance on vaccination, I do not think it is possible to foresee a

return to normal. Earlier this week, the government presented an economic statement without any recovery plan. I hope that will come soon, but we cannot think about economic recovery without a vaccine.

If Canada goes last, which appears to be the case, our economic recovery will be delayed and getting life back to normal for the entire population will happen more slowly. We therefore need clear guidance as soon as possible.

Thinking back on the government's actions on health and what it has been saying these past few days, I thought of a rather simple principle that is used in the health sector, the precautionary principle. It means rapidly taking concerted action when confronted with danger or elevated risk. It emphasizes being proactive, not reactive.

It seems to me that the government did not apply the precautionary principle when it comes to the vaccine. We are faced with two major questions that remain unanswered by the government: when will the vaccine be available to all Quebecers, and how will it be administered?

The question of when is still a grey area. I will come back to that. The question of how is also a grey area, since we do not know how the vaccine will be distributed to the provinces. Has the government decided to distribute the vaccine based on the number of cases or based on the available infrastructure? We have no idea. This planning is the federal government's responsibility.

That is what is shocking. The government is interfering in areas of jurisdiction where it does not belong. One example is how, in its economic statement, the government is proposing \$1 billion to support long-term care homes by imposing Canada-wide standards. This is an area of provincial jurisdiction, not federal.

The government is intervening and maybe applying that precautionary principle in these areas of jurisdiction that do not belong to it, but it is not doing anything to sort out when and how to procure the vaccine. This is cause for concern and confusion for many Quebecers, and many Canadians too, I am sure.

With respect to the question of when, earlier this week, I heard the Prime Minister say that a majority of Canadians would be vaccinated by September. For a sovereignist, a majority means 50 plus one, or 51%. What kind of majority is the government talking about? Is it 51%, 60% or 70% of the population? That is another pretty big grey area.

The government also said that potentially by March 31 next year, 700,000 Quebecers would be vaccinated, which is 8% of the population. Once again, we do not know how Quebec will get these vaccines from the government. The federal government itself does not seem to know.

Three large companies are the furthest along in their vaccine research: Moderna, Pfizer and AstraZeneca. However, the federal government does not seem to know where it stands in the order of precedence. The Prime Minister told us that we rank high with Moderna, but we do not know where we stand with Pfizer or AstraZeneca. We are completely in the dark about when and how the government will procure the vaccine.

• (1840)

I would like to highlight something else I found quite shocking. On Tuesday of this week, the Prime Minister announced that \$126 million would be invested to increase Canada's domestic vaccine manufacturing capacity through the National Research Council of Canada. I quote: "Once a vaccine is proven to work, we'll also need to be able to produce and distribute it here at home."

The Prime Minister said this on Tuesday, but that is not when he should have said it. The government should have said it in April. This brings us back to the precautionary principle I mentioned. We already knew in April that pharmaceutical companies were well on their way to finding a vaccine. It was then that the government should have invested in the infrastructure needed to produce it ourselves. What made the government act only on Tuesday instead of in April? That is a rather important question.

We also know that the COVID-19 vaccines are made using a new technology. We knew that in April. We knew that our facilities in Quebec and in Toronto, the two major facilities capable of producing vaccines in Canada, did not have the required infrastructure. The government took no action before Tuesday, when it made this \$126-million announcement. That means that we lost eight whole months when vaccines could have been made here.

Do I have any time remaining, Madam Speaker?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I can see that the member has more to say, and I am certain that he can finish up in questions and comments.

[English]

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would simply ask for the member's comments on how the government seems to be making this a hyperpartisan issue when the motion is quite clear. We simply want clarity for all Canadians on this very important issue—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We lost part of that.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Jonquière.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, at the beginning of my speech, I said that we are starting to hear the same old tired rhetoric in the House. As soon as we question the government's decisions, we are told that we are trying to pick a fight and that we do not want to collaborate anymore.

Business of Supply

I think the best way for the government to collaborate is to give us a clear indication of when and how the vaccines will be distributed. The government needs to stop playing partisan games that seem to me to be an attempt to hide its inaction.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important to point out that there is and has been collaboration by the federal government. It is working with the different departments, particularly health, and the provinces to ensure that once the vaccines have been approved and are ready, Canadians will have access to them. That involves a great deal of collaboration, and I am glad to say that collaboration is taking place.

The health and well-being of Canadians is our first priority moving forward on vaccines, and we will continue to work with provincial jurisdictions, the Canadian Forces and the many stakeholders to ensure that Canadians will be well served during the vaccine's distribution.

• (1845)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I did not really hear a question in what the parliamentary secretary said.

I understand that the Liberals want to work with the provinces. The big problem is that they focused their actions on the wrong targets. In seeking to apply standards to seniors' residences, they are infringing on an area of jurisdiction that does not belong to them, and they are forgetting to do what they should be doing, which is to procure a vaccine and ensure that we have the infrastructure to produce it. The Liberals are not doing their own job.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to apologize. I am sticking to the English channel to make the translation work better. This is a fairly technical question, so I hope the member will forgive me.

We have talked in this place about access to vaccines, and the fact that federal funding, and government funding all around the world, has gone to private sector companies that now plan to reap the profits of the public investment.

Is the member aware of a move, from South Africa and India, for a vote at the World Trade Organization next week for a waiver from the onerous patent requirements under the TRIPS Agreement: the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. Green Party members certainly support a waiver so that more countries, particularly developing countries, can manufacture their own vaccines and bring down the price.

Does the Bloc Québécois have a view on this move to make vaccines more available as common intellectual property and not just for the profits for big pharma?

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I do not have enough information to take a stand on that issue, although I do tend to be in favour of what is known as open research, which can benefit everyone.

I want to stress one thing. In the 2000s, we had a sizeable cluster of pharmaceutical companies in Quebec, but unfortunately the Liberal and Conservative governments cut technology partnerships Canada, which meant that, in the space of just five years, all those major players disappeared from Quebec.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Jonquière for a very good speech. I would like to talk a bit more about those pharmaceutical companies, and I'm drawing inspiration from the open letters my colleague from Joliette published. He published another one just this week in *L'aut'journal*.

Recently, the Government of Canada admitted that the U.S., the U.K. and Germany would start vaccinating their populations in December 2020, whereas Canada would have to wait until the first months of 2021. Why will Canada be starting the process months after the others? It is hard to know, because the Government of Canada signed confidential agreements with pharmaceutical companies that put Quebecers and Canadians in line behind the Americans, Brits and Germans. That is why the Bloc Québécois demanded that the federal government agree to the Government of Quebec's request for more information about how we will be getting the vaccine.

The Government of Quebec and the Bloc Québécois want to understand why Canada did not get any guarantees for priority processing of its orders. Why did it not align its approval process with those of the vaccine-producing countries in order to synchronize timelines? Why will Quebecers not be vaccinated at the same time as the rest of the world? Why is Canada unable to come up with a solution to Canada's vaccine production and licensing capacity so that the vaccine could be produced in Canada on a tight deadline? Above all, why did the Prime Minister give a false impression about how quickly the vaccine would be available in Canada?

Upon closer examination of the Government of Canada's decisions and actions, it is hard to know whether there is a real plan for vaccination and, more importantly, whether there is any willingness to increase vaccine manufacturing capacity in Canada, particularly in Quebec, with Medicago, a Quebec-based pharmaceutical company that has the capacity to meet the demand for vaccination with other international pharmaceutical labs.

That is why the Bloc Québécois demanded that the federal government agree to the Government of Quebec's request for more information about the decisions and actions of the Government of Canada. With former Bill C-13, the federal government had established the legal framework required to ensure that pharmaceutical companies could produce a competitor's vaccine without having to wait for a licence. However, Ottawa backed out after the first step. Lastly, the Prime Minister gave false impressions.

I will now speak about the destruction of our pharmaceutical industry because it is worthwhile delving into this issue. I would like

to remind my colleagues in the House of Commons that just a few years ago, Quebec had the capacity to develop and sell vaccines. For decades, Quebec was a world leader in the pharmaceutical sector. In Longueuil, Laval and Montreal, in the metropolitan area, large pharmaceutical companies were well established in Quebec.

Under the Government of Quebec's requirements, Canada was collaborating with the Government of Quebec to develop a true pharmaceutical cluster. At the time, the pharmaceutical industry in Quebec was thriving, with many start-ups. The governments of Canada and Quebec were providing economic incentives and policies favouring the development of large laboratories, as well as local manufacturing of innovative drugs. Hundreds, thousands, even tens of thousands of start-ups, SMEs and jobs were being created.

In the 1980s and 1990s, through the collaboration between the federal and Quebec governments, Quebec built a true pharmaceutical cluster, but as usual, the federal government simply destroyed Quebec's pharmaceutical cluster in the 1990s and the 2000s.

It was the Liberal Party that started the destruction in the 1990s by reducing patent protections for pharmaceutical companies operating in Canada. The Liberal Party then suspended Technology Partnerships Canada, a risk-sharing investment program. When the Conservatives returned to power in the 2000s, Stephen Harper simply finished what the Liberals had started by abolishing the program.

From then until 2012, all of the big pharmaceutical laboratories in Quebec shut down one after the other. Once again, Quebec was abandoned by Ottawa. Meanwhile, the Liberals and the Conservatives chose to favour pharmaceutical companies in Ontario at the expense of those in Quebec. I should also point out that the pharmaceutical companies in Ontario have always contributed significant amounts to Liberal and Conservative election campaigns. Both the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party were responsible for Ottawa's choice to stop investing in pharmaceutical companies in Quebec.

● (1850)

That is why, even though the Government of Quebec wanted to develop its pharmaceutical cluster on its own, it simply could not keep this industry competitive in the face of global competition. What kind of dynamic growth would we have seen in Quebec's pharmaceutical industry? What kind of expertise would Quebec have now? I believe that this industry would still have been one of the best in the world. It would surely be in the process of manufacturing a vaccine. That vaccine might even have been approved by now, and we would have been vaccinated.

Business of Supply

Once again, Ottawa undermined an important industry in Quebec. Once again, Quebec had a world-class pharmaceutical industry, but Ottawa kept dragging Quebec down. Once again, Quebec's expertise was world-renowned, but Ottawa kept plundering Quebec's industry to help Ontario's. It is always the same old story with Ottawa.

As we saw with the shipbuilding, auto and forestry industries, and as we are currently seeing with the aerospace industry, Ottawa continues to drag Quebec down. Quebec gives half of its tax revenue to Ottawa, but Quebecers have a bad feeling that they are paying for the destruction of Quebec's most successful businesses with their own money. They have felt that way for far too long. We see it happening with the decisions made by the Liberal and Conservative parties, which do not really care about Quebec's economic development.

I think it is worth mentioning these industries. It has been said that this was a missed opportunity and that there has been a decline in the pharmaceutical industry in Quebec. We were once one of the major world centres. In the early 2000s, we had seven big private pharmaceutical labs in Canada, six of which were located in Quebec. They were Merck Frosst, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Witten A.R., Shire BioChem, Boehringer Ingelheim and AstraZeneca, whose vaccine is currently undergoing approval.

In 2006, the best year for Quebec's pharmaceutical sector, investments totalled \$600 million. Six big pharmaceutical companies had research centres that employed 8,100 people. The pharmaceutical sector had 21,000 employees.

All the big pharmaceutical laboratories subsequently closed their doors. Now, the pharmaceutical industry is one-third smaller. Several major researchers have left the country. Several small pharmaceutical companies were bought out for their patents, and their products are now manufactured abroad. That is the crux of the problem.

If this had not happened a dozen or so years ago, the vaccine could surely have been manufactured in Quebec and Canada. The pandemic might have been over by now, and we would have been able to leave our homes. We could have spent Christmas with our families. The Liberals and the Conservatives bear a certain responsibility for this.

● (1855)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague, but I would like to start by reminding him that the vaccines slated for distribution in the U.K. next week are being made in Belgium.

I think the people tuning in are wondering when Canada will take action and when the Liberal government will tell people at what point the country will finally get a vaccine. It is almost Christmas, and nothing is certain. Today, we learned that there will be no small gatherings in Quebec.

Would my colleague tell us how this delay in getting the vaccine will affect his community, the fight against the pandemic, and a future return to cruising speed once the country is back on track?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

It will have a huge effect. I am lucky enough to live in a yellow zone in Abitibi-Témiscamingue. We can have a more or less normal social life. However, my in-laws are in the eastern townships, and I am worried because I just found out today that I cannot go visit them. If we had the vaccine, if we had the capacity to manufacture the vaccine, if we had planned ahead, we could probably be seeing our neighbours and families.

I am also worried because Canada's chief public health officer, Dr. Theresa Tam, asked that we start by vaccinating seniors, health care workers, essential workers and members of the most vulnerable communities, such as indigenous people. As we know, several families often share one dwelling in indigenous communities, which is very dangerous for spreading a virus. I am very worried when the government says that just six million doses will be available in a few months, because I think that means that we will still be dealing with this pandemic for a long time.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, ultimately the distribution and that priority list are done through the provinces for most, if not virtually all, that is being suggested. Ottawa does play a role, as our health care experts will provide some opinions. I offer that in a positive way to my colleague across the way.

At the same time, I would ask him to look at the different restrictions such as different codes and different jurisdictions in Canada. Canada is a big country and there are a lot of restrictions. Unfortunately, it will have an impact, but I do not believe it is appropriate to start blaming political parties. I believe we have seen a great deal of collaboration from different political parties and different levels of government to try to ensure that people would have the best Christmas we can this year. There is no vaccine today.

● (1900)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his comments.

I am going to act in good faith and point out the good things that were done this fall.

The government announced \$126 million for the creation and production of vaccines by the National Research Council in Montreal. Obviously, production will not be able to start for six months. The government announced its intention to inject up to \$173 million in Medicago and set up a production facility. In the best-case scenario, these vaccines could be developed and released in 2021.

Adjournment Proceedings

The message I would like to send my colleague from Winnipeg North is that the government dropped the ball this time. It was the first strike, but what will happen the next time? We can expect another pandemic, we can perhaps expect a third wave, and we can expect another type of pandemic like COVID-19.

Will the government be able to step up the next time if it brings back the cutting-edge pharmaceutical system that used to exist in Quebec? I am certainly in favour of that.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 7:02 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth with every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion. If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, we would like a recorded vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, September 23, the division stands deferred until Monday, December 7, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[Translation]

I want to inform the House that, because it is getting late, the period provided for private members' business is cancelled. The order is therefore deferred to a future sitting.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House, you might find unanimous consent to call it 7:17 p.m. at this point so we could get on to the late show.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Do we have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has been a bit of a custom of mine over the last couple of weeks, during Adjournment Proceedings, to bring good news to the House, and tonight is no exception.

My sister and her husband, just last week, welcomed their first-born. Beatrice MacDonald was born to my sister Allie and her husband Kyle MacDonald. I am so excited to welcome Beatrice here in Canada's House, and I want to congratulate Allie and Kyle and thank all the health care professionals: the staff, nurses and doctors

at the Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital who allowed Beatrice to arrive safely and took good care of my sister.

We know what a challenging year this has been for our health care professionals, and they did not let it show. With professionalism and great care, they took care of my family and my newest little niece. It is really important that I have the opportunity to mention that to the House this evening.

An hon. member: Time.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Now I do want to talk about time, and I thank my colleague for mentioning that.

For over 40 hours, we had Liberal members filibuster committees to prevent the truth. Opposition members wanted to continue the work that parliamentarians had agreed to undertake during the beginning of this Parliament's first session.

What happened? The WE Charity scandal gripped Parliament. It gripped this country, and on the eve documents were to be released, the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament, shutting it down for six weeks and saying there would be all kinds of time to answer those questions when Parliament resumed. The Liberals just needed time for a reset to give their new vision for Canada.

The second verse was the same as the first. We heard promises that dated back to 1993 that they have not been able to keep. I would have been about nine years old the first time they tried some of those commitments. Maybe on the 15th attempt they will get it right, but we are not optimistic.

Canadians will see, south of the border, our American neighbours start getting vaccinated next week. The same will occur in the European Union, in the United Kingdom and in many, many other countries. Canadians wonder when we are going to get a vaccine. They wonder what the plan is. They wonder what is going to happen next year.

The government continues to introduce legislation hastily and then seek the unanimous consent of the House. I am proud to say Her Majesty's loyal opposition has supported important measures to help Canadians during these times, but it is really no thanks to planning on the part of the government. It wasted those six weeks during its prorogation cover-up. It wasted 40 hours at the ethics committee, dozens of hours at the finance committee and many hours at other committees.

What are the Liberals so desperate to hide that they are not willing to get to work, roll up their sleeves and introduce a plan for Canadians?

● (1905)

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, first, let me congratulate my friend on becoming an uncle yet again. He may have other brothers and sisters who have children as well. My congratulations to the parents of special baby Beatrice.

We have had dialogues in the past and this evening we are talking about a few issues. The member makes reference to filibusters, he talked about the prorogation, he talked about the government bringing in legislation and wanting to rush it through.

We have been talking a lot about the MAID issue, which is very important. It is a life-and-death matter. The member nodded his head in the affirmative, recognizing just how important that legislation is. However, we have a Superior Court in Quebec with a deadline that is coming up, and we see the Conservatives conducting a filibuster on this important legislation. Now, they will say that they want to have more time, but we have been debating the issue of assisted death for many years now. There have literally been hundreds of hours of debate, committee hearings and so forth. With this pending deadline, we are now hoping to get the bill into third reading as early as tomorrow, yet the Conservatives are filibustering. I guess they would argue that is a good filibuster.

The member talked about the prorogation. I do not know how he calculates more than three days, because, in theory, we were supposed to come back on September 21 and we ended up coming back on September 23. Keep in mind, we sat for four days inside this House where we literally had hundreds if not thousands of questions to the government during the summer. I think that there has been a net gain for the official opposition and other opposition parties in terms of being able to ask questions.

There is always the opportunity for opposition to work with the government. I like the word “collaboratively”. At one time, I think there was a higher sense of collaboration, and the member is right in the sense that, on the coronavirus, which I spoke earlier today about and I know how important that issue is to Canadians, we are constantly looking for collaboration. We have been receiving collaboration from all over Canada, from other levels of government, such as municipalities and provincial and territorial governments, indigenous leaders, and non-profits. There are so many sectors working with the government, and even the Conservatives, to a certain degree, have. However, when it comes to the vaccination issue, I think we may see the Conservative wanting in terms of being a little more creative in providing better solutions or ideas on distribution, keeping in mind the federal responsibilities working with provinces and so forth. We will get there, because we are listening to the health care experts and science on this issue.

• (1910)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his comments.

This government has clearly been in no hurry to pass legislation. The official opposition asked the government to have regular sittings in a hybrid format throughout the summer, and that the House not rise for the summer. We did not ask to sit for four days, but to sit throughout the summer, and the government could have advanced other legislation at that time. However, there was no agreement with the other opposition parties and certainly not with the government.

The government had the opportunity to advance its legislative agenda and to address a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it failed to do that at the time. Now, the opposition wants to debate

and the government wants to continue the cover-up it started with prorogation. Why? Why not help Canadians?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the government is in a minority situation. There was an example last spring where opposition members said that, well, no, they did not want more government days, they wanted more opposition days. The member will recall that the combined opposition parties took away a government day so that they could have yet another opposition day. I recall that quite well.

The government has been very much following the calendar, and because of the coronavirus, we actually sat, for the first time in 30 years I understand, during the summer to ensure that opposition members would be able to hold the government to account and provide ideas in regards to the coronavirus.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Madam Speaker, since I came here in 2015, the government has waged a full-fledged attack on my home province of Alberta. It began with flippant statements by the Prime Minister even before he was elected as the Prime Minister. I remember when he forgot to mention Alberta on Canada Day. There is the carbon tax, Bill C-48 and Bill C-69. These are all attacks on Alberta.

We are now seeing the new clean fuel standard, which is once again a full-fledged, frontal attack by the Liberals on what the energy sector is all about. I have some statistics: 30,000 jobs nationally and approximately 20 billion dollars' worth of capital will leave Canada if we put in the clean fuel standard.

Yesterday at committee, I had the opportunity to ask the minister about the CFS. He told me not to worry, as the government is diversifying the economy, and that Alberta should be thankful for the new standard being put in place. Nothing could be further from the truth.

About a month ago, Alberta released a brand new recycling hub idea to recycle plastics in the province. Not even 24 hours later, the government labelled plastic a toxic substance. What will that do to the energy sector and Alberta as a whole? It attacks the workers and the jobs in that sector. At the end of the day, vehicles are largely made of plastic, as are the pipes that go into the ground. This is yet another unfortunate piling on by the government.

We have seen the government add red tape and cause constant delays in approval processes. When I got here in 2015, I could not have imagined the extent to which the current government, the Prime Minister and the ministers have gone on to attack my province.

Thankfully, we were able to change the provincial government. Unfortunately, we had a Notley NDP government there for a full four years, which added more burden to the energy sector. We still have yet to get rid of the federal government.

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Issues have now been going on for five years. Why does the government continually insist on implementing policies that hurt Albertans?

● (1915)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to first congratulate the Alberta government and all Albertans for their support of Canada's goal to reach zero plastic waste by 2030. Alberta is a key partner in implementing the Canada-wide strategy on zero plastic waste and we welcome the province's recently announced goal to become the western North America centre of excellence for plastics recycling by 2030. We can only reach these goals by working together.

Congratulations are also in order for Alberta's agricultural plastic recycling pilot program, which aims to help address the issue of agricultural plastic waste. Across Canada and across economic sectors, there is an emerging consensus that a circular economic approach is core to addressing the problem of plastic waste and pollution. When plastic waste is reused in new products through enhanced recycling techniques and technologies, there is a significant opportunity to recapture the value of materials, including products such as agricultural plastics used in Alberta.

We are also encouraged by the unanimous support of a recent motion in the Alberta legislature to examine the opportunities afforded by implementing extended producer responsibility. With it, Alberta has the opportunity to move into the ranks of the leading provinces in plastic recycling, such as Ontario, Quebec and B.C.

On the question of the proposal to add plastic manufactured items to schedule 1 of the CEPA, this is an important step to allow us to manage the waste and pollution caused by plastic products. We conducted a science assessment of plastic pollution. Its core findings are that microplastics are ubiquitous in the environment and harmful to wildlife and habitat. Canadians see the effects of plastic pollution in their communities and waterways. They see the volumes of plastic waste being discarded and they expect the government to take action.

The proposal to list plastic manufactured items on schedule 1 of CEPA would enable the government to take measures to address the pollution and waste along the life cycle of plastics and protect our environment, while also moving Canada to a more circular resource-efficient economy.

The government does not believe that this action hurts Albertans or any other Canadians. On the contrary, acting to better manage plastic waste will keep plastics in the economy and out of Canada's environment.

Minister Wilkinson, the minister of environment, recently released, for consultation, a discussion paper that provides an overview of the government's proposed next steps. It contains a framework to address single-use plastics along with a proposed list of six single-use items to either ban or restrict as well as a proposal for the establishment of recycled content requirements in products and packaging. This latter action aims to drive investment in recycling infrastructure and spur innovation in technology and product design.

We want to support the growth of the Canadian recycling industry, boost overall economic growth and create new jobs while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. All of these proposed actions have the potential to complement and accelerate progress toward Alberta's goal to become a centre of excellence for plastics recycling.

The government wants to hear from Canadians and stakeholders on its proposed approach to address plastic pollution and waste. The comments received will help shape the choices on the path forward to a more circular economy for plastics.

● (1920)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that he is not to use the name of a minister or an MP by their first name or last name.

The hon. member for Edmonton Riverbend.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Madam Speaker, the reason why the labelling of plastic substances is so detrimental not just to my province of Alberta but across the country is because the government did it in this back door way. Are we debating in here the labelling of plastics? No, we are not. The way the government did it was to put it through without any sort of legislation. It did it through the back door, which has the entire stakeholder community confused as to whether it has to move today, tomorrow or yesterday with respect to changing its products.

Why did the government choose this lack of transparency, in a sneaky way, to label plastics as toxic?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, the provinces, territories and municipalities are leaders in the recovery and recycling of plastic waste. The Government of Canada is continuing to work with them to strengthen existing programs and increase Canada's capacity to reuse and recover more plastics. This will include collaborating with them to ensure that the rules are consistent and transparent across the country and that producers and sellers of plastic products are made responsible for collecting these plastics.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the parliamentary secretary to shut his microphone off when he is not speaking, so it does not interfere with the interpretation or with the person who is actually speaking.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, in Adjournment Proceedings this evening, I am pursuing a question for which I did not receive an adequate answer on November 20.

I asked about the new legislation before us, Bill C-12, which proclaims itself as a net-zero climate accountability act. It fails on almost every point. The Green caucus is struggling with how to handle it. We want so very much to support climate accountability, but we struggle with whether we can even vote for this legislation at second reading to send it to committee.

Here is what the legislation must do as the bottom line requirement to be called accountability on net zero for climate action: We have to get the science right, we have to get the process right and we have to get the accountability right. Right now, it has three strikes and this legislation is out.

Getting the science right means that in the preamble, one does not cite one aspect of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change science, that to hold to 1.5°C we must have net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, all the while ignoring the closer-term reality of the emergency and the urgency. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change also says that to have any hope of holding to 1.5°C, we need massive reductions in greenhouse gases in the next decade.

It is not an even pace of having three decades so we take our time and do it in even bits every 10 years. No, we cannot do that. Most of the heavy lifting has to be done before 2030. That is not clear in the legislation. As a matter of fact, it is denied by the way the legislation is structured with a first milestone year in 2030.

Next is getting the process right. I am honestly baffled that the Liberal government appears to have ignored the experience garnered in other countries with climate accountability legislation. The U.K. has had its legislation since 2008. There are lessons to be learned there. Similarly, New Zealand, which brought in its legislation, learned from the U.K.'s experience, as did Denmark. All of the climate accountability legislation in countries where it is working has relied on expert advice. To the extent they have an advisory group, they are experts.

This legislation wants to have an advisory body that seems to be another version of a multistakeholder group without expertise. That is a very significant error. I like multistakeholder groups. I used to be vice-chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, which was destroyed and repealed. It was originally put in place by the Mulroney government, by the way, and it was repealed under Bill C-38 in the spring of 2012. We should bring a national round table or something like that back, but not through the back door of Bill C-12, where we need expertise, not multistakeholder advice.

The third area of accountability that fails is having the mechanisms to hold the government to account and getting them right. This bill does not use mandatory language around the minister meeting a target. It is interesting. I have been conferring with colleagues in New Zealand and they are looking at saying, if the target is missed, that means the government will have to make up what it

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missed by buying credits and paying for them. Their finance department is getting ready to book the costs of missing the target. Therefore, there is a financial penalty and the government will then be keeping its eye on the ball to avoid that penalty.

The bottom line here is that the Paris Agreement now has the support of the United States, President-elect Joe Biden has appointed a high-level special envoy in John Kerry. Canada should be jumping up right now to be bold and ambitious.

This bill is not what we need. I hope we can see changes before it comes back at third stage and report stage.

• (1925)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the immediate priority of the government is to support Canadians through the pandemic. However, we are also planning strategically for how to promote economic prosperity while also addressing the global crisis of climate change.

Canadians are experiencing the impacts of climate change and the government understands the urgent need to take action and ensure that sustainability is built into all aspects of our economy. This is critical for Canadians today and for our future generations.

We are making progress through Canada's current climate plan, the pan-Canadian framework. This plan is projected to achieve a historic level of emissions reductions, but we know we need to do more. That is why the government has committed to exceeding its 2030 greenhouse gas emissions targets, and putting the country on a path to prosper in a net-zero emissions economy by 2050.

We have also committed to bringing forward a new NDC emission reduction target by 2030, prior to COP26 in November 2021.

To reach these targets, we are strengthening existing measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and introduce new ones. The 2020 fall economic statement announced some of these new measures, and our work to build back better will make the economy greener, more inclusive, more resilient and more competitive.

Investments include putting climate action at the centre of our plan to create a million new jobs; bolstering training support for those hit hardest by the pandemic, including marginalized and racialized women, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and new Canadians; and proposing to provide up to 700,000 grants to homeowners to help them make energy efficient improvements to their homes.

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We are committed to investing in Canada's clean power supply and working to connect Canadians with clean electricity across the country. We are investing in zero-emission vehicles, including charging and refuelling infrastructure. The Government of Canada is also working to develop a well-functioning, sustainable finance market in Canada. We are also prioritizing investments in nature-based solutions, including plans to plant two billion trees over 10 years.

We are investing in climate-smart, natural solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to ecosystem loss, and we are committing new funding to support climate solutions for agriculture. In the coming weeks, the government will bring these and other elements together in a coherent, enhanced climate plan, providing Canadians with transparency as to how Canada will exceed its current 2030 Paris Agreement targets.

After the proposed plan is released, we will be consulting with our partners, indigenous peoples, provinces and territories, municipalities, industry and civil society. These consultations will inform the development of Canada's updated 2030 target.

I would like to thank the hon. member for her commitment to increased climate action. I look forward to working with the member, our colleagues and Canadians as we work towards bringing forward a plan that will enable Canada to exceed our 2030 targets and help set Canada on a path to achieving a prosperous net-zero emissions future.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, when the hon. member refers to our Paris targets, the number he is referring to is that from the third time that Stephen Harper weakened our target. It is the weakest of the three Harper targets, and we still have it five years after an election. I find this not just baffling but tragic.

The Government of Canada committed in Paris, in the COP decision document, that we would increase our 2030 target this year, in 2020, not merely before COP26 next year, but this year, when we have vanishing days left for us to fulfill our international obligations.

We have a short time left. The window closing on 1.5°C will close in the coming years, well before 2030. If it closes, it closes for good, and it closes for our children the opportunity to have a livable world. The stakes could not be higher. The government has to do better.

• (1930)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, global greenhouse gas emissions need to decline rapidly over the next three decades according to scientific experts.

The Paris Agreement calls for governments around the world to take urgent and ambitious action on climate change to keep global warming well below 2°C and to pursue efforts to keep it below 1.5°C in order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published its special report on global warming of 1.5°C in 2018. That report concluded that global emissions need to reach net zero around mid-century for there to be a reasonable chance of meeting the goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C.

On November 19, the minister tabled the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability bill, which, if passed, would legally bind the government to a process to achieve net zero by 2050. It would make our 2030 target legally binding, and set five-year emission reduction targets to 2050 to improve accountability and transparency. We look forward to working with all the parties to pass this important legislation and strengthen our 2030 targets.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:32 p.m.)

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