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# House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 2, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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

I move:

That the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be amended as follows: that the member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation be the replacement for the member for Mississauga Centre.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

[*Translation*]

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

There being no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

### ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2020

The House resumed from January 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 30, 2020 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by giving a shout-out to my constituents. During this unprecedented crisis, the people of Hochelaga have been and continue to be resilient, united and involved. I am proud to represent them in the House.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, over 700,000 Canadians have contracted COVID-19 and over 18,000 have died from it.

The hospitals and long-term care facilities in Hochelaga and eastern Montreal have been hard hit by COVID-19 outbreaks. Right now, unfortunately, the health and social services centre, or CIUSSS, in Montreal East has the highest mortality and hospitalization rates. My thoughts are with the family and friends of all those affected. Every life lost to this disease is one life too many.

Now that we are facing a second wave of the pandemic, an increase in the number of cases across the country and new variants of the virus, we must not let our guard down. That is why we have invested in the capacity of the health care system across the country. Saving lives is the top priority.

Ever since the pandemic hit, our government has been implementing programs to support organizations, businesses and families and provide them with what matters most: a social and economic safety net. To date, the government has invested \$407 billion, or nearly 19% of Canada's GDP, in this unprecedented emergency response plan, which will carry on through 2021.

It is important to note that, since March 2020, eight out of every 10 dollars spent fighting the pandemic has been spent by the federal government. By saving jobs and helping businesses weather the storm, we have averted long-term economic damage and positioned Canada for a strong recovery from the recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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We are working with the provinces and territories to battle COVID-19 on multiple fronts. We have invested in our capacity to provide health care safely, and we have increased testing.

The pandemic is evolving, and so is our approach. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance tabled the fall economic update, which includes new measures we plan to implement as we focus more on economic recovery. Bill C-14 is the first step toward that.

In addition to the many programs and supports introduced by our government, we have purchased up to 429 million doses of seven promising vaccines, giving us the most diverse and extensive vaccine portfolio of any country in the world.

This will ensure access to free vaccines for every Canadian who wants one, and ensure that all Quebecers and Canadians are vaccinated by the end of September. To date, nearly 238,000 Quebecers have been vaccinated.

We have also procured personal protective equipment for health care workers, investing \$7.6 billion to rapidly procure more than two billion pieces of PPE. The fall economic statement also proposes an additional \$1.5 billion to continue to procure the PPE we need. More than five million gloves and 10,000 ventilators have been sent to Quebec.

We have also announced the elimination of GST and HST on the sale of face masks and face shields. We will also provide \$150 million over three years, beginning in 2021, to improve ventilation in public buildings to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. The devastating COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care homes have highlighted the gaps in standards and care for our most vulnerable. That is unacceptable.

To ensure that seniors and those receiving care live in safe and dignified conditions, the federal government will continue to work with the provinces and territories to establish new national standards for long-term care.

We are investing up to \$1 billion to create a fund for long-term infection prevention and control, in order to help the provinces and territories protect residents of long-term care homes and to support infection prevention and control activities.

I would like to mention the tremendous work that the Canadian Red Cross is doing in long-term care centres. In Quebec, there are approximately 280 workers in 14 long-term care centres. In Hochelaga, the Canadian Armed Forces were deployed for several weeks to the Benjamin-Victor-Rousselot long-term care facility and the Grace Dart extended care centre. I thank them for their help during Operation Laser and the assistance they continue to provide.

● (1010)

The lockdown and reduced social contact during this pandemic has had serious repercussions on people's mental health. We have a duty to ensure that every person in Quebec and Canada can get the help they need when they need it. During this difficult time, we are investing \$50 million in additional resources to reinforce crisis centres and an extra \$83 billion in support for Wellness Together Canada and the free services it provides.

We must not forget our front-line organizations, which have been working extremely hard since the start of this crisis. As mentioned in the fall economic statement 2020, in 2021-22, we will invest \$299.4 million in reaching home, Canada's homelessness strategy, to help shelters prevent the spread of the virus and to ensure that everyone can stay housed during the winter. Since the beginning of the crisis, more than \$2 million has been allocated to support organizations in Hochelaga that work with the homeless and to provide better safe access to housing. Funding of \$1 million was allocated to the CAP-CARE shelter, which helps the homeless and is housed in the former Hochelaga YMCA.

Bill C-14 will top up the regional relief and recovery fund to provide a level of support equivalent to the Canada emergency business account. The CEBA was expanded and now provides loans of up to \$60,000, of which \$20,000 can be forgivable. This measure has benefited over 762,000 small businesses in Canada. Through the PME MTL network, this support has helped many businesses in Montreal and represents 56% of the assistance disbursed in Hochelaga, Mercier and Maisonneuve, all funding combined.

This bill will make it easier to access the Canada emergency rent subsidy. Once the bill is passed, businesses will have access to the rent funds before paying the rent. This fixed expense is a big financial burden for businesses and organizations, and the government's measure will alleviate a large portion of that burden. Théâtre Denise-Pelletier in Hochelaga, Café des Alizés, Pavillon d'éducation communautaire, CARE and Fondation des aveugles du Québec are all examples of organizations that could benefit from this important amendment.

Another very important measure in this bill is the increase to the Canada child benefit, which will go up by \$1,200 for every child under the age of six. More than 9,000 families and 15,000 children in Hochelaga received the Canada child benefit in 2019. Somewhere in the neighbourhood of 1.6 million Canadian families will benefit from this increase.

I am proud to be a member of a government that supports the people of Hochelaga, Quebec and the entire country. I have spoken to a number of Canadians, organizations and businesses that are receiving essential support from this government. We will continue to do everything we can to limit job losses and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.

Once we are through this crisis, our country will be better equipped for a more equitable and sustainable recovery. I hope that all members in the House will support this bill. We must remain vigilant, united and committed in the face of this pandemic.

[English]

**Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member mentioned in her speech that 10,000 ventilators were purchased in Quebec. I am wondering if she could expand a little further on that. We know that a contract for 10,000 ventilators was given to a company that had only been in existence for seven days prior to the award. That company subsequently subcontracted that out to Baylis Medical, a company owned by former MP Frank Baylis, for a premium of \$100 million over retail price.

Can the member tell the House how many of the 10,000 ventilators that were purchased in Quebec are currently being used and how many ventilators are being used in the province of Quebec?

[Translation]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

What I want to emphasize is all of the support that the government was able to provide to all of the provinces and territories for their health care systems. The goal was to provide prevention and screening support to people and organizations. I think that the work the government did in the provinces and across the country has been essential for fighting the pandemic.

• (1015)

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question about the deficit.

Recently, we have talked a lot about the need to set up a special committee to shed some light on how taxpayers' money is being spent. There was the WE Charity scandal and the awarding of some rather questionable contracts.

The economic statement provides a lot of specific information, but I would like my colleague to talk about the special committee. The purpose of that committee is to help us determine exactly where the money allocated to fight the pandemic is going.

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

What stands out to me is the government's accessibility and the ease with which it was able to answer the opposition's questions during the pandemic. We were always here. There have never been so many questions asked and so many answers given to the opposition. I think that we are doing everything we can to be transparent and to collaborate with the opposition in order to get through this pandemic and deliver the necessary funds to support all Canadians across the country.

[English]

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, as many in the House know, one of the biggest concerns for me, especially representing the constituents of Edmonton Strathcona, is how we are supporting students during this time. There are a number of students in my riding who are struggling and a number of recent graduates as well.

While we are delighted to see the government take the initial step to stop student loan interest from being repaid, I have some real concerns. We still have not seen any action from the government on

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the moratorium on student loan repayments until the end of May 2021, which the Liberal government promised, through a unanimous consent motion, to implement.

When can we expect the government to implement that?

[Translation]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Madam Speaker, I share my colleague's grave concern about what students are going through. There are lots of students in my riding. We have put several measures in place to help students get through the crisis. I am sure that, in the months to come, we will be able to put forward more measures to better support students and help them get through this virtual crisis.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague.

I know how hard she is working on the ground to help the people of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. I also know that Hochelaga-Maisonneuve has been hit especially hard by the second wave of the pandemic.

I would like her to tell us more about measures in the economic statement that will help her constituents.

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Actually, the east end of Montreal, including Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, was among the first to be hit by the pandemic. It is the epicentre of the pandemic. The Canada child benefit, the Canada emergency business account, the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance, the Canada emergency wage subsidy and many other measures are helping all—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Order. Resuming debate.

[English]

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we are here today debating a bill ostensibly to support Canadians given the pandemic. It is important for us to support Canadians, but we are a year into the pandemic now and I am wondering if the government is missing the boat.

A year ago, when parliamentarians came together in the midst of the first lockdowns, the restrictions, lockdowns and measures we were putting in place for Canadians to support them were designed to buy governments time to figure out exactly what COVID-19 was, how it spread, who was most affected, how to put in place testing systems and things we needed to do to produce therapeutics and vaccines, and how to get hospitals ready. That was a year ago.

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I would like to pause and say that it is actually miraculous what has happened. Vaccines have been developed. Therapeutics have been developed. Rapid tests have been developed. However, these are all things that should have been deployed widely in Canada, a G7 country, by now. We are now sitting here talking about a bill, and while, yes, the support is important, the support is necessary because we do not yet have an end in sight from the federal government. That is a huge problem.

We are continuing to ask Canadians to sacrifice more and sacrifice the hope of jobs, recovery, reunion, safety and mental health without having a path forward, and it is because we do not have the information we need from the federal government to have an end in sight.

I want to talk about what this means in the context of a very personal human face. I want to talk about my cousin Eric. My dad's side of the family is a big, French-Catholic family, with eight brothers and sisters, dozens of grandchildren and dozens of great-grandchildren. None of us grew up in wealth, but everybody has worked hard.

This year at Christmas my cousin Eric phoned me. He is 27 and he is going to get married, and this is really great. Normally it would be such a big cause for celebration, but there were two things that really bothered me about the conversation we had. One of them was how hopeless he sounded. Anyone who knows him knows he has a sense of humour and is always very positive, but the first thing he said was "I do not know how we are going to get a house." He had no idea, and it was off the table for them. That is wrong. He said it is because he and his fiancée Jessica have had very tough times.

Jessica is a business woman. She put together a dog grooming business that got very successful, but the restrictions shut it down numerous times. Eric works at a box manufacturing plant. Whenever he tells people that he works at a box manufacturing plant, I hate that he shrinks back, because he is an essential worker in the pandemic right now. How many people listening to this speech today have had something delivered in a box over the last year?

These bills are failing Eric and Jessica. The government's response has largely been classist, let us be honest. We have not really addressed the fact that people who work in box manufacturing plants, in grocery stores and on the front lines really do not have a lot of hope because their lives are on the line. They are the most at risk for transmission right now. They do not want the CERB forever. They want safe working conditions. They want a prospect to move forward. Eric and Jessica want a wedding and want to be able to buy a house. I do not see anything in the bill, or anything the government has done, that has an end date in sight.

• (1020)

If this bill were doing what it is supposed to be doing, it would be tied to such things as the number of vaccinated people in Canada. We should start setting targets for vaccinations and for the number of rapid tests deployed in plants such as the one Eric works at, so we do not have to continue to put restrictions on Canadians without telling them what they are getting out of it. That is the reality.

We keep putting more restrictions on Canadians, but we are not explaining to them when, or under what circumstances, those restrictions will end. That should be concerning to every member here. If everything is going so well, why can we not tell Canadians when the end will be in sight?

Yesterday I asked the transport minister the simple question of whether a vaccinated Canadian would be subject to the same travel restrictions the government put in place. He did not really have an answer for that. Why? Why can we not talk about better systems, rather than just curfews, putting people in quarantine hotels and more restrictions, when we have tools, such as rapid tests, that have not been deployed across the country?

Vaccines have not been brought into the country and we do not have a date in sight for that. The government needs to take a leadership role. It needs to work with every party in Parliament and all premiers of all political stripes to put together a plan, so we are not coming back to Parliament to debate more extensions on restrictions that require us to pay people for taking away their freedom, liberty, hope, mental health and way of doing things.

I do not accept that this is where we are. We are having the same debate we were having a year ago. Why? I could accept that and tell Eric and Jessica that is where we are, if there were not better ways of doing things that the world has produced. We need to start tying bills and measures such as this one to hard dates and hard plans for recovery. That is what is missing in this bill right now.

Frankly, we are abdicating our responsibility as parliamentarians, because the amount of money we are spending on these stopgap solutions is bankrupting the future for people like Eric and Jessica. Yes, we need to be supporting people through lockdowns, of course we do, but we keep spending more money. I know people hate talking about debt levels in this country, but we are going into so much debt as a country that the interest payments on that debt, the credit card payments on that debt, are going to bankrupt our country's ability to spend on things like affordable housing in the future.

Every time we have to make an interest payment to another country on the money we are spending now on stopgap solutions means another road, hospital or affordable housing complex cannot be built in the future. We are making a choice to continue these temporary measures versus coming up with a long-term plan. That is what is wrong. That is what is missing here.

I get that we are arguing about the technicality of these programs and extending them, but people do not want to stay on CERB forever. They do not want to stay on long-term support; they want hope and a way out of the pandemic.

We have those tools. They exist in the world, but have not been deployed in Canada. The government has to get its act together. It has to start answering questions, such as whether the vaccine will be tied to travel restrictions by a certain date, or what the data points we need are and how we are going to get to them. It should be giving status updates to Canadians. The government cannot keep taking away freedom and the hope of living a good life without a plan.

Here we are spending all of this money and I cannot give Eric and Jessica an answer to whether they will have a wedding next year. I do not know if they will be on CERB. I do not know if Jessica will be able to practise her business. For every single one of us, of all political stripes, that is not acceptable a year in. We all have to demand better, because Eric, Jessica and every single Canadian deserve better. They deserve hope, and that is what we should be fighting for.

• (1025)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I really appreciated how the member used personal experiences to illustrate what people have been going through. The examples are countless.

I have a first cousin on my dad's side of the family, the baby of the cousins, who got married just before the pandemic. She recently announced that she was expecting. Her name is Mary and her husband's name is Matt. I had to drop off their baby shower gift at Canada Post to be delivered to them because we obviously cannot see them in person.

There are definitely so many people throughout our country who are struggling with this. However, there is an end in sight. This member asked a lot about the end in sight, and what the hard date was. Every Canadian will be vaccinated, if they choose to be, by September of this year. When we use that as our date and we tell people to look forward to that, it will motivate people to plan around that. For example, Queen's University in my riding is planning events for the fall, based on this information.

Does the member not see that as a tangible date we are able to tell people to prepare for?

• (1030)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Madam Speaker, first of all, the government has not said that it would lift restrictions once everyone is vaccinated, so I do not know. That is number one.

Number two, the reality is that most of the vaccines the government has contracted are produced in Europe, and Europe is about to impose export restrictions on vaccines. Our country is not on the exemption list. That is a huge problem. Also, we are two million doses short of the vaccine this week.

I actually do not know if September is reasonable. Based on all the projections we have right now, I would say it is not. That is what I am talking about. We do not have this information. The government has not been transparent. It is not talking about tying vaccines to lifting restrictions. It is not talking about implementing better systems of rapid testing. It is just vague stuff. We need more information.

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We need information. We need hard timelines. We need clear conditions so that people can plan. No, to Mary and Matt—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We will have to give colleagues an opportunity to ask questions.

Continuing with questions and comments, is the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, what really concerns me is that we are in the biggest medical catastrophe in a century, the biggest threat to Canada since the Second World War, and we are being told not to worry, that by September, everybody will be okay. It is the Bobby McFerrin solution: *Don't Worry, Be Happy*. However, I have so many small businesses in my riding that will not be around come September. It will be tough luck for them.

The question I want to ask is about the failure to address the vaccine crisis. We knew this was coming. It was the same with our incapacity to deal with PPE. We are being told not to worry, that the Europeans will be nice to us.

That does not cut it with the new variant strain they say is going to hit us like a hurricane. The Novavax vaccine will not be ready for at least two months, and the NCR plant is still under construction.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague about the absolute failure of the government to seize the tools necessary to protect its people in the biggest medical crisis we have ever seen. We need the government to actually take a lead on vaccines, rather than hoping that the Europeans will be nice to us. That is not going to cut it when the new variant strain hits.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. The government's vaccine strategy is an abject failure.

What people watching us want to know is what we are going to do to fix it. I want to point out that the colleague who just asked the question is from the New Democratic Party. I have worked with colleagues from that party and with colleagues in the Bloc. We do not agree on everything, but we agree with the fact that we need to do better.

It is incumbent upon the government to work across party lines and admit this failure. That is the first step to fixing a problem, admitting the failure and saying it is not okay. It is not Bobby McFerrin, and we need to move forward.

That is what we are all working on here in the House of Commons. I encourage the government to take these concerns seriously, because we cannot wait until September for some sort of hope that might never come.

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**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on Bill C-14, but before I do so, I would like to echo a lot of the comments that have been made in the House celebrating Black History Month. I would especially like to give a shout-out to my provincial colleague in Alberta, Minister Kaycee Madu, whose provincial riding is shared between my riding and that of Edmonton Riverbend. Minister Madu is the very first Black justice minister in any provincial or federal government in Canadian history, so I would like to give him a special shout-out and special congratulations for Black History Month.

In Alberta we have been blessed with incredible contributions from the Black community, from the legendary John Ware, our first Black cattle farmer, who was rumoured to be able to wrestle a steer to the ground and jump on cattle while riding a herd forward, to Violet King Henry, the very first Black woman ever called to the bar in Canada. It is a great month and a great contribution to Alberta.

Black History Month is the good part. Now we move on to Bill C-14, which is the bad part. I will start with all the debt the government has added during the pandemic. We have added more per capita than any country in the G7 and G20. Our debt this year is probably going to hit \$1.1 trillion. That is just the federal debt. The provincial debt is going to be about another trillion. However, these numbers do not cover the federal liabilities for Crown corporations or pensions.

What do we get for all that debt? We have the most spending per capita in the G7, the most support, while also having among the highest levels of unemployment in the G7. Our unemployment rate is only better than that of the economic basket cases Italy and, just now, France as well. We are barely ahead of them. We have only 0.3% lower unemployment than France and 0.4% lower unemployment than Italy. What about the rest of the G7? Our unemployment rate in Canada, despite all of the spending, is 41% higher than the unemployment average of the G7.

In May, at the height of the pandemic, our unemployment was pretty much the same as the U.S. at 14%. The most recent data from the OECD is from December, when Trump was still in power, and Trump's America had dropped to 6.7% unemployment. We were at 8.6%. The U.K., probably ravaged far worse by COVID than any other G7 country, has an unemployment rate of 5%. Italy, which is just barely above us right now, was devastated by the first wave and the second wave, and its unemployment is actually lower now than it was pre-pandemic, yet Canada struggles along.

What about going forward? What is the sign for the economy? The IMF recently slashed our growth projection for this year for the economy by 31%. It did not know why and did not state why. I do not think the Liberal government knows why. There is no plan for going forward, so it was probably just a shrug as to why. However, what if we compare this with the rest of the world? The IMF increased its forecast for growth by 5.7% for the economy around the world, while Canada's dropped 31% from the previous projection.

Getting back to the debt, if we ignore the fact that Crown corporations are technically supposed to look after their own finances, they have about \$400 billion or \$500 billion in liabilities. The unfunded public service pension liabilities is upward to about \$100 billion. When we talk about the overall debt hitting \$1 trillion, it is

actually about \$1.5 trillion. I ask members to let that sink in. That is before the lower interest rates negatively affect the pension liabilities.

The finance minister would tell us that everything is fine, everything is good, and not to worry. My colleague from Calgary stole my line about Bobby McFerrin and *Don't Worry, Be Happy*, but that seems to be the comment. We are told not to worry because interest rates will stay low forever. However, and here is the thing, they will not stay low forever. We are at the mercy of a world economy. If the U.S. raises its interest rates, we are going to have to pay more for our debt.

The finance minister says that we do not need to worry, and that we have locked in this debt for a long term. When we look at how borrowing is done, the longer that we are borrowing and the longer we are locked in, the higher the rates actually are. When we look at the Bank of Canada website, it is anywhere from triple to eight times the short-term rate the longer that we lock in.

● (1035)

It is not a simple matter of locking in zero interest rates forever or that we never have to pay it back. Rates will eventually rise and we will end up as we were in the Chrétien-Martin era, slashing the public service and health care transfers to provinces.

What is the plan to get out of all of this? What is the government's plan to build the economy? The whole plan is built around a slogan stolen from Joe Biden. We are going to "build back better". That is the plan.

We have massive unemployment in tourism hospitality, but we should not worry; we will build back better. With airlines on the verge of collapse, that is okay; we will build back better. The Alberta energy industry is devastated by the government's incompetence and its inability or refusal to act on Keystone or other issues. We should not worry; we will build back better. Slogans, unfortunately, are not going to pay the bills and slogans are not going to help us build back better.



*Government Orders*

We do not have a fiscal anchor. We used to have one years ago, which was “the budget will balance itself”. That was the Liberals' original fiscal anchor. Then it changed to the budget would be balanced in the third year. Then the fiscal anchor became 27.5% debt to GDP, then 30.5%, and then the anchor switched to being a decreasing debt to GDP. Now we have fiscal guardrails.

The finance minister says that we should not worry, that we will have fiscal guardrails to guide us forward. What did the Parliamentary Budget Officer say about these guardrails? Besides nonsensical, he said that they were contradictory and incompatible. This is what is scary. The finance minister says that we will have our guardrails based on hours worked and unemployment.

What does the PBO mean by saying that they are incompatible and contradictory? Unemployment levels can go down, but the number of hours worked is predicted by the PBO to go down as well because we have an aging workforce and therefore fewer people working, fewer people participating in the workforce with fewer hours worked. We have our new fiscal anchor being called nonsensical by the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Again, there is no plan.

There is no plan about the Liberals' \$100 billion stimulus spending. The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that most if not all jobs lost will be regained by 2021-22, which is when the fiscal stimulus is set to kick in.

Therefore, the government basically does not know what its guardrails are. It says that it will spend about \$100 billion in the coming years, but it will kick in when the Parliamentary Budget Officer expects our unemployment to be back to where it was pre-pandemic. Again, what is the point of the \$100 billion? The government does not seem to know. Where is our debt going? The government does not seem to know.

I want to get back to what my colleague from Calgary was talking about in regard to the vaccines. We need the vaccines to get out of this. Thank God for Pfizer, Moderna and all the scientists and big pharma for performing a miracle and getting these vaccines out. However, they need to be in the arms of Canadians.

I have a gentleman in my riding who is 102, a World War II veteran, Fred Russell. He is a magnificent man. He still has his full faculties and still gets up and dances. He landed at Dieppe and got off the beach, probably the last 10 survivors from the Dieppe raid. He landed at Normandy, actually liberated Dieppe with the Canadian troops, fought through France, fought through Holland and fought through Germany. From about mid-September, a couple of weeks after Canada declared war, until after VE day, he was away serving this country. He is locked in his room in a seniors care facility, without seeing family, friends, without seeing anyone, because he does not have a vaccine.

This is a gentleman who stepped up for Canada. He was there for Canada when Canada needed him. Where is Canada now when he needs Canada to step up for him with the vaccine? It has disappeared between Liberal talking points of vaccines for everyone one day down the road. It is not good enough for Fred Russell, who gave everything for Canada, and it is not good enough for Canadians either.

• (1040)

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the service of Russell who lives in my colleague's community and what he did for Canadians.

I will take a step back to some of the higher-level messaging the member set out in his speech, particularly with respect to his concern around spending and the debt level.

I find it very difficult to understand how we will be able to invest in science and create vaccines domestically without spending. I find it very difficult to understand how we can support our entrepreneurs and businesses without the spending.

Would the member like to explain how we can continue to support Canadians and invest in the domestic production of vaccines without adding to our debt level?

• (1045)

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague said that it was difficult for her to understand. It is difficult for me to understand as well when a company in Calgary has been reaching out to the government since the beginning of the pandemic for support for its made-in-Canada vaccine. What did it get from the government? Nothing. The company probably received an email thanking it, saying that the government was procuring more per capita than anyone. The government says that it wants to invest in made-in-Canada solutions, but when it had the chance, it refused.

When she talks about the spending, we just learned that the government spent \$115,000 to put workers up in a luxury resort in British Columbia instead of using lower-priced hotels in Esquimalt. Fisheries and Oceans justified it by putting them in the most expensive hotels in the country.

The government is happy to spend in every possible way that does not actually benefit Canadians, but when there is a chance, like investing in the pharmaceutical company in Calgary, it turns its back.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, small businesses have been hit really hard during the pandemic and many will not survive. In my riding of Winnipeg Centre, business owners have literally remortgaged their houses to try to keep their employees employed and their businesses open. The government has failed grossly in providing adequate support for small businesses to ensure they can survive the pandemic.

Would my hon. colleague have further thoughts on this?

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**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Madam Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg Centre makes a very good point. Small businesses are suffering. At the very beginning, the government said that the wage subsidy support would be 10%. We called for 75%, like many in the G7. Then it delayed the rollout for months and months. By the time the wage subsidy was rolled out by the government, most of these people were laid off and sitting on CERB.

On the rent subsidy, we begged the government to change its program to support businesses directly instead of waiting for fat-cat landlords to apply. The government again ignored the requests from the opposition and small businesses. It failed them utterly.

**Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague gave us a lot of data to process.

Several times the member reiterated that the Liberal government had no plan. Failing to plan is planning to fail, and I do not know why the Liberal government would want to fail. Why would it want to fail Canadians? This is a crucial time in the history of Canada. The Liberals have an opportunity to lead and they are not; they are reacting. It is time to plan and it is time to lead.

I wonder if the member could talk a little more about our increasing debt levels and the potential of interest rates rising and what that could do Canada.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Madam Speaker, my colleague asked why the Liberals planned to fail. I think it is just practice. Rising interest rates are going to cost us dearly. We saw it in the Chrétien-Martin years where it outpaced our growth. If we can get growth higher than the interest rates, we will be fine. That is the problem, though. There is no plan from the government for growth, for growing the economy.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to add my voice to the debate on Bill C-14. I appreciate very much the contribution of my learned colleague.

The bill deals with matters from the fall economic statement, which has still kept Canadians in the dark with respect to the financial future of our great country. However, it is no surprise when the last budget presented by the government was in 2019. We are two years later and we still have not had a budget. Canadians need to be assured about the state of our finances. During these very uncertain times, we need that certainty from our government. Canadians need to know that someone has a steady hand on the wheel.

However, it has come to the point where the Prime Minister rolled over when the U.S. President, Joe Biden, cancelled the Keystone XL pipeline, basically his first order of business once he was elected. We know this project would have created thousands of jobs at a time when we badly need job creation, particularly in the west, and it would have generated billions in revenue at a time when Canada needs more revenue with very quickly rising expenses. It is hard to believe that the Liberals were not pleased by the decision of the President to cancel the Keystone XL pipeline. It is an opportunity for an ideological win for their party, while dealing a blow to the Canadian energy sector.

Our greatest resource has been blocked by the Liberals who have drastically increased our national debt. How is federal spending gov-

ing to position our country to come back for a post-pandemic recovery? With this never-seen-before federal stimulus spending, where is the vision for our country? How will generations to come pay for the promises being made today?

No matter what the plan is and no matter how they spend the money, the Liberals leave Canadians out of the loop until they appear at a podium to make an announcement. There is no meaningful consultation. The government has announced \$100 billion infrastructure spending over the next 10 years, but nobody knows what the plan is for that. How are they going to get that money out the door? How is it that going to be distributed and what projects will be priorities? We are left to wonder if there is a plan.

We know that it would be totally unlike the government to just focus on a flashy announcement with no actual real substance. No matter how much the announcement or what the results will be, Canadians continue to be left in the dark on how their money will be spent. Therefore, how can we expect to make this great Canadian comeback, which we desperately need? How can we get back in the fight with both hands tied behind our backs, with our greatest resources being stifled and attacked by the government?

Our manufacturing sector has been taxed and regulated to death, to the point where manufacturers across Canada, including in my riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, are packing up and leaving for jurisdictions with friendlier governments where there are not the regulations and never-ending mounting taxes. For them the uncertainty of their future is too great, knowing they have spent their time, talent and treasure to create jobs in their communities. The burden becomes too much to bear.

Our energy sector, which employs folks from coast to coast and all points in-between, has been hobbled and stymied by the Liberals at every opportunity. Their anti-energy ideology does not respect the fact that people in my community have to drive to work and heat their homes. This is not an option. They must use oil and gas in their day-to-day lives.

*Government Orders*

• (1050)

I cannot imagine a Canadian government that would prefer we use oil from countries like Saudi Arabia, where we know that there is horrific treatment of women and minorities and where people are persecuted for their sexual orientation, rather than using ethical, clean oil from Canada's west. It is produced to the highest environmental standards in the world, and while I cannot imagine a Canadian government that would want something different, that is what we are seeing. Conservatives know we should empower the Canadian resource sector to produce, employ and innovate. The story of the great Canadian comeback starts here at home in Canada, with knowing our strengths and playing to them.

When we see, at the first opportunity, a government look to reward its friends and well-placed insiders, we see that it defaults to corruption instead of to a team Canada approach. It certainly gives Canadians pause and it does not give them the confidence they need in the face of very uncertain times.

The resignation of the Governor General is disheartening, to say the least. As a former member of the Canadian Forces, I hold the office of our commander-in-chief in the highest regard, but it does not come as a surprise, when the Prime Minister had his finger on the scale in selecting the Governor General, that it would end poorly. That is the modus operandi of the government. It will always put its Liberal friends first. We see examples regularly of Liberals coming first and everyday Canadians coming second.

We need to make sure that we have a government that is willing to collaborate with opposition parties not after the fact, but before legislation is put in place. We have seen Liberals fix legislation, but often the fixes were recommended by opposition parties before the legislation came to the House. However, because opposition parties and the Conservative Party are committed to a team Canada approach, we have not delayed their unanimous consent bills when they looked to implement help that Canadians needed. We recognized that Canadians needed that help very badly.

• (1055)

On Liberals' spending plans, Canadians are left in the dark. The same is true of their plans for our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, helping Canadians get back to their regular lives and end the lockdowns. We are in a position where Canadians are not receiving the vaccines that we need. We are in a position where rapid tests have not been deployed in a way that would allow us to get back to our regular lives and earn our livelihoods.

Canadians, and the residents of my community in Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, are counting on the government not to just talk the talk, but walk the walk. We need a clear plan from the government. We need to make sure Canadians are able to unleash their full potential so we can get back in the fight stronger than ever. It requires transparency, co-operation and a real team Canada approach from the government, and Canada's Conservatives are committed to being a part of that team.

Throughout this pandemic, the government has been scrambling for quick fixes, trying to ram bills through without proper debate and consultation and letting Canadians slip through the cracks along the way. From the get-go, I was hearing from folks in my rid-

ing that they had been left behind by the government's poorly thought out and poorly executed moves, such as small business owners who did not qualify for the CEBA, those who knew a 10% wage subsidy would not cut it and all those people who were ineligible for CERB, just to name a few. Instead of getting the help that Canadians needed to them, the government was more concerned with helping its friends. We do not have to look any further than the sweeping powers the current government tried to snatch in the early days of this pandemic, which would have given it the ability to tax and spend without parliamentary oversight for years. That blank cheque is not the team Canada approach that the government claims to use, and that Canadians so badly want to see.

Regardless of how the Liberals have bent or broken the rules to serve themselves, Conservatives will continue to hold them to account. We know that during this pandemic the Prime Minister took the opportunity to reward his friends at the WE organization, the organization that had given half a million dollars to members of his family. Then we saw the government give a half-billion-dollar contract to his friends to administer.

• (1100)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my friend and colleague's assessment is not right. In fact, it is pretty far off when he talks about helping friends and says we did not do enough with CERB, the wage subsidy or the rent subsidy programs, and that we could have issued more money and support. Nine million is a lot of friends, Canadians, to have received CERB. Millions received the wage subsidy program, and tens of thousands received the rent subsidy program.

On one hand he is criticizing the government for not spending enough money on these programs, yet the Conservatives are saying we are spending too much money and they are concerned about the deficit.

Can he provide clarification? Are we spending too much money or not enough money?

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, it is shocking not to see the parliamentary secretary in the House. I know he prides himself on spending a great deal of time here, so it is very unusual to be in this position. It is nice to hear—

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, I have a point of order. I hate to interrupt the member's video clip, but we should not be referring to the physical presence of a member in the House. There is no difference between being here virtually or in the House. We are all considered to be in the House, and we are equals whether we are virtually or physically here.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I remind the member we do not refer to the absence or presence of other members. As well, we are in a hybrid format, so the member is considered present.

*Government Orders*

Please proceed.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I know the member totally respects the rules, as I do. The member for Kingston and the Islands is wrong, because my Conservative colleague was not referring to individual members. He was referring to the number of members, which is a different issue.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** We have an individual member—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but that is debate. There was a specific reference made to the parliamentary secretary.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes has the floor.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, no good deed goes unpunished. I looked to say a nice thing about my colleague from Winnipeg North but will be sure to stick to the point.

The Liberals are trying to measure progress by the amount of money they spend, with no regard for the efficacy of the way they spend it. They are not giving a plan to Canadians. They are spending first and making a plan later. Canadians expect better and deserve better.

If we are going to stick to the business of it and dispense with the pleasantries, Canadians want a plan from the government. The parliamentary secretary owes answers to Canadians, and we are here to get them.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the aerospace industry has been completely left out of Bill C-14.

For ages, the Bloc Québécois has been repeating that this industry is in need of support. The aerospace industry is one of Quebec's biggest exporters.

Longueuil—Saint-Hubert is home to two big companies: Pratt & Whitney and Héroux-Devtek. The landing gear for Apollo 11, which was the first to touch down on the moon, was manufactured in Longueuil—Saint-Hubert. This is a huge achievement. A plane can be fully manufactured in Montreal, but the government refuses to support the industry during this crisis.

Why does my colleague think the government refuses to do anything to support the aerospace industry?

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, at this point in the pandemic and the government's mandate, it is quite confusing why we have not seen a plan to help a whole range of sectors: the airline sector, the tourism sector, small and medium-sized enterprises, and folks in the restaurant industry and the hotel industry. We have not seen a clear plan.

I am not sure what the Liberals are waiting for. They prorogued Parliament. They had lots of time on their hands when they shut down Parliament for their cover-up from August to October. They

had lots of time then. They had lots of time when they were filibustering at committees for dozens of hours. They certainly were not engaged in helping Canadians. They could have at least done the work of creating a plan to help sectors like the one in the member's riding.

**Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I agree with the member on many points and important issues. When listening to the debate all morning and on previous days, one of the things we have not heard about is our vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities. We hear crickets about them from the Conservatives and Liberals. We do not know when the pandemic is going to end, yet we hear about new programs for them, but we do not know when.

Does the member not agree there should be immediate help for our vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities who are facing high costs and do not know if they should be eating or paying their rent and hydro?

● (1105)

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, we saw that priority was not given to seniors and Canadians with disabilities by the government, with its delayed and slow rollout of the pandemic relief it offered to them.

We also know that the costs for folks living with disabilities and seniors have gone up because taxes have been increased by the Liberals this year, so we certainly need to see a plan from the government on how it will specifically help Canadian seniors and Canadians with disabilities.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by acknowledging that I am on Robinson-Huron treaty territory in the traditional lands of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek. I am happy to be joining the House today from my home in Sudbury, Canada's mining capital.

I am pleased to speak to a bill that lays the foundation for a green and prosperous post-pandemic future—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member seems to have a bad connection.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Indeed, Madam Speaker. It keeps freezing.

I have gone months without any issues, but now when I am starting a speech, I am having problems.

Can you hear me now, Madam Speaker?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Yes, we can hear you well.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Madam Speaker, I will start again and hope there will be no further issues.

I am happy to join the House from my home in Sudbury, Canada's mining capital. I am thrilled to address a bill that lays the foundation for the prosperous, green future that awaits us after this pandemic.

I am proud to be part of a community that for generations has played a key role in Canada's natural resource economy. We helped create the wealth that funds our hospitals, our schools and our roads across the country.

I am also proud of the way we support each other. Although Sudbury has grown and become more diversified, there is still a true sense of belonging to the community. This year, many in my community have made simple yet meaningful gestures, like helping a neighbour, a friend, a family member or even a stranger. Some helped an older neighbour stay safe and healthy by going to the grocery store or pharmacy for them. Others volunteered for organizations like the local women's shelter. A group of classic car owners drove around town honking their horns in support of our health care workers.

One of these kind people is Kass Bazinet. This 22-year-old woman lost her job because of COVID-19, but she did not lose her musical talent. She put her creativity to work when she learned that a friend's little girl was having nightmares about the pandemic. One day, she stood in the parking lot under the balcony of the apartment where the little girl and her family lived. While Tiffany listened wide-eyed, Kass sang songs from her favourite movie, *Frozen*. The nightmares stopped. Kass then sang other songs for other frightened children and for seniors living alone.

Unfortunately, there are some things that volunteers cannot do. When small businesses close and workers like Kass are laid off, the Government of Canada needs to take action, and that is the purpose of Bill C-14. By adopting this bill, we will be implementing the many measures set out in the fall economic statement. As the Minister of Finance said at the time, this is part of the most important economic assistance program since World War II. The economic statement describes the measures taken by the government in response to COVID-19. At the same time, the bill will lay the foundation for an economic recovery once we have conquered the virus.

Others emphasized the measures set out in Bill C-14 to help individuals, communities and businesses get back on their feet. I would like to mention the measures taken, including one in particular that enhances the excellent work that Natural Resources Canada is already doing for Canadians. With the adoption of this bill, Natural Resources Canada will receive \$150 million over three years to improve our zero-emission vehicle infrastructure. The network already includes more than 400 charging stations, and we are working to build twice as many. This will boost the public's confidence in the availability of charging stations when and where they are needed.

The government is proposing \$2.6 billion over seven years to help homeowners make energy-efficient improvements to their homes. Grants of up to \$5,000 will help up to 700,000 landlords and homeowners save money and make their own contribution to helping Canada meet its Paris targets by achieving net-zero by 2050.

Finally, and this is the point I want to focus on today, if Bill C-14 passes, Natural Resources Canada will receive more than \$3 billion over 10 years to plant two billion trees. This investment in particular resonates with Canadians because our forests are very important to us. Urban parks make our cities more livable. They allow us to

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reconnect with nature and ourselves. They are a place where children play, where couples fall in love and where families, especially those who live in apartments, can spend the day outdoors.

Residents in our city can go to Bell Park in Sudbury to play or simply go for a walk and breathe in nature's beauty. They can also attend a summer concert in the afternoon or evening at the Grace Hartman amphitheatre in the park, overlooking magnificent Lake Ramsey. A few kilometres away, we can visit the Laurentian Lake Conservation Area. It is famous for its spectacular birdwatching activities and panoramic hikes in the summer. We can also go snowshoeing and cross-country skiing after a good snowfall.

• (1110)

[*English*]

These places are a part of the Canadian soul. People travel to Europe to see cathedrals and to Asia for temples. These forests are our cathedrals and temples. However, forests are about more than bringing health, laughter and memories; they will also help us save this planet from the worst impacts of climate change.

Their capacity to absorb carbon makes them a key part of our government's broad-based plan to reach zero emissions by 2050. That is why my colleagues, the Minister of Natural Resources and Minister of Environment and Climate Change, will soon appoint an advisory committee of experts.

This committee will be made up of people who can help us maximize emissions reductions through nature-based solutions, such as increasing the capacity of our forests, grasslands, wetlands, marginal—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We have lost the hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

We will come back to the hon. parliamentary secretary once the connectivity problems have been resolved.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am joining members today from sunny Saskatoon, and it is my pleasure to speak to Bill C-14.

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It's not news to anyone in Canada that we have been in an unprecedented situation in 2020 and 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the way Canadians live their lives, run their households and businesses, manage their finances, pursue their education and so much more. As a result, millions of Canadians are out of work, and many businesses have been forced to either limit their services or shut their doors altogether. Some, unfortunately, will never have the opportunity to reopen.

In Saskatchewan, we lost more than 8,000 jobs from November to December 2020, which is just one month, and we have seen a decrease of over 27,000 jobs from December 2019 to December 2020. We need to be sure that we are responding in a way that supports Canadian families, workers and, of course, our businesses.

Early on in the pandemic, as members know, we saw programs such as the Canada emergency response benefit and the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which were targeted at helping out-of-work Canadians pay their bills and struggling businesses to keep their employees working. However, there were, from the outset, some inherent flaws in these programs. For example, the wage subsidy was originally too small and the response benefit ignored many workers and students. With the opposition's input and pressure on the government, some of these problems were remedied. The wage subsidy was increased to 75%, for example.

However, some major flaws remain in the lack of programs and supports for certain sectors. At the heritage committee, we heard about the problems from artists, festivals, local and national sports organizations, museums, newspapers and other institutions that are crucial to our communities in Canada.

Between February and July of 2020, the GDP in the arts, entertainment and recreation sectors fell by more than 50% compared with the GDP of all Canadian industries, which fell by about 5% to 6% over the same period. Employment in these sectors also fell by over 50% compared with approximately 20% for total employment. These groups told us of the lack of funding available for them and their organizations, and that the money the government kept announcing was not trickling down to them in a meaningful way. They feared having to close their doors for good.

Even when the pandemic is in our rear-view mirror, whenever that will be, it will not simply be business as usual. It will take a long time for businesses and organizations in these sectors to rebuild their consumer base and build up means and financial reserves to support production and staff at pre-COVID levels. These flaws are not just creating short-term problems; they are ensuring long-term ones.

When we look to other industries to see where the Canadian economy is taking a hit, we come to the cancellation out west of the Keystone XL pipeline. When the new President of the United States announced that he was cancelling the permits that had been granted by the previous administration, it was a major blow to the industry and the western Canadian economy, which was already struggling. The reality is that we need to get as many people in every part of Canada and every sector back to work as quickly as possible, and the Keystone XL project needs to do just that.

Unfortunately, much like he did when the Obama administration first blocked the Keystone XL expansion, the Prime Minister seems perfectly content to roll over and allow the Americans to simply scrap it without much contest. The loss of this project, and the many others the Prime Minister himself has either cancelled or regulated into oblivion, is only going to make the recovery that much harder, particularly here in western Canada.

• (1115)

We also need to consider the importance of procuring and distributing vaccines in the road to rebuilding our economy and helping Canadians get back to work. There is no recovery without widespread vaccination.

This brings me to a question that I hear from constituents every day: When is that going to happen? The truth is that we do not have a clear answer from the government. As much as the government loves to proclaim its success in procuring vaccines, we are falling behind our allies. The United States, Israel, the United Kingdom and other countries around the world are still well ahead of Canada in vaccinating their populations.

My office receives calls from care homes and seniors residences and from individuals who are at high risk or immunocompromised. When is it going to be their turn? It is a good question. Businesses are wondering when they are going to be able to reopen properly, without fear of being shut down again.

Canadians hear the stories about people being vaccinated in other countries with clear timelines and they are frustrated by the snail's pace that our federal government is travelling at. The provinces have been clear: They do not have enough vaccines and cannot meet the demand. Sunday, in the province of Saskatchewan, only 88 people were vaccinated. This is a province of nearly 1.2 million people and only 88 people were vaccinated.

As a consequence, the lockdowns and closures are going to last much longer. The pressure on individual and family finances, the difficulties facing businesses on the brink and the strain on Canadians' mental health are going to last, unfortunately, much longer.

From the public numbers and news reports, it is clear that Canada is falling further and further behind. Last week, we did not receive a single dose of the Pfizer vaccine. Premiers and other world leaders were actively on the phone with Pfizer over this issue, but the Prime Minister could not be bothered until he was pressured by the public and the opposition. That is not the leadership we need today in this country.

I want to highlight the importance of looking ahead and planning for life after the pandemic.

Canada now has a deficit that far exceeds anything we have ever seen in our lives. The national debt is at a record level. We have lost thousands of jobs, and far too many businesses have been forced to close.

We know that the economy we see post-pandemic will have some significant differences from the one we knew pre-pandemic. We need to be prepared.

We also know that the recovery is going to take time. I spoke with Tourism Saskatoon. It believes the recovery will not take months, but years. I talked to the new CEO and she admitted to me last week that maybe the tourism industry in this province and in Canada can look ahead to 2024. In the news today, it was reported in Saskatoon that a number of downtown hotels are on the verge of closing for good. This is not good.

We need a plan in place that will provide economic stability and give Canadian businesses, big and small, the tools they need to grow and re-establish themselves. We also need to have plans to encourage new businesses. We need a plan that recognizes the realities facing our country while respecting the need to reduce the deficit and provide stable and responsible economic management.

Unfortunately, as I think Canadians have become all too used to, the government does not seem to have a plan. There is no clear path forward. Rather, the Prime Minister is governing by the seat of his pants. His only plan is to call an election whenever it is most to his advantage, which may be this spring.

• (1120)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I heard the member talk about unemployment, and other members from the Conservative Party have spoken at great length about the employment levels and our economy during their speeches. It is true that Canada has one of the higher unemployment levels in the G7, but what is left out of that very important discussion is the fact that we have one of the lowest levels of deaths per million population in the G7. As a matter of fact, earlier someone else referenced that the United Kingdom has a 5% unemployment rate, while we are over 8%; however, the number of deaths per million population in the U.K. is three times that of Canada's, and if we compare ourselves with the U.S., the statistics are even worse.

One of the main objectives of the government intervention and spending in 2020 was specifically to get people to stay home, to shelter in place, so that we could control this pandemic. If we look at the statistics on the fatality rates throughout the G7, we see that Canada has fared very well, obviously at the expense of having a slightly higher unemployment rate than some of the other countries that have fared much worse. Would the member not agree that a temporary bump in our unemployment rate is worth potentially saving millions of lives?

• (1125)

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Madam Speaker, what is interesting is that it took the government a year to finally realize that international flying was one of the major issues facing COVID-19 in this country. Then it cherry-picked the closures of international flights. We still have flights coming in every day from Florida, Arizona, California and other parts of the world. The government took almost a year to

shut down international flights. That is one of the major issues with COVID-19, yet the government has been very slow to react to it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. I have the pleasure of sitting with him on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. He spoke briefly about the impact on the cultural community, industry and the media, among others.

I would like to hear his opinion on the measures' implementation and on the impact they could have given that fact that they are too little, too late. I would especially like to hear what he has to say about the fact that we are losing cultural resources and artisans who are making a career change because the current situation prevents them from earning a living in their field.

What will be the impact of the long-term cultural and media losses?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Drummond. He is a valuable asset on the Canadian heritage committee.

Yes, we have seen drastic changes made in 11 months to the arts and culture industry in Canada. I am fearful it will never recover, or that if it does, it could take up to a decade.

We are going through the changes proposed to the Broadcast Act in Bill C-10 at the heritage committee. What are we going to do with the big multimedia giants like Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, Apple and Disney? These Canadian media giants really have no investment at all in Canada, and they are forcing a major issue here.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his intervention. I quite enjoy being on the heritage committee with him and I admire the work he does on behalf of artists.

As my colleague will know, Edmonton Strathcona is the heart of the arts community in Alberta, where we have the Edmonton International Fringe Festival and the Edmonton Folk Music Festival.

I too am very concerned about this long tail of COVID-19 and the impacts it will have on the arts community in Canada and in Edmonton Strathcona in particular. How does the member feel about a guaranteed basic livable income for artists as a potential solution for the arts community?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood may give a very short answer.

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**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Madam Speaker, the member for Edmonton Strathcona is absolutely right about artists. Saskatoon piggybacks on anything that her community does. We also have a fringe festival here in Saskatoon, or at least we did in 2019. These are people who were vulnerable from the start. They are looking for an opening to make a big name for themselves. I am very worried about the arts and culture community in this country. Like the tourism industry, it has been decimated, as I said in my speech. I do not see a lot of progress being made by the government, even though it dished up—

• (1130)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Drummond.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, before starting my speech, I would like to point out that this week is National Suicide Prevention Week, and that this year's theme is "Talking about suicide saves lives." I would like to acknowledge and salute the exceptional work done by the people at the Drummond suicide prevention helpline, who are saving lives. We need to talk about suicide, especially this week.

There are three topics I would like to address. They are dear to my heart and I think we can do better.

The first is the development of high-speed Internet and telecommunication technologies in general, because I also want to talk about cellphones. We have spoken a lot about this in recent months and years. We even managed to get everyone to admit that effective and fair access to high-speed Internet was an essential service for all Quebeckers and Canadians.

If we are bringing it up again today, it is because not much has been done, despite the fact that we know that it is an essential service. I admit that there have been a lot of announcements, and that a lot of money has been invested in various programs. However, high-speed Internet is now more essential than ever during the pandemic and the resulting lockdown and the need to follow health guidelines. Families have to work from home and use a lot of bandwidth, and students are learning from home and also using a lot of bandwidth, not to mention that a lot of our entertainment is Internet-based. In short, high-speed Internet is an extremely essential service, one to which Quebeckers and Canadians have very uneven access, especially in remote areas.

Given how essential high-speed Internet is, the \$1.8 billion we invested to accelerate its rollout may not be enough. The Quebec government aims to connect all Quebeckers by fall 2022. Some say it is a pipe dream, while others have faith. I think that it is entirely possible if we do what is necessary. I believe it is high time that the government work harder than it has been. Not only must it invest more money in the rollout of high-speed Internet, specifically in the regions, and I know it wants to do this, but it also needs to put conditions on the subsidies it provides. These conditions could include requiring that the beneficiary of a government subsidy undertake to connect every building in the sector in which it is rolling out the service.

The same goes for cell service. It is unthinkable that cell and Internet coverage is totally insufficient in densely populated areas relatively close to urban centres. I am thinking about Saint-Majorique-de-Grantham, a municipality in my riding about four minutes from downtown Drummondville; the situation in Saint-Joachim is similar. This situation is unacceptable in 2021, especially when people are being asked to stay home, work from home and learn from home.

I think that we can do far better in this regard and that we need to do it fast, since the economic recovery will depend on it. We will not automatically go back to our old ways of doing things as soon as the pandemic is over. There will be a greater need for Internet services and economic development in the regions, where businesses must often choose between moving to an urban centre and staying in the town where they were established. Many of my constituents are wondering when all this will be taken care of. I am sure that the same problem exists in each of my colleagues' ridings, except for those in very densely populated cities.

The second topic I wanted to discuss is the regional media and culture. My colleague spoke about this earlier in his speech. Before the pandemic and the crisis hit, we were already talking about the extreme vulnerability of the print media industry, especially regional media, and we were already implementing programs to come to the aid of the regional media. Then the pandemic happened, and it only made things worse.

Along the way, a few measures were proposed and well received. I must admit that, and I must acknowledge the Minister of Canadian Heritage's understanding and efforts to implement various measures.

• (1135)

However, the media is now asking how the government is managing its priorities. The fact that the GAFAM web giants are taking over the regional media's advertising share, their bread and butter, is an emergency that no one is doing anything about. Action is being postponed to some time in the future. The latest news was that something is coming in the spring, which is encouraging, but for the regional media, this is a matter of survival, and we have been saying so for months and sounding the alarm. We wonder whether anyone really hears us and understands the urgent situation our print media is in.

Tourism and major events have also been affected, and these sectors are recognized as being among those hit hardest by the pandemic. Tourism is a sector that relies on predictability. The people who work in this sector are extremely creative. They are being told that things have to change and that they have to adapt, and they are the ones who are best equipped to find creative ways of reorienting their activities and complying with the various public health guidelines.



Consider for example the Village québécois d'antan, an historic site in Drummondville that has a theme for each season. In the summertime, interpreters bring the village to life. In the fall, the haunted village becomes a major tourist attraction for Halloween. During the holidays, the village turns into an illuminated, magical place that transports visitors back to the Christmases of yesteryear.

During this pandemic, the village staff has had a few months to plan ahead for the pandemic and has prepared a fantastic tourist attraction for visitors to enjoy. The team was able to pull this off because it could plan ahead. However, no one knows what this summer will bring. If the team could be reassured that they are getting a certain amount in financial assistance, they could develop ideas and create something, reinvent themselves and welcome any visitors who come through our wonderful region of Drummond. However, this requires predictability.

The highly affected sectors credit availability program was announced two months ago, but no details have been given since then. Tourism businesses like the Village québécois d'antan need to know the details and need to know how much funding will be available in order to successfully create new attractions.

Lastly, I would like to talk a little about the environment and climate change. We receive a lot of emails from our constituents asking us to consider the environment and climate change when planning the recovery. We are being asked for a green and fair recovery. In December, the government introduced its greenhouse gas reduction plan to tackle climate change. However, once again, we see that they do not necessarily walk the talk.

I will give the example of Soprema, a company in my riding. In 2017, Environment and Climate Change Canada announced changes to the Ozone-depleting Substances and Halocarbon Alternatives Regulations, which would require manufacturers of plastic foam insulation to use a foaming agent with a lower global warming potential, or GWP. At the time, companies were using foaming agents with a GWP of approximately 750, but now that level had to come down to 150.

The three companies that share the blowing agents market, Dupont, Owens Corning and Soprema, took on the task in 2017. The first two of these companies are U.S. giants. On June 18, 2020, Soprema announced that it met the deadline and was ready for 2021. However, in August, we learned that Dupont had been granted an exemption allowing it to continue using its product, which is five times more polluting, on the pretext of economic infeasibility, which is a joke.

Efforts were made to overturn this ridiculous decision that created an appalling inequity in the market, especially since the new product was of course more expensive to produce. That gave Dupont an absolutely unacceptable economic advantage. Steps were taken, but there was no response, nothing happened. Then, in January, we learned that, instead of correcting their mistake, Environment and Climate Change Canada also granted Owens Corning an exemption, in addition to offering Soprema assistance in obtaining an exemption of its own.

### *Government Orders*

• (1140)

This means that, instead of applying the new regulations to fight greenhouse gases and climate change, the government is lowering its standards to the lowest common denominator, punishing the good guys and penalizing Soprema for millions of dollars in losses, rather than rewarding it for its efforts.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and his comments.

I lived in the Eastern Townships for a number of years, so I am quite familiar with his area, Drummondville. It is a wonderful city that, as he said, has an extremely vibrant arts and culture scene. As we know, those who work in arts and culture often have trouble making ends meet and sometimes face certain obstacles.

My question is quite simple. Does he agree with the idea of a guaranteed basic income, as proposed by the member for Winnipeg Centre? Does he believe that having a guaranteed basic income would improve the situation for those living in the regions? In Drummondville, the cultural community is extremely vibrant, but artists sometimes have a hard time making ends meet.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his questions.

Indeed, the arts community is very up and down and unstable. However, artists need some level of security. It so happens we are working on that with the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, among others, as we emerge from the crisis.

Quebec has the Status of the Artist Act. In addition, the Union des artistes works extremely hard to gain recognition for artists and ensure they have access to the various programs that can help meet their needs when things slow down for them.

It goes without saying that the arts community is pretty vulnerable, but it also fares quite well in Quebec. We will always be open to suggestions for improving the status of artists, because the arts in Quebec and Canada are important to us.

[*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, we actually need to recognize and provide substantial support to our culture and arts community. That community plays a very important role in our society, and there is no doubt it has been hit very hard because of the coronavirus. Many cultural shows were cancelled and artists have found it very difficult, and so I am wondering if my colleague could continue to provide his thoughts on how this industry plays a critical role in our communities, whether in terms of jobs or just our Canadian heritage. That is why it was so important that we reached out and supported that community through some of our programs over the last 12 months.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his intervention.

*Government Orders*

Indeed, it is a very important industry in Quebec and Canada that represents tens of billions of dollars. In fact, if my most recent figures are correct, it is a \$53-billion industry.

It is true that some programs have been quick to help the cultural industry. In our recent studies of these programs, we found that the artists were often the last to actually get any money. Of course, organizations such as broadcasters and producers have been helped as much as possible, but at the end of the day, the most vulnerable—the unemployed artists, technicians or contract workers—do not benefit from the subsidies that are provided to organizations and broadcasters.

This is a shortcoming that must be addressed quickly because we do not want to lose this talent and this resource, which generates not only significant economic benefits, but also great cultural wealth.

● (1145)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Before continuing, I would like to thank technical services and the hon. parliamentary secretary for their patience and goodwill. We will now let the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources resume his speech.

He has the floor for four minutes. Afterwards, there will be five minutes for questions.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to resume debate. I would also like to thank technical services for their support.

[*English*]

We plan to increase our forest cover by 1.2 million hectares, an area twice the size of Prince Edward Island. Doing this will cut overall emissions by up to 12 megatonnes by 2050, all the while we are creating more than 4,000 jobs. There are additional benefits. This commitment will also create more habitat for wildlife, improve biodiversity, and enhance our ability to restore habitat for species at risk, like the boreal caribou and migratory birds.

Still, this is a complex undertaking that takes time. We must work closely with provincial and territorial governments that own and manage 90% of Canada's forests. Of course, we must work with indigenous groups, continuing to build capacity and focusing on partnerships.

We also have to contend with delays caused by the pandemic. That is why, early in the pandemic, our government put up \$30 million to help small and medium-sized businesses in the forestry sector, including tree planting companies, to offset the costs of COVID-19 safety measures. This helped keep workers in nearby communities safe, all the while that more than 600 seedlings were successfully put in the ground.

The main reason we are approaching this carefully is that planting trees is a complex and delicate undertaking, as I said. We must plant the right tree in the right place at the right time, and ensure

that seedlings in nurseries and young trees survive, providing us with their long-term benefits. For instance, which trees do we choose to ensure that new forests or reforested areas can withstand a warming climate, or which trees and techniques will restore particular habitats, and how do we ensure that newly planted trees near city streets survive their urban environments?

Clearly, the federal government cannot do this alone, which is why we are also talking with municipalities and community groups, non-governmental organizations and green entrepreneurs, philanthropic and conservation organizations, universities and colleges, indigenous communities and organizations. This is indeed an enormous and complex initiative, and one of the most ambitious tree-planting endeavours in the world. We believe it will pay dividends over generations, well beyond 2050. We are going to start by planting trees in urban areas across Canada this spring.

I will wrap up by saying that this pandemic has been tough, and often frightening for our youngest children and vulnerable seniors, but it has also helped us see the forest through the trees, to recognize what we value, including our natural world, its ability to restore our planet's health and its role in helping us rebuild our economy the right way, with sustainable jobs and vibrant communities.

I urge all members to support Bill C-14 so we can make this happen.

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague who is always a joy to work with on the natural resources committee, but I am going to question his virtuousness around planting trees. We have an industry that plants 600 million trees per year. It regularly plants three trees for every tree it cuts down. The cycle of carbon in a tree, of course, is such that the tree actually absorbs carbon in its mid-life. It is not going to be absorbing much carbon when it is a seedling. The member seems to think that it is going to happen in the next 10 years, but it is actually not going to happen until at least 2030 when the effects of greenhouse gas reductions are going to be well upon us.

This virtue signalling in doing something with planting trees is thus a bit of a non-starter if we look at its actual effects on reducing carbon. We need to do more than this. I am going to challenge my colleague's virtuousness because he has not costed this. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that the government has not costed this correctly. The government is only thinking of this plan as it goes along.

Could the member please explain further how this would actually result in carbon reduction in the next 10 years?

● (1150)

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to work with my colleague at the natural resources committee.

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I would certainly beg to differ with the conclusions of my colleague that planting two billion trees will not help the environment. Our goal is to be at net-zero emissions by 2050, so the fact that the member is stating that we should not even start is absurd, given that we need to start somewhere. This is engaging communities, families and the provinces to get this done.

I must say that in my region of Sudbury, where the landscape was devastated 40 years ago, we have planted 14 million trees over the past 30 years, which has done much for our community. The member says that wanting to plant trees is virtuous and is virtue signalling. Again, I bet to differ.

On another note that my colleague raised, with respect to the PBO, if he reads the report, he will see that the PBO says that basically it is hard to make these estimates and that they might be off, but that this is the basic estimate. That said, a lot of organizations across Canada have reached out to me and said that the PBO report, in its calculations, is quite wrong. The calculations are based on Ontario at the cost of three dollars per tree to be planted, whereas most of the ones I have heard about cost less than a dollar a tree to be planted.

Let us stick with the facts. This program is good for Canada, it is good for families and it is good for everyone.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am rather pleased that the parliamentary secretary was able to finish his speech. It really resonated with me when he spoke about the fight against climate change earlier.

I hope that my colleague was able to hear me earlier when I spoke about how the Department of Environment and Climate Change granted exemptions to two American giants that have a technology they are ready to put on the market. They were granted exemptions for economic reasons, while a Quebec company that is part of a small group of suppliers of a particular product had to play the obedient student and suffer the consequences for doing so and trying to do what it could to help fight climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Madam Speaker, unfortunately I did not hear my colleague from Drummond's entire speech.

However, I can say that our strategy is to ensure that all SMEs can play a role and that they have the technology. We are here to support them. There is funding for that. Over the past six years, we have even increased our contribution to several funds to support these businesses and create this innovation, which will allow us to meet not only our Paris targets, but also those related to achieving net-zero by 2050.

I would be pleased to talk with the hon. member for Drummond to see how we might provide our support. We could at least have a discussion about that business in his riding.

We see a lot of innovation in Quebec, but also across Canada. Clearly we need to continue to support these technologies and these innovative entrepreneurs who create these opportunities, not to

mention support this green technology that will also create jobs and wealth in Canada.

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to start with a special tribute once again.

We have been talking about this for a long time, as we have been in the midst of a pandemic for a year. I want to pay tribute to health care workers, especially people working in hospitals, the nurses, orderlies, doctors and so on. We see them on the news, we see the images and reports. This is a matter of mental health as well, given all the stress and anxiety people feel. These people are on the front lines, they are right there, and I would say they are on the front lines of the war we are waging.

Our job is to plan so that they have the tools to do their job. Unfortunately, that is not enough. That is one of the problems. For the past year, the Bloc Québécois has tirelessly asked for health transfers. The federal government has spent money during the pandemic, but had it responded to the provincial government's call for increased health transfers over the years, we would not have gone through what we have gone through. We would not have gone through this crisis in the way we did. That is a major problem.

All of the provincial premiers called for the federal government to increase health transfers, but the federal level did not do so. An increase in health transfers would have helped our people on the ground and our health care workers who are working day in and day out to protect us from this pandemic, but it did not happen. I want to pay tribute to all the health care workers who are there and to all those people. I sincerely thank them.

Today, I want to talk about the fact that we often hear people, especially government members, say that they are pleased to talk about the subject in question when they rise in the House. It is quite the opposite for me. I am not at all pleased, because the things that I am going to talk about next are major problems, particularly housing.

Housing is one of the most powerful indicators of poverty, and I am not pleased to have to say that we are not doing enough. The government is not doing enough, and we are not doing our job, which is to provide housing for people. For example, in the bill to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement, which was introduced by the Minister of Finance, the government announced the expansion of the rental construction financing initiative as a new measure.

That was already in the national housing strategy. It is not a bad thing, but it is mostly loans for the construction of housing units that, 80% of the time, are not affordable. When they are affordable, rent for these units can be as high as \$2,000 in Montreal. I do not know who in Montreal can afford \$2,000 in rent, but that is what this program has to offer. It can even go as high as \$2,400 in Quebec City and Gatineau. That is not what I call affordable housing.

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Quebec's approach is known for being more socially and community focused. I have talked to federal government colleagues who are involved in housing in Toronto and Vancouver. They recognize the Government of Quebec's social, community-focused approach, which enables people to find housing for less than 25% of their income. That is important, and it is called social housing. We want investments in social housing.

Housing is a provincial jurisdiction, as is health. We keep having to remind the federal government to mind its own business. Health is none of its business; housing is none of its business. These are provincial jurisdictions. All we are asking of the federal government is that it provide the funding so we can house people, especially given that we send half of our taxes to Ottawa. Quebec sends \$50 billion to Ottawa. That is significant. It would be nice if the feds would toss something back our way so we can protect our citizens.

The Government of Canada announced the national housing strategy on November 22, 2017. It is a major strategy, and Ottawa put a lot of money into it. Since housing is a provincial jurisdiction, Quebec should have had its share of investments. However, that took three years of negotiations and agreements. Some funding was finally released last fall: a total of \$3.8 billion, with \$1.9 billion being provided by the federal government and \$1.9 billion by the province. That money can help build between 2,000 and 4,000 housing units, but four times those numbers are needed.

During those three years, the Government of Quebec could not move forward with building social housing units. There was no money. This summer I went for a walk. There were tents along Notre-Dame Street. There were people experiencing homelessness, but it went beyond that. The crisis is, of course, difficult for the people with mental health and addiction issues who are traditionally associated with homelessness. It is very difficult for them.

• (1155)

However, the pandemic has created a new type of homelessness. People who were in precarious work situations and lived in shared housing were already on the precipice and the pandemic pushed them out onto the street. If the agreement had been signed in 2017, if the federal government had resolved this dispute with Quebec, these people might not have ended up on the street. We could have avoided what we saw on Notre-Dame Street. We could have housed our fellow Quebecers. That is important. It is huge.

I would take it even further. Two weeks ago a homeless indigenous man died, likely from the cold, in a portable toilet just steps from a shelter he frequented. If the agreement had been signed a few years ago, this man would not have died. We could have built housing units for homeless indigenous people in downtown Montreal, which would have saved this man's life. This is having serious and often tragic repercussions, all because this agreement went three years without being signed. I cannot believe it. I repeat: Housing is one of the most powerful indicators of poverty, and the agreement went three years without being signed.

I cannot help but think that, if Quebec were independent, the issues related to health and housing would have been quickly resolved. We would be spending money where it is needed. We

would be sure to house and care for our people. Independence is the magic solution for Quebecers.

I want to give another example of a situation where Quebec would have been better off on its own. In the fall, the government implemented the rapid housing initiative, which is not a bad thing in and of itself. The federal government invested \$1 billion to house our fellow citizens during the pandemic. That is good, except that Quebec got the short end of the stick once again. Only two cities in Quebec received a share of the first \$500 million for big cities. Fifteen big cities in Canada were ranked by their homelessness needs. The government decided to give Toronto \$200 million. That is huge.

Quebec represents 23% of Canada's population, yet it received only 12% of the first \$500 million allocated under this initiative. That is completely unacceptable. The federal government allocated \$56 million to Montreal and \$8 million to Quebec City. There was nothing for Gatineau, Longueuil, Laval, Rouyn-Noranda, Jonquière or Gaspé, even though there are problems everywhere. We got the short end of the stick.

For the other \$500-million stream, Quebec put its foot down. It decided that it would have control, which is logical and to be expected. Consequently, it was able to invest \$116 million in projects, which is not bad. However, we need to invest more in housing. It is essential that we do so to help our fellow Quebecers. It is still a serious issue in Quebec. There are 300,000 households considered to be in dire need of housing, and that is a significant number. In addition, these are pre-pandemic figures.

Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante said a few weeks ago that homelessness needs have doubled in Montreal. There used to be about 3,000 homeless people in Montreal, but there are now about 6,000. In Quebec, 80,000 households spend more than 80% of their income on housing. These are pre-pandemic figures. This is unacceptable.

Currently, 40,000 Quebec families, including 2,000 in Longueuil and 23,000 in Montreal, are on the waiting list for low-income housing. In short, there is a huge need. I am running out of time. We never have enough time to talk about the important things in this Parliament.

My message is this: we have invested in housing, but the needs are 10 times greater than what Quebec has invested in the past year. The government must therefore invest. We have to take care of our people and provide housing for them. Again, it is one of the biggest indicators of poverty. Having good housing helps a lot. We must provide housing for our people. We must take care of them.

• (1200)

[*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.):** Mr. Speaker, one thing I have learned, which has been reinforced by my constituents and Canadians from all regions of the country, is that there is an expectation that goes far beyond Ottawa just providing cash for health care. We can see that when people raise the issue of standards in long-term care and reinforce the need for pharmacare involvement. There seems to be a real tangible desire that we build back better on the health care file.

I wonder if my colleague recognizes that Canadians in all regions of the country expect the federal government to play more of a proactive role in the area of health care, given that it is such an important issue to all of us.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Trudel:** Mr. Speaker, it is a provincial responsibility. We need to stop talking about it. I am not sure how else to say that.

If the fathers of Confederation had wanted it to be a federal responsibility, they would have said so in 1867. It would have been settled. Then, the federal government would have hired doctors, built hospitals and done preventive health, but no. All of that is under provincial jurisdiction. Quebec has the expertise, and the provinces have the expertise. The Government of Quebec is the one looking after people. It is the expert. When folks in Ottawa try to take over, it does not work.

The federal government's job in this pandemic is to supply vaccines. As we can see, that is not working right now. In a report published in *The Economist*, an independent committee contradicts the Prime Minister's assertion that all Canadians will be vaccinated by the end of September, stating that it could take until the middle of 2022.

All we are asking the government to do is its job: supply vaccines.

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear colleague.

I found the content of his speech quite eloquent, particularly with regard to housing. I would like to ask him a question about that.

The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, of which I am a member, just completed a study on indigenous housing. The need is absolutely desperate, and the testimony we heard expressed the same message to us all.

Funding definitely needs to be increased. What does my colleague think has to be done, particularly under the rapid housing initiative that was just adopted, to ensure that it meets the needs?

**Mr. Denis Trudel:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question.

Funding is obviously the key. The needs are there, and we know what they are. On the ground, people are ready. We are fortunate to

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have experts on the ground who are ready. We need to listen to them.

We have experts on issues related to domestic violence, seniors, and children with disabilities. This requires a special approach and special services that we have in Quebec. We have developed them over the years. This is recognized across Canada. The federal government just needs to fund them adequately.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the worst vacancy rate in Quebec is in Saint-Hyacinthe, with a rate of 0.3%.

Real estate is a very complex and speculative field and has been the source of economic crises in the past. Still, I would like to know how such a vacancy rate is possible and what has caused it.

How can a city that is so dynamic in many other respects have a vacancy rate of 0.3%?

What should I tell the groups and residents in my riding who are worried?

**Mr. Denis Trudel:** Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. I do not know the answer for Saint-Hyacinthe specifically, but I do know that there are disparities across Canada.

For example, of the \$500 million earmarked for the first stream of the rapid housing initiative, \$200 million is going to Toronto. Obviously, rents are very expensive in Toronto, so the real estate market is very high. Low-income earners have an even harder time finding affordable housing in Toronto and Vancouver.

However, that is not our problem. In fact, we are sort of being penalized for the fact that Toronto and Vancouver cannot sort out their real estate markets. This means that the federal government provides more funding to those folks, who do not appear to be very good at looking after the most vulnerable. As the rest of Canada is not good at it, Quebec has developed an approach that works pretty well. The same is true in many areas; we would be better off if we were independent.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a novel sensation to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-14, for several reasons. First, it is always a tremendous privilege to rise in the House, even though it is not as populated as it has been in the past, to represent the constituents of Provencher and speak to the issues of the day regarding this great country of Canada. Second, it is novel to speak to an economic statement that does not typically lead to legislation. This is an unusual speech in that respect.

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Third, this marks the very first meaningful budget-like document that the Liberals have produced since 2019, almost 650 days ago. To be sure, this is not a budget. However, I am grateful to have the opportunity to address Bill C-14 given the fact that the Liberals have flat out refused to present a budget since 2018.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on Finance, which is just now concluding its pre-budget consultations and entering the drafting stage of the report. It is now time for the committee to review the recommendations from Canadians, and to consolidate into the report all the needs that have been identified by Canadians from coast to coast to coast to present to the finance minister. My hope is that the Minister of Finance will take this process seriously, that her response will be thoughtful and that she will come up with a realistic plan for our nation's finances.

Conservatives have been clear right from the beginning that we want to make sure that Canadians struggling as a result of COVID-19 have the support they need. We recognize the challenges that so many are facing, including those of us living under stringent public health restrictions that have dramatically impacted our well-being. The government has a duty not only to help Canadians get through the crisis, but to develop a plan to help us get out of it. I said earlier today in the House that it seems as though the government has no plan, and failing to plan is planning to fail.

It is perfectly fair for governments to react quickly when faced with a crisis. One cannot get everything right when trying to sort out something new and unexpected on the fly. However, a year has now passed since COVID-19 came on Canada's radar in a real way. By now, the government has had plenty of time to prepare a solid, long-term plan for Canada's economy. By now, we know where the damage is most significant. We know who is hurting, and with this knowledge comes the power to plan for the future: to show Canadians a way out and a plan for things to return to normal.

One tangible way that the Liberals could do this immediately is by setting a fiscal anchor. A fiscal anchor is driven by rock-solid foundation principles and will be an anchor or reference point to hold things together and provide stability on which we can establish policies. The principles of financial anchors are missing from the Liberal government.

The Business Council of Canada defines fiscal anchors as follows:

...notional ceilings or caps to the levels of public spending, deficits, and debt that governments are prepared to reach in their fiscal policy. They serve many purposes including:

- 1 Retaining the confidence of lenders and global markets...;
- 2 Establishing a positive investment climate for businesses;
- 3 Providing a measure of fiscal discipline inside government...; and

4 Ensuring that the government has the ability to respond to future economic shocks and unforeseen crises.

In practical terms, this is about creating good jobs for Canadians. It is about creating the conditions for local small businesses to succeed and thrive. It is about moms and dads being able to put food on the table for their families. However, it is also about governments being able to sustainably fund the social services that many rely on: health care, education and the social safety net. Fiscal responsibility, or a fiscal anchor, signals to Canadians that the gov-

ernment is not merely acting for its own immediate interests today, but for the good of the country and its future.

Former parliamentary budget officer Kevin Page told the National Post in October, "There's a cost to having effectively no fiscal plan. And right now it's fair to say we have no fiscal strategy." He added, "This is about where the government's rudder is. Where is the policy strategy that guides us through the pandemic, and to the post COVID-19 recovery? We're missing that."

● (1210)

In a November piece for *The Globe and Mail*, Mostafa Askari, Sahir Khan and Mr. Page write:

All governments need constraints. Politicians do not like to raise taxes. There is a bias toward deficits. Higher debt can create the risk of future economic instability. It can reduce fiscal room to address the next economic downturn. Constraints also signal future policy intentions of governments and are essential to promote accountability.

The Liberals' refusal to adopt a fiscal anchor is such that they continue to avoid accountability for their spending. We are facing a historic deficit of almost \$400 billion. The total federal debt will reach \$1.1 trillion this year, and the federal debt, as a percentage of GDP, has risen dramatically. If ever Canadians deserved transparency and accountability, now is the time.

With this in mind, I want to speak about part 7 of the bill. In this section of the legislation, the Liberals propose to amend the Borrowing Authority Act and the Financial Administration Act by increasing maximum borrowing authority for the federal government of Canada from \$1.1 trillion to \$1.8 trillion. Even as someone with years of experience in the financial sector, those figures seem very daunting to me. This increase is considerably more than the government needs to get through this next fiscal year. Moreover, it authorizes a massive expansion of the national debt all while the government refuses to identify a fiscal anchor and refuses transparency.

If the Liberals were swiping their own personal credit cards during these transactions, it would be one thing, but they are swiping the nation's credit card, knowing full well that hard-working Canadians will ultimately be stuck with a bill that will likely have to be paid through tax increases and will be passed on to future generations. This is money out of the pockets of real people, real families, and not just this generation.

Young parents trying to set aside money for their children's education, small business owners trying to meet payroll for employees and seniors on fixed incomes will all be affected by this increase to our national debt.

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In the real world, when Canadians want to obtain a line of credit they have to show the lender that they are good for it. They have to show they will be able to make payments. They have to show that they are responsible stewards of the money that is being lent to them. That is how the three Cs of credit work: character, collateral and capacity. I, for one, do not see why the House should authorize such a significant increase of the government's maximum borrowing authority when it cannot even establish a baseline for its spending. Liberals have not demonstrated the ability to be responsible for increased debt.

This is about taking care of Canadians today and tomorrow. We owe it to future Canadians to ensure our public finances are sustainable. Debt is a moral issue: It is something that is owed to one by another with the understanding that what is owed must be paid back. This is a basic principle, and one that is almost universally understood within the context of business, finance and even personal relationships. If we borrow money from the bank to finance the purchase of a home or vehicle, there is an understanding and a binding agreement as to how and when that loan will be paid back. The borrower is taking on that debt, and with it the responsibility to repay the amount borrowed from the lender. A commitment has been made to restore the financial situation of the lender. The refusal or failure to do so will result in penalties, or at the very least adverse effects to the credit and financial well-being of the borrower.

To borrow without the ability or a clear plan to repay is foolish. While in our culture some debt is usually unavoidable, it is a reality that most of us try to avoid it. We do not want to be in debt. We do not want to be enslaved to interest payments. We want to be free. The government does not have its own money, it only has the money that it receives from the taxation of its citizens. When it needs more money, the government only has three choices: raise taxes, cut spending or borrow.

As my colleague, the member for Carleton, has so succinctly put it, paycheques are the solution. Canadians need opportunities to work. This puts food on their tables and produces tax revenue governments need to provide important services. It is time that the Liberals focus on creating opportunities for Canadians. There are many ways to achieve that objective. Stop raising taxes such as the carbon tax and the CPP payroll tax. Accelerate project permit application processing for infrastructure. Repeal Bill C-69 and Bill C-48. Ideas like these create space for a real recovery.

• (1215)

Let us pursue sustainability and fiscally responsible policies that get Canadians not just through this economic slump, but actually out of it.

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to quote something from that fine old socialist newspaper, The Globe and Mail, which said:

Once the world gets past the worst of the pandemic, and growth returns to more normal levels, the economies in most industrialized countries should expand substantially faster than the interest rate on their debt. This means the size of their government debt should shrink steadily as a portion of GDP. In Canada, for instance, it makes perfect sense to borrow at 0.7 per cent (the current yield on 10-year Canada bonds) to support an economy capable of growing at 3 per cent or more.

Given that our debt service costs today, with the additional deficit, are \$4 billion less per year than they were in the fall of 2019, how does the hon. member justify the alarmist narrative that he has been delivering?

• (1220)

**Mr. Ted Falk:** Mr. Speaker, I would tell the hon. member to look at what the International Monetary Fund has to say about the situation of our finances.

We know that the forecast for our economic growth has been reduced by 30%. The Liberal government does not have an explanation for that. If we are reducing our economic growth, we are also reducing the ability for this government to collect tax revenue. When we incur additional debt without incurring the additional ability to pay for that debt, we run into some very serious problems. In the real world they call it insolvency when one does not have the means to cover one's debt.

Yes, interest rates are low, and we can fool ourselves into thinking that now is the time to amass an incredible amount of debt that is going to look after itself. I think it was this very Prime Minister who said that "the budget will balance itself", and that we did not have to worry about that, which seems to be the attitude I am sensing from this Liberal member.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my fellow Manitoban for his comments.

The member talked a little about trying to assist people during the pandemic, but we know, certainly in the province of Manitoba, that there are many people who have been left behind. I have seniors residing at Lions Place who did not get proper support even prior to the pandemic, and are worried now about ending up on the street. How abhorrent is it that, in this country, seniors are not even given an amount that would allow them to remain housed? We also know that students have been left behind and, certainly in my riding of Winnipeg Centre, people with very severe mental health and trauma issues who were left behind before the pandemic are now even more vulnerable, as we saw with the cases of trench fever that occurred in my riding prior to Christmas.

Knowing all of this, I wonder if my hon. colleague would support a guaranteed livable income to ensure that all Manitobans and all Canadians could have their minimum human rights assured and guaranteed.

**Mr. Ted Falk:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg Centre for her question. I recognize her passion for the less fortunate and underprivileged in the world, and certainly her community in the heart of Winnipeg is no exception.

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I also want to acknowledge an organization in the member's riding, Adult & Teen Challenge, and its former executive director, Steve Paulson, as well as Daniel, who is now in charge. It does a tremendous amount of work. I talked to some organization members recently, and they indicated that they were running at capacity. Adult & Teen Challenge is an organization that offers hope to people struggling with addiction and substance abuse. It has a very effective program that reaches people in the area, which is right in the member's riding, and I know that she is connected with them, and that is tremendous.

I think we need to give people the opportunity to succeed financially and to earn a living. The best way to lift people out of poverty is to provide jobs for them so that they can look after themselves. We also need to keep our eye focused, as I said, on part 7 of the bill before us, because it would increase our national debt level to the point that we would have to increase taxation, and we would reduce the wiggle room we have to provide adequate social services for folks who really need it, such as folks in her riding.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today in the debate on Bill C-14.

As the House knows, the Bloc Québécois has already stated that it will vote in favour of the bill because on the whole it will provide long-awaited support to our SMEs and our families.

I could have talked about a pile of programs that did not meet certain needs because, again, families and SMEs do not have access to assistance. They either do not meet the criteria, their application has not been processed or it is waiting on a pile, or they are having a hard time getting through to anyone by phone to help them navigate the various programs.

Instead today, I want to take the opportunity to speak about and shed light on some very important issues that are a priority for parliamentarians, but also for my constituents, the people I represent in the riding of Salaberry—Suroît.

On page 81 of the 2020 fall economic statement, the government acknowledges that “Canadians in many rural and remote communities who still do not have access to high-speed Internet face a barrier to their ability to be equal participants in the economy.”

In 2018, just 41% of rural households had access to high-speed Internet, which is defined as a download speed of 50 megabits per second and an upload speed of 10 megabits per second. The speeds I get back home in Ormstown are laughable. I think I have two speeds: slow and non-existent.

That percentage accurately reflects my reality. Allow me to compare that to urban areas. That same study showed that 98% of urban households in large and medium-sized population centres had access to high-speed Internet. I find this unacceptable. This inequality between rural and urban communities is inexplicable and untenable.

I am proud to represent a rural riding. My riding does have some urban centres, but the vast majority of it is rural. No matter where you go in my riding, you are about 30 to 45 minutes from Montreal.

In my own home, I am about 50 kilometres from Montreal and I do not have access to high-speed Internet.

I am not using my personal circumstances to elicit sympathy. No one in my neighbourhood or in my town has access to fibre, which would help us join the 21st century just like the people living in cities or urban centres. Every week I have constituents asking me, not always politely, why we are not connected yet, when they will be connected and when the Internet will finally reach their home. I think that we are very patient. We have been waiting a long time. Quebeckers and the people of the riding of Salaberry—Suroît do not understand why it is taking so long to get connected.

We have to buy technological gadgets. I have bought cellular equipment.

I have a lot of equipment. I believe I have spent \$1,500 on equipment because companies sell me new technology that will supposedly provide high-speed service. We install it, we get our hopes up, but it does not work.

Teleworking during the pandemic has been a nightmare for people like me in Salaberry—Suroît living without high-speed Internet. It has been a struggle getting the children to do their school work when three or four computers are connected to the same network. It has been an ordeal trying to study or work remotely.

In Salaberry—Suroît, I am lucky to be able to rely on cable companies that have a social conscience and want to develop the fibre optic network. I am thinking in particular of the co-operative CSUR. There is also the private company Targo. They know exactly which parts of my riding do not have high-speed Internet.

• (1225)

These cable companies have submitted project proposals for various subsidy programs in Quebec and Canada. The programs are not coordinated, however, and plans to connect families and households are completely disorganized, especially in rural areas. Neither the CRTC nor the government can say when the projects will be approved.

That is not all. On November 26, the CRTC's chairperson and CEO appeared before the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology for its study on the accessibility and affordability of telecommunications services, which the Bloc Québécois had requested. Here is what he said about deployment plans submitted in June: “we have received almost 600 applications from all regions of the country. They add up to a total of \$1.5 billion. We have our work cut out for us. We are working quickly to assess those projects and we'll move forward. All of those are targeted areas that do not have acceptable levels of broadband service.”



In other words, there is a desperate need. People are ready, and they are feeling very impatient. We still do not know who will benefit from that money because the CRTC has a lot of work to do to assess the projects.

Still, we can say that there have been some advances. Bianca Dupaul, the executive director of the CSUR co-op, told me that during an installation on a rural road before Christmas, residents were crying at the prospect of a reliable connection. They felt lucky to get access to this connection before Christmas. It was a real blessing for them.

Sharing this good fortune is not complicated: the various levels of government need to coordinate their efforts to connect rural areas to high-speed Internet. Big companies like Bell Canada need to be brought into line, since they are engaging in legal obstruction and hindering the Internet rollout.

It is not just a matter of getting connected. There is also the whole issue of maintaining the network. For example, the CSUR co-op requested access to a specific pole and received a \$14,000 bill for the work required to make the pole safe. Before the fibre optic cable could even be run, \$14,000 had to be paid to secure the pole and gain access to it. This is far from reasonable. It is exploitation. We do not understand what is going on right now. Why do cable companies that want access to the poles end up with such whopping bills? I have written letters denouncing this situation, we have approached the media, and we have written emails to the minister and municipalities and sent resolutions.

We feel like the federal government is listening but not taking any action. No one is tackling the issue of high-speed Internet head on. No one is taking it seriously or acting with the urgency required. A new minister is taking care of this file, a minister from Quebec who also represents a rural riding. He can be sure that the Bloc Québécois will be there to remind him of his commitment to get all rural regions connected to high-speed Internet so that they can enter the same century as urban areas.

• (1230)

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. As she knows, I am very familiar with Salaberry—Suroît because I have visited that beautiful region about fifteen times. The people there are very hard-working.

She spoke about accessibility, but is this not a matter of fairness as well? Rural regions often do not get the investments they should. That is why I want to ask her this question.

The matter of income is not addressed in Bill C-14. Many people, in the NDP and throughout Quebec and Canada, think that there should be taxes on wealth and excess profits. Since the beginning of the pandemic, billionaires have become \$53 billion richer and some companies have been making huge profits. Does the member agree with the principle of a tax on wealth and a tax on excess profits?

• (1235)

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

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He is quite right to say that there are hard-working people in the beautiful region of Salaberry—Suroît. Unfortunately, economic development, access to distance education and telework are all more challenging because of poor Internet coverage. This is a fundamental problem. One large corporation has a monopoly and is making a profit. It complies with the law, but it is still deliberately obstructing the deployment of high-speed Internet.

It is not right that the subsidies given to cable companies allow Bell Canada to upgrade its poles and all its infrastructure before even running the fibre optic cable. The government must demonstrate a stronger political will and bring this large corporation, which owns the infrastructure, into line. It also needs to give the CRTC greater powers to ensure that high-speed Internet is deployed within a reasonable time frame. Quebec is expecting this in 2022, and we hope the new minister will bring the CRTC into line.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for his very cogent presentation.

All of us in rural ridings have similar connectivity problems. I find it ironic that I can listen to satellite radio out of the United States, but I cannot get a cellphone connection everywhere I go. I know it is not the same technology, but when we think about it, a wave from Quebec does not reach everywhere while the one from the United States does.

My question for my colleague is this: Are we also addressing the issue of good “corporate” citizens? Last spring I attended some meetings of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology and many people pointed to certain companies that had the towers, but were not making enough of an effort to ensure that there is connectivity everywhere.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has identified a very important problem.

High-speed Internet will not reach rural areas without giving the CRTC the proper tools and introducing policies with some teeth. The government must have greater political will and rein in the major companies that own the infrastructure. This would make it possible for smaller cable companies to move to fibre optic and provide access to high-speed Internet to those who do not have it.

The same applies to cellular technology. Towers are put up, but there are areas without cellular reception. This clearly demonstrates that high-speed Internet is not a government priority. If it were, the CRTC's performance would have improved a long time ago. We have to give it the means to do its job and rein in the corporations that own the infrastructure so that all of Quebec can have high-speed Internet.

[English]

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and an honour to rise today to talk about the economic statement.

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Members have heard me speak a lot about wild salmon and small business, but affordable housing is also something that is dear to my heart. We know that for many Canadians, finding affordable housing was a crisis well before this pandemic, and this crisis has just made things even worse. In my riding, for example, housing prices have soared, while many people have been left behind.

Nothing in this legislation actually addresses the housing crisis that is raging across our country, especially for many people who have lost their jobs. Young people are already feeling the pressure on their mental health from the pandemic, and many of them are working two or three jobs just to pay rent.

We know that the Liberals have made many promises around housing, but it was the Liberals who pulled out of the national housing strategy in 1993.

In the 1970s and 1980s in Canada, co-op and non-market housing was around 10%. In Europe it is actually around 30%, but today, we are at less than 4%. Personally, I know how important it is because I am a product of co-op housing. It made a huge impact for me and for my family. It gave my parents a chance.

We can look to Europe, which is at 30%. We are at less than 4% right now. The Liberals made a lot of promises that they would start to invest in affordable housing; we have not seen that promise delivered in communities, especially rural communities. I can speak from a rural lens, and we have not seen those critical, much-needed investments there. In fact, the federal government has downloaded dealing with the housing crisis and this huge lack of housing units onto the provinces, and in turn the provinces downloaded it onto local governments. Now, as members can imagine, after 27 years, the accumulated need has become literally hundreds of thousands of units. In fact, we hear that over 300,000 units are needed just for homeless people, never mind working people who are barely able to make ends meet and are living in precarious housing.

There are opportunities. We know that when we invest in affordable housing, it helps small business owners. The chambers of commerce in my riding are united in their top couple of priorities, and affordable housing is at or near the top of everybody's lists. Most businesses cannot continue to grow, because they cannot find employees. The pressure is on many working families who are working two or three jobs to make ends meet, and even on small business owners who cannot find safe, secure and affordable housing. This is something everybody should have access to. It is about priorities, and governing is about priorities.

The Liberals said they were going to invest in affordable housing, but we have not seen that roll out. We heard their commitment around veterans. We all made a commitment in this House in the last Parliament to end veterans' homelessness by 2025, but we have not seen an investment in housing for veterans. In fact, two previous rounds of funding went by, and the Qualicum Beach Legion cited this in an application to get funding to end veterans homelessness. They needed to get some data to start that planning stage to build affordable housing similar to Cockrell House in Victoria, where homeless veterans are housed and given a safe, secure place to live and the supports they need, especially if they have been struggling or suffering from disabilities or from PTSD. Cockrell House has saved many lives, but there is only one place, on South

Vancouver Island. There is nothing north of the Malahat, for example, and the Legion just got a rejection notice from the national housing strategy research and planning source.

People are just frustrated. They want to help to protect those who put their lives on the line overseas to protect the most vulnerable. They signed up to serve our country and they are not getting the support that they need and deserve. People are looking to make these really important steps, but they are not able to.

Another thing is that indigenous people are overrepresented in the housing crisis. I live in Port Alberni, where two-thirds of the people living on the streets are indigenous. The overrepresentation of indigenous people is clear. We can see it any day of the week. In fact, a week and a half ago we counted 38 people in doorways at night in a small rural city, and most of them were indigenous.

● (1240)

I was speaking to a lot of them. The next morning I was bringing coffee, hot chocolate and some snacks to people who were living on the streets and having a chance to catch up with them. They all had something in common; most of them, but not all of them, were living with health or addictions-related issues, but they all cited that housing was absolutely number one and that they could not rebuild their lives or get a fresh start without a safe, secure place to live.

It is so expensive to have people living on the street. They talked about their struggles and challenges, and we looked at the opportunities and what the solutions what might be.

We can look at Portugal, which has done a really good job of putting the most vulnerable and marginalized citizens into housing. They have opened up therapeutic treatment centres and facilities to help support treatment. It is long-term treatment, because we know that 28 days is not enough for treatment, although that is what the government still continues to offer, in most cases, because it simply cannot afford to deal with the issue right now. We are downloading dealing with housing, homelessness and the opioid crisis onto the provincial governments, and we need the federal government to step up to the plate. The provinces just cannot be left holding the bag any longer.

Portugal did that. Its government said it was going to get involved, take responsibility, lead and be leaders in tackling this really scary crisis when it was dealing with addictions. Portugal proved, through a strategy of making sure people have affordable housing and safe supports, that they could tackle their issues. Portugal had the highest levels of overdoses and addiction in Europe, and now they are the second lowest, so it has been proven that it can work.

I also want to talk about the cost. I have shared a story before in the House of Commons about a man whom I am going to call John. He has an addiction to alcohol, and every day he would drink and pass out. Fire, police or an ambulance were called, and he would get ferried up to the West Coast General Hospital in Port Alberni. Then he would either stay in an acute care bed or be put in a cell, and he would be out the next day. This would happen day after day for years. I will ballpark the cost of this at \$2,000 per day, and I would say that 300 days of the year this would happen. That is \$600,000. They found a place for John in a low-barrier non-profit housing unit. Of course, B.C. stepped in and is building half of the non-market housing in the country, and they really need a federal partner. He stayed there for five years, and it was \$500 a month to house this gentleman, which is \$6,000 a year.

We have a choice: \$6,000 a year, or \$600,000 a year. There are those who do not think we should be investing in affordable housing and helping those people in need, and that it should not be coming out of taxpayer dollars. Taxpayers are paying for it already, and it is critical that we invest in this.

There was also a really important study that came out, the report of B.C.'s blue ribbon panel on crime reduction. We know that many people who end up homeless, especially those who end up living with addiction, feed their addiction by stealing or committing property crime to get by and to make ends meet. The report says that 80% of all crime comes from 20% of repeat offenders, and a male in that category typically costs more than \$1.5 million to society through property crime, the judicial system and the health care system. I could speak all day on this. They say that every dollar spent in prevention, treatment, health, judicial reforms and helping people rebuild saves society \$12. We could be saving literally millions of dollars while helping to support these people in rebuilding their lives.

When it comes to housing, we need a robust investment. When it comes to the opioid crisis, thousands of people are dying on the streets of our country. The Liberal government has still not declared it a public health emergency so that the necessary resources would be invested. We still have not decriminalized it, so people are living with a stigma in what is a health crisis. We need critical investments in therapeutic treatment centres, like Portugal, as well as investments in housing.

• (1245)

I would love to speak more on the many other issues that I touched on, such as small business, wild salmon, seniors and people living with disabilities, but today it is really important that we talk about the most marginalized.

If we are going to have a COVID recovery, it has to include investments in affordable housing. We have put in a rapid housing investment application and we are waiting for the federal government to decide on it. Literally, people are dying right now on the streets of Port Alberni and throughout my riding. We are looking to the federal government to be a partner, to help save lives, to help rebuild people's lives.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated today's intervention by our colleague from the NDP. He raises a very important point, which is that hous-

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ing has to be one of the very basic amenities people must have in order to build a foundation for everything else they require and need in their lives.

The federal government is there with the national housing strategy, and applications are being received daily by CMHC and being reviewed. The CMHC has been directed to work with applicants to make these applications successful so that housing can be implemented.

I am sure that the member must be in favour of that program, given the impact it could have with the \$50 billion attached to it.

• (1250)

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Mr. Speaker, we are coming out of a crisis. The government has announced 3,000 units for the whole country through the rapid housing initiative, but we need over 300,000. That is less than 1%. It is about 300 units for B.C.

There is an application in from Port Alberni. The government was supposed to announce all the details of who the lucky recipients were and which communities had been selected by January 31. We still have not heard anything.

The other thing is that we do not have Reaching Home status in most rural communities, so rural communities are being left out even though they are still dealing with this incredible housing crisis. I have lost three of my friends' children on the streets in my community just in the last six weeks. It is not working. The government is not moving quickly enough.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague brought up some very good points. I know housing is a big issue, and it definitely needs to be dealt with, as well as the opioid crisis. However, my concern is more with the mental state. We definitely need to do more for the mental state of these people. It is not good enough to just give them a house if they do not have the capacity to understand how to manage it.

Could the member give us his perspective on how we need to deal more with the mental crisis and in this way alleviate a lot of the other problems as well?

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

Complex situations require complex care. People living with mental health issues and addiction need more than housing. The member is absolutely right. They need treatment centres, with therapeutic supports, so that they can move forward and get the support they need to live a healthy life.

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In B.C., the previous Liberal government closed down places like Riverview and support centres. We still have not really embarked as a nation, as Portugal has, on building therapeutic communities to give people the supports they need. That is what we need.

We need the federal government to step up to the plate, stop downloading on provinces and come up with an overarching strategy to deal with this crisis, whether it be the mental health crisis or the opioid crisis. We need therapeutic treatment to help support people living with trauma. It is absolutely critical, and I want to thank the member for that very good question.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it really worries me when the Liberals talk about their rapid response on housing. What will that turn out to be? Is it maybe three units per community per year? That is ridiculous.

In my region, in the city of Timmins, a community of 45,000, we have 800 homeless people. When we add in the opioid and fentanyl crisis, people are dying at staggering rates, and yet we see indifference. Housing is not just for those who are dealing with the opioid crisis; seniors cannot get proper housing and families cannot get proper housing.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague to comment on the vexatious way that the Liberals play with people's hopes on housing but refuse, year in and year out, to actually deliver a coherent plan to get people proper housing so they can be safe and live a good, decent life.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Timmins—James Bay has been fighting the same fight for the most marginalized people who do not have a safe, secure place to live and need the supports to move forward.

We have been hearing from the Liberal government for five years about its robust investments in its national housing strategy, yet we have not seen it. I am in Port Alberni where we have the same situation he has in Timmins—James Bay: people do not have safe, secure housing and are dying on our streets. These lives can be saved.

Everybody deserves a right to a safe, secure place to live. It is one of the United Nations sustainable development goals. It is a priority in the list of 14 sustainable development goals, yet the government likes to talk the talk but never walks the walks. As well, 3,000 units to deal with a crisis of over 300,000 homeless people in our country is absolutely appalling and shameful. The government needs to do something quickly. This is our opportunity for a proper COVID recovery.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's speech. He went off the beaten path and talked about his riding's unique characteristics. I am going to do the same in my speech today. People talk about economic measures in such general terms and try to fit everyone into the same box to the point that we forget how different ridings across Quebec and Canada are from one another.

Many aspects of Bill C-14 deserve to be debated, but I would like to offer a more regional perspective.

People know I love faraway places. When the Government of Canada talks about the regions, it does not mean regions like the North Shore or Gaspé. Its meaning is broader. The regional relief and recovery fund, the RRRF, is built around the Pacific region, the Atlantic region, Ontario and Quebec. Those regions are as big as countries. To put it in a nutshell, that way of designating regions is practical for the government because then it can create programs based on thinking that seems arbitrary to us, the people of the North Shore, programs that adopt a “one-size-fits-all” approach.

I will be basing my remarks on that example, because this approach has been, and continues to be, problematic in my region in terms of what the government is offering for COVID-19 through the RRRF, for example. This one-size-fits-all approach means that the money cannot be spent, although it is absolutely needed, of course.

I want to come back to the specific needs of the regions. My colleagues from Abitibi—Témiscamingue and Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou can talk to you about their economies, which include natural resources, forestry and agriculture. People from those regions are concerned about jobs. There is also the Eastern Townships region. My colleague from Shefford might want to talk about agriculture and maple syrup—of which there is a seemingly unlimited global supply—but also about all the economic development and recovery projects happening in her region. The same is true for the Gaspé region.

I would like to look to the future. In the recovery that is just around the corner, we do not want drilling projects. There are the projects in the economic update, but there are also all the future projects that will be undertaken to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Magdalen Islands and the Gaspé want to revive the seal industry, which is a regional feature here too. There is also forestry, heritage and lighthouses to be saved in the Gaspé. My colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia would also be willing to talk about it.

The same is true for Charlevoix, which relies on tourism, culture, gastronomy and international tourism. My colleague from Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix could tell you all about it. There is also Montreal, with its aerospace and artificial intelligence industry. We could discuss it with my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île, who is a proud Montrealer. There is also Quebec City, the national capital of Quebec, where our National Assembly is located and where culture and tourism are also very important.

Companies like Davie would also like a little boost as part of the economic recovery. We need to put the economic statement in the context of the current needs while looking at what is ahead for us.

I could go around Quebec to showcase all its regions here. What I want to show is that it is difficult to use a one-size-fits-all approach when designing programs and proposing measures, because that means people will not be able to access them.

• (1300)

That is why I feel it is important to talk about this heterogeneity. Although we want to collaborate on projects that affect all of the regions, we need to consider regional particularities, because every region has its own issues and challenges. When you have a one-size-fits-all program that does not benefit these people, everyone ends up penalized. Every region is distinct and has its own challenges and its own aspirations for development.

Speaking of regions, I have to talk about my own. I am the member of Parliament for Manicouagan. Like all members, I am biased. My riding, all 350,000 square kilometres of it, is the most beautiful. It might as well be made up of six countries. There are six RCMs, each of which has its own very different reality. One of my RCMs is the richest in all of Quebec, yet it borders the poorest one. As a member of Parliament, it is my duty to adapt, listen, be understanding and find different solutions for each one of these six different regions that make up the North Shore.

I am very fortunate to represent this riding that includes 1,400 kilometres of waterfront, forests, mountains and fauna. It is a veritable paradise, but at the same time we are facing our own specific challenges. I would have liked to talk about these challenges and the issues that the public would like us to be working on now and in the future. Obviously these are regional issues, but I think it is important to talk about the differences between these places so that people feel listened to and so that we can work better for them, including by adapting programs such as the RRRF. It would be a win-win situation.

There are many challenges in my riding. Take, for example, indigenous issues, which I am very concerned about. In my riding, 15% of people are members of the Naskapi or Innu first nations. These people live proudly in Nitassinan. I would like to lend my voice to the first nations in my region and make their wishes known. There are many issues to address. There is the issue of language, which is currently very important for first nations. This issue is not necessarily being addressed from an economic development perspective, even though it is an economic development issue. It affects education, culture and the importance of preserving the first nations' relationship with the land, water and forest. There is also the issue of police services, the funding for which was cut. There is less and less funding for that.

There is also the issue of housing, which was mentioned earlier and which is very important in my riding. The population is growing by leaps and bounds. The issue of protection officers is also important. Communities need them because fishing is part of their development. There is also the issue of first nations health. There are so many examples that I could give, but I will stop there because my time is running out. I could keep talking about these issues for a long time.

There is also the issue of roads. In my riding there are no roads within a 400-kilometre area. We border Newfoundland and Labrador and there is a ferry. The interprovincial link was not creat-

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ed by the Canadian government. There has to be a way to open up the North Shore and build a road that would also benefit the people living east of us, our neighbours in Newfoundland and Labrador. It could be a development project in our area. As we saw yesterday, there may be exploratory drilling on the lower North Shore. I would prefer that a road be built so that people could travel and we could develop tourism or have more respectful development of the environment, which is what my constituents want. I could go on talking for a long time.

• (1305)

I talked about the regions in general, but, zooming out, my integration model would apply to all of Quebec. We have put forward our agendas for seniors, the environment and health, and I would like the government to listen to what Quebec and the regions want so it can harmonize programs and budgets according to people's needs.

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her speech, although I have to say I am a little disappointed that she described her riding as the most beautiful, when she knows perfectly well that Drummond holds that title. Let us just say that in a beauty contest, her riding on the North Shore would be the runner-up.

Seriously though, she talked about concerns specific to the regions. Her riding is immense and has a lot going for it. Her riding also has problems with high-speed Internet. Our colleague from Salaberry—Suroît talked about this earlier, as did I. I know that my colleague's riding, Manicouagan, made a lot of progress in terms of expanding high-speed Internet access when people took matters into their own hands and got some great projects up and running.

There are still challenges though, and I would like to hear her opinion on programs that subsidize rolling out Internet access in the regions and on what the federal government has been doing in this area.

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Drummond. I would say that Drummond and Manicouagan are tied in terms of the beauty of our ridings.

High-speed Internet access is very problematic in my region. As has been mentioned, the riding is very large. These days, high-speed Internet is the driving force of economic development and vital to keeping our people from leaving. A lot of businesses know this. We see it ourselves with teleworking, where we have to use the Internet every day. Not having Internet access means the devitalization of our communities and poorer populations. We need only think of education and the people who cannot attend class online. There are even some witnesses from my riding who cannot appear before parliamentary committees because they do not have access to Zoom. One might not expect it, but it is an essential service.

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I think this is taking too long. The money needs to get out quickly. The Quebec government has a faster timetable than the federal government, so I urge the feds to give this money to Quebec City, which can then deploy these services. It is urgent, it is essential, it is necessary and the people are waiting.

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for the love she has shown for all our regions in Quebec.

I know that my colleague is quite concerned about her region, which has its own specific needs and whose economy relies mostly on seasonal industries. When it comes to the government's vision and specific approaches, what would be her position and recommendations to best respond to the needs?

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville for her question about the importance of seasonal work in Manicouagan. I did say seasonal work, not seasonal workers. Seasonal work is essential because many people work in tourism, the fisheries or the forestry sector, which are the economic pillars of my riding. These people live in small communities of 200, 300 or 400 people. There are 45 communities in my riding.

These people do not necessarily have access to other employment, and we do not want them to leave, either. We do not want these villages to die off. On the contrary, we want to maintain and develop them. Amazingly, we now realize that the fact that these people have access to EI not only gets them through the spring gap they once had to live with, but also enables them to stay and help develop the region. The EI program has become a tool for regional economic development. I hate to say it, but it is truly an insurance, no pun intended.

The government is introducing many new benefits, and I am pleased that there is money for those who are sick and for caregivers. I truly hope that the available funds will not be divided among more people. I hope that contributions will be adjusted accordingly rather than reduced, which would allow us meet everyone's needs. Our regions really need seasonal work to be recognized.

• (1310)

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat ironic that on this day, Groundhog Day, not unlike the plot of the movie of the same name, we find ourselves back in this place making further adjustments to the government's response to the pandemic. I do not offer that comment as a criticism of the government. I raise that point to serve as a reminder that we have been here before.

I also raise the point because we should all recognize that we may be here again, doing something similar in the future. I believe all of us would agree that, ideally, we would prefer that would not be the case. I am certain we would much rather see these troubled times put behind us. However, we know that the vaccine rollout has not, to date, gone well for Canada. We know that new and more deadly variants of this virus are being identified in different parts of Canada, and that should be concerning to us all.

For the record, I do not mention the slow pace of vaccine rollouts in my comments today as a political tack. I am certain that the government, like any government, would like to see a more timely and successful vaccine rollout. I would also add that that is not what we are here to debate in this bill today.

[*Translation*]

I am raising these concerns for a different reason, and I will come back to that. Let us first acknowledge that this bill proposes measures that we all support.

We support the enhancements to the Canada child benefit. The political notion of providing direct support to families was actually developed by a Conservative government in spite of the Liberals' claims at the time that parents would waste the money on beer and popcorn. When they came to power, the Liberals adopted this program and made other improvements. I have to give them credit for that.

In Canada, during the pandemic, the official opposition also supported programs such as the CERB, the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency business account. There may have been some disagreements about the best way to implement them, however, in principle, we agreed with these programs.

For that reason, I will not be focusing today on the elements of the debate on which we agree. As many of us know, this bill is essentially divided into seven different parts. The official opposition supports most parts of the bill. However, we strongly disagree with part 7.

[*English*]

Part 7 of the bill proposes to increase the Borrowing Authority Act, basically to add another \$323 billion in incremental borrowing until March 31, 2024. The official opposition would prefer to split this from the bill so that matters we do agree on can be voted on separately. We believe it is important to have a separate debate on that borrowing, which significantly increases our debt. Before some might say to themselves that I am being a typical Conservative, I would ask that everyone hears me out.

First, let me summarize briefly where we are. In 2015, the Liberal government promised to run modest deficits before returning to a balanced budget in 2019. Every person, whether in the chamber or here virtually, knows this did not happen. I am not here to revisit that, but simply to place it on the record as being a factual point.

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In 2019, given the absence of following that fiscal plan, a new fiscal plan came from the government, and it was based on debt-to-GDP ratio. The Liberal thinking told us that as long as our debt-to-GDP ratio remained within certain parameters, everything would be fine. However, every person participating in this debate, whether in the chamber or attending virtually, knows that the debt-to-GDP targets have now been thrown out the window. Again, I raise that because it is factually true.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

We are now in a new situation, where the latest Liberal thinking has it that we cannot afford not to borrow more money, since interest rates are so low. Just because interest rates are this low it does not mean that it is okay to borrow so much money.

One has to wonder: What would happen if this plan, much like the Liberals' previous financial plans, proved to be wrong? What will happen if, or rather when, interest rates rise?

It is our job to be asking these questions. We need to ask ourselves how the decisions we are making today will affect Canadians in the future. If we are being honest with ourselves, how would we answer that question?

Some may say that hypothetical questions are irrelevant and that we need to focus on the now, since we are in the middle of a pandemic. I would like to take these people back to the same period last year.

[*English*]

One year ago, we had a health minister who told us that border closures would not work, and that travel restrictions would not only not work, but also could actually be harmful. We were told that they could stigmatize others. On that same note, we were also told that wearing masks was not recommended, as they would provide a false sense of security and should be avoided.

Now we all know how those policies turned out. I am not looking to belittle the government or government members. I am simply looking to point out how spectacularly wrong this advice was. How and why does this matter in the bill that we are debating today? It is because we have to accept that we have new and more deadly variants of this virus and that we are well behind in the vaccination fight against the original variant.

We may be in this fight for much longer than any of us would have ever anticipated or want to be. Obviously, we all have to hope and work hard to ensure that that is not the case. At the same time, we have to be prepared. That brings me back to part 7 of this bill, which fiscally proposes unprecedented borrowing to continue the firehose-like spending.

[*Translation*]

I would like to believe that most of us, even if it is not all of us, understand that the federal government cannot keep spending at the same rate as it has been. These expenditures are not sustainable in the long term. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said so, as did other leading economists.

Obviously, the government is very much hoping that this record spending will help us get through the pandemic. However, at some point, we will have to step back and ask ourselves whether the rate of spending is commensurate with how long we can actually fight the pandemic.

That brings me to my next question. Do we want these issues to be asked, debated and examined by Parliament or do we want to continue to allow the Liberal government to sign blank cheques and trust it to spend money in secret, just as it has been doing so far?

I think we all know the answer to that question.

• (1320)

[*English*]

We have an official opposition, and a third and a fourth party for a reason. It is to hold the government to account and now, more than ever, we need to do that job. I am hopeful that other members of this House will see the benefits of splitting part 7 from this bill and will agree.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I heard a number of Conservatives over the last week and a half go on about how we were told back in the day to not wear masks as it was not important versus where we are today. It goes without saying that the entire world learned and adapted to what it came to understand and know about the virus and the way it spread.

Yes, in the beginning we were saying just washing our hands should be enough. As the world started to understand more and more about this virus, it changed and adapted behaviours and recommendations. I cannot understand why the Conservatives are continuing to critique advice given a year ago versus the advice we have now based on the information we have come to know.

For example, I am wearing this mask, and I do even when I speak. I realize that when I speak, the particles in my mouth might go further than two metres and there is a desk full of people sitting right in front of me. We adapt, we learn and we change our behaviours as we move along.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, I support health measures based on science. The point of my speech was that some of the assumptions the government made decisions on a year ago based on expert advice did not turn out to be true. If people came to me and said that they were going to do a two-day trek across the desert but were told by someone they only needed a certain amount of water and they would be just fine, I would tell them that it is always best to hope for the best but prepare for the worst.

Unfortunately, if members on the Liberal side will not question the government, then it remains up to the official opposition. As I said, there are various viewpoints from the NDP, the Bloc, the Green Party and independents. However, in this case, as a member of the official opposition, I am asking for a particular section of the bill to be cut out so we can debate it more intensely.

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We should not be making such large-scale decisions in such a limited amount of time. Every time we have done that, it has turned out badly for every—

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

The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on his French. It is unfortunate we do not always sit together on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, because the rate at which I am learning English is not the same as the rate at which he is learning French.

I understood what he said about the expenses involved. I would like him to talk in more detail about how that money will be spent. I would like his answer to go beyond the amount of money that is planned. With respect to the economic statement, I am critical of the fact that for some issues there is no sound and no picture as to the sustainability that needs to be given to the issues of health transfers, seniors, the sectoral approach that the government needs to take in areas that are still in crisis because of the pandemic. There are people who are unemployed and without income. It seems to me that the recovery plan must take these issues into account. We must have a vision in this regard.

How does my colleague see spending in this area?

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the words of the member and miss the opportunity to sit with her on the HUMA committee.

The fall economic update by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance presented a lot of eye-popping numbers with very little detail. It is my hope that we start discussing. This is why I suggested carving out this section, because I think many members on the Liberal side would agree that there were not enough details as to what \$100 billion would do for stimulus.

Doing that over three years, when we do not have a good grasp on where we are at or where we will be based on some of the variants and various issues, is dangerous. This is one of the reasons we should be carving out the section so we can be asking questions.

Anything that brings value for money is important, but some of my constituents have asked why there has been more money set aside for WE Charity than for domestic vaccination production. We an announcement by the government today that it would be far later than what other countries presented. We need to start asking, “What if we are wrong?” What kind of prepare for the worst but hope for the best thinking can we find collectively? This chamber is built for that kind of thinking and consensus building.

• (1325)

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-14, the fall economic statement.

I miss being in the House of Commons for these speeches, but it is an honour and privilege to speak in the riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith in the traditional unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw, Snaw-Naw-As, Stz'uminus and Lyackson First Nations.

In the House, I represent the constituents in Nanaimo—Ladysmith, but I also feel a responsibility to speak for the 1.1 million voters who voted Green in 2019. If we do the math and average the number of votes by the number of MPs elected, I represent 387,000 Green voters. By comparison, the Liberal Party received five times more votes than the Green Party but elected 50 times more MPs, averaging 38,000 votes per MP. This is not a true representation of the democratic will of Canadians.

The fall economic statement contains a long list of much-needed spending to help Canadians get through the COVID-19 pandemic. The Green Party welcomes many of the initiatives that are listed in the fall economic statement. Our leader Annamie Paul is particularly pleased to see the government commit to exploring the implementation of carbon border adjustments to protect Canadian businesses and encourage climate action abroad. This is something Ms. Paul was advocating.

What is remarkable about this fall economic statement is what has been left out. This was an opportunity to implement much-needed reforms and improvements to our social welfare and health care systems. There are minor reforms to our tax system, but they do not go far enough to create more fairness in the system. There is program spending for indigenous people, but not enough to deal with the systemic problems with which they are grappling. Minor programs deal with the climate emergency, but not enough bold action to deal with the existential crisis.

I know that members of the Conservative Party, the official opposition, have been cuddling up with conspiracy theorists, with their questions and speeches referencing the World Economic Forum's great reset. Quite frankly, the Conservatives should be ashamed of themselves. I am no fan of the World Economic Forum and its gatherings of unelected billionaires at Davos. These billionaires talk a great game about social responsibility and protecting the environment, while they continue to press governments for more tax cuts for the wealthy and fewer regulations for corporations. It is not a conspiracy theory; it is unfettered greed in action.

The Conservative agenda has been much the same as the World Economic Forum agenda all along: tax cuts and deregulation while pretending to care about working people. When Stephen Harper was the prime minister, he spoke at the Davos conference several times, including the 2012 meeting, which planned for the so-called great transformation: same agenda, different title.



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Canadians deserve better. It is time for bold action.

It is time for a guaranteed livable income so we can eliminate poverty by creating an income floor under which no Canadian can fall.

It is time for universal pharmacare to complete our universal health care system. We are the only country with universal health care that does not include universal pharmacare. It could save us billions of dollars in health care spending. We also need to fund proactive therapies, treatments and programs that keep Canadians healthy, and include these in the Canada Health Act.

It is time to fully include the mental health care services and counselling under the Canada Health Act. We need more than half measures to deal with the mental health crisis in our communities. This is particularly true as we near the one-year anniversary of pandemic restrictions.

It is time to fund universal child care and early childhood education. This is especially important to ensure that women can regain the ground they have lost in the workforce as a result of the pandemic.

We need to increase funding to deal with the affordable housing and homelessness crisis.

We need bold action to deal with the opioid overdose crisis.

It is time for much deeper reform of our tax system to ensure that the billionaire class, the big banks and the multinational corporations pay their fair share and cannot use loopholes and offshore tax shelters to avoid paying taxes in Canada.

We encouraged the government to roll out and expand programs such as the Canada emergency wage subsidy to ensure that workers and companies could survive the economic lockdown. However, we were also very clear that government emergency support should not be used by companies to pay CEO bonuses or shareholder dividends as had happened in the past. The government did not include these conditions as part of the relief programs, and this has led to abuse and to corporate welfare.

● (1330)

A recent report found that billions in wage subsidies were paid to 68 companies that turned around and paid more than \$5 billion in dividends at the same time.

For example, Imperial Oil received \$120 million in wage subsidies and paid out \$324 million in dividends during this period. The big telecom companies took in almost a quarter of a billion dollars in wage subsidies. Bell Canada received \$122 million, despite having \$5.2 billion in available liquidity.

For-profit companies running long-term care homes for seniors have also used government COVID emergency tax dollars to line the pockets of CEOs and shareholders, while the death toll in their facilities continues to climb.

The Green Party is happy with some of the environmental initiatives, but they are clearly not enough to deal with the crash in biodiversity or the climate crisis we face.

There has been a lot of talk about the government initiative to plant two billion trees as part of the Canada climate action plan. This sounds great, but I would like to point out a few flaws in this idea.

A 500-year-old tree sequesters far more carbon in a year than an acre of seedlings can. If the government is serious about using trees as a carbon sink, it should fund an immediate halt to the destruction of old-growth forests, especially in B.C. and on Vancouver Island where only 1% of the big tree old growth forests outside of parks remain standing. The B.C. government talks about preservation, but continues to allow old growth forests to be cut down. This needs to stop. Let us allocate tree funding for old growth.

The other trees we need to protect and preserve are in the boreal forest. The boreal forest is Canada's equivalent to the Amazon and provides enormous ecological benefit to the planet. It is time to leave the virgin forests alone and preserve them. There are plenty of places in Canada where second-, third- and fourth-growth forests can be used for timber supply. The forest companies must be required to replant trees after they have harvested, both on Crown or on private forest lands. It is the cost of doing business and should not be subsidized.

The Green Party welcomes spending on consumer initiatives addressing the climate crisis, including funding for home energy retrofits and zero-emission vehicle infrastructure. However, the climate crisis demands more than consumer initiatives. It is time for the government to take much bolder steps, starting with the cancellation of the Trans Mountain expansion pipeline. Experts have stated that this project is not financially viable and is predicted to become a stranded asset. It will not help finance climate change initiatives.

Fossil fuels will continue to be used in the foreseeable future, but in dwindling amounts. We need to end all subsidies for the oil and gas industry.

The truth is that if we do not take bold action to address the climate crisis, the spending needed to deal with mitigation and the disasters resulting from climate change will make what we are spending on the COVID-19 pandemic look like chump change. Canada is a climate laggard. Canadian governments have committed to nine international agreements and produced zero plans to meet the agreed targets.

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Eight provinces and three territories representing 85% of the Canadian population met the Copenhagen target in 2020. However, two provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan, increased emissions so much that they completely wiped out the progress of the rest of the country.

Canada has the worst record of the G7 for climate action. The U.K., the country with the best record, has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 41% from 1990 levels, while shamefully Canada has increased emissions by 21%. In order for Canada to catch up with the rest of the wealthy countries, we need to set new targets to reduce emissions by 60% by 2030.

Average Canadian consumers could take their emissions to zero and it would not mean a thing as long as we allow the oil and gas industry to continue to pollute our atmosphere with climate killing gases. The government should not let the conspiracy promoting MPs continue to intimidate it from taking real action. Be bold, that is what our children and grandchildren expect from the government.

Bill C-14 contains some much-needed spending and actions. In our view it needs to be much bolder. The Green Party will support the bill and we will continue to press the government to take bold action.

• (1335)

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to listen to the member's comments. He seems confused about whom he is holding to account with his comments about the Harper government. He has a very interesting perspective on conspiracy theories, given his history with the 9/11 truth movement, and has been involved in looking to free Meng Wanzhou. He also talked about all of the things the Green Party stands against that the government is putting forward, but said that he is going to support the bill anyway.

My specific question for the member is about the parliamentary leader for the Greens celebrating the demise of thousands of jobs for western Canadians and billions of dollars in revenue for the Canadian treasury. While he is supporting the government's initiatives, as he has said, and standing opposed to its plans for the environment, I am wondering what the member's plan is to fund his proposals in the short term, because it seems as though he is happy to—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Nanaimo—Lady-smith.

**Mr. Paul Manly:** Mr. Speaker, to start with, we need a just transition for oil and gas workers. It has already been looked at. We have done this before with asbestos. We know that we need to take bold climate action, and now is the time to do that.

Clearly, the Conservatives do not see things the same way I do. I see a lot of good things in the fall economic update. However, I do not think it is bold enough and that we are taking the steps we should be taking to ensure that Canadians get the kind of support they need and that we deal with the climate crisis. These are the existential problems we face.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for my colleague.

This week, the leader of the Green Party met with Premier Legault. They no doubt spoke about health care, and Mr. Legault surely reiterated the demand that all provincial premiers have made for health transfers to be increased from 22% to 35%. The Bloc Québécois has shared this demand with the federal government.

Can we count on the Green Party's support? Will the Green Party members support the Bloc Québécois and all provincial premiers in demanding that health transfers be increased?

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Manly:** Mr. Speaker, yes, I believe that the provinces should get the health transfers they need. We have seen continual cuts to health transfers, and the way the Harper government set this up cut it back even further. We need to go back to the plan we had originally and ensure that the provinces have enough funding to take care of their own people.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about having a bold agenda, and the NDP has actually been doing that in real time.

I wonder if the member supports Bill C-213, the pharmacare bill we put forward; Motion No. 46, which would guarantee a livable income and dental care; and certainly Bill C-232, my private member's bill that supports a bold climate agenda. It is a climate action emergency framework that is about bold work. The NDP is doing it in real time.

**Mr. Paul Manly:** Mr. Speaker, we absolutely support all of those things. They have all been in our platform for many years. A guaranteed livable income is something the Greens have been putting forward for over a decade, and for universal pharmacare it is the same thing. Bold climate action is something we want.

I have actually signed on to a number of these private member's bills and motions, and I look forward to working with the hon. member to push the government to enact these bold changes for Canadians.

• (1340)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, does the member think the investments that have been made in Canadians to date have been the right move for our country? I know there was unanimous support for them throughout the House, but the Conservatives seem to be criticizing the fact that we invested in Canadians previously. How important is it to get us through this and out the other side?

**Mr. Paul Manly:** Mr. Speaker, I think we have been making the right investments. There have been some mistakes, but that is the nature of a changing pandemic.

*Government Orders*

I am quite confused by the Conservatives. On the one hand they want more spending to protect Canadians, but on the other hand they want cutbacks. I am not sure if they talked about this as a caucus or not.

We need to take bold action to protect Canadians during this pandemic to ensure that our small businesses survive and that Canadians pull through this healthy, safe and economically sound.

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to join debate today on Bill C-14, which would implement measures put forward in the government's fall economic statement.

Many residents of my riding have been very hopeful for some time to see a new plan from the government to get our economy going again. However, time and again the government has disappointed, and I am afraid this economic statement is no exception to that.

We know the pandemic has touched the lives of all Canadians one way or another. Far too many have lost a loved one and others have been separated from friends and family. Small businesses across the country are struggling to get by, if they have not already closed their doors.

That is why the Conservatives were in favour of new programs to support Canadians through this unprecedented time. Every step of the way we worked with the government to bring forward very thoughtful amendments to improve many of these unprecedented and much-needed programs, such as the recovery benefit and the wage subsidy, as many Canadians found they were falling through the cracks regarding these programs. We also know that we need a long-term economic recovery plan moving forward that will result in jobs and paycheques for Canadians, not just more debt and uncertainty. We need a return to normal life, not another year or more of restrictions.

As mentioned, this pandemic has devastated small businesses across the country. Many relief programs were not sufficient for many business owners, in particular for many seasonal operators in the riding of Kenora, and they were unable to keep their doors open. I also believe a flawed rollout of these programs and, in many cases, poor communication on the part of the government have made this difficult time much worse for small business owners.

The Conservatives spent much of the spring and pretty much all of the summer calling for improvements to these programs to help reduce some of the barriers to entry and help more Canadians get the supports they need in this desperate time. Unfortunately, we saw the Liberals drag their feet. What should have been very simple fixes in many cases came far too late or in some cases have not come at all.

None of this has stopped the Liberals from wanting to raise taxes on Canadians. That does not surprise me and should not surprise any members of the House or any Canadians who may be watching, because it is always the ordinary hard-working Canadians who are struggling to get by who have to pay the price for the government's mismanagement.

A friend of mine in the riding of Kenora recently had to close his business, and his wife had to close hers. They are unsure of their

next move given all the uncertainty moving forward. According to the CFIB, one in six small business owners is in a similar situation. They are considering closing their doors permanently. This paints a very frustrating picture of the current situation and of the urgent need for a robust recovery plan.

Last spring, lockdowns and other restrictions were put in place by governments not only across Canada but across the world in an effort to buy time. It bought the government time to get access to more permanent solutions, such as vaccines and rapid testing. We now know that other countries are well on their way to vaccinating most of their populations and are making use of rapid testing as well, but the current government has positioned us at the back of the line for vaccines and without widespread rapid testing. These are vitally important tools that are enabling other jurisdictions to position their economies to reopen, but many Canadians will have to wait half a year or more before they can get a first dose of vaccine.

This is incredibly troublesome for my region because tourism is a massive contributor to the economy there. Campgrounds, hotels, outfitters, regional airlines, restaurants and local shops have thrived in the past thanks to visitors from outside of the riding, primarily those from the United States.

● (1345)

To put it in perspective, for all members of the House, in my riding the American clientele for tourism outfitters is important. Based on the sheer population, there are more people living in the state of Minnesota than in all of northern Ontario, Manitoba and, I believe, Saskatchewan combined. I might need to be fact-checked on that, but we know that the market for domestic tourism is incredibly small when compared with what the American market brings in.

When the border closed last year, the business dried up. What made things even more difficult for many in my riding was the uncertainty around what conditions the border may be able to open in some capacity. Business owners did not know if they should be recruiting staff, paying insurance or setting up their facilities for visitors, who of course in the end were not able to come last season.

Not only did these business owners lose a whole season, with no income, but they also spent thousands of dollars on overhead costs that turned out to be unnecessary, because of a lack of clear communication and a clear plan forward from the government. I am afraid that history may be repeating itself, as we get closer to the spring and have yet to see a plan forward from the government.

In the House yesterday, the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill asked whether people who had been vaccinated against COVID-19 would be exempt from the Liberal government's new quarantine laws. I believe it is safe to say that the answer from the government was non-committal.

*Government Orders*

It truly begs the question: If Canadians are not able to travel freely after they have been fully vaccinated, when will they be able to do so? What criteria is the government using to decide when and whether the restrictions would be lifted, or is the entire plan just to continue with the status quo forever or for however long it takes?

I believe my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill said it more eloquently yesterday, but there is a better way of doing things. There is a way we could begin to return to normal while still protecting the health of Canadians and, of course, keeping those who are most vulnerable safe.

I believe the strategic use of rapid testing could allow Canadians to go about their business more normally, but of course the government has not deployed tests in a way that would allow that. Vaccines, as I have noted, are vitally important, but we know the government has botched the procurement process.

If I am not mistaken, I believe that as of January, roughly only 2% of Canadians had received a single dose of a vaccine. That is why we need the government to bring forward a plan. We need the government to have success in bringing vaccines to Canada. We know that until the majority of the population is vaccinated, we could be faced with more restrictions and more lockdowns. More workers could lose their jobs and entrepreneurs could lose their businesses. More Canadians could struggle with isolation and their mental health, and unfortunately more Canadians could become sick and there could be more deaths.

Canada's Conservatives know that Canadians are frustrated and are looking for hope from their government and a clear path forward. That is what we are fighting for. We are fighting for every Canadian to have access to a vaccine. We are fighting for rapid testing and other measures to alleviate the impact of this pandemic. We are fighting for adequate support for our hospitals and health care systems. We are fighting to ensure that entrepreneurs who make our country stronger will have a fighting chance.

We can and we will beat this virus. However, once we do, we will have even more work to do to revive our economy and secure our future. I will end it there. I appreciate any questions and comments from my colleagues.

• (1350)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member raised the topic the member for Calgary Nose Hill raised about when and if vaccinated individuals could travel and what loosened restrictions there might be for such individuals. I do not have the answer to that, but I am going to go out on a limb and say the government is going to make its decisions on that based on advice from medical professionals, including our chief medical officer of health, rather than from MPs giving their personal opinions on the floor of the House of Commons.

Would the member agree that the best people to advise the government on making those decisions would be the public health officials who are spearheading us through this pandemic?

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Mr. Speaker, of course we know that public health officials and the experts have to be the ones guiding these decisions. However, to my colleague's point, I would say that the lack of transparency by the government about what it is hearing

from public health officials has caused a lot of frustration. There have been a lot of mixed messages, and I believe, in many instances, the Liberals have allowed their own political rhetoric to get in the way of some of the information from public health officials.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with some of the member's observations about the vaccines.

The problem with the government is that it is always a step behind. We do not have the agreements to know about the number of vaccines. We know that we have reserved industrial quantities of them. We could give some to the rest of the world. However, the problem is that we are not able to get enough vaccines to conduct mass vaccinations. That is what we need.

Quebec is waiting. All of our vaccination sites are ready to go. The staff are ready to go, but we cannot meet demand.

I agree with the member on this, but since the government is a step behind—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Kenora.

[*English*]

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from the Bloc mentioned, we do agree that the government has botched the vaccine procurement process. We have seen a very slow rollout across the country, which has resulted in a lot of frustration and uncertainty for Canadians.

Moving forward, we really want to see the plan from the government on how it is going to move forward and distribute vaccines in a way that can help get our economy going again and secure our health and future.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member's area very well, having passed through it a dozen times. Kenora is the linchpin between eastern Canada and western Canada, and I know that the folks in his riding are very hard-working. I know they are as concerned as all Canadians are about the very slow trickle of vaccines. The new Biden administration just confirmed that over the next couple of weeks, it will be delivering 10.5 million doses of vaccine. In Canada it is just a few thousand, a trickle.

My question is very simple. What is the impact, in his community and in communities across the country, of Canada trailing dozens of other countries in the actual rollout and administration of vaccines?

*Statements by Members*

● (1355)

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Mr. Speaker, I think, as for all Canadians experiencing the impact of the lack of vaccines, there is a lot of worry. A lot of people are feeling uneasy about what lies ahead. Specifically with regard to my region, as the member will know, there are many remote first nation communities and vulnerable populations who have begun to receive vaccines, but that has not been enough to ensure that all of those who are in a vulnerable situation can be vaccinated in a timely manner.

That is something we need the government to succeed on, so that we can ensure that all vulnerable Canadians and all Canadians who want a vaccine will be able to get one.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what a pleasure it is to be in the House once again.

When the fall economic statement was delivered some months ago, I made very clear my expectations for the airline sector, on which the government has yet to deliver. The pain and desperation across this sector continue.

I will start with a letter from a childhood friend of mine in Calgary Midnapore, who is now in the aviation sector. His parents are still my constituents. He asked me personally to read this letter and I told him I would. It reads:

“January 12, 2021.

“To the Right Hon. Prime Minister of Canada and Right Hon. Minister of Transport:

“This letter is a first for me as I do not usually engage elected officials to convey my disappointment regarding the state of an industry to which I have devoted over 25 years of my life. However, having worked in the Canadian aviation sector in an operations control management capacity and experienced executive leadership which successfully met the challenges of recessions, rising energy prices, 9/11, SARS and H1N1, to name just a few, it saddens me to see that in nine short months the Liberal government is on track to severely weakening or destroying strong companies that have taken decades to build.

“Was this intentional? I'm almost certain it was not, but lack of Liberal proactivity and collaboration with leaders in the Canadian aviation industry have led the industry on this path. CERB and CEWS are not silver bullet solutions that will fix this problem alone, contrary to popular belief. The industry needs strong leadership in the form of aggressive procurement of expedited COVID testing and results within hours of flight departures and arrivals, not two weeks of quarantine upon arrival and testing of Canadian citizens 72 hours prior to their return to Canada.

“Facilitating conditions for safe travel will help this industry recover and rapid, reliable COVID testing will play a major role in boosting consumer confidence. It does exist, but the Liberal government needs to aggressively pursue it and have a plan.

“Currently, I do not see a coherent plan. If Liberal actions continue on this path of reactivity, myopic leadership and decisions made in a vacuum without consultation with industry, then Canadians may wake up in the near future to view the slow death of our nation's main carriers, a renegotiation of our airspace sovereignty be-

cause Canadian-based airlines are not financially able to serve all communities due to poor Liberal policies, U.S.-based airlines operating point to point domestically and other foreign carriers facilitating travel for Canadians abroad.

“Does the Liberal Party really want to have the legacy of leading to the demise of our aviation industry with proud innovative roots”—

● (1400)

**The Deputy Speaker:** We will have to leave it there until we get back to the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore after question period later this day.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### DAVENPORT SENIORS

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the amazing seniors who are living independently in my riding of Davenport. In spite of the lockdown, Davenport seniors are doing all they can to stay safe and active, with many taking part in vital programs on Zoom, FaceTime and other online platforms.

I want to thank the many seniors homes and local organizations that have been instrumental in keeping our seniors safe, especially those who are living alone, including Terra Nova, LA Centre for Active Living, New Horizons for Seniors, Armonia Hispanic Seniors Group, Casa dos Acores, Casa do Alentejo, the Abrigo Centre, West Neighbourhood House, the Davenport Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre, and so many others.

I am also proud that our Liberal government has given seniors \$2.5 billion in top-up payments, has launched over 2,000 community support projects, and has allocated half a billion dollars to partners like the United Way food banks and charities to help seniors and others get essential services and supplies. We will continue to support our seniors and will have their backs for as long as they need us.

*Statements by Members***MEN'S SHEDS CANADA**

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a true community hero, Doug Mackie, for being awarded the Manitoba Lieutenant Governor's "Make A Difference Community Award." In 2011, Doug founded Men's Sheds Canada here in Winnipeg. He recognized that many in our community were suffering from isolation, loneliness and depression. In a shed, men get together for activities like woodworking projects, cooking, playing cards and so much more. Doug expanded across the country and now has 38 locations with over 1,000 members.

I visited our local Woodhaven shed with Doug to see first-hand the movement he has created. These collaborative and communal spaces provide a safe place to come together, stay productive, and contribute to the community, all while improving the social, physical and mental health of seniors, or what Doug calls "health by stealth."

Doug truly embodies the spirit of volunteerism, and I want to offer him my heartfelt congratulations on this well-deserved award.

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**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this year is the 25th year of Black History Month in Canada. It is a time to celebrate the immense contributions of Black Canadians around the country, along with recognizing their resilience and strength. Although we may celebrate differently this year, we can still connect virtually to honour the incredible achievements of Black Canadians, who have done so much to make Canada the culturally diverse, compassionate and prosperous nation it is today.

I encourage everyone to keep an eye out for virtual events related to Black History Month in my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville and in other communities. Diversity is one of Canada's greatest strengths, and a multicultural Canada benefits all Canadians. Canada's commitment to diversity and inclusion is an essential, powerful and ambitious approach to making Canada and the world a better and safer place. We are a nation created by people from all walks of life. As Canadians, we are committed to playing a positive role in the world.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like us all to acknowledge Black History Month, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary here this year. This is an opportunity to highlight the often little-known contribution that all of Quebec's Black communities have made to our history.

Because of the pandemic, celebrations will be virtual, but there will still be a full slate of concerts, talks, discussion groups and more. I invite all Quebecers to attend the online events put on by the round table all month.

As we celebrate, we cannot forget that the history of Black communities in Quebec is being written right before our eyes. The Black Lives Matter movement was one of 2020's defining moments, and it will certainly continue to have an impact well into the future. People are finding their voice as never before. This Black History Month, let us proclaim ourselves as allies.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

**NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK**

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as Parliament resumes, and especially given that this is National Suicide Prevention Week, my thoughts are with the post-secondary students in my riding and across Quebec who are once again beginning virtual classes.

For months, I have been seeing the effects of this pandemic on my own children, Keyla and Ianco, and on young people like Christine, Eric, Michel-Anthony, Nadine and Nicolas. I have witnessed psychological distress, suicide attempts and anxiety in our young people.

Universities and CEGEPs are places to socialize and exchange ideas. They are places where young people make memories, have their ideas challenged and fall in love, but not virtually. I am sure all my colleagues in the House will join me in wishing them the best of luck. Above all, I want them to know that they should not be ashamed to reach out for help if they need it.

We have invested in free mental health supports such as Wellness Together Canada and Kids Help Phone. I would like to highlight the exceptional work of the CIUSSS in Montreal East and its partners, including the Collège de Maisonneuve, in supporting the mental health of our young people.

In these pandemic times, I wish everyone a healthy mind in a healthy body.

\* \* \*

**BUY LOCAL**

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, buying local is even more important during this COVID-19 pandemic.

More than ever, our small shop owners, artisans and farmers need the public to stand behind them and buy their products and services. I would like to draw the attention of the House to the human dimension of buying local and having contact with the person whose work gives us an exceptional quality of life.

*Statements by Members*

By extension, demanding more Canadian products will make us all safe when it comes to all the goods and services we consume. It is important that we learn from the tough times we are going through and do things for the long term with the human dimension in mind when it comes to safe supply in the future.

The political choices made in the coming months will leave a lasting mark on the Canadian economy. Let us choose the right direction together.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**GROUNDHOG DAY**

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today, February 2, is Groundhog Day, when our furry friends across North America give us their prediction on whether we will have an early spring or six more weeks of winter. As the folklore goes, if the groundhog does not see its shadow, we can expect to have an early spring.

This morning at the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park, Nova Scotia's own Shubenacadie Sam, the first groundhog in North America to report its prognosis, emerged from her burrow. I am happy to report that today in Nova Scotia, as we are experiencing a blizzard, Sam did not see her shadow and is predicting an early spring, which is welcome news to Nova Scotians who are looking forward to warmer weather.

Since 1987, Shubenacadie Sam, the prognosticating groundhog, has had an impeccable track record of giving accurate forecasts, with higher accuracy than many other famous groundhogs, including Wiarton Willie.

I want to thank the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park for the work it does to educate Nova Scotians about our wildlife. I hope members of the House can agree with me that Sam has an excellent track record, and we are hoping her prediction rings true in 2021.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**VIMY'S BIOTECH COMMUNITY**

**Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to recognize this government's incredible efforts, which have resulted in the purchase and delivery of more than one million vaccine doses to the provinces. Millions more are on their way. We are still on track to meet our targets.

I would also like to mention the businesses in my riding of Vimy that contributed to the development of a vaccine: Biodextris, Nexelis and Glycovax Pharma, in partnership with the Armand Frappier Centre. I want to thank them for their efforts and their service to Canadians.

We are fortunate to have such a vibrant biotech community in Laval.

Canadians can be proud of the work this government has done to combat the pandemic. They can rest assured that they are in good hands.

[*English*]

**ROAD SAFETY**

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising to speak on two issues. The first is to share the prediction of this country's greatest groundhog, Wiarton Willie. It is official: we will have an early spring.

Next is a more serious message, but one of hope and inspiration despite the tragedy associated with it. Last week, Grace Haines of North Vancouver, a 17-year-old honour roll high school student dedicated to fitness, was taking a study break by going for a run near her home when she was struck in a hit-and-run accident that left her critically injured.

I have the honour of knowing Grace's parents, Chris and Andria, from our time together at the Royal Military College. In the face of this tragic accident, they and her brother Jack are demonstrating bravery and compassion that is an example for all Canadians.

As Chris has stated publicly, instead of lashing out in anger at the driver, he is calling for all of us to look inward at our own driving behaviours. More importantly, in Chris's own words, "Anger won't heal Grace, just love will." Considering the challenges all Canadians have faced the past year, we should all follow this advice.

I am sending my love to Grace and her family.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**FLEETWOOD—PORT KELLS HIDDEN HEROES**

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, everybody here can share stories about the generosity of the folks at home as we have made our way through some very difficult times, and I am glad to offer examples of just those kinds of people in Fleetwood—Port Kells: Flavio Marquez and his amazing Christmas light show and his wonderful Fraser Heights neighbours, who donated 1,427 pounds of food and nearly \$1,800 in cash to the Surrey Food Bank; people like Narinder Singh at the big gurdwara at 152nd Street and 68th Avenue, who turbocharged their langar hall and delivered thousands of meals to seniors and people having tough times; the Muslim Food Bank, which helped thousands more; our Filipino community, and Narima Dela Cruz; Michelle Liu, for our Chinese community; Sergeant Mike Spencer, of our Surrey RCMP; Brian Woudstra from our faith community, and so many others that our constituency office has honoured as Fleetwood—Port Kells Hidden Heroes.

The worst of times can bring out the best in so many, and to all who have done their best, I thank them.

*Statements by Members***BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this February we respect Black Canadians by recognizing and participating in Black History Month. It is a time to show special appreciation for their contributions to Canada's history beyond the usual lip service and virtue signalling frequent in this chamber.

When we honour Black History Month this month, we learn from an intersectional understanding of separate communities across our great nation, each one demonstrating tenacity and bringing unique experiences that contribute to our cultural mosaic from coast to coast to coast.

I would highlight Robert Sutherland, Canada's first Black lawyer, whose estate saved Queen's University from bankruptcy. It was a simple act that has allowed countless Canadians since to receive quality post-secondary education.

I would encourage all to seek out and improve our knowledge of Black history in Canada. On behalf of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, we wish all a respectful and enlightening Black History Month.

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**ENBRIDGE LINE 5**

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today with great concern over Michigan Governor Whitmer's attempt to shut down Enbridge Line 5 in violation of the transit pipelines treaty. If this important line is shut down, more than 20,000 jobs would be impacted in my riding alone. Thousands more would be in jeopardy across Ontario and Quebec's energy industries.

Line 5 supplies fuel to both the Pearson and Detroit airports, as well as 30% of home heating energy to these regions. Refineries, downstream processors, farmers and businesses on both sides of the border would be impacted. Alternative methods of transportation, such as trucks and railcars, are not more environmentally friendly, and there are not enough of them to handle the capacity.

The Prime Minister needs to seek President Biden's assistance on this issue. To help avoid the shutdown of Line 5, anyone can let Governor Whitmer's office know of their opposition by sending the proposed email available on my MP website. Together, we can help keep Line 5 open and secure jobs on both sides of the border.

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**OIL TANKER MORATORIUM ACT**

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for nearly 50 years, communities along B.C.'s north coast have been working together to keep oil tankers out of our coastal waters. An oil spill here would damage our coastal economy and the world-renowned ecosystem of the Great Bear Rainforest. For first nations that have called the coast home for thousands of years, such a disaster is unthinkable.

In 1972, on a motion tabled by former Skeena MP Frank Howard, the House unanimously agreed that oil tankers on B.C.'s north coast were "inimical to Canadian interests, especially those of

an environmental nature." That remains as true today as it was then. Tomorrow, we will again vote on this important question.

Since Bill C-229, which would repeal the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act, was first tabled, I have heard from community leaders and residents across our region. In a matter of weeks, our petition received hundreds of signatures. On behalf of the people of northwest B.C., I ask that the House support a vibrant, sustainable future for our coast.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

[Translation]

**POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to announce that beginning in September, UQAM will be offering courses in Saint-Constant in my riding.

As early as 2012, when I was a member of the Quebec National Assembly, I saw that the availability of post-secondary education was not keeping pace with our region's rapid development. I therefore began to work on bringing a satellite campus to the area to give students access to a college education, a project that came to fruition in 2018.

When I returned to politics at the federal level, I promised to join a university to that CÉGEP. A promise is a promise, and from now on, young people from Roussillon, starting with my children, will be able to complete all of their studies in my region.

I want to acknowledge the effectiveness and efficiency of the UQAM team, ably led by university president Magda Fusaro. I also want to thank Marc Rémillard, director general of the Valleyfield CÉGEP, and my friend and former partner Jean-Claude Boyer, the mayor of Saint-Constant, who never sees problems, only solutions.

I wish UQAM in Roussillon long-lasting success.

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[English]

**COVID-19 VACCINES**

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, throughout this pandemic we have seen people, families and small business owners left behind by the government's response. Now Canadians are locked down and left behind because of the Liberals' failure on rapid tests and vaccines. Instead of focusing on vaccine delivery guarantees and securing the ability for domestic production, the Liberals spent the fall filibustering across multiple committees in a grand effort to cover up the Prime Minister's role in the WE scandal.



Every day, Canada falls farther behind our peers. They have enough doses of the vaccine, while our elderly and our most vulnerable continue to be at risk and businesses remain closed.

Conservatives want the government to get vaccine rollout right. We know that Canada cannot secure jobs, our economy or our future without vaccines. We need vaccines to end the lockdown, and we need to end the lockdowns. Canadians can count on Canada's Conservatives to secure health care, secure our economy and secure our future.

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#### LEGION BRANCH 170

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has greatly impacted veterans and the resources they rely on. Legions across the country have had to close their doors, leaving many veterans isolated and without these community-led supports. Legions provide supportive spaces and valuable assistance for our veterans and their families.

Our government understands the important role Legions have in our communities, and responded by creating the \$20 million veterans organization emergency support fund. Through this fund, Legion Branch 170 in Uxbridge received \$10,000 in support. Not only does Branch 170 honour and support veterans, but it brings together the entire community in its efforts and teaches future generations of the sacrifices that veterans made for us.

The work our community does with Branch 170 is incredibly special, and I am glad our government supported this to ensure veterans' supports will continue in Uxbridge and in so many communities across Canada.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the last two weeks, the Prime Minister has failed to specifically raise the issue of Line 5 with any senior American officials he has talked to. There have been three calls, but no action. Thirty thousand direct and spinoff jobs in Ontario depend on Line 5.

This is what these workers want to know: When is the Prime Minister finally going to stand up for their jobs?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over the past many years this government has consistently and effectively stood up for Canadian interests across the table from American administrations. We have demonstrated our ability to protect steel and aluminum workers, secure supply management, protect our cultural exemptions, and renegotiate NAFTA.

We will always stand up for Canadian workers and Canadian energy and we will continue to engage actively with the United States administration.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all the jet fuel at Pearson airport, the jobs at refineries in

### Oral Questions

Montreal and Lévis, and 66% of the crude used in Quebec, and zero mention of the issue from the Prime Minister in three calls with senior U.S. officials.

Yesterday, the natural resources minister talked about a team Canada approach. When is the Prime Minister finally going to get on the field, talk about Line 5, and stand up for workers in all parts of this country?

● (1420)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have seen this consistently from Conservatives over the past many years: armchair quarterbacking; telling us what we had to do, should do, and would do. We just went ahead and did it.

We kept protecting Canadian jobs. We kept standing up for Canadian interests. We delivered on NAFTA. We are delivering on protecting Canadian interests, and we will continue to do so, on Line 5, and on every other issue facing Canada and the U.S.

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### HEALTH

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Actually, Mr. Speaker, do they want to know who really did it and showed some leadership? It was Northern Ireland.

In a few hours, it was able to obtain written exemptions from the European Union with respect to vaccine export controls. Friday night, the EU changed its rules to guarantee the vaccine supply to Northern Ireland. It is now Tuesday, and all we have gotten from this Prime Minister and the trade minister are some verbal assurances that they have raised the matter.

With Canada falling further and further behind in vaccines every week, can the Prime Minister get to it and guarantee in writing our supply of vaccines from Europe?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take this opportunity to reassure Canadians that we indeed received strong assurances from the EU leadership, including Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, that Canada's deliveries of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines would not be disrupted by the new transparency measures the EU is bringing forward.

We are relying on vaccines from European production plants, and Europe will continue to protect Canada's supply.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have learned that Novavax will likely be able to manufacture vaccines here in Canada, if Health Canada approves the vaccine.

The Prime Minister said that the new facilities should be able to produce vaccines here by the end of the summer, but his Minister of Innovation is saying that it will be by the end of the year.

Can the Prime Minister tell Canadians which it is?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to be at the Royalmount facility last September to announce federal investments in vaccine production in Canada.

As I said, the plant should be built over the summer. Then there will be an approval process, and vaccine production will be up and running by the end of the year.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there was an investment in a partnership with China in September.

News about potentially manufacturing the Novavax vaccine in Canada was slow to come but positive. Canadians are tired of waiting to be vaccinated because economic recovery depends on vaccines. The Liberal government should have a clear plan for vaccine delivery.

Why is the Liberal government always lagging behind other countries?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservatives are completely out to lunch. They are just scaring Canadians.

By negotiating agreements with a number of different companies, we made sure we would have more doses per capita than any other country, and we will be receiving millions of doses at the end of March, as planned.

We will be getting 20 million doses this spring, and everyone will be vaccinated before September of this year because that is the commitment we made.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, every territory and province, including Quebec, asked that the federal contribution be increased to 35% of what it costs to take care of our seniors and our sick, for a total of \$28 billion.

The Liberals said no, and more than that, they are going to impose Canadian standards. The Conservatives said that they would hold a meeting in the first 100 days after the next election, and of course the NDP acted like a subsidiary of the Liberals.

Is there no party in Canada that is prepared to accept the unanimous request of the territories, the provinces and Quebec?

• (1425)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in the House and my hon. colleague refuses to hear it, we are going to increase health transfers. In fact, we demonstrated our willingness to do so with our unprecedented

increase in investments in the provinces, the public, seniors and workers during this pandemic.

We know that more needs to be done and we will continue to be there to do more not only in the short term and immediately, but also in the long term. I look forward to having these discussions in due course once this crisis is behind us.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what is a national standard?

The federal government does not administer hospitals. It does not supervise doctors and nurses. This is not an area of federal jurisdiction, no matter how you slice it.

Why is it better if it is a Canadian standard rather than a Quebec standard?

What can a Canadian do that a Quebecker cannot?

How is being Canadian intrinsically superior to being a Quebecker?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could point out one thing. Most Canadians and most Quebeckers, with the exception of the leader of the Bloc Québécois, know very well that doctors from the Canadian Armed Forces helped in Quebec's long-term care facilities, and those Canadian soldiers, with their medical doctorates, helped a huge number of seniors.

To claim that the federal government does not have any doctors is just saying anything to make a crass political argument. We will be there to work with all of the provinces to protect seniors, and I think—

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Burnaby South.

\* \* \*

*[English]*

**COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a recent report indicates that 65% of greater Toronto area workers are essential. In fact, Dr. Naheed Dosani indicates that those workers who get COVID-19 are “working in close [proximity]” and with “inadequate access to paid sick leave”. This is very clear. Paid sick leave will help us stop the spread of COVID-19 and will ensure that we save lives.

The Prime Minister says the job is done, and that it is already good enough, but the existing program has problems. Will the Prime Minister commit to fixing paid sick leave so it covers all the workers who need it?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we brought in paid sick leave for Canadians who are not covered by their jobs because we know that, during this pandemic, people need to be able to make the choice to stay home if they start exhibiting symptoms and know that they can still put food on the table for their families. That is why we moved forward with federal sick leave. It is also why we are so happy to see many provinces step up to improve the system and to adjust it so it is right for their province.

We will continue to work hand in hand with the provinces on delivering for Canadians right across the country, because protecting our most vulnerable workers is part of the way to not just to keep up safe, but to make sure we recover well.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I had a meeting with Premier Legault. In his capacity as the chair of the Council of the Federation, he delivered the message that all premiers across the country want increased health transfers.

During a pandemic, it is more important than ever to increase investments in our health care. My question is simple. Will the Prime Minister increase health transfers, yes or no?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yes, that is the commitment we have made to all the provincial and territorial premiers.

I know we are going to have to increase health transfers. We will continue to increase these transfers, as we do every year. However, during this pandemic, it is also a time to provide immediate assistance, which is why we have sent tens of billions of dollars to the provinces to support health care systems.

As for the long term, we are very open to these discussions. As I have already said, yes, we will increase health transfers. In terms of the details, I look forward to having those conversations, but again, we will be there to support—

• (1430)

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we know that, at the beginning of the pandemic, the government was slow to respond at the borders. Then, the authorities lacked guidelines for screening travellers. As such, it was quite incredible for Quebeckers to hear the President of the Treasury Board say yesterday on LCN that the Sûreté du Québec had done a poor job of ensuring that Quebeckers comply with the quarantine orders. When will the government show some leadership and admit its wrongs on the border issue?

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear. There was no delay, and we actually took very timely action in not only stopping all non-essential flights into Canada, but also in closing the largest undefended border, the border between ourselves and the

United States. We have also been working closely with the provinces and territories. In most of them the police have jurisdiction, and they have been very effective in their enforcement of the quarantine orders.

We have been working with the Province of Quebec. I'm very pleased to advise that they now say the Sûreté du Québec is prepared to take over their responsibility in enforcing the Quarantine Act.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that the government is trying to pass off its incompetence on the backs of the provinces. Is it the fault of the provinces that the borders were not closed in time last spring? Is it the fault of the provinces if the Prime Minister is not able to ensure a vaccine supply?

The accusations of the hon. member for Québec demonstrate a flagrant lack of leadership. His government must assume its responsibilities. When will it apologize to the SQ and Quebec?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the accusations of my Conservative colleague are absolutely unfounded.

He knows very well that in the past, we already had one of the most robust plans for managing our borders. We have just strengthened that, and significantly. Anyone who comes to Canada has to be tested before they arrive. They have to pay \$2,000, which they have to show when they want to come here. They have to be tested when they arrive in Canada. They must self-isolate for three days in a specific location. These measures are among the strictest in the world. It would be nice if my colleague would at least have the decency to recognize that.

[English]

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the European Union's export controls on COVID vaccines are adding to uncertainty. The trade minister says she has verbal assurances from her EU counterpart but has no written agreement confirming that we are exempt. A trade expert told the Toronto Sun this means "the EU can say this doesn't apply to Canada until they decide it does."

Is the minister working to get a written exemption, just as other countries have, for our millions of doses of COVID-19 vaccine that would be coming from Europe?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government and I have been in contact with our counterparts at the European Union as well as with the member states on this very important issue. Over the past week I have reiterated to my counterparts that our expectation is that their mechanism will not affect vaccine shipments to Canada. Our next vaccine shipments remain on track for delivery.

*Oral Questions*

We are going to continue to work with the EU and our international partners, as we have throughout this pandemic, to ensure that critical health and medical supply chains remain open and resilient. We share the urgency of Canadians to ensure that vaccines get to Canada, and we are operating every day with this urgency.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that over 100 countries are exempt from these measures and we are not.

The government has no written assurances that the EU's export controls will not affect Canada. Whether a week from now or a month from now, we simply do not know if the EU can implement these measures on Canada's vaccine contracts. Verbal assurances are simply not enough.

Why is the minister not pushing to get Canada on this exemption list?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the exemption list largely includes developing countries and states from the European single market. Many of our long-standing international partners, including New Zealand or Japan, were also not included on this list, but let me be clear: We have been repeatedly assured, in my discussions with my counterparts and in the Prime Minister's conversation with President von der Leyen, that the EU's measures will not affect our vaccine shipments. Our government is going to continue to work closely with the EU, and with the member states, to ensure that Canada's access to vaccines is not disrupted.

• (1435)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over a year after COVID-19 started to spread, the world has learned a lot about how to fight it, but Canadians are still being asked to sacrifice with no end in sight. Canadians need vaccines, deployed rapid tests and information to secure our future and rebuild our economy. By now the Prime Minister should be telling Canadians what is being done to eventually safely lift restrictions and not just putting new ones in place.

How many million Canadians need to be vaccinated before restrictions are lifted?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, we have been there for provinces and territories as we have fought COVID-19 together. Whether it is through the provision of billions of dollars to ensure that provinces and territories have the capacity to test, contact trace and safely isolate or whether it is to provide personal protective equipment, purchase testing or vaccinations, that is what we have been doing: supporting provinces and territories every step of the way.

Vaccines are an important tool in seeing the end of this pandemic, and I thank all Canadians for trying so hard together to protect each other.

**The Speaker:** I want to remind hon. members who are joining us virtually today that the arm on their headsets is sometimes too close to their mouths and sometimes too far away. The rule of thumb is one and a half centimetres away, just below or just above, the end of their mouths. For those who are not quite into metrics yet, it is about half an inch away.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that you said that, because I would love to be having this debate in the House.

However, the minister could not answer my question, a question that relates to when life gets back to normal. Limiting Canadians' charter rights, limiting their movements, preventing them from entering their own homes and having to go to quarantine facilities are extreme measures that should have a clear end criteria. They must be temporary. A year into COVID, the Liberals must start telling Canadians how and when they will be safely lifted.

Therefore, no word salad: How many million Canadians need to be vaccinated before restrictions are lifted?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, as the science and research has evolved around COVID-19, Canada has been guided in our response by that science and evidence. In fact, quarantines are an important measure in protecting Canadians from the importation of the virus and now the importation of variants. Every step of the way, we have followed research and evidence, and we will continue to do that.

I want to thank all Canadians for the sacrifices they are making to keep each other safe.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is good news in the long term that a Novavax vaccine will be manufactured in Montreal, but that is no help to us now, because we will not see a single dose of that vaccine this year.

This will be helpful in the event of a future pandemic, but it will not help the 13 million people the government promised to vaccinate by June. Meanwhile, the bad news keeps coming about procuring vaccines to get us out of the second wave.

What is the government doing now to make sure that we get the doses we need?

**Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning, our government has had the following objectives: one, secure access to vaccines and to the best vaccine candidates in the world; two, invest in the most promising Canadian vaccines and treatments; and three, invest strategically to rebuild Canada's biomanufacturing capacity.

That is exactly what we have done, and we have known all along that we must rely on the best advice of Canadian scientists. We are supporting biomanufacturing for Canadians. It is coming.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, those are three objectives, but will they be reached? I do not believe so.

Producing the Novavax vaccine in Montreal will help us in the future, but we need vaccines right now. We have been in the race for vaccines for 11 months. However, not until today did the government announce an agreement to manufacture the vaccine locally, which will not happen until 2022. The government should have negotiated this 11 months ago so we could start manufacturing vaccines the moment they were approved by Health Canada. Eleven months is a long time.

Why did the government wait so long?

• (1440)

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I remember that a couple of months ago, the Bloc Québécois was saying that we would never be able to vaccinate anyone and that it would not happen. We are vaccinating Canadians. Once again, the Bloc is trying to scare Canadians.

Yes, there are challenges. Yes, the global demand for vaccines exceeds the supply. That is why we signed agreements with so many companies at the outset. The objectives remain the same. We will reach those objectives. I am talking about six million doses by the end of March, half of Quebecers vaccinated by the end of June and then all Canadians who want to be vaccinated by the end of September.

Those are our objectives, and we will reach them.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### AIRLINE INDUSTRY

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government asked Canadian carriers to suspend flights to both Mexico and the Caribbean, yet American carriers are still carrying Canadians to these sun destinations.

The airline sector in Canada has already been put through the wringer. Why is the Prime Minister putting American jobs first when he should be standing up for Canadian airline workers?

**Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our domestic airlines carry the vast majority of Canadians travelling to sun destinations on vacation. However, we are aware that some foreign carriers also operate between Canada and sun

destinations. The government is working with foreign airlines on this issue.

For example, Aeroméxico already announced it was suspending flights between Canada and Mexico.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while American carriers continue to carry Canadians to sun destinations, Canadian carriers are parked right here at home.

The Canadian aviation sector has already lost significant market share as a result of the government's incompetence and inaction, while foreign carriers have received billions of dollars in sector-specific aid. When will the Prime Minister put Canadian jobs first and deliver a plan for the airline sector?

**Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that a U.S. carrier cannot transport Canadians to a sun destination without first stopping in the U.S. She probably also knows that the Biden administration has already implemented new measures on all travellers coming to the U.S. By the way, there are additional measures we are working on coordinating with the U.S.

I ask my hon. colleague to join me in calling on all Canadians to suspend or postpone non-essential travel.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, listen to this: while the Liberal government announces that Canadian airlines will no longer be flying south, we learn that U.S. airlines will continue to provide this service to Canadians for all-inclusive sunny destinations. This makes no sense. It is utterly ridiculous.

When will the government take responsibility and manage the border like it should?

[English]

**Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, no U.S. carrier can carry a Canadian to a sun destination directly without stopping in the U.S. I also stated earlier that the Biden administration had implemented new measures on all travellers. I ask my colleagues to join me in calling on all Canadians to postpone non-essential travel.

I also want to take a moment to thank the airlines for voluntarily agreeing to help prevent the spread of COVID. Our government is currently working on a support package to help airline carriers and their workers.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to read to the minister what the president and CEO of the Air Transport Association of Canada said:

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How can we not be frustrated at a situation like this? It is unbelievable that the government could not find a way to prevent American competitors from doing something here that it is prohibiting Canadian airlines from doing.

Our Prime Minister is always reacting to situations and is unable to make good decisions quickly.

When will he protect our border and Canadian jobs?

● (1445)

[English]

**Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the jobs in the airline sector are incredibly important for our country's safety and the economy. We are currently working with the airline sector on providing a support package for it.

I would ask my hon. colleague to join me in understanding the importance of these travel measures and in encouraging all Canadians to avoid non-essential travel.

Let us recognize and acknowledge the sacrifices made by the workers in the airline sector. We will stand by them.

\* \* \*

### HEALTH

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians do not have access to the dental care they need. More than one-third have no dental coverage at all, and the numbers have increased because of the pandemic. Young people, seniors, precarious workers and families with low incomes endure pain and suffer avoidable health and social consequences because they cannot afford dental care.

Last February the Liberals voted against a dental plan. Will they change their minds and support my private member's motion to implement a federal dental program now for all uninsured Canadians with a family income of less than \$90,000?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for advocating for low-income families and for access to dental care. As I have said in the House, this seems like a worthy area to investigate and I certainly would be more than happy to review any recommendations that might come from the health committee or the committees that study the issue.

\* \* \*

### COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Robert Major is a 62-year-old mechanic in my riding. He was unable to work because of health issues during the pandemic. Like thousands of Canadians, Robert was asked by the CRA to repay the CERB money he received in good faith.

Robert has worked for over 40 years, paid his taxes, paid into EI, yet he cannot get the help he needs. Robert and his wife cannot access other supports and they cannot afford to pay the clawback.

Why is it that when Robert needed help the most and the Liberals promised to have his back, he got a knife instead?

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when

the pandemic hit, we quickly introduced the CERB, helping nine million Canadians put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads. We know this continues to be a difficult time for many and we will continue to be there.

No one is required to make repayments at this time and we are actively looking at options to support Canadians who may in fact be determined ineligible.

As the Prime Minister has said, we are going to work with Canadians who need to make repayments in a way that is flexible and understanding of their unique circumstances. There will not be penalties or interest for anyone who made good faith mistakes.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the new highly affected sectors credit availability program was introduced yesterday. The program is being directed toward companies that have already qualified for and received the Canada emergency wage subsidy or the Canada emergency rent subsidy.

My question for the minister is on behalf of businesses throughout Canada that have not received either of the subsidies. Will their applications be at a disadvantage compared to the companies that have it?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Surrey—Newton for his strong voice for small businesses.

We know many small businesses continue to be hard hit by this pandemic and continue to face restrictions, and are protecting the health and safety of their employees and their customers. HASCAP is another way our government is stepping up to provide this critical lifeline for Canada's hardest-hit businesses. Applications are open at Canada's financial institutions and businesses that do not receive the wage subsidy nor the rent subsidy will not be affected. I would encourage them to please apply.

\* \* \*

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the buy America rules announced by the Biden administration allow exceptions only under limited circumstances where there is an overwhelming security, humanitarian or emergency needed in America. Canadian businesses could be shut out of U.S. government procurement.

In 2010, the Conservative government dealt with buy America requirements by signing an agreement with the Obama administration to allow Canadian companies to participate in the U.S. infrastructure projects?

Why has the government done so little on a file that means so much to Canadian businesses?

• (1450)

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

The Prime Minister raised this in his call to President Biden, that workers in both our countries benefit from the integrated resilient supply chains. The Prime Minister also spoke to Vice-President Harris this week about strengthening our trade relationship and avoiding unintended consequences of the buy American policies for the benefit of people in both countries.

We are always going to take a team Canada approach, working with Canadian businesses and exporters, manufacturers and industries, just as we have done in the last five years.

**Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce says that the new buy America rules will make it more difficult for Canadian business to secure contracts in the U.S. This will put a significant chill on investment at a critical time when the Canadian economy is very fragile. The government cannot blame its trade problems on the previous administration in the United States anymore.

What is the plan to ensure Canadian businesses can participate in U.S. government contracts?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will always stand up for the interests of Canadians. The Prime Minister spoke with the U.S. President and Vice-President and emphasized that workers must benefit from our integrated supply chains. The Prime Minister and the President agreed to consult closely to avoid any measures that may constrain trade between our two countries. We will work together to support a sustainable economic recovery.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last year gun seizures at Canada's borders spiked. Eighty per cent of guns seized by Toronto police came from the U.S., while shootings went up.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister talked to the U.S. VP about gun trafficking, but last week the exact same Prime Minister defeated a Conservative bill to crack down on illegal gun smuggling. As usual, the PM is all talk and no action. Why does he target law-abiding firearms owners and retailers, but rejects solutions for criminals and gangs that terrorize Canadians?

#### Oral Questions

**Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward to strengthen gun control, including addressing all of the ways in which criminals gain access to guns. We have promised Canadians that we will strengthen gun control, while the Conservatives have promised the gun lobby that they will weaken it.

It is important to listen to police chiefs, like the police chief in Edmonton, who advises that only 5% to 10% of the guns in his city come from across the border. The rest are obtained illegally through straw purchases or are stolen.

We are committed to doing the whole job of keeping communities safe.

**Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, police across Canada have been very clear that smuggled firearms, illegal firearms and criminals are the real problem in this country, not legal gun owners. If the Liberals actually took gun crimes seriously, they would have demonstrated that last week on Bill C-238, but what did they do? The Liberals voted against one of the root causes of gun violence in Canada, which is illegal firearms smuggled into this country from the United States. They did not even want to study the issue at committee.

The government continues to fail Canadians at every turn. Why?

**Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that we have made a commitment to deal with all of the ways in which criminals gain access to guns, including by strengthening our response at the border and by dealing with guns that are stolen and illegally diverted into the hands of criminals.

Let us listen to the police chiefs. The police chief in Saskatoon told us that guns used in crimes in his city come primarily from theft. The police chief in Regina said that they are not being brought across the border, but are coming from break and enters in his city. As I have already said, the chief in Edmonton has said that only 5% to 10% come from across the border.

It is important for us to address all of the ways criminals can get access to guns, and that is the work we are doing.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, pandemic or no pandemic, there is one industry that can always count on the federal government, and that is the oil industry.

*Oral Questions*

In the spring, the federal government eliminated environmental assessments for 100 drilling projects off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. Last week, the government authorized another 40 there, and now it has its eye on Quebec.

An Alberta oil company wants to do exploratory drilling in an area covering 1,500 kilometres off the lower north shore, right in the middle of a marine refuge.

Will the environment minister say no today to oil drilling in Quebec?

• (1455)

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the health of our marine areas and their biodiversity is a priority for our government. That is why we committed to protecting 25% of Canada's oceans by 2025 and joined the Global Ocean Alliance.

Our government respects Quebec's moratorium in the St. Lawrence and on new offshore oil and gas projects in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The permit in question was issued in the 1990s by the Government of Quebec.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals let oil companies walk all over them. They took advantage of the pandemic to give them gift after gift while the public's focus was elsewhere. Now, the minister does not know what to tell me, and he confirmed that he might be thinking of authorizing oil drilling in the middle of the St. Lawrence. Quebeckers want no part of that. Our future does not lie in oil.

I will repeat my question. Will the minister say no today to oil drilling in Quebec?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question, but the things she said are completely false.

As I said, our government said that the permit in question was issued in the 1990s by the Government of Quebec and that this matter is under provincial jurisdiction.

Our government respects moratoriums imposed by the provinces and Quebec on new offshore oil and gas exploration in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

\* \* \*

[English]

**AIR TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Nav Canada has made the unilateral decision to close seven of this country's air traffic control towers. Last week it was revealed at committee that Nav Canada paid out \$7 million in executive bonuses at the same time it was making the decision to close the towers.

The federal government holds three seats on the Nav Canada board. Can the minister tell us if the federal appointees voted for or against these executive bonuses?

**Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague knows that Nav Canada operates at arm's length from the government and operates independently. Nav

Canada is currently undertaking several studies to assess the level of services it needs. It is important to note that any changes in the level of service proposed by Nav Canada will be subject to a rigorous safety assessment. Rest assured, safety is the main concern of me and my department.

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**CARBON PRICING**

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has not given our seniors, who are struggling, a clear plan to help them through this pandemic, but it is raising their taxes through the carbon tax. Tripling the carbon tax will cost seniors even more for essentials like gas, groceries and home heating. For many seniors, their budgets are already stretched further than they can manage.

Will the Prime Minister give them a break and cancel his failed carbon tax?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, certainly while COVID is the challenge of our lifetime, at the present time we cannot forget that climate change is an impending existential threat to humanity. Putting a price on carbon pollution is part of our critical plan to attack climate change and reduce emissions. We do so in a manner that ensures affordability, and if the hon. member would look at the plan and those who actually are in federal backstop jurisdictions, the vast majority of Canadian families get more money back than they pay in the context of the carbon price.

It is the most efficient way to reduce emissions. It is an important part of fighting climate change in a manner that is affordable, and certainly it is something—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

• (1500)

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week at the public accounts committee, the government stated that the GST was not a tax on the carbon tax. That is patently false. There is GST charged to every dollar of federal carbon tax. If anyone has any doubt, just ask a farmer.

Why did the government mislead Canadians about its tax on tax?



**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, addressing and fighting climate change should not be a partisan issue. Now more than ever, I think we all need to work together to bring together the best ideas to fight climate change. Our plan to put a price on pollution will ensure that there is certainty for businesses and individuals going forward and that we reduce emissions in a manner that is both efficient and affordable. We certainly hope that the party opposite will come to the conclusion that addressing climate change is actually important and bring forward a credible plan of its own.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### HEALTH

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, ever since the pandemic hit, our government has worked tirelessly to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

Our government has put measures in place to address COVID-19 concerns. International travellers are subject to a mandatory 14-day quarantine, and passengers must provide a negative PCR test result before boarding their flight for Canada.

Would the Minister of Transport tell the House about new measures to better protect the health and safety of our communities?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

[English]

Each new case of COVID-19 is one too many. That is why, since March of last year, we have enforced some of the world's strictest border measures.

We recently introduced new restrictions, which involve an agreement with airlines to suspend flights to and from Mexico and the Caribbean. Additionally, all travellers will soon have to book three nights at a public health facility and get tested upon arrival.

We will continue to do whatever it takes and for as long as it takes to protect and support Canadians during the pandemic.

**Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on my desk is a picture of Rogers Stadium in Toronto. I would show it to you, but you would accuse me of using a prop.

I will just say that the picture is of a stadium full of 50,000 people. Coincidentally, that is the same number of people who were being vaccinated every day in Canada up until about 10 days ago. After 10 days of no vaccinations, do the math. That is a half a million people.

Could the Prime Minister tell us what modelling the government has done to determine how many Canadians' lives could be lost because of this 10-day gap in the government's bungling of vaccination procurement?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, our government has worked to protect the lives of Canadians from COVID-19 from the beginning with, as my colleague has mentioned, some of the strictest measures on the border, with a mandatory 14-day quarantine, which was most recently

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strengthened, and the \$19 billion in support for provinces and territories and the supports for long-term care, ensuring that provinces and territories have what they need to deliver health care in their jurisdictions.

We will continue, whether it is buying tests, buying vaccines, distributing the vaccines for the most vulnerable to provinces and territories, we will be there for Canadians.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to border closures, mask mandates, protective equipment and vaccine procurement, the government has been a day late and a dollar short.

The U.K. realized the necessity of making vaccines domestically months ago, and their facilities are ready to go.

We are an embarrassing 38th in the world in vaccinations per capita. Our ad hoc made-in-Canada solution was finally announced today.

Canadians deserve better. This is the most important intervention we have to save lives. Why did the minister wait so long?

**Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, by no means did our government wait at all. Increasing our country's bio-manufacturing capacity has been part of our recovery plan since the very beginning. It is in our interest, both now and in the future, to have this capability within our borders.

That is why, at the beginning of this crisis, at the beginning of the pandemic, we made immediate investments in bio-manufacturing projects in Quebec City with Medicago, VIDO-InterVac in Saskatchewan, the National Research Council, of course, and with AbCellera.

We have moved quickly to make sure that our bio-manufacturing is much stronger after years of disinvestment. Today's announcement with Novavax is just another bit of good news. Our government is taking a step-by-step approach with advice from our national—

• (1505)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

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### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, vaccines are critical to reopening the economy and securing jobs for Canadians.

*Oral Questions*

The government has said that all Canadians will have a vaccine by September, but the numbers just do not add up. The government needs an average of two million doses every week to meet the September timeline, but there is an expected 1.93 million dose shortfall this week alone.

Does the government have a real plan to secure these doses, or will this shortfall simply balance itself?

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when Canadians needed PPE, we procured over two billion items. When Canadians needed rapid tests, we procured over 40 million rapid tests.

When Canadians needed vaccines, we procured the largest number of doses per capita from seven different suppliers. Vaccines are arriving in this country, and every Canadian who wants one will be able to get one by the end of September.

We always have Canadians' backs. We will not play politics with vaccine procurement, unlike our colleagues on the other side of the House.

\* \* \*

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, despite the pandemic, many of the business sectors in Hamilton are performing well, contributing to wages and tax revenues, including the steel industry, which I am proud to help represent.

With the current round of pre-budget consultations now under way, can the Associate Minister of Finance tell us how the government plans to ensure vibrancy and sustainability for steel and steel-related industries as we navigate the complex issues of a post-pandemic economy?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it was a pleasure to hold a pre-budget consultation with stakeholders in Hamilton last week. Like my colleagues, I heard many views on making significant investments to support the steel industry and create good jobs for the middle class.

[*English*]

I heard directly from Hamiltonians about their ideas to make Canadian steel the most sustainable in the world as we strive to be net zero by 2050. I also heard that we need to create opportunities to support our youth, who have been particularly hard hit during this pandemic, to get the skills they need through investments and skills training.

[*Translation*]

Hamiltonians can rest assured that our government will do everything in its power to support them.

[*English*]

**GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, an abusive employer can damage one's career, one's health and one's dignity, and some of those scars never heal. The Prime Minister failed to undertake basic due diligence in vetting Julie Payette, and he failed to lay down clear rules on her entitlements. She does not merit a pension or perks because she failed in her duties to Canada.

The Prime Minister needs to send a very clear signal that our institutions will not be a safe haven for employers who abuse their workers. Will he tell Madame Payette that she is simply not entitled to her entitlements?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has, from the very beginning, made it clear that no Canadian should work in a place that is not respectful, safe and healthy. The Prime Minister has made that commitment to all people who work in Canada's public service, and we have taken action in legislative ways to ensure that this is also the case in other workplaces. We continue to say to all Canadians that it is a fundamental right they have to work in a safe, healthy and respectful workplace, and Rideau Hall is no exception.

\* \* \*

**HEALTH**

**Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Vancouver Granville, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, we all want to know when we will be vaccinated. However, vaccine nationalism has become a real concern as nation states compete to procure vaccines for their citizens. We are part of this competition. While politically challenging, the hard truth is that until such time as all of the planet is vaccinated, none of us is safe. We are all interconnected. The virus will continue to mutate, and unvaccinated populations will become more virulent and will inevitably come here.

I know we are understandably focused on vaccinating Canadians, but what specifically are we doing to ensure successful global vaccination?

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member and all members of the House that while we have the most diverse portfolio of vaccines in the world and the most doses per capita of any country in the world, we are also very committed to multilateral alliances, including the Gavi alliance of the WHO and the COVAX facility, of which we are a part.

Once we have vaccines in this country to vaccinate Canadians, we will be sure to share our doses with the rest of the world. We believe that until everyone is vaccinated, no one is protected.

\* \* \*

• (1510)

## POINTS OF ORDER

### VISUAL DISPLAYS—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I would like to take a few moments to revisit an issue that has been raised on both sides of the House in recent days. The use of props in the House and committees to illustrate a point or promote positions has always been contrary to our rules and practices. With respect to members' statements, the Chair has shown some flexibility as long as a statement was not disruptive. However, Speakers have not hesitated to interrupt deliberations and even votes to ask certain members to comply with this rule.

[*Translation*]

Confronted with an unprecedented situation almost a year ago, the House decided to allow members to participate in deliberations by video conference, while always respecting our traditions. The Chair has, moreover, intervened on several occasions to remind members to maintain a background that is neutral in nature, respecting the chamber's tradition, and that the normal dress code remains mandatory.

[*English*]

Unless the House decides otherwise, we must recognize that the rules and practices that govern us remain in force. Regardless of the circumstances, the same is true when we follow the recommendations of public health authorities by wearing a mask in the House.

In the chamber, members express their opinions through the words they use and the way they vote, not through the use of props, whether they have the floor or not. As stated on page 617 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, "Speakers have consistently ruled that visual displays or demonstrations of any kind used by Members to illustrate their remarks or emphasize their positions are out of order. Similarly, props of any kind have always been found to be unacceptable in the Chamber."

This also applies to masks. While the Chair encourages members to wear masks, they should not be used to deliver a message or express an opinion. Simply put, they should be plain and neutral.

[*Translation*]

I thus call on the members to take account of these parameters in their choice of masks to wear in the House. Your co-operation is essential to maintain our long traditions regarding decorum.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2020

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to implement certain provisions of the economic statement

### *Government Orders*

tabled in Parliament on November 30, 2020 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore has seven minutes remaining.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, to begin, I will conclude the letter from my childhood friend. I grew up with him in Calgary Midnapore, and he is now in the aviation sector.

"Does the Liberal Party really want to have the legacy of leading Canada to the demise of our aviation industry with proud, innovative roots in history? For the sake of half a million aviation employees right now out of work and the future of our industry, the time to act decisively and collaboratively is now.

"I would like to thank the right hon. member [for Calgary Midnapore] for reading my concerns. As the shadow transportation minister for the Conservative Party and an old school colleague, she has well represented Canada's aviation industry in the past since the start of the pandemic.

"Sincerely, Grant Caswell."

I would like to say hello to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Caswell, who live on the same street I grew up on, Lake Bonavista Drive, in the riding.

For months I have been advocating, in the House, for support for the airline sector, which was announced yet again in the fall economic statement. I will add that it was also in the supplemental mandate letter to the Minister of Transport. It is long past due that this sector receives some type of support. Unfortunately, as I have indicated in recent days, the inaction and incompetence of the government is going far beyond the airline sector and is now reaching out to touch all Canadians.

I am sure members are very well aware that on our side of the House we pushed extensively for rapid testing in the fall in all facets of life, which would have facilitated many things within our communities and our society. However, as the shadow minister for transport, I pushed for it specifically in regard to air travel.

I am very proud of YYC, Calgary's airport authority, which took the initiative to have an on-arrival pilot project. We could have duplicated this across the nation initially, instead of giving the sledgehammer response that we have seen. It could have been avoided if the government had listened to our calls for rapid testing and then rolled out testing on arrival. We spoke of this again and again to the deaf ears of the government.

*Government Orders*

Now, very frankly, we are seeing this with vaccines. There was an inability to recognize the necessity to be at the head of the procurement line. This is not an excuse, nor is it acceptable. The government should have foreseen this and should have had a plan B as well, which it did not. It is not only the airline sector that has suffered terribly, as I have mentioned over and over again, but now all Canadians.

I even question the pharmaceutical approval process. I am very glad that my good colleague, the member for Foothills, brought this up last week specifically in regard to Solstar Pharma, which has an incredible antiviral project. In fact, my own leader mentioned this in the leaders' round of question period last week.

I have sheepishly led many individuals who have contacted me about the approval process. I have given them the website and perhaps written a letter of support, and left them in the queue with the wish and hope that there will be some good outcome for Canadians, because we need it so desperately. I am happy to see that we have the advancement with Novavax today.

I also want to talk to Canadians today about why they should care about the loss of the airline sector, because that is the direction we are going: the complete demolition of it. It will not be there, and why should Canadians care? It is because we will come out of this one way or another, through the stumbling and falling of the government in its attempt to manage this.

However, what will be there? Canadians gave up their summer vacation, gave up their winter vacation and are giving up their spring break. It looks like they will be giving up their summer vacation once again, according to the government. However, when the time comes for them to travel again with their families, will there be an airline sector to take them places? I am not sure today.

• (1515)

For Canadians who want to visit their families in remote parts of the country or in any part of the country, places where we have seen loss of service include St. John's, Gander, Goose Bay, Fredericton, Quebec City, Prince Rupert, Kamloops and Yellowknife. This is a result of the government's inaction. These routes are not there now and they will not be available when Canadians want to travel. When my friends in the 905, in Vancouver and all across Canada want to go to see their extended family in India or in Hong Kong, those flights will not be there, given the way we are going right now. All Canadians have an interest in the survival of this airline sector.

Canadians should be asking if their sector is next. I will tell the House as a member of Parliament from Alberta that I have seen the current government single-handedly destroy the energy sector here. That is one sector. I have seen them single-handedly destroy the entire airline sector. That is two airlines. Every Canadian, the ones on CERB, the ones who have jobs and the ones who are Uber drivers, should ask themselves if their industry is next. The government will come for their industry as well. It came for mine, it came for the airline workers and it will come for theirs.

Finally, as many of my colleagues have asked, I ask when this will end. When does this end? It is a year later, and I thought my life would be a lot bigger and a lot more open, as well as my fami-

ly's, and it is not; it is smaller. It is the result of the incompetence and the inaction of the government on so many things I have mentioned here today.

For me, it started with the airline sector, and it is far beyond that. It reaches all Canadians now.

• (1520)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for talking about airlines. They are important to us.

The small northern airlines provide service to the northern communities, but to be able to do that, they need the revenue from the flights that go south. To get that revenue, they need to interline with the big airlines, but reasonable interline agreements with the big airlines have not yet occurred.

I wonder if the member, and hopefully all members in the House, would join me in encouraging the large airlines to make meaningful interline agreements with the small northern airlines that are so important to us.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Speaker, it is great to see the member for Yukon after serving with him for some time on the House procedures committee.

The member for Yukon is actually, in my opinion, very fortunate, because the north is possibly the only specific region that has received any attention from the government as far as airlines are concerned. However, he raises an excellent point on interline agreements. I have had many conversations with carriers that are interested in interline agreements. My leader, the leader of the official opposition, was on a call with me, and I will have members know that he also supports interline agreements.

I think this is a wonderful idea brought forward by the member for Yukon, one we have also been asking for and one we also support.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is one thing I want to pivot to, a subject we have not touched on.

We know that *CBC Marketplace* has just outlined that over nine million Canadians right now have low credit ratings and are going to alternative lenders, who are charging outrageous rates of interest, between 30% and 50%. People are caught in that trap. Someone identified it as being in a hamster wheel. It is absolutely outrageous, since the Bank of Canada floor right now is less than 1%.

*Government Orders*

Does my colleague agree that there needs to be a better process and that the federal government needs to intervene and cap these rates? Right now it is on the backs of the provinces. We know more and more people are going to be falling into this trap, especially with COVID, job losses, and people losing their businesses and struggling to make ends meet and pay their bills. They are looking for help, but they do not qualify for financing.

Does my colleague agree that the federal government needs to step in? I am sure that in every riding across this country, we can find these alternative lenders preying on everyday Canadians who are in trouble.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Speaker, I really believe that at the root of all this is the economy and that it is necessity that has brought Canadians to these positions my colleague speaks of. It is the economy. It is the loss of good-paying jobs.

Now we have added billions of dollars to the debt. We are at \$1.1 trillion, with a \$400-billion deficit projected for this year, and looking forward, we see no way out of it, as I have talked about for the last 12 minutes.

I definitely share the concerns the good member raises, but more importantly, why were Canadians brought to this place where they have to consider these conditions for loans, and what we are all going to do to get out of it?

• (1525)

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have seen the government's stumbling with the lack of testing in airports when it said it was testing and really missing the boat in treating the COVID crisis the way it should have been.

Looking in a positive way, as I know the hon. member understands, what do Canadians need to look forward to? I see there is a hopeful future for us, but there really is a change necessary for that to happen.

What does the member see as the big change that needs to occur for us to have hope once again in Canada?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague shares the same sunny disposition as I do, and we should be positive, because there is so much opportunity for us as Canadians, families and workers coming out of this pandemic.

I believe my colleague is right when he says a change is needed. Canadians have to ask themselves who will best lead this nation forward for the best economy possible and the most jobs possible. My answer is that it is my party, the official opposition, the Conservative Party of Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has been focusing on the importance of the economic recovery for quite some time. We must look to the future. We must think beyond the next election.

There are many federal mechanisms to get Canada back on its feet. In Quebec, the recovery will centre on local initiatives, the re-

gional economy and the development of our nation, its towns and its villages.

Green, responsible innovation must be at the heart of our efforts. To be effective, these innovations must flow from current and future programs that are flexible and tailored to the situation of the regions and municipalities. The Bloc Québécois believes that each nation must take responsibility for itself and use appropriate mechanisms that fit its situation to meet the challenges to come. For our economies to recover, we need more than low-interest loans. We need more vision. Here is a wish list of what the government must do to restart our economies.

First of all, the government needs to look after Quebec's interests. Infrastructure offers a way to stimulate the economy and jump-start development projects in our towns and villages. Quebec has more than 1,800 towns and villages spread out over the 18th largest territory in the world. Nearly 80% of Quebec's towns and villages have fewer than 3,000 inhabitants. Infrastructure can connect our territories, be it on the ground, in the sky or in the digital realm. This will take long-term investments from the government.

Towns and villages know their own needs the best. That is why federal infrastructure funding, to the tune of \$100 billion over 10 years, must be transferred to Quebec and to municipalities, which are in the best position to manage that money.

In the same vein, the government needs to pick up the pace on getting the regions connected to the Internet. This is a huge need in Quebec. It is hard to imagine these days that there are still people who are isolated and living without Internet access. I am thinking of business owners, farmers who have limited access to technology and innovation, and the many other sectors that will lead the recovery, such as the tourism, culture, social development and knowledge-based sectors.

Quebec is ready to get all Quebecers connected in the short term. I want to remind members that Internet access is an essential need that gives access to technology so that entrepreneurs can innovate, as they do so well when given the means. One way of accomplishing that is to force telecommunications companies to provide service to all of Quebec.

Even more surprising is that in addition to not being connected to the Internet, many first nations communities still do not have clean drinking water or even running water in their homes. Can the first nations get the infrastructure they need for their development? They need clean drinking water and housing. The situation is heart-breaking.

Many villages have been built all over Quebec. Quebec's tourist destinations are known for their hospitality, their food scene, their local products and their cultural vitality, as demonstrated by the emergence of many festivals. These are places that have a wonderful quality of life. They are known for the quality of their festivals, their sports and adventure infrastructure, or simply for their scenic beauty.

### *Government Orders*

We want to preserve and enhance these economies for our future common good. We need to foster our spirit of pride and acknowledge our heritage. We need to protect our lakes and forests.

Individual and collective entrepreneurship drives development in our regions. To prevent the decline of the regions, we must maximize secondary and tertiary processing initiatives because they create wealth and value added.

Let us invest in Quebec's innovative spirit and the next generation. Let us get young people involved so they can put their creativity to good use. For the development of our regions in eastern Quebec and for our marine economy, all the way to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, we must repair the ports and other infrastructure. They provide income for many middle-class families. The Davie shipyard, which is recognized for its expertise in America, is a fine example.

We must implement national aerospace strategies for the development of greater Montreal, one of the most important innovation hubs in North America. This development also requires that we support innovation at the Port of Montreal, one of the largest in the world. We must invest in shipping infrastructure and supply chains to have the most effective, sustainable and greenest flow of goods possible.

We must also fund research on how to make heavy-duty vehicles more environmentally friendly and even run on electric power. We must also modernize digital data-sharing platforms.

● (1535)

Generally speaking, it is important to support those of our industries and businesses that embrace the circular economy and to evaluate a product's environmental impact throughout its life cycle, from the extraction of raw materials through manufacturing, distribution, use, repair and maintenance. We need to make our industries greener and more efficient. To achieve that, we need to fund low-carbon energy systems.

Quebec has 760,000 square kilometres of forest. That is almost half its territory. We have no shortage of forest resources. Quebec needs to leverage its forestry innovations to develop the regions. Forestry companies are among the most innovative companies in the world. Quebec's forestry industry is reinventing itself, and it is doing so with very little investment from Canada.

We have to produce innovative, high-quality forestry products. Forest fibre, such as low-carbon forest residue, can be used to make thousands of different, innovative products. We have to develop markets for these innovative forestry products, and that means enhancing the forest innovation program to adequately fund things like forest biomass supply chains and bioenergy research and development.

There is also aluminum. Quebec is the largest and most environmentally friendly producer of aluminum in the world. The transformation of aluminum into carbon neutral aluminum needs to be financed.

To revitalize our villages, we have to revive agriculture by promoting organic farming and greenhouse cultivation and using green energy. Local products need to be promoted and showcased through

tasting events. This will encourage people to buy local, quality, fresh and organic products.

Seafood products also have to be supported by modernizing processing plants and subsidizing research into innovative secondary and tertiary processing products. Quebec's extensive expertise in innovation must be preserved and continually developed.

That is why investments are needed in R and D and in Quebec's research centres, particularly in the regions, in colleges and in universities so as to foster the acquisition and adaptation of green technologies for the benefit of Quebec's SMEs.

To kick-start the economy, Canada is proposing a plan worth between \$70 billion and \$100 billion over three years. It is not yet clear where the government is headed; it all seems uncertain. I have proposed several possible solutions, and I have an excellent idea for the government.

That would take regional funds administered by and for the regions of Quebec, as well as regional councils, in collaboration with Quebec, citizens, researchers, entrepreneurs from the private sector and the social economy, agencies and institutions. For example, the CFDCs would be able to act through a regional council of businesses and agencies to contribute to setting up new innovative projects.

We need an actual local innovation support program with local people who could put their talents to use to come up with solutions to revitalize our economies and our ecosystems. Through their creative strength and innovation, the communities themselves are in the best position to target the appropriate innovation zones for their area and the new potential markets. We will rely on their talents and strengths.

Also, it is important that the innovation respond effectively not only to market challenges, but also to the challenges faced by the locals, their community and their region. People in the regions are losing out in this pandemic. They need a win in the recovery.

With regional funds, the regions will become more dynamic. The participation of civil society will increase the sense of belonging and pride and stimulate creativity and collaboration. Regional funds will increase the innovation capacity and appeal of our towns, villages and regions. With regional funds, the innovations created in the regions will have an impact on the major issues of this century.

[English]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have three quick questions.

First, the member mentioned reducing carbon in mining. Would he support the idea of getting off-grid mines to use less carbon and get off of diesel?

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Second, I was delighted to hear the member mention nature and clean areas. Would he also help celebrate President Biden's efforts to protect the Yukon-Alaska Porcupine Caribou herd?

Finally, does the member agree with Canada's recent record investments in nature and in protected areas of land and water?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, I would like begin by thanking the hon. member for his sensitivity on a number of issues, including the issue of reducing carbon in mining.

My colleague talked about diesel. I have heard that in Malartic, in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, trucks consume about 100,000 litres of diesel every day. This is obviously a site that has become huge, even bigger than the city. Solutions must be found, and the electrification of transportation is one of them. The government will have to take this path, because electricity is very strong. It is a powerful driver.

An industry like the mining industry could promote charging when its trucks are on short-haul trips. There are opportunities here.

I liked that my Liberal colleague talked to us about nature, clean areas and especially the Joe Biden effect. I am indeed satisfied with the response of Joe Biden, who opposed Keystone XL. I will not have time to say more about this third point.

[*English*]

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, in addition to the hon. member's very distinguished tie, his speaking at length about municipalities is near and dear to my heart. As a former city councillor, multiple times I heard the federal government make big announcements about supports to municipalities, but they would often come in a one-third, one-third, one-third funding agreement.

Would the hon. member agree that we ought to have a program in place, as he has identified, that would provide predictable, direct funding to municipalities so that it is not either held up by the province or shortchanged at the city level?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, the first thing I want to say to my colleague is that I could have spent 10 minutes just talking about how business owners are sick of only having access to loans. They need subsidies and cash. If they want to be part of the recovery, they will need cash flow, because they are stretched very thin right now.

We are all familiar with the study from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that shows that many businesses are on the brink of bankruptcy. We need to get away from loan obligations and instead focus on subsidies.

As for the municipalities, all I can say is that this is a provincial jurisdiction. Ottawa has a responsibility to transfer this money to Quebec so that Quebec and its municipalities can look after themselves.

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, does my colleague agree with me that the federal government has an important role to play

in Canada's economic recovery, including in Quebec, through economic development programs such as the CFDCs, which he mentioned, but also through the connecting Canadians and Canada summer jobs programs?

Does he agree with me that the federal government has an extremely important role to play, even in Quebec?

• (1540)

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, I salute my colleague, who I saw in my riding barely two years ago, when he was participating in an activity of the Abitibi-Témiscamingue conference of prefects.

Indeed, the federal government has a role to play because we pay half of our taxes to Ottawa. In my view, the share Quebec receives is totally insufficient. It is the Government of Quebec that is incurring expenditures related to the current pandemic. We are talking about a 35% increase in health transfers because health spending is carried out by Quebec.

The federal government's responsibility to help the provinces in the context of the pandemic would have been to simply close the borders. It is a responsibility that it has not taken and is still slow to take. The provinces are waiting for that to happen. Yesterday, Ontario decided to take its own initiative because it was tired of waiting for Ottawa to act.

I am not even talking about vaccines or other issues that are undermining our economy. The federal government must meet its responsibilities if it wants to ensure the development of the regions.

[*English*]

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I rise virtually to debate Bill C-14, an act seeking to legislate elements of the Liberal government's long-awaited fiscal update, which was announced last fall.

I would like to mention that it is my granddaughter Avery Chapman's first birthday today, and I care very much about the Canada she is inheriting, as she goes from walking to running to embracing her future.

As proud Canadians, let us first consider where we are and how we got here. For the past five years, the Liberal government has opened Canada's pocketbook, running up our national debt to historic levels. Despite revenues being at an all-time high because of the strong fiscal foundation left by the previous Conservative government, year after year the Liberals ran deficit after deficit. There were deficits of \$19 billion in 2016, another \$19 billion in 2017, \$14 billion in 2018 and \$26 billion in 2019.

Liberal campaign promises in 2015 of a balanced budget and a \$1-billion surplus have been dropped entirely from the Trudeau Liberals' vocabulary. The Liberals spent so freely—

*Government Orders*

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I remind the hon. member to please not refer to the names of current members of Parliament.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, I apologize.

The Liberals spent so freely before the pandemic that instead of being prepared for the possibility of an economic downturn, and economies are always cyclical, the cupboards were bare long before the first case of COVID-19 was known.

The pandemic has demanded more spending, but it should also demand transparency and explanations as spending priorities are rolled out. Workable solutions that benefit the most needy and support the survival of Canadian small businesses, new and established, should be at the top of the list.

The Liberal government racked up a \$381-billion deficit in 2020. This deficit equalled 17% of our GDP, which made for a higher debt-to-GDP ratio than we realized in World War I, the Great Depression or the great recession.

With the addition of this \$381-billion deficit to our balance sheet, our national debt recently surpassed a tragic milestone, a debt of \$1 trillion, which is a first for Canada. That is \$1,000 billion for those counting. This all from the party whose leader famously stated, “The budget will balance itself.”

While these numbers may seem too big to comprehend, let me speak plainly. This is money that we, the taxpayers of Canada, collectively owe. It is debt that accrues interest each and every day. It is money that we have an obligation to repay, that our children will be on the hook for, and in all likelihood, that our children’s children, such as one-year-old Avery, will be paying off decades from now. Is this to be our legacy? We can and must do better.

What does all this debt really mean for Canadians? It is not just a number on a balance sheet somewhere. It means that Canadians could face higher taxes to pay down the debt and its interest, taxes that could further stifle the economy. It means the social supports and programs that many Canadians rely on could falter. It means that we could face another economic crisis with decreases in the value of homes, a declining stock market, loss of people’s savings, reduced pension values and the rise in unemployment lasting far longer than was necessary.

I hope members on both sides of the aisle recognize the human toll that another financial crisis would have on mental health, substance abuse, depression, domestic violence and homelessness. These are tragedies that are unfolding around us, which have already increased at alarming rates this past year. They are issues that my constituents and I feel deeply about, and that we are already studying at the justice committee, of which I am a member.

That takes me to where we are. Finally, at the end of 2020, after months of calls from our side of the House for a comprehensive budget to show Canadians where their tax dollars, and all this debt-financed spending, is being spent, the Liberals gave Canadians a “budget lite” and a “budget really lite”, which they called their fiscal update. That fiscal update included a proposed \$25 billion in new spending measures and a \$100-billion stimulus plan, but again,

there were few details about how the money would be spent, or how and when it would be paid for.

The day after it was presented in the House of Commons, the deputy minister of finance, the highest-ranking bureaucrat in the government’s finance ministry, abruptly announced his resignation. We can add this to the growing list of high-profile resignations under the government, which now includes the following: Julie Payette, the former Governor General; Bill Morneau, the former minister of finance; Jane Philpott, the former president of the Treasury Board; the member for Vancouver Granville, who served as the minister of justice and attorney general; Michael Wernick, the former Clerk of the Privy Council; Gerald Butts, the former principal secretary to the Prime Minister; and the member for Mississauga—Malton, who served as the minister of innovation, science and industry.

To replace the deputy minister of finance, the Liberals appointed Michael Sabia, an architect behind the GST, which was introduced in the 1990s. That tax was later lowered by the Harper-led government, thanks to sound financial management. Does Mr. Sabia’s appointment signal to Canadians that the Liberals plan to raise taxes? Will the government really start taxing the equity in Canadian home ownership, as is being widely reported? Only time will tell.

One thing I know for certain, as an MP and as the former minister of national revenue, is that the lack of a federal budget is simply unacceptable. The budget is not just a planning tool for the government. It is the means by which the government announces in detail to Canadians from coast to coast to coast what it plans to do with billions of hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

● (1545)

According to the government’s own website:

The Budget is a blueprint for how the Government wants to set the annual economic agenda for Canada. And it’s the job of the Department of Finance to prepare it.

The last federal budget was presented on March 19, 2019. That was 686 days ago. So much for an annual budget. So much for promised transparency.

As for some of the specifics Canadians were given, the most troubling part of the bill before us is the amendment it proposes to the Borrowing Authority Act. This amendment seeks to increase the government’s maximum borrowing authority from \$1.1 trillion to \$1.8 trillion, a new maximum limit on the nation’s credit card. This sets another record, as it is the biggest increase in borrowing authority ever sought in our nation’s history. I ask members to let that sink in for a moment. It is more than in World War II or past global recessions.



At this point, why should Canadians trust the government? We have all seen the headlines, which include: “CRA admits ‘unclear’ CERB communications led to mistaken applications”; “CERB repayment frustration continues”; “More than \$636M in CERB benefits paid to 300,000 teens aged 15 to 17, documents show”; “Troubled pandemic rent subsidy program expires today – and there’s no replacement ready”; “Exclusive golf course books \$1 million surplus, aided by federal COVID-19 relief”; and “\$150 million more to SNC-Lavalin.” Really? The SNC-Lavalin that is mired in scandal and ethical challenges?

Conservatives want to help Canadians make ends meet. They recognize that the virus has affected millions of Canadians in a variety of ways, my family included. I know far too many constituents who have been laid off in the hospitality sector, tourism industry and retail businesses. I have heard from countless South Surrey—White Rock business owners who are struggling to keep their doors open. Throughout the riding, our once-bustling restaurant and shopping scene, including many shops along our picturesque White Rock Pier, are enduring catastrophic drops in patronage and revenue, and that is just the tip of the iceberg.

Our airline industry, which employs many in my riding, is hemorrhaging. Of course I am in favour of the emergency response benefit, the wage subsidy, and the emergency business account, but we need to ensure these programs are rolled out correctly, and that funds are timely, spent effectively, and spent in Canada to help Canadians.

We need to ensure that through these billions of dollars in spending, no Canadian is left behind. So far, that is not what we have seen. There are many new businesses in my community whose investments were all made before the pandemic hit that are not eligible for current subsidy programs because they opened their doors after March 2020. Who is looking out for them?

Given the astronomical size of our country’s debt, we really cannot afford to get this recovery wrong. We need to spend, but to spend responsibly. We need transparency and we need a true, comprehensive budget. More than anything, we need to get Canadians back to work and a clear road map to recovery.

• (1550)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to remind people that most of the Harper years we were in deficits. Although Liberals have spent the most time in government in Canadian history, the Conservatives built up the biggest debt. In fact, coming into this pandemic, Liberals had the best debt servicing costs to the size of the economy than any time in the last 100 years, including during all the Conservative governments.

The member talks about cutting expenditures, but members of her party, including herself at the end of the speech, asked for more expenditures for business. Which of the major expenditures that people and businesses really needed, which she mentioned she supported and her party supported, and that have led to the debt, does she disagree with?

### *Government Orders*

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that the hon. member did not really listen to what I was saying, so I will repeat it. I said that I was in favour of helping Canadians, as my Conservative colleagues are. As he knows, we took a team Canada approach and supported many measures to help Canadians. What we do believe in is doing it responsibly and not giving flagrant amounts of money, huge amounts of money, to those who do not need it.

SNC-Lavalin's \$150 million this past year is a good example of that. I take issue with the member talking about the former Conservative government and deficits without talking about the circumstances of those deficits, which was to slowly build out of a global recession, and which that government did successfully, leaving a surplus.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very interesting speech.

However, she paints a rather gloomy picture of the situation, compared to my colleague, who presented some innovative solutions. Does she think that the Quebec model my colleague presented could be replicated in the rest of Canada?

[*English*]

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, actually, I am a great optimist. That is my personality. I really believe that Canada and Canadians will build their way out of our present situation through Canadian innovation and ingenuity, and through being responsible with spending and programs. We need to help, but we cannot do it without transparency. We certainly cannot do it without a proper budget and a proper plan. Right now, we do not see that from the Liberal government. I was commenting on the fact that the government had put before us its fiscal updates as opposed to budgets.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, a lot of Canadians are suffering right now. We have just seen the government bring in some very strict measures when it comes to people who have to travel abroad and come back, with figures as high as \$2,000 to be spent on hotels.

As health critic for the New Democrats, I am very much in favour of strong measures to protect public health. However, I have been contacted by some constituents, some who are working class and of limited means, who have to do essential travel, perhaps for a death in the family or something similar. They find the \$2,000 three-day bill to be quite high.

*Government Orders*

Would my hon. colleague share any thoughts or comments on whether there should be some form of relief for working class or low-income Canadians who might find the payment of a \$2,000 hotel bill to be excessive?

• (1555)

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, I know my colleague to be a very caring member of Parliament in high regard and of long standing.

This is where we should never have one-size-fits-all policies like this. We have to take into account specific circumstances. I agree that this seems like a huge bill for people who can ill afford it and who may have been put in that situation.

The government is not being consistent across our borders. In my own riding, we have the Peace Arch Park where people are being allowed to come from all across Canada and the United States to meet up with each other, because the Liberal government has not addressed the opening on the Washington state side.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-14 on the economic statement, which is extremely important during COVID-19. The bill seeks to implement certain provisions of the November 30, 2020, economic statement and other measures.

I basically want to talk about three things. First, I will share our party's position on the measures for seniors. Second, I will speak about certain measures that are still letting some businesses fall through the cracks, and third, I will say a few words about the problems that this pandemic has created for women and about my desire to support a more feminist economy.

For the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, the law already allows for the funding of the various health initiatives set out in the bill. That totals approximately \$900 million, including an investment of over \$500 million in long-term care. The safe restart agreement between Canada, Quebec and the provinces should absolutely be amended to include long-term care. In the economic statement, the government provided for an investment of up to \$1 billion to create an infection prevention and control fund to help Quebec and the provinces protect people living in long-term care facilities.

What exactly is being done about long-term care?

I will quote the November 30 economic statement again:

...the Government of Canada is committing up to \$1 billion for [an infection control fund] to help provinces and territories protect people in long-term care and support infection prevention and control. Funding will be contingent on a detailed spending plan, allocated on an equal per capita basis and conditional on provinces and territories demonstrating that investments have been made according to those spending plans.

Need I once again remind the House that Quebec and the provinces have extensive authority over health care pursuant to a number of provisions in the Constitution Act, 1867, including section 92.7, which gives Quebec and the provinces exclusive jurisdiction over the establishment, maintenance and management of hospitals.

Moreover, all provinces have exclusive jurisdiction over the direct delivery of most medical services. Clearly, therefore, Quebec and the provinces, not the federal government, have the experience and expertise to handle long-term care homes. Quebec and the provinces also pay for the vast majority of these services.

In 2014, the Canadian Institute for Health Information estimated that 73% of the costs related to long-term care facilities in Canada were funded by provincial, territorial and municipal systems and organizations in Quebec and the provinces, while 23% of the costs were borne by residents or through their private insurance.

Any funding from the federal government with conditions of any kind is unacceptable to the Bloc Qu b cois. The federal government has only one role to play in health care, and that is funding. It does have the means to do more.

Ottawa's revenues, at 4.1%, are increasing faster than those of the provinces, at 3.5%, while health care spending in Quebec and the provinces is increasing at an annual rate of 5%. Remember, the federal government's share of health care is shrinking significantly every year.

In 2019 Quebec, the provinces and territories funded 40% of health care spending, while the Canadian government absorbed only 22%, according to Conference Board of Canada data. At the current growth rate, the federal share of health care funding will drop below 20% by 2026. That is unacceptable.

If the federal government is truly concerned about seniors then it needs to accede to the reasonable request made by the united front formed by Quebec and the other provinces and backed by the National Assembly of Quebec. Starting this year, not after the crisis, the government needs to bring its annual contribution to health care funding in Quebec and the provinces to 35% on an ongoing basis. In fact, and this is significant, the F d ration des m decins sp cialistes du Qu bec, or the FMSQ, also supports this request by Mr. Legault.

As for the possibility of bringing in national standards in long-term care facilities, let us not forget that the Canadian Armed Forces' report following their time in Quebec's long-term care facilities was very clear: Despite there being many standards and rules on contamination prevention and control, or on wearing protective equipment, they were not enough to stop the virus.

The big question has more to do with the capacity to adhere to the existing standards and rules and enforcing them. The primary reason these rules were more difficult to follow is just as clear: the labour shortage. Let us properly fund our health care system. It is not just the Bloc Qu b cois and I calling for that, but major seniors' organizations such as the FADOQ.

The army's report says, and I quote, "According to our observations, the critical need for CHSLDs is an improved level of staff with medical training." The provinces and Quebec do not need federal standards for long-term care homes. They already have standards.

• (1600)

Quebec and the provinces need the means to properly care for seniors. The successive Liberal and Conservative federal governments need to stop withholding spending.

In addition, the federal government can and must ensure that we have an adequate supply of vaccines. Once seniors in long-term care homes and seniors residences are taken care of, seniors living alone need to get out of isolation. Even though part of the bill amends the Food and Drugs Act, the delays we have seen are increasing stress and frustration levels.

I remind members that since the beginning of the pandemic, seniors have been saying that the \$300 cheque that seniors receiving old age security got in July and the \$200 cheque sent to seniors receiving the guaranteed income supplement have been woefully inadequate. The government needs to permanently increase old age security benefits by \$110 a month, but this is not included in the economic measures.

Second, many people in the riding of Shefford work in the sectors most affected by the pandemic, those associated with tourism in general, such as hotels, restaurants and major cultural events. All these sectors are essential for the economic vitality of the riding. I am thinking of such well-known cultural institutions as the Granby international song festival, the Palace de Granby, the Maison de la culture de Waterloo, the Yvonne L. Bombardier Cultural Centre and the Maison de la culture de Racine, to name but a few.

We have a lot of questions about the terms of the highly affected sectors credit availability program, HASCAP. Why is it that almost two months after announcing this program, the Trudeau government is still unable to provide details on its terms?

Let us remember that, from the beginning of this pandemic, the Bloc Québécois has demonstrated how important it is to develop assistance programs tailored to each industry, since one-size-fits-all programs really do not work. On May 13, 2020, the Bloc Québécois was already unequivocally calling for targeted assistance for seasonal industries, particularly the tourism industry. Some of the programs that had already been rolled out, such as the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program, were poorly designed for these sectors and turned out to be a real disaster.

We then suggested that a real assistance program to cover fixed costs be implemented. In the spring, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development even came to tell members of the Haute-Yamaska chamber of commerce that those sorts of measures were coming. Several months later, it is clear from talking to tourism operators that the measures announced so far are insufficient. Many concerns remain, particularly for Quebec's sugar shacks, a key symbol of our heritage. They are still wondering whether they will be able to benefit from the Canada emergency wage subsidy.

### *Government Orders*

We must not forget that tourism is a vital industry for the regions of Quebec. More than 400,000 workers benefit from the tourism industry, which generates \$15 billion for Quebec's economy. Two-thirds of those businesses are located outside the metropolitan regions of Quebec City and Montreal and employ fewer than 20 workers, making them crucial to keeping our communities alive. Tourism is one of the industries that was hit hardest by the pandemic, and stakeholders are still waiting for the federal government to show some more empathy.

In closing, I want to point out the importance of making an economic she-covey a priority because the pandemic has hit women harder than men. Some programs, like the Canada emergency business account, have been harder for women to access. Groups such as Femmessor told the Standing Committee on the Status of Women about the importance of developing programs that are a better fit for female entrepreneurs. I heard that again earlier this week from a Bank of Montreal representative who wants more programs to do a better job of taking female entrepreneurs' reality into account. Family tax credits are not going to help women. They need programs that will help them leverage their economic power and escape poverty. Helping mothers is good, but enabling them to achieve their goals is even better.

The women who own the store Orange coco la vie en vrac, for example, work incredibly hard but do not seem to qualify for any of the programs.

In conclusion, we are in dire need of measures for seniors, for the cultural tourism industry, for restaurants and for women, all of which have been hit harder than most by the pandemic, along with measures for a greener, fairer economic recovery. Let us make that happen.

• (1605)

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to commend my colleague on her very good speech. We appreciate the determination, devotion and passion that fuel her commitment to the well-being of seniors.

The pandemic has exposed the effects of the chronic underfunding of health care. Let us not forget that the Conservatives reduced the escalator from 6% to 3%, which did not cover the cost of the health care systems.

The Premier of Quebec described a meeting with the Prime Minister of Canada and his provincial counterparts as a missed opportunity. The Prime Minister left immediately to announce that the government would increase health transfers in due course. However, we all know that now is the time to tell the provinces and Quebec how much leeway they have to get out of the pandemic.

What does my colleague think of this attitude, and why does she think the Prime Minister of Canada is turning a deaf ear?

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Montcalm for the question.

*Government Orders*

I do not know why. This has been going on for far too long already. That is why, in my speech, I talked about the power to withhold spending.

Since the days of Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien, successive Conservative and Liberal governments have made cuts to health. Now they are trying to teach us a lesson and imposing national standards on us.

I was listening to the Prime Minister's response at noon. He said he would wait until after the pandemic to invest more in health transfers. That is unacceptable. Our health system needs help now. It is on life support.

[*English*]

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to work with my hon. colleague from Quebec. We have been working on a number of issues from across the country.

This particular bill would raise the debt cap for Canada. Is she at all concerned about the new levels of debt that the government is taking us to, and does the Bloc Québécois have any plans to help repay that debt?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. I have been working with him recently on the issue of modern slavery and human trafficking, a subject that we will be revisiting shortly.

To answer his question, I would say that in the early days of the pandemic, the Bloc Québécois was the first to try to hold the Liberal government to account. How many times has my colleague from Joliette risen in the House to demand an economic update?

In order to know where we are going, sometimes we need to know where we stand.

I think the economic statement came late. We needed this update much sooner. Of course, we are concerned about the whole issue of transparency in funding and programs. The Liberals have a habit of not wanting to tell us everything and of making investments that reward their close friends, the emergency wage subsidy being a prime example.

When Liberal members tell me that political parties like the Liberal Party need help as much as businesses in Shefford, I find it deeply insulting.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, we know that pre-pandemic, one in five Canadians was not going to see the dentist regularly, and 6.5 million Canadians had no dental coverage at all. The expectation is that two million more Canadians will lose their benefits because of COVID-19 and the economic impact of it. We spend about \$246 billion a year on health care. The NDP plan to cover all families that have incomes of \$90,000 or less and ensure they get dental coverage would cost about \$1.5 billion, versus the \$246 billion we spend on health care.

Does my colleague agree and support that universal health care should cover everything from head to toe, including dental cover-

age, and does she support the proposal that was tabled today by my colleague from St. John's East?

● (1610)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Madam Speaker, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that health care is the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. It is up to them to make their own decisions.

[*English*]

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, \$1.1 trillion is a lot of money. That is what the national debt will be at the end of this fiscal year in accordance with this fall economic statement that we are debating today. It becomes very intimidating when we measure that national debt against gross domestic product, the GDP, in analysis of how well the economy can manage the debt. Just a few years ago it stood at 30%, but by the end of this fiscal year, March 31, 2021, in accordance with this fall economic plan it will stand at 55%, uncomfortably close to its 67% level during Canada's debt crisis in the mid-1990s.

We have heard many times from the Liberal side of the House that we can afford it, we have the fiscal room and we have the muscle power to manage this debt. That is true because, when we managed to get that 1995 debt crisis under control, we had a series of good, fiscally responsible governments that managed the economy, including through the Harper years.

Today, the big debt, \$1.1 trillion, is going to be affordable only because interest rates are as low as they are. The federal government can borrow money at less than 1%. Money is almost free. Why would the Liberals not borrow as much as they can? However, any economist will tell us that interest rates will not stay low forever. Central banks will respond to inflationary pressures. It has happened throughout human history and that is not going to change.

In a debate in the House a couple of months ago, the member for Carleton, who is the Conservative Party's shadow minister for finance, asked what a 1% hike in interest rates would cost the Canadian treasury. It was a rhetorical question because obviously the math is very simple. One trillion dollars is a one followed by 12 zeroes. If we multiply it by 1%, it is now a one with 10 zeroes, which is \$10 billion. That is \$10 billion every year if interest rates go up only 1%. That is \$10 billion that is not available for the federal government to spend on other important programs, including health transfers and giving Canadians the help that they need. That money is now going to be taken away from Canadians who need help and who have come to rely on these programs. That money is now going to go to international bankers and pension funds and make them richer.

*Government Orders*

I know that the middle of a worldwide pandemic is not the time to talk about cutting costs. The Conservative Party recognizes that the federal government has a big role to play in a time of crisis: to keep liquidity in the marketplace and confidence in the minds of the public, and to keep the economy going so that people can keep on working, earning paycheques, taking care of their kids, paying for university, and paying the mortgage or rent. We recognize that this is important. The Conservative Party has stood right along with the Liberal government to support these programs that Canadians need so badly to get through this economic crisis.

Where do we go from here? We are happily seeing a light at the end of the COVID tunnel. We are not there yet, but we are optimistic that there is a post-COVID world that we need to plan for. Canadians want to get back to work and they want to see their government get its fiscal house back in order. We need to see a plan that will move us away from a credit-card economy to a paycheque economy. The problem with the current Liberal government is that it does not have a good record of managing the economy.

Many people remember that leading up to the 2015 election the Liberal Party campaigned on a promise of a few small to medium-sized deficits, somewhere around \$10 billion to \$15 billion per year for three years, but that in the fourth year of the Liberals' mandate they were going to balance the budget. They did not even come close to that. The deficit was multiple times higher than what the Liberals had promised, and by the 2019 election campaign they had given up all pretense of ever wanting to manage to balance the budget. Therefore, Canadians are rightly concerned about the current government's record of poor fiscal management and its ability to manage a post-COVID relaunch of our economy.

• (1615)

There is another aspect of the government's response to the COVID-19 crisis I want to highlight that has frustrated many Canadians. Even though our COVID relief spending is the highest among all our trading partners on a per capita basis, we also have the highest unemployment rate. How could that be? We are spending almost \$400 billion more this year than we are taking in, in government revenues, yet millions of Canadians are being left behind.

I have a couple of examples from my riding. I was talking to a husband and wife who are family business operators. They run a dance studio. Business was pretty good until the provincial public health officer shut them down. They were happy the federal government came out with an emergency rent subsidy program, and it looked like they would qualify. Certainly, if one looked at their bank account and balance sheet, they qualified. However, when they filled out the application, they realized because of their corporate structure, and because they could not answer that they were operating at arm's length, they were disqualified. Like tens of thousands of family-owned businesses across the country, they have a dual corporate model, where one company owns the land and the building and the other owns the company that operates within the building. It is required by many bankers to mitigate risk and manage commercial operations. I can hardly imagine the government had intended for that to happen.

The operators of a hotel chain here in British Columbia are another example. They qualified for the rent subsidy, but had to share the subsidy across a whole group of properties. They complained to me, saying that if each of them were an individually owned hotel property they each would have individually qualified. Because they had to share the rent subsidy across the whole family, the rent subsidy became almost meaningless. They said to me that it looked like the Liberal government was taking the "M" out of SME, small and medium-sized enterprises. Medium-sized enterprises like theirs do not qualify.

As my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo said, the government is a day late and a dollar short, and a lot of Canadians are suffering on account of that.

Bill C-14 has seven parts. My party is going to support most of it, but we have trouble with part 7, which is about future spending. We wonder why the federal government feels it needs to have a total debt ceiling of \$1.8 trillion, when all it really needs is \$1.1 trillion to get through this fiscal year. Does it not trust Parliament to do the right thing at the right time? The government should come back when it needs more money and we will respond, as we have in the past and throughout this crisis. We will look at the legislation and question it and the proposed programs, because we are the opposition and that is what we do.

I submit that the emergency programs Canadians are now relying on are very much better because of the work we and other opposition parties have done. Canadians want transparency. They want to know bills are being debated in Parliament and that the government does not have unfettered power to do as it wishes. When it needs more money, it should come back and ask for it, and prove to us that its spending plans will actually help the Canadians who need it most.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am not sure what world the member is living in when he says this government has a poor record of managing the economy. Before the pandemic, we had the lowest unemployment rate since we started recording it in the sixties. We had one of the fastest-growing economies in the G7.

Yes, it is true our unemployment rate is two points higher than the U.S. and the U.K., for example, but their death rates per population are three times higher than in Canada, because this government took the position that we needed to invest in and protect Canadians. It is one thing to say the economy is not in a good position, but it does not mean it is right because he is saying it.

*Government Orders*

The reality is we had one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. We had the lowest unemployment rate in over 40 or 50 years, and we are investing in Canadians now so we can get back to that on the other side of this.

• (1620)

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Madam Speaker, I would remind Canadians that the Liberals ran an election platform in 2015 of balancing the budget in year four, which would be 2019. By the time we got to the end of that mandate, they were nowhere near that. They had given up any pretense at all of ever aspiring to balance the budget. Yes, the economy was strong during their first four years. That is the heritage of the good fiscal management leading up to their being elected in 2015.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I asked a question earlier of a Conservative colleague of the member who is speaking right now. I talked about the nine million Canadians who have had to go to predatory alternative lenders who are charging between 30% and 50% annually in interest, despite the Bank of Canada's base rate of less than 1%. The response from the member was that we needed to create better paying jobs. I cannot agree more that we need to make sure there are more jobs with a better living wage for Canadians and that we are tackling inequality.

Do the Conservatives believe that we should be putting in federal legislation to safeguard and protect vulnerable Canadians from these predatory lenders? I would actually call them vultures. Legislation would ensure they are protected and are not paying these abhorrent rates that are completely out of control. Anyone who is in that cycle, which I will refer to as being on a hamster wheel, knows exactly how difficult it is to jump off. It does not matter how good the job is; the government needs to intervene. I hope my colleague will support the call for the federal government to implement legislation and cap these predatory lending rates.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Madam Speaker, I am happy to hear he agrees with the answer my colleague from South Surrey—White Rock gave. I listened to the answer and thought it was very good. We want to get Canadians back to work. We want to get away from a credit card economy and move to a paycheque economy. I am sure all Canadians agree with that. People should not have to go into debt just to stay alive and keep their families operating.

That said, I am sympathetic to anybody who ends up in a debt cycle and I would be interested in carrying on that conversation with my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, would my colleague do the honourable thing and consider that, with regard to the disastrous impact of the pandemic being linked to the fact that health care has been underfunded for years, his government's cuts from 6% to 3% when it was in power were inappropriate?

The Prime Minister of Canada says that he will deal with health transfers after the pandemic. Does my colleague believe that that is a responsible attitude?

[*English*]

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Madam Speaker, health care is obviously a very important aspect of people's lives, and certainly during a pandemic. I think there is a misconception that the Conservative Party would cut health spending. It would not. We recognize how important it is and we will be there to help Canadians when they need it.

• (1625)

**Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is great to have this opportunity to participate in the debate today. I have listened intently to previous speakers. It is very interesting to hear the Liberals' questions and the different types of points they are trying to make in the debate.

We heard the member for Yukon a little while ago talking about the Harper record going back to the economic meltdown in 2008 and criticizing the Harper government's spending, which was many times less than what we are talking about right now. I was elected in 2006. The hon. member was around during that time as well. He might recall that during that time we could not spend enough to make Liberal members of Parliament happy. Certainly, one of the absolutely critical things we did was to lay out a road map during a very difficult time to get back to balanced budgets. We had a surplus leading up to that point, very different circumstances from what we find ourselves in at this point, and we laid out a seven-year plan to get back to budget balance. I had the opportunity to serve on the cabinet subcommittee that evaluated plans from departments and ministers to get back to balance, and I am pleased to say that by 2015 we maintained that schedule and got back to balance. There are no conversations right now with the current government on the long-term impact of the spending we are now undertaking.

There is a lot of talk about deficits and previous governments' deficits. When we take a look at the deficit cycle of governments from 1968 until today, it is easy to trace back exactly why we wound up having the fiscal situation and debt we have right now. We can go back to 1968 when we had almost no debt in this country. We had the Pierre Trudeau government at that time, which made a very deliberate decision to run deficits in 14 out of 15 years.

We ran those deficits in 14 out of 15 years, and then by 1984 the country was in crisis. Rates were through the roof. Interest rates were in the high teens and 20s. In the previous years the Liberals, like the current government, had run an absolutely disastrous energy plan, which was devastating to the people of my constituency in Alberta. Yes, in the Mulroney years the deficits were even higher, but if we look at those Mulroney years, those deficits were actually almost entirely made up of interest on Trudeau's debt. It is very important to understand that. Because interest rates were so high, the Mulroney deficits were almost entirely the interest on Trudeau's debt.

Then we fast-forward to the late nineties and another Liberal government, the Chrétien-Martin government. That generation of Canadians had to pay for the debt that was accumulated back in the seventies and early eighties under the Trudeau government. It was a generation later, and we can see there is a parallel here and a predictor of the future. The impact then was that the Trudeau-Martin Liberal government cut \$35 billion from health care, social services and education transfers through the Canada health transfer and the Canada social transfer. There were devastating cuts down the road because of the spending that happened in the late sixties, the seventies and the eighties.

When we listened to question period today, it does not seem to matter what question is asked. All three main opposition parties can ask very legitimate questions about vaccines, testing or spending programs, and they are almost always answered with derision and condescension by the Prime Minister and other ministers, but particularly by the Prime Minister. Almost every question is met with an accusation of our playing political games, and again, it does not matter which party asks. Then we get this sort of throwaway line, without the ministers ever really answering the question about when vaccines might be coming, or answering the legitimate question today about how many Canadians would need to be vaccinated, and what the evidence shows, before we can start to come out of the lockdowns. These are things that my constituents desperately want to know.

• (1630)

We hear this throwaway line that the government has Canadians' backs. What does that actually mean? First of all, it is a line that gets used for almost every question without the person actually giving a response to the question. It is very calming. It is presented in a very calm fashion by someone who has clearly been trained in delivering lines, but it does not say anything.

If we look closely at that, when they say the government has Canadians' backs, it is not really the government that has Canadians' backs, it is not the Prime Minister who has Canadians' backs, but our kids and our grandkids who ultimately have Canadians' backs right now, because our kids and grandkids are going to be paying for the deficits we are running right now. It does not mean we should not be doing it. Absolutely, I think members from all sides, from all parties, believe that we should be spending and running a pretty significant deficit right now.

However, as we are putting forward these plans for spending, there needs to be some hope, some vision for the future, and a consideration, an acknowledgement at least, that the spending we are undertaking right now is a trade-off. There is going to be a trade-off from that spending down the road. In other words, future generations of Canadians are going to forgo a certain level of their quality of life because this money will have to be paid back, or money will have to be spent to pay for the interest charges on the debt we are incurring right now. That money will not be able to be spent on other things.

The previous speaker eloquently brought up the member for Carleton's question about interest rates, which has been asked a lot. I remember the night we had a debate with the finance minister and the opportunity to ask him those questions. There was a complete

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refusal to acknowledge that interest rates can go up at some point in the future and that there might be a cost to that.

If we take a look at the interest rates in the situation we saw in the 1970s, there is a clear lesson in this. Back in August 1971, the interest rate in Canada, the overnight rate, was 5%. By August 1976, the interest rate was 9.25%. That was very high, obviously. However, it was nothing, because by August 1981 the interest rate had risen to an astonishing 20.78%.

The lesson for us here is that in August 1971 the Trudeau government would never have envisioned an interest rate of 20.78% as it was just starting on the road of ramping up its deficits. In 1976, things had started to get out of control; things had changed in the energy market and there were all sorts of factors that were leading to that interest rate going up, but the government had kind of lost control a little.

By 1981, we were in a spiral. At the same time, there was a national energy program that was devastating on the revenue side. I will not have enough time to get into that. Maybe someone could ask me a question about it and the parallel it has with our policy today. I would love to have that opportunity.

By 1981, we had a 20.78% interest rate, and ever since that time, governments have run deficits or we have had significant debt in this country, and we have been making interest payments on the debt that was run up during that time and forgone the opportunity to pay for things that we could have used those revenues for.

I have lots of other things I could say. I could talk about the government's absolute inability to generate innovation or take advantage of the substantial innovative capacity here in Canada around testing and the development of rapid testing, the development and procurement of vaccines, and the possibility that spending on those things early on might have resulted in a decreased need to spend the \$30 billion a month we are spending on support programs right now.

I will wrap up here and look forward to taking questions from my colleagues.

• (1635)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, talk about cherry-picking the data. The member talked about the debt that Liberals ran during the last three or four decades; for the nearly two decades that Brian Mulroney and Stephen Harper were in this place, they ran only two surpluses in those nearly two decades. I got a real kick out of how the member justified that by saying that they had to make the interest payments of the previous governments. No, they did not have to. As a matter of fact, Stephen Harper decided that he was not going to run a deficit, and what happened in his minority Parliament? He almost got taken down by the balance of the members of this House. Then he decided that maybe he needed to play ball. That is actually what happened.

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If the member is so concerned about the supports that have been given to Canadians over the last 10 months and the debt that these supports created, why did he vote in favour of them, quite often through unanimous consent motions? All he had to do was stand up and say no, he would not give unanimous consent, but he never did that. He voted in favour of them. Why?

**Hon. Mike Lake:** Madam Speaker, I love how the member talked about cherry-picking data and then cherry-picked his own data. He criticized the Harper government for running deficits and then, in the same sentence, accused the Harper government of being reluctant to run deficits.

It is almost as though he has talked to some of his colleagues who were around at the time and may have reminded him that, yes, it did go against the DNA of the Harper government to run deficits. We did it anyway, because it was the right thing to do at that time and, as I mentioned earlier, we could not spend fast enough to satisfy Liberal members of Parliament at that time. In fact, they threatened to band together with the separatist Bloc and the NDP to bring down the government because the deficits just could not possibly be high enough for them.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague to explain the Conservatives' thinking on the unanimous demands with respect to health transfers.

His party says that there will be predictable, stable transfers. When the Conservatives cut health transfers from 6% to 3%, they were predictable and stable, but we have seen the disaster that chronic underfunding of health care has caused. What does “stable” and “predictable” mean to the Conservatives?

Does this meet the unanimous demands of Quebec and the provinces, yes or no?

[*English*]

**Hon. Mike Lake:** Madam Speaker, again, I was in government for almost a decade, and having actually been there, I can say that the Conservative record is stable over the entire time. There were stable increases of 6% every year through the entire time Conservatives were in government. If the member wants to look at stable funding for health care, let us avoid the rhetoric, the talking points and the revisionist history. The fact of the matter is that under Stephen Harper's government at that time, we increased health transfers by 6% a year.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, we have heard the new president, President Biden, talk about a buy America strategy. We have heard that in the U.K. they have a COVID recovery strategy that implements the United Nations sustainable development goals of 2030 when it comes to procurement. In fact, every dollar they spend has a strategic social, economic and workforce impact that is analyzed as to how it will play out.

The member spoke a lot about vaccines. I really appreciate his commentary on the lack of capacity and the importance of building capacity here in Canada, but we have also seen what happened to distilleries in Canada when the government flooded the Canadian market with foreign sanitizers. Does he agree that part of our COVID recovery should be a strong domestic procurement strategy

that would ensure that we analyze social, environmental and workforce impacts and do it quickly?

• (1640)

**Hon. Mike Lake:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member talks about supporting Canadian business. Let me give an example that hits really close to home for me.

The fact of the matter is that right now in Atlantic Canada, we are importing 600,000 barrels of oil every single day. The third-, second- and fourth-source countries for that oil are Algeria, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia. That oil is not subject to the same strict regulatory regime as oil from—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I must interrupt.

[*Translation*]

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 Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Housing; the hon. member for Kenora, Indigenous Affairs.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Repentigny.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the government's economic statement in November gave us all a lot to think about.

We have heard about many measures in today's speeches on Bill C-14 and certain provisions from the economic statement. My colleagues have given us a thorough rundown, and I thank them for that.

Spending is up, and this is necessary, given how the pandemic is ravaging our sectors. Our caucus is also pleased to see that some of our party's suggested measures were adopted. We are working together. Naturally, there is a cost to helping workers, small businesses and families in Quebec. We expect that.

However, with the government's deficit now estimated at over \$381 billion, it makes no sense that it refuses to heed another of the Bloc Québécois's requests, namely to create a special committee to study all COVID-19 spending. All of this spending needs to be studied. No amount is too small.



Nobody can blame Bloc Québécois MPs for speaking up when hundreds of millions of dollars are being, or were intended to be, squandered all over the place, some of it through WE Charity, or when we hear about a shady contract awarded to a former Liberal MP, or when the Parliamentary Budget Officer repeatedly insists that there is a transparency and accountability issue with federal spending. I should also mention that the government promised to create such a committee. Those of us on this side of the House are not surprised to find that this promise will not be kept, and who could blame us? We are getting used to it.

Quebeckers and Canadians need to be sure that federal authorities are also contributing to our collective effort. Creating this committee is crucial to shedding light on the structure of support programs and on the nature and extent of planned spending. Most importantly, it is crucial to ensuring full transparency during an unprecedented economic recovery. This economic statement once again leaves us in total darkness regarding \$100 billion in planned spending. I will elaborate on that at the end of my speech.

My colleagues and I are getting calls from constituents who are concerned because they have been the victims of fraud. Some are worried because CERB payments were requested in their name, while others never received their cheques. There have also been some glitches with the transition from the Canada emergency response benefit, or CERB, to the Canada recovery benefit, or CRB, which have left families dealing with uncertainty and stress that they did not need.

Taxpayers' money is more precious than ever. The pandemic has demanded so much effort and sacrifice from families that the government and elected officials must treat the public purse with the utmost care. Yes, workers are important. Yes, business owners are important. Yes, families are important. The government must play the role of universal benefactor. I want to emphasize the word "universal" because, since 2020, the government has been a somewhat self-serving benefactor. Let me explain.

We submitted questions about all of the government's spending on fossil fuels and renewable energy. We are talking about loans, grants and any other government programs. We received a 105-page response less than a week ago. We began analyzing it and found that three letters came up frequently in the searches conducted by the Library of Parliament analysts. They were E, D and C, which is the abbreviation for Export Development Canada. I want to take a few moments to talk about that.

The government has in no way slowed down on environmental measures during the pandemic. I am not talking about measures to protect the environment or key renewable energy projects. I am talking about big, concrete measures that will negatively affect our environmental record and the climate crisis. The minister has taken hundreds of meetings with lobbyists representing the oil and gas sector, and the nuclear sector as well, while coalitions of citizens concerned about climate change have not been able to speak to the minister.

The government does not want to leave Export Development Canada out of its post-pandemic plans. The government needs EDC because there is a lot of money there. However, there is no transparency. A number of observers have criticized Export Develop-

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ment Canada for its practices and status. The Globe and Mail talked about the pattern of secrecy and the lack of transparency at this government agency.

• (1645)

Prior to COVID-19, EDC contributed up to \$14 billion annually to the oil and gas energy sector. That is 13 times more than the total funds allocated over five years for renewable energy. This means that EDC's incorporating statute needs to be reviewed, since it is profoundly inconsistent with the targets that are desperately needed to address climate change.

I mention EDC because Quebec and Canadian taxpayers' money is directly involved in its practices through what is known as the Canada account, which is managed by EDC. With this account, ministers can facilitate guaranteed loans that EDC might refuse and deem too risky. Ministers can have a say and do so when it is in the national interest. Ministers can approve a project that EDC would not support because of financial risks.

One such example is Trans Mountain. These are the same ministers who are listening closely to the demands of lobbyists, who have been tirelessly active for nearly a year and who used this account to purchase Trans Mountain. We therefore have every reason to fear the worst. Using the Canada account ignores both environmental and financial risks. Ministers could try to use this account again for who knows what else, because there is no transparency.

The legislation governing EDC was amended, allowing the agency's total liability to increase from \$45 billion to \$90 billion, while that of the Canada account would skyrocket to \$75 billion. That was until October 2020. Handouts with the greatest political discretion tripled. I would remind hon. members that the Canada account is secured by the Treasury Board and therefore by taxpayers. To be accurate, we might call it the government's discretionary account.

For a government to be a universal benefactor, it needs to manage public funds responsibly, not in a way that, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer says, does not take into account the jobs that will come back or be created in a few years. In this future context that we must take into consideration, is it really necessary to add another \$75 billion to \$100 billion to the deficit? It is just another example of the lack of transparency criticized by the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

A universal benefactor demonstrates transparency, accountability and responsibility. Recent experience shows us that the party in power does not value transparency or integrity in key areas of government action. It has no concept of accountability and responsibility.

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From the hundreds of millions of dollars that the government plans to spend supporting oil projects from coast to coast to the half a billion dollars for the Coastal GasLink pipeline in British Columbia, the hundreds of millions of dollars for drilling in the Maritimes and the obstinate support for the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, these are all obscene expenditures. They are obscene because of the government's official line that it is a leader in the fight against climate change. They are obscene because public money is enriching foreign corporations and shareholders who are already multi-millionaires. They are obscene because needs are being manipulated and exploited at the expense of indigenous workers and communities.

The Bloc Québécois will continue to monitor the doublespeak and announcements that hide other contradictions, such as decisions that harm the environment and increase spending. I am referring to deregulation at all levels of government, the weakening of the requirements of the clean fuel standard regulations, regulatory changes for nuclear energy and its waste, drilling in Newfoundland, which I spoke about at length today, and the 25% reduction in funding for monitoring oil sands waste, not to mention what my colleagues clearly pointed out in their speeches, the federal government's desire to interfere in Quebec's jurisdictions.

• (1650)

[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, as I listened to the member talk about the environment, this came to mind. If she were to read the throne speech, she would find many substantial financial measures. That was back in September.

In November, we introduced Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act, which would hold the federal government to its commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 and exceed our 2030 Paris target. Net-zero is not just a plan for a healthier environment; it is a plan to build a cleaner more competitive economy.

I wonder if my colleague could provide her thoughts on those two statements. She tries to give the false impression that the government is not doing anything, but the reality seems quite different.

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

He is correct in saying that there were some good things written in the throne speech, and just before Christmas there were some good things said about a plan to combat climate change. I will take all of this into consideration.

Let us have a fun talk about Trans Mountain again. In 2018, this pipeline was purchased for \$4.4 billion. In 2019, that figure went up to \$12.6 billion. On December 8, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said it might cost \$18 billion. All of that is just for Trans Mountain. In my speech I spoke a little about the money earmarked for fossil fuels, drilling and so on. This amount eclipses the investments being made in renewable energies.

[English]

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, one of the terms my colleague used was “responsible management” and I want to pick up on that. All opposition parties are trying to hold the government to account for that. Every time we bring up the fact that the deficit is at all-time highs and that it wants to raise the debt ceiling, the government comes back with “Well, don't you support us helping Canadians?” We do support the government helping Canadians, however, we are hoping that we are getting good value for that money. We are hoping we are getting a Rolls-Royce for that money not a K-car.

Would the hon. colleague have any comments on that?

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Indeed, we would like a Rolls-Royce, and it would be even better if it were electric.

I spoke a lot about transparency in my speech. The Bloc Québécois suggested that a committee be created to study all of this. We could then see whether we are getting a Rolls-Royce or a little Volkswagen that pollutes because the manufacturers cheated.

[English]

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member talked about the need to shift toward a post-carbon economy. I know Quebec is making significant investments in transit.

I will ask the hon. member a question that I tried to ask another member of her party. Would she support direct investments from the federal government to municipalities in Quebec for sustainable, predictable, operational funding for infrastructure projects like public transit?

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Madam Speaker, I thank my NDP colleague for his question.

I would like to remind him that the Government of Quebec is the one that should be getting the money and distributing it according to the needs of the municipalities. That is how it works. The Government of Canada has very little responsibility over infrastructure. We always say the same thing. The federal government's responsibility is to transfer the money to the Government of Quebec.

Interestingly enough, Quebec gets along very well with its municipalities when it comes to the federal gas tax fund. We do not need the federal government for that.

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• (1655)

[English]

**Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC):** Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like to thank my constituents for electing me 14 months ago and for sending me here to be a voice for them and to work on their concerns on their behalf.

Who could have predicted that we would be in the situation we are currently in? However, my office has been open the entire time during this pandemic to serve, work for and help constituents. I am not able to attend events, but I have looked at ways to connect with constituents, to hear from them and to respond on their behalf. I have been seeing a lot of successes and a lot of work. I want to thank my staff both in Ottawa and Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

Canadians have made a lot of sacrifices for health and safety reasons and to control COVID. I know many people who have had COVID, including in my extended family. An uncle passed last year from it. We all have stories during this time, which has been difficult.

This has also been a time when people in my community have come together to help each other, whether it is staff, volunteers, friends, or the food bank that has gone the extra mile, putting in the hours to ensure no one goes hungry. There are the many organizations, including the Seniors Network, which is a number of organizations that meet to look at ways to support thousands of seniors in Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

Quinn Callander is an innovative 12-year-old boy from Maple Ridge. He began making ear guards with his 3D printer at home for health care workers. He is an inspiration for all of us.

Then there are all the front-line health workers. Their efforts day in and day out for over a year now are very much appreciated and valued.

I also want to thank the teachers in the schools who are continuing to instruct classes. I was in the classroom myself prior to getting elected. Kudos, and I thank them so much for what they are doing.

Who could have imagined that our world, our nation and our communities would be turned upside down? We have had the closure of maybe hundreds of thousands of businesses across our country from coast to coast to coast. We have seen our hospitality and tourism sectors decimated. I will be presenting a petition this week on behalf of the tens of thousands travel agents who have been really impacted.

On a flight to Ottawa, I sat with a flight attendant who told me of the thousands who had been given layoff notices over the weekend.

We have to wear masks. We have to deal with the closure of places of worship, which is important for so many of my constituents and people across the country. There is also an inability to gather with those we care for, or for weddings or for funerals for those who have passed. It is not wrong to talk about this, but it is right to want to see an end to it. We understand the health concerns. People are doing their part, but we do want to see an end to it.

It has been frustrating and disturbing to watch the johnny-come-lately approach of the Liberal government. I get tired of hearing the same talking points of the Liberals day in and day out. If we ask a question about the vaccine, the answer we get is that they have secured more vaccine per capita than anyone else in the world. It is not how many we have secured for the future, it is how many people are being vaccinated today, this month, and we are behind. We need two million dosages per week to reach the Liberal goal of September for vaccinations. This week alone, we have fallen 1.3 million vaccinations short alone. There is no doubt that eventually we will get the vaccines and then the Liberals will call an election or maybe sooner.

We did not have to be in the situation we are in right now. We are in it because of Liberal incompetence.

• (1700)

While the Liberals are betting all our chips on a Chinese vaccine from last year with CanSino, our allies were signing deals with AstraZeneca, Moderna and Pfizer, but Canada would not sign deals until months later. All Canadians are paying a price for this failure.

Let me read a message from Rocky. I received this about an hour ago as I was preparing some notes.

He said, “Good morning, Marc.

“Did I correctly hear that Canada did not even get their orders for the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines until late? I would expect the manufacturer to fill orders based on the order in which they were purchased, as they came in, or else they could expect severe backlash if they were shown to be giving favourites on quantity. Did our country not know that, or did they expect special treatment because we are in Canada? That is downright juvenile and ignorant if they did.

“Second, why were all our vaccine eggs in one basket at the onset? I have more faith in Pfizer, which didn't send us any this week, than to get it done by CanSino. This is an unmitigated disaster, and I am so disappointed that while I've put our savings and house on the line for our business, the people we elected were unable to take off the political glasses long enough to see what was going on. This is infuriating.

“Then to blame it entirely on retooling—I was born at night, not last night.”

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Our country is in collaboration with and working tightly with China, a country that is holding our two Michaels hostage, that has banned many of our exports, that is persecuting Uighurs and putting them in concentration camps, that is suppressing human rights in Hong Kong. What gives?

Recent news is that the Liberal-appointed Canadian ambassador to China, Dominic Barton, provided advice on sales of OxyContin to Canada and the United States. This is a very sensitive issue, especially in British Columbia, where I come from, and where thousands of people have died from overdoses. There were 500 overdoses in the community of Maple Ridge, which I represent, last year alone.

The Liberal COVID action has been pathetic. The health minister agreed to pay \$237 million to Baylis Medical for 10,000 ventilators, even though the devices were not approved in any jurisdiction in the world. Baylis Medical is owned by Frank Baylis, a Liberal MP until the 2019 election. Why was there a fast track for Mr. Baylis' device, but no fast track for the rapid testing that every Canadian needs right now? We are finally getting the kits, but it was not fast and we have suffered from that. We are suffering the consequences today. Why is this former Liberal MP, with technology that has no track record of being approved and that has not been approved anywhere in the world, getting a special deal?

On top of that, he was able to pocket an extra \$100 million by selling ventilators for twice as much as the competition. It is not right. What is going on? The Auditor General would like to know. In an unprecedented time with an unprecedented amount of money being spent, what is happening? We would like to know what is going on.

The Auditor General would like to know, but his office is being starved for funds. He is not able to do the reports. What happens when they start to dig into the finances? What do they start to see in the Liberal expenditures?

I know this next point is very old news. It is called the WE scandal, and I know it was last year. Half a million dollars was given for speaking fees for—

• (1705)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We have to take questions now.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

**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 Conservative spin we just listened to is a lot to take. Is the member serious? We had a national vaccine committee with health experts who relied on research. They did a fantastic job at protecting Canadians' interests. The reality is that we will have over six million doses by the end of March.

Where was this Conservative concern back in August and July when the Conservatives had thousands of questions regarding vaccines and other issues such as rapid tests? Hindsight is 20/20, and the Conservatives have dropped the ball when it comes to holding

the government accountable. Our focus has been the coronavirus and minimizing the damage, and that is exactly what we continue to do by working with Canadians.

Would my friend provide his thoughts on the national vaccine council?

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** Madam Speaker, hindsight is one thing, but how about some foresight? It was tremendously lacking. How about just some sight? We would like to see some sight into Liberal expenditures. The Parliamentary Budget Officer certainly would like to know what is going on with the many expenditures. The Auditor General would like to know what is going on. We would like to know what is going on. This has been hidden from the public and members of Parliament.

I mentioned the WE Charity. The Prime Minister prorogued Parliament so that we could not use committees to see what exactly was going on. There is a lot more going on than meets the eye.

What about SNC-Lavalin? That is older news, except it was just given a \$150-million contract for COVID expenditures on equipment. What are the details with that? The company has been involved in improprieties.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague from Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge spoke about a number of topics that are very important during a pandemic.

What does he think about the economic recovery? Does he believe that the economic recovery is linked to the environment and the measures that the government will take with respect to its position on the environment in which we live?

I would like him to talk about the possible economic recovery.

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her intervention.

We certainly do need an economic recovery. That is vital. She spoke about the environment, and I believe that the Liberal government has made some real mistakes. The government imposed a new carbon tax that will impact agricultural producers and farmers. The government is imposing much too heavy of a burden on them in these difficult times.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, for months we have been hearing from the government that it is going to be there for the transportation industry and the aerospace sector, and it keeps talking about delivering a plan. It has been saying this since the spring. We have not seen it roll out a plan to ensure, as part of COVID recovery and getting through the recovery, that it is going to help protect workers. Whether there will even be a wage subsidy is uncertain. There is no stipulation that those jobs are actually tied to the wage subsidy.

We have been hearing from the workers in that sector, and they have been looking for support. We met with Unifor last week, and Unifor is talking about 11,000 workers who are at risk right now. They need a national aerospace industrial strategy that creates high-quality jobs, a strong supply chain, a thriving commercial and defence sector and also promotes Canadian-made aircraft in Canada and abroad.

Does my colleague agree that the government has been dragging its feet, and that given the importance of this sector in his riding and in my riding, as we both have aerospace jobs at risk—

• (1710)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We have to give a few seconds to the hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge to answer.

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** Madam Speaker, yes, the aerospace industry is so important in my region also. There are many employees who work in it and we need to do all we can, but it seems as though the opposite is actually happening.

On infrastructure spending, where is it? There is supposed to be \$100 billion committed, but we do not see it.

**Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today on Bill C-14, the government's economic statement. As we all know, the economic statement was released late last year and is a substitute, in the government's mind, for not bringing forward a budget. We are now approaching two years since the last budget and Canadians do not know what the future holds with their dollars.

First, let me say that the economic statement by the current finance minister is an improvement over the one last summer, which was the economic snapshot or, as some called it, the “economic selfie” by the former minister of finance, Mr. Morneau. This is an improvement. What is also an improvement is the fact that the current finance minister has probably come a little closer to the chaos that is being created by the government for in the financial future of our country.

In the economic statement, the estimated deficit for this fiscal year, which is rapidly drawing to a conclusion, was somewhere in the range of close to \$400 billion. I predict today that because of the bungling by the government, the delay in vaccines that is causing Canadians to be out of work for longer than anticipated, which is going to significantly affect the revenue picture of the government because Canadians are not paying taxes if they are not working and corporations are not paying taxes if they are not open, the fiscal deficit of the government, whenever the government gets around to bringing forward a budget in the House, will be much closer to half a trillion dollars.

Let us talk about what half a trillion dollars looks like. If we take all of the normal spending of government in a year, some \$350 billion, the government is spending that plus another one and a half times that this fiscal year. How is that sustainable? I know the Prime Minister has said on a number of occasions that it is better that the government take on the debt than individuals on their credit cards. That is fair enough. Let me be clear on this, because I know that the Liberals will say that Conservatives do not care about help-

### *Government Orders*

ing Canadians in the pandemic when nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the question is, where is this money going? We have seen no ability by the government to be transparent with all of these dollars.

Let me go back to the Prime Minister's statement that somehow it is okay to run debt as a government versus individuals. Who does the Prime Minister think government is? It is 35 million Canadians who are going to be shouldering this debt as we move forward. It would be really helpful if the government would be more transparent and show members where this money is being spent, because that clearly has not happened until today.

I get a lot of emails, as I am sure most MPs do, from constituents asking me to ask the Prime Minister this or that. If I were to stand here and ask the Prime Minister all of the questions that my constituents have requested that I ask him in the last three months, we would be here all night. I am going to try to focus on three areas. One is vaccines, two is the Governor General and three, most important to my province, is jobs.

First of all, we have heard a lot about vaccines. I asked a question of the minister today, and in typical fashion of this government, there was no answer. I used the example of a picture of Rogers Centre in Toronto full of people, which it has not been for well over a year now. Rogers Centre holds 50,000 people and 50,000 people is what the provinces were vaccinating on a daily basis 10 days ago. However, everything stopped 10 days ago, which means that half a million Canadians have not been vaccinated in the last 10 days because the Liberal government bungled the vaccine purchase.

• (1715)

I get emails every day from Canadians in the U.S. who are getting vaccinated there. S. How does that make any sense at all? Canadians are going down to the U.S. and getting vaccinated, and Canadians here in long-term care homes and seniors are not getting the vaccine. Something is wrong. The government has to own this problem.

I want to spend a couple of minutes talking about something that my constituents keep asking me about, and that is how we could be in this situation where we have a Governor General who has effectively resigned for all of the right reasons and yet will be collecting, going forward, expenses and a pension after just three years in office. Canadians cannot accept that. The government needs to fix that problem, and fix it soon. Liberals will pay a price at the polls, whenever they have the courage to go there. Canadians are fighting a pandemic and they see this kind of entitlement going on and see a government that is not prepared. It is just saying that this is the way it is, and that this is what the legislation says. The government is in a position to change the legislation. If it does not, I will say here today that this will be an issue in the next election.

*Government Orders*

Finally, I want to talk a little about jobs and the effect this pandemic and, in many ways, the inappropriate programs introduced by the government have had on jobs in my province. There were a number of things that happened well before COVID that impacted my province directly as a result of government action.

I will start with one of the first things the Prime Minister did when he was elected. He cancelled the Northern Gateway project. Today that project would be creating thousands of jobs in Canada, not just in Alberta but across Canada. However the Prime Minister, who always talks about making decisions based on science and data, decided one day when he was flying over northern British Columbia that this was going to be a campaign promise. It was a bad choice, because today that project would be wrapping up. People would have been employed for the last two or three years, and we would now be shipping a product that is in demand internationally. That is number one.

Then, of course, we had the so-called energy east project that was cancelled. I could go on with the kinds of bad decisions the government has made that have affected jobs in my province. However, we have a major issue in Alberta, and to a lesser degree, probably, in Saskatchewan and other parts of western Canada. I do not know where a 40-year geologist is going to find work in this transition to a new green economy.

This new green economy is not going to create the wealth that the energy industry has created for this country over the last two or three decades. I would just ask the Liberal government to think about that as part of its economic statement when it considers going hell-bent for leather into making sure that it transitions out of oil and gas to a green economy. I know the government is not going to worry too much about it, because it has its farm team over there, which used to be called the NDP, to support it on all these initiatives. Neither of those two parties cares what happens to this country. It is a mess, and they are doing nothing to fix it.

● (1720)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is very disingenuous when a member says that parties in the House do not care about what happens in Canada.

Nonetheless, the member talked about the Prime Minister's comment about the government shouldering the debt. When the Prime Minister says the government will shoulder the debt, what the Prime Minister is saying is that we recognize that it is in society's interest to go through this together so that we shoulder that debt together.

I see the member laughing. It makes sense, because the Conservative motto is "Every person for themselves; you take on the debt you need to and I'll take on my debt, and we will see how everything comes out on the other side." That is just not the reality of how the government wants to approach the situation.

Liberals believe that we need to get through this together to get to the other side, because we will be stronger later on when we come out on the other end.

**Mr. Ron Liepert:** Madam Speaker, that proves that the member does not understand. I do not know if he is like the Prime Minister, who was a trust fund baby, as I do not know his background, but I

know that the Prime Minister has never been responsible for signing a paycheque in his life. I know he has never been responsible for meeting payroll. If members believe that it is not Canadians who are shouldering the government debt, then I do not understand the rationale.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Madam Speaker, my question is about the concerns that the member and many of us have expressed on the vaccine rollout. People here in northern Manitoba are very concerned about the lack of vaccines in our country, especially here where we know that we are extremely vulnerable. As a result of intense advocacy, many indigenous elders have received the vaccine, but we know that we need much more. Does my colleague agree the federal government must step up urgently to ensure that Canadians across our country are getting the vaccines they need?

**Mr. Ron Liepert:** Madam Speaker, I was watching the news last night and noticed a story about some vaccines in Thompson, Manitoba. I believe that is the hometown of the member who asked the question. It is reassuring that some vaccines are getting to these communities.

There is no question that in the last 10 days, while the government has failed to deliver vaccines to the provinces, half a million Canadians have not been vaccinated. There are ways to fix this problem. The government has no plan, which is not surprising considering who is leading it.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I picked up on a couple of the comments made by my friend from Calgary Signal Hill about pipelines. I am very concerned as it has been repeated in the House many times that the Liberals, the NDP or the Greens do not care about the economy or workers in Alberta. I agree with the member for Kingston and the Islands that nothing could be further from the truth, but that there are in fact changes that transform economies. This is one that is coming whether the hon. member wants to hear about it or not. Global markets are moving away from fossil fuels; investors are moving toward renewables. I want to make the point that when energy east was cancelled, it was not cancelled because of government regulations; it was cancelled because of a decision by the company itself. Even what we now call the Canada Energy Regulator, which used to be the NEB, has said that we do not need additional pipeline capacity in this country.

● (1725)

**Mr. Ron Liepert:** Madam Speaker, the other night when we had the emergency debate, I watched with pleasure as my colleague from Calgary Forest Lawn put this particular member in her place by chastising her for her comment when she said "Yahoo" to jobs in western Canada after President Biden cancelled Keystone XL. My colleague put it so well when he said that if the member really cared about western Canada and western jobs she would apologize for tweeting "Yahoo" when that pipeline was cancelled.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to be here in the House to continue with this debate. I have been listening to the comments from all sides here, especially many of those of the members of our Conservative caucus on the concerns that we are seeing in western Canada.

I am going to attach on to some of the discussion after question period of my colleague from Calgary Midnapore. She was talking a lot about the transportation industry and the most recent closures and lockdowns when it comes to coming into Canada, the international travel ban and the impact that it is going to have on airlines. I wanted to take that one step further, because there are people who are booking these tickets, and I am sure many members across the chamber have had people from the travel and tourism sector contact their offices.

I want to read this letter into the Hansard, so that people can understand what is happening to businesses that are part of travel and tourism. This letter comes to us from Marion Rose. I have known Marion for a number of years. Twenty-five years ago she hired my best friend to be a travel agent there, and it is a very respectful company. She started off her letter by asking about my family. She then continued:

Elgin Travel & Cruises has been in business now for 32 years at the Elgin Centre and have been a huge contributor to our community. In March of this year we employed seven full time staff. As you are aware, once COVID hit, we were virtually out of business and, as no one is travelling or can travel with the present "avoid all essential travel" advisory and the 14 day quarantine in place.

Just to remind members she is talking about the impacts of that back in March of 2020. We are now 10 months later, and there still has not been any work for this recovery. Continuing with her letter, she says:

This however does not mean that we are not working, as clients are still being repatriated, cancellations for bookings throughout 2020 and now into 2021 are being processed and either rebooked for the second time or insurance claims filed. Our staff are still working 40 hours a week just to process the above. The Wage Subsidy to the end of August was a welcome assistance to allow us to keep our staff. However with the new reductions, and still at over 100% decrease in sales, we are flailing.

This letter was written to me back in November. This was from three months ago today, today being February 2, and the government still has not stepped up. We know that it has just put forward a new program and applications started on February 1, but I am talking about a business that in March 2020 was closed down. By the time this company is looked at and the government provides the supports, this company may not be there.

These are the types of challenges that Marion Rose from Elgin Travel has shared with me. She is working very closely as one of the independent travel agencies that are across Canada talking about this, and we have to understand the impact of this and the impact to these livelihoods.

In my case, I look at the demographics of the people who are working in that sector. We know that over 85% are women or members of the LGBTQ community. We have to look at the fact that we have talked about a she-recovery. I say there is no recovery, so I ask how this could be a she-recovery. This specific group has not been looked at.

Yes, the government is going to be looking with high priority at issues of travel and tourism, but my concern is that money has not come out of the door yet, and it is going to be a year. These workers have looked at some of the travel restrictions that we have coming into Canada and the impact that is going to have on them, and they are just asking for a break.

### *Private Members' Business*

I have spoken to many other members of our community, and because I have such a short period of time, I wanted to talk about some of the things that have been changed with the rent subsidy. I understand that the rent subsidy has changed, and now small businesses are able to apply, but I do not know if the government has considered the following scenario.

What if someone who is a hair designer is working, but they do not have that lease agreement? They are being asked to pay \$500 to \$700 a month so that they can rent a chair, but that chair is not open to the public because no one can come to their facility. However, they still have to pay that rent.

As well, those who are making less than \$30,000 and who may not have a CRA account, are still having to pay for a lease. The government is supposed to have a simple tax return, and so many of these small businesses with small incomes are still doing it on their personal tax returns and not through CRA. What we have done by doing this has closed them off as well.

I am so pleased to be able to speak here, and I hope the government will start getting it right, because we are going to continue to lose more businesses in this country.

● (1730)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member will have just a little over five minutes the next time this matter is before the House.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business, as listed on today's Order Paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### CLIMATE CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed from November 4 consideration of the motion that Bill C-215, an act respecting Canada's fulfillment of its greenhouse gas emissions reduction obligations, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to address the chamber on the important issue of our environment.

When I looked at Bill C-215, the first thing that came across my mind was that in November of last year, the government introduced Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act. If we were to look at these two pieces of legislation side by side, we would easily understand why we should be supporting Bill C-12. I look forward to debating Bill C-12 to hear the ongoing discussions, because it covers so much more than Bill C-215.

*Private Members' Business*

Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act, would hold the federal government to its commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 and exceed our 2030 Paris target. That is the essence of what Bill C-215 does. Having said that, there are some significant differences between the bills. There are certain things that Bill C-215 does not have.

Before I comment on some of those differences, I want to emphasize that we must take advantage of the economic opportunity that climate action presents in order to provide the world with the cleanest and most cutting-edge innovation. I think, for example, of hydroelectricity in my home province of Manitoba. When we talk about the development of clean energy and being innovative, there is so much potential in my home province. Equally, I suspect that if we were to go to all regions of our beautiful country, we would find opportunities. That is why it is critically important that we take to heart the idea of net-zero emissions and the goal of 2050 and take actions today that will really make a difference going forward.

I made reference to some key differences between Bill C-215 and Bill C-12, and I will now give a couple of specific examples.

In Bill C-12, the government's bill, there is a requirement for consultations with the provinces and territories, indigenous peoples, experts and Canadians as a whole. This is absent in Bill C-215.

Bill C-215 would only require the publication of a single action plan. Contrast this with Bill C-12, the government's legislation. It would require the publication of an emissions reduction plan for every milestone year. That is a significant difference. Bill C-12 would also require the government to set each target at least five years before the beginning of the related milestone. Bill C-215 would require the government to set all of its targets up front.

Those are the types of differences that I believe clearly demonstrate that we should be looking at ways to get Bill C-12 through the House of Commons and encourage some form of consultation about it at committee, and encourage the Senate to recognize the true value of the bill. I suggest that my friend from the Bloc, who introduced Bill C-215, review the bill to see if maybe there are aspects of the legislation that could in fact be incorporated at the committee stage.

• (1735)

Bill C-12 requires the Minister of Finance to publish an annual report describing how departments and Crown corporations are considering the financial risks and opportunities of climate change in their decision-making, whereas Bill C-215 does not include any such provision. That is why I would encourage members of the Conservative Party who are supporting Bill C-215 to seriously look at ways in which we could see Bill C-12 pass. I have already had the opportunity to speak to Bill C-12, and members can look at some of the content that I put on the record at that time.

One of the things that I want to put in perspective is the issue of other initiatives. In the throne speech introduced in September, we not only talked about green policy but we committed hundreds of millions of dollars to ensuring that we were on the right track. I look forward to when a budget is presented to Canadians, and to the many initiatives and specifics that will give Canadians reason to be

optimistic that we finally have a government that is taking the environment seriously.

As a government, we have recognized from the beginning that, to have a healthy economy, we also need to strive for a healthy environment, and that we can develop policies that complement both the environment and the economy. We have recognized the value of major projects going through the department of environment or through independent provincial or national commissions, and that it is important to do research and consultations because those will give projects a better chance of success.

I want to very quickly say that I am excited about the pledge to plant two billion trees. The Prime Minister has made it very clear that we, as a government, are committed to planting two billion trees. That will be a great filter for our water. It will ensure that the air we breathe is healthier.

These are the types of initiatives that people can understand and relate to, and they are going to make a difference and get Canadians that much more excited about working to improve our environment.

I appreciate the opportunity to share a few words on this legislation.

• (1740)

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating my colleague, the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, for putting forward her first private member's bill, Bill C-215.

The climate emergency is the greatest existential threat of our time, and we are running out of time. Executive director Inger Andersen of the UN Environment Programme stated, "The science is clear that if we keep exploiting wildlife and destroying our ecosystems, then we can expect to see a steady stream of these diseases jumping from animals to humans in the years ahead." There is a direct correlation between the climate emergency and the current pandemic in which we find ourselves. She went on to say, "To prevent future outbreaks, we must become much more deliberate about protecting our natural environment."

It is clear that climate accountability and climate action are essential to preventing future pandemics. It is clear that without acting on this emergency, we will increasingly experience food and water insecurity, income crises, conflict and, even further, global conflict. The infinite cost of climate change will continue to rise unless we act now.

The climate emergency poses a serious threat to our environment, economy, health and safety. At the forefront of this issue are indigenous peoples. The government has even acknowledged that. In fact, a preamble paragraph in Bill C-15 states:

Whereas the implementation of the Declaration can contribute to supporting sustainable development and responding to growing concerns relating to climate change and its impacts on Indigenous peoples



This is in reference to the full adoption and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The impacts of this crisis are already being felt in Canada, particularly in the Arctic and along our beautiful coasts. It is disproportionately impacting indigenous nations, rural communities and marginalized and racialized communities. This is what we call environmental racism. Indigenous and northern communities, farmers, food producers and others have been sounding alarms about the impact of climate change on ecosystems, but this has fallen on the deaf ears of consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments, which have failed in their duty to protect our beautiful mother earth.

We know that the climate emergency is now impacting our food security, and indigenous people across our lands are among the most impacted. It is disrupting traditional ways of life and food security, especially in remote northern communities, where the climate is warming at a much faster rate, which is impacting traditional food sources.

Not only that, when we take away people's sustenance, we force them to find other ways to acquire food. We force remote communities to rely on expensive imported food alternatives, leaving individuals to afford only the unhealthy food options. This has a negative impact on health, so it is not surprising that there is a correlation between physical wellness and the impacts of the climate emergency.

• (1745)

In addition, it goes beyond just climate to include the kind of violence and the increased rates of violence against indigenous women and girls that come as a result of resource extraction projects that bring workers into our communities. They are perpetrating violence against indigenous women and girls, a crisis that was confirmed in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We need to act now to respond to the calls for justice.

Indigenous people have experienced the greatest impacts of the climate emergency, so it is not surprising that many indigenous peoples from across this country, even as we speak in the House today, are on the front lines to fight against the climate emergency.

Reconciliation and fundamental indigenous rights, the rights that are articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, go hand in hand with environmental justice. With all due respect to my colleague, the fact that she did not even mention the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in her bill is shocking.

Not only that, but I think we see the impacts of climate change on emotional health, particularly the emotional health of young people who are fighting to keep our world healthy. People are tired of governments committing to targets and then missing them again and again. We are running out of time to turn things around.

With Bill C-12, we will not be on track to meet our international climate obligations. We need an action plan that honours our international climate commitments and obligations. We need a plan that addresses the urgency of the climate emergency.

### *Private Members' Business*

Although the current government proposed Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act, it is not consistent with agreements we have made with the international community. For example, there is no target for 2025 and there are no real accountability measures for the next 10 years, even though we know the next decade will be the most critical.

The accountability mechanisms, including the advisory committee, are weak and rely on the environment commissioner, whose office is already underfunded. We will not achieve climate justice without accountability, so it was surprising to me that although there are many good parts in the bill, the accountability measures put far too much power in the hands of ministers, who have a history of destroying our environment and not taking environmental stewardship seriously.

The NDP has a long history of pushing for greater accountability of government for its actions to fight climate change. I put forward, for example, Bill C-232, which provided a clear accountability framework and called on the federal government to take all measures necessary to address the climate emergency. For the first time, a piece of legislation pushed forward a clean, safe and healthy environment as a human right that would be enshrined in law with the federal environmental bill of rights.

We have other examples, such as Linda Duncan, Jack Layton and Megan Leslie.

We need to work together to push forward a bold climate agenda. We are running out of time.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the purpose of Bill C-215 introduced by my hon. colleague the hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia is to make the government accountable for its climate action.

This bill calls on the government to bring in realistic and adequate measures and to implement oversight mechanisms. Through this bill the Bloc Québécois is hoping to make the government accountable to the House of Commons and the public on its environmental measures.

The Bloc Québécois is proposing that a commissioner of the environment assess the action plans to attest that they meet their objectives, or that he or she recommends to the federal government changes that will help meet the set targets. It is not rocket science.

*Private Members' Business*

We want the minister to take the commissioner's recommendations into account and implement them. I believe that Bill C-215 on climate change accountability is a tool for success, not an obstacle to action.

Quebec sets the bar for North America because it is one of the world's very few environmental leaders. Quebec's per capita CO2 emissions are lower than in the rest of Canada thanks to its massive investments in hydroelectricity over the past 80-plus years. Quebec understood the need for long-range climate action over 30 years ago. The rest of Canada did not. That is why the Bloc Québécois believes that meeting targets should not hinge on what the federal government decides to do. Measures need to be formalized, and the law must hold the government accountable to the people. It is time to walk the talk.

Reducing the impact of human activity on the environment is crucial for the future. A green recovery would stimulate our economy and increase our GDP while reducing environmental impact. We owe it to future generations.

By green recovery, I mean supporting renewable energy sources, such as forestry and hydroelectricity. I mean investing in research and development and in our CEGEPs and universities so they can create and adapt green technologies that our SMEs can use to their advantage.

We in the Bloc Québécois believe it is essential to meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets and stop funding tax incentive programs that support fossil fuels. We must encourage innovation and the quest for new economic avenues.

The necessary means must be deployed to achieve that. We need to look further ahead and encourage innovation and the energy transition. This economic recovery, which we will all contribute to, offers a great opportunity to take a hard look in the mirror and promote measures that will also have a positive impact on future generations.

The Association québécoise de lutte contre la pollution atmosphérique says that the government bill is extremely vague and not particularly binding, proving that the Government of Canada has not done its job since 2015.

To help the Canadian government come up with some solutions, I have a few to suggest. First, Canada must invest in freight transportation infrastructure and supply chains to make the movement of goods as efficient, sustainable and environmentally friendly as possible.

To that end, Canada must help businesses modernize digital platforms and data sharing. Canada must also fund research on heavy-duty vehicles with a view to making them greener, possibly even electric. Why not start immediately by providing incentives for the purchase of electric buses and ambulances, for example?

Quebec and Canada do not have a shortage of forestry resources. Canada must invest in this sector and Quebec's and Canada's regions must take advantage of forestry innovations to develop and supply the most environmentally friendly products possible and produce forestry waste with low carbon emissions. Let us develop markets for innovative forestry products.

Furthermore, why does Canada not focus on research and development for forestry biomass supply chains and the production of bioenergy? It should do so.

Why does Canada not also promote Quebec's aluminum, which is the greenest in the world?

We should fund the shift from producing simple aluminum to producing carbon-free aluminum. To continue its efforts to reduce greenhouse gases, Canada must invest in research and development and research centres in the regions and at colleges and universities in order to promote the acquisition and adaptation of green technologies that will benefit businesses as well as the land, wildlife and plant life, and above all, everyone's health.

● (1755)

Canada must make smart investments in transportation electrification by facilitating the purchase of zero-emission or hybrid vehicles and the replacement of older vehicles, while guaranteeing their availability on the market. The federal government needs to install charging stations at federal buildings, particularly in the regions, and establish carbon footprint as a criterion for procurement and the awarding of contracts in federal government procurement policies.

The Bloc Québécois supports enforcing the "polluter pay" principle, which rewards those who care about the environment, by instituting green equalization, which is a carbon tax for provinces that produce more greenhouse gas emissions than the national average. That money would be given to provinces that produce less pollution than the national average. That is an idea that is very popular among my colleagues in the House, at least those who are here. I am being sarcastic, of course.

At the same time, Canada should stop directly investing in western Canada's fossil fuel industry through subsidies and tax breaks. Obviously, we also need to support our friends in Alberta in their green transition. I am sure that Albertans will know better than the federal government how to expedite their transition to a greener economy.

The purpose of Bill C-215 is to make the federal government accountable for its climate action. The bill calls on the government to bring in realistic and adequate measures and to implement oversight mechanisms. We need to reassess how we operate and how we interact with the land and the economy. If we want to do things right, I think we need accountability mechanisms. I think Bill C-215, introduced by my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, is an excellent bill.

I also want to mention some parts of this bill, which talks about adapting and mitigating effects, in addition to limiting greenhouse gas emissions as part of the fight against climate change. These are all things that I feel are missing from Bill C-12.

*Private Members' Business*

Key words are important to me. The bill establishes greenhouse gas reduction targets, mechanisms to review those targets and mechanisms to monitor that reduction. It requires the government to table, within nine months of its passage, an action plan for greenhouse gas reduction that includes detailed measures. It also provides for monitoring of the action plan by a competent and independent authority, an environment commissioner, who will be able to keep an eye on the government's actions. The commissioner must analyze the action plan within six months of its tabling and report back to Parliament. The goal is to be accountable to the House and the public on the progress of the action plan.

If the environment commissioner determines that this is insufficient, the government will have to take his or her recommendations into account and rectify the situation. The legislation includes mechanisms for reviewing targets and evaluating how well the government is adjusting its actions. This is enshrined in legislation to ensure that Canadian climate action is consistent with Canada's climate objectives. In other words, the Bloc Québécois's climate accountability bill has been drafted in such a way that it can be supported by all MPs of all stripes. We are therefore reaching out to Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats, Greens and independents.

If the government is serious about its stated intention to meet its own targets, nothing should stop it from voting for a bill that would enshrine those very same targets in law. The economic recovery must not compromise our climate future. It is interesting to note that climate change affects human health, security, the food supply, climate migration, human rights, the economy, jobs, national security, defence and transportation infrastructure.

When we talk about growing a green economy that is good for people, that is what we mean. Those are the conditions and the principles for a green recovery.

In closing, what this means is that we must move to ensure sustainable climate action. Meeting our targets can no longer hinge on what the government decides to do. It must be guaranteed by law. Emissions reduction targets and the mechanisms to adjust them must be enshrined in law. That, to me, is key. The purpose of the law is to make the Government of Canada keep its own greenhouse gas emissions reduction promises.

• (1800)

[*English*]

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Western Economic Diversification Canada) and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (Canada Water Agency), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-215, an act respecting Canada's fulfillment of its greenhouse gas emissions reduction obligations. I would like to thank the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia for raising an issue of urgency and importance: climate change.

Canadians know that climate change threatens our health, way of life and planet. They want climate action now and that is what the government will continue to deliver. Canadians continue to face the impacts of climate change during the COVID-19 pandemic. From forest fires and floods to ocean pollution and coastal erosion, Cana-

dians are experiencing the impacts of climate change each and every day.

Canada's climate is warming at twice the rate of the global average. In the north, warming is happening at nearly three times the global rate. The effects of warming are already evident in many parts of Canada and are projected to intensify in the near future.

Bill C-215 aims to ensure that Canada will fulfill its obligations under the Paris Agreement to reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions. It would recommit Canada to achieving our current Paris Agreement target of at least 30% below our 2005 GHG levels by 2030 and enshrine in legislation Canada's commitment to ensure that greenhouse gas emissions are reduced to net zero by 2050.

Our government has committed to two key climate change mitigation objectives: exceeding our 2030 target of 30% GHG emissions below 2005 levels, and legislating Canada's goal to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. While the government supports the intent of Bill C-215 and thanks the hon. member for bringing this important issue forward, it will not be supporting the bill, as it has introduced Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act. Bill C-12 would codify the government's commitment for Canada to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

While Bill C-12 and Bill C-215 share similarities, they have important distinctions and differ in key respects. Both share a common purpose and objectives. They both require the establishment of a pathway for Canada to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and achieve its international commitments with respect to mitigating climate change.

Bill C-12 requires the federal government to set national emissions reduction targets at five-year intervals for 2030, 2035, 2040 and 2045. Moreover, Bill C-12 goes further than Bill C-215 by requiring the government to develop emission reduction plans for each target area, as well as explaining how each plan will contribute to reaching our long-term goal of net zero in 2050. This process ensures that each plan will be tailored to its target and will be built upon previous plans when applicable. It would also ensure that other federal ministers who have duties and functions related to measures that may be taken to achieve a target will be consulted when establishing emission reduction plans.

*Private Members' Business*

While both bills require reporting to provide updates on Canada's progress in reducing emissions or achieving the GHG targets, Bill C-12 goes further than Bill C-215. It enshrines in legislation reports that must be prepared to provide an update on the progress that has been made toward achieving the GHG emissions target and, furthermore, on the implementation of the federal measures, sectoral strategies and federal government operation strategies described in the emissions reduction plan.

Bill C-12 would also require that the minister prepare an assessment report in relation to a milestone year or to 2050 that states whether the target has been met or not and an assessment of how the federal measures contributed to Canada's efforts to achieve the target. If Canada fails to achieve the targets, the minister would have to explain why and describe actions the government will take to address the shortfall.

Bill C-12 goes further than Bill C-215 by establishing an advisory body whose mandate is to provide the Minister of Environment and Climate Change with advice on achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 and to conduct engagement activities related to achieving net-zero emissions.

• (1805)

This advisory body will be composed of up to 15 experts who will draw on research and analysis to identify actions that Canada can take to set the foundation for 2050. It will engage with stakeholders, indigenous peoples, other experts and the public.

In terms of accountability, both Bill C-12 and Bill C-215 include a role for the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to examine and report on the Government of Canada's implementation of the measures aimed at achieving the greenhouse gas emissions targets. Bill C-12 includes robust transparency mechanisms, including requirements that all targets, emission reduction plans, progress reports and assessment reports be tabled in Parliament.

Finally, Bill C-12 would also require our government to lead by example by having the Minister of Finance report on key measures that the federal public administration has taken to manage its financial risks and opportunities related to climate change. The government intends to use the report to enhance transparency about its own operations with respect to climate-related financial risks and opportunities.

Net zero is not just a plan for our climate; net zero is a plan for our economic competitiveness in the global marketplace. In December 2020, the Government of Canada released "A Healthy Environment and a Healthy Economy", which is the federal plan to build a better future with a healthier economy and environment.

This is a plan that builds on the work done to date and efforts that are already under way under the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change and continues down that path that Canadians, governments and businesses have been setting. It is a key pillar in the government's commitment to create over one million jobs, restoring employment to pre-pandemic levels, of which climate action and clean growth is the cornerstone. This strengthened climate plan will also enable Canada to exceed its current 2030 emissions reduction target under the Paris agreement.

While many of the themes presented in Bill C-215 echo our government's priorities set out in the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act, we will not be supporting Bill C-215. While we will be advancing Bill C-12, I am encouraged to see all parties in this place recognize the need for strong climate action. Combatting climate change should not be a partisan issue and our government will work across party lines and with all Canadians to achieve our climate goals.

Once again, I thank the member for bringing forward such an important issue. I look forward to further discussions on Canada achieving net-zero GHG emissions by 2050.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am so happy to be back in the House for the second hour of debate on this climate accountability bill.

This bill is deeply important to me because it is the first bill I had the opportunity to introduce in the House of Commons. I hope it will be the first of many. It is also deeply important to me because it could not be more timely.

The public health crisis we are going through spotlighted another crisis we were already going through: the climate crisis. As everyone knows, the current health crisis and the environmental crisis are inextricably linked. Decades of government inaction on the environment had a hand in the emergence of this pandemic. We need to acknowledge that and take action now.

This parallel is brilliantly explained in the book *Pandemic*, written by journalist Sonia Shah, who explains that today, we imagine pandemics "to be as unfathomable and unpredictable as being struck by lightning. We cast them as acts of foreign aggression. We did not grapple with our complicity in their spread."

Like our increasingly mild winters, the pandemic is a reflection of how nature is changing. Our complicity in the increasing number of pandemics stretches back to the development of transportation and industry, from the dawn of the modern age to the chaos of contemporary urban development. All of this created an unhealthy proximity between humans, animals and potentially dangerous micro-organisms. Of course, the impact of oil and gas development, which exacerbates climate warming a little bit more each day, also serves as a vector of pathogen transmission.

There is no denying that not only are COVID-19 and nature connected, but the political decisions we make connect them even further. Failure to take action on the environment is setting up a world where the risk of epidemics will be part of our daily lives. The question is how our societies will choose to manage this risk. I believe that our societies are prepared to move forward with the energy transition and protect our environment and our communities by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The only thing missing is a bit of political will.

I see this bill as a sort of safeguard to shield us from the current and future governments' lack of political will to protect the environment. It is high time that the government took the climate crisis seriously. It is our responsibility as parliamentarians, legislators and representatives of the public.

The public deserves more than a government that talks out of both sides of its mouth. The public deserves more than a government that promises to surpass the greenhouse gas reduction targets it committed to under the Paris Agreement, but that continues to invest heavily in highly polluting industries. It is high time that the government stepped up and did what is needed to combat climate change. This is the main objective of the climate change accountability act. It would force the government to turn its rhetoric into meaningful action.

I would remind members that Canada has never met its greenhouse gas reduction targets. It failed to do so multiple times. It had to withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol and will likely not meet the Paris Agreement targets. Making the government accountable for its climate action will prevent this failure from being repeated. That is the objective of the bill I introduced.

We cannot stress enough that this is critical. We are beginning to pay dearly for the government's inaction. The cost is high financially but also in terms of human life. We are running straight towards our own demise, and that is deplorable.

It is certainly a huge challenge, but I am confident that we can do it. I am confident in my generation, the young people driven by an inspiring passion. They deserve more representation in our institutions. The government must live up to the trust it has been given.

Bill C-215 gives Canada the opportunity to pass a climate act. A climate act must truly be binding and make it possible to have transparent and honest mechanisms. It must make the government accountable for its action or inaction on climate. This should have been put in place a long time ago.

The good thing about this bill is that it gives the government the freedom to choose the avenues it wants to take in the fight against climate change. For governments, this is a perfect opportunity to remain flexible on the means but firm on the targets.

I encourage my colleagues from all parties to vote in favour of our climate change accountability bill so that we can study it in committee.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members who have risen in the House to speak to this bill. It has been inspiring to see that, regardless of our political affiliation, we are prepared to make this a non-partisan issue and work together.

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

• (1810)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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 invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

• (1815)

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 3, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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## 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 is a pleasure to rise today to address the failings of the government.

Throughout the fall of 2020, the Liberals spent time, effort and taxpayer dollars filibustering for dozens of hours across committees, all in the name of a cover-up to protect the Prime Minister's interests, to protect the Prime Minister from the consequences and accountability that go along with corruption. It is the same old song and dance with the Liberals, even during a pandemic.

While they were dialled in on this cover-up, they were dropping the ball on the pandemic response, including on rapid testing and vaccines. Like so many times before, the Liberals put their friends and insiders first, ahead of everyday Canadians, so they could protect their own interests.

They could have been working on bolstering domestic production capacity for vaccines. They could have been ensuring that we had delivery guarantees for vaccines. However, because of misguided selfishness, Canadians are left in the dark. We are left behind the rest of the world and are left in lockdown in many places across our country.

Canadians need to know when they will be vaccinated if they wish to receive a vaccine. They need to have access to rapid testing. They need to get their livelihoods and lives back on track. We need to return to some semblance of normalcy.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Canadians deserve good, ethical government. They deserve a government that will put the needs and interests of Canadians ahead of self-interests. We need a government that puts Canada first, because the great Canadian comeback starts right here at home.

With so much going on, members from 338 constituencies have been willing to work together to get results for Canadians. However, we have a government that wanted to shut down committees, shut down the House and then, when we came back, shut down debate.

When is the government going to put the needs of Canadians first, ahead of its insiders' needs and those of its Liberal friends?

**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, to be very clear, the Government of Canada has put Canadians in all regions of our great nation first right from the very beginning, and that has been the focus of this government, diligently, every day of the week, and I would like to start by paying a tribute to the many people who have worked alongside the Government of Canada in so many ways to ensure that we could minimize the negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Nothing could be further from the truth in terms of what has actually transpired over the last 12 months than what the member opposite just finished saying on the record. A wide variety of programs were brought forward to assist small businesses, including the Canada emergency wage subsidy, the emergency rent subsidy, the emergency business account, the credit availability program and the regional relief and recovery funds. For individuals, we had the CERB, which helped just under nine million Canadians. The government has been there in a very real and tangible way for Canadians.

We have also been listening to the advice of experts, which is why we have a national vaccine committee to ensure that Canada got it right. There were hundreds of millions of dollars of investment to make sure that we would be positioned as well as we are today with the vaccines and the vaccine rollout, ensuring that we will have those six million doses by the end of March and that Canadians who want to be vaccinated will be vaccinated before the end of September. We have a plan. We have been working with partners to make sure that Canadians' backs have been covered.

The Conservative Party, on the other hand, has been focused more on personal attacks and more on what sort of destructive role they can play. Conservatives like to say that they have been co-operative, and to be fair, to a certain degree, in certain areas, they have been. However, when I hear the Conservatives talk about hindsight issues, whether it is the vaccines or the rapid tests, I would suggest that they would have a lot more credibility if in fact they had focused on issues of that nature back in the summertime as opposed to trying to look for conspiracies, corruption and so forth.

Yes, when we spend billions and billions of dollars covering the backs of Canadians, there are going to be some mistakes, and yes, there were some mistakes, and we have learned from them. However, to say that it was corrupt is a stretch. To try to give an impression that Canadians have not been the first priority of this govern-

ment over the last 12 months is a real stretch, because nothing could be further from the truth.

Whether it is the Prime Minister, ministers or members of the Liberal caucus, we have been working seven days a week and 24 hours a day to ensure that Canadians would be protected and that we would be able to continue to move forward on this very important issue that we all have to face, which is to overcome this pandemic.

• (1820)

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, the member opposite does not need to look very deep into the facts to see that the Liberals did not spend their time focused on the right things, which is why Canada today is 29th in the world per capita on vaccine administration. That is an unacceptable result from a government that spent its time focused on helping Liberal insiders instead of helping Canadians.

When the Liberals tried to write themselves a blank cheque last March so that they could tax and spend without parliamentary oversight for nearly two years, the Conservatives, Canada's official opposition, worked tremendously hard to make sure that their measures did pass the House unanimously, but we did have to give them the opportunity to get it right. That is why the wage subsidy had to be improved. That is why so many of their measures had to come back before the House a second time. It was because they would not take the advice of the opposition the first time.

We are looking for a real team Canada approach.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, the government listened to Canadians, provinces, territories, indigenous leaders, many other stakeholders and members on all sides of the House when we introduced new programs because of the pandemic. The programs required some changes, and we did the responsible thing by having ongoing dialogue and making sure we could retool to produce protective gear and have vaccines for Canadians. That has been a priority for the government because we understand and appreciate the difficulties we all have to go through. I would hope members of the opposition would not exaggerate things, such as Liberal contracts. I can assure members that Liberals, New Democrats and Conservatives all received contracts in one form or another. I suspect even some Bloc members received contracts—

• (1825)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Unfortunately, time is up for this debate.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

HOUSING

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Madam Speaker, the government has enacted some positive measures through the national housing strategy. The act acknowledges that adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law. This is important and should underpin every measure to address the affordable housing and homelessness crisis in Canada.

For decades the government shifted the responsibility for funding affordable housing onto the provinces and municipalities. It is good to see that changing, because there is no doubt that neglecting that responsibility worsened the current crisis. The housing and homelessness crisis is especially severe in Nanaimo—Ladysmith. Local agencies appreciate the funding sources, but more action is needed in the short and long term.

The forces driving the affordable housing crisis in Canada and around the world need to be addressed. Numerous reports reveal that Canada is an emerging tax haven for the world's ultrawealthy. Canadian real estate is a major vehicle for money laundering, with estimates that in 2018 alone \$5.3 billion was laundered in British Columbia. Unregulated lenders, which are not required to report money laundering, accounted for \$25 billion in residential mortgages in greater Toronto. These illicit activities have had a huge impact on home prices in Canada's major cities.

The government's amendments to the Canada Business Act are a welcome step toward closing tax evasion and money laundering loopholes, but much more needs to be done. The new registry for beneficial owners of privately held federally incorporated companies needs to be public and transparent. Corporate investment in residential real estate, and the financialization of housing, are distorting the market even further and making communities across Canada, both large and small, unaffordable.

In the 10 years following the 2008 market crash, \$28 billion in housing in the Toronto area was acquired by corporate entities including numbered companies, hedge funds and real estate investment trusts. They went beyond traditional investments in multi-unit housing and started purchasing single-family homes as well. Many pension funds were heavily invested in real estate-backed investment packages. It is painful to realize that the workers paying into those pensions are being hurt by the unaffordable home prices and high rents that are the result of predatory real estate investment practices.

I often hear Liberal and Conservative members of the House bragging about how Canada is one of the most open jurisdictions when it comes to foreign direct investment. This is not something to brag about when it comes to the impact of foreign investment on housing affordability. We need stronger regulations to stop this free-for-all.

The increased price of housing drives up the cost of rent. Renters are often forced to move when the home they live in is sold and new landlords increase rent or engage in renovations. Finding a new home with a comparable rent is often impossible. Transfers to the provinces should be contingent on stronger rental protections or national standards for rent and vacancy controls. The rental subsidy for low-income renters is a band-aid solution to help people with rising rents, when in reality it is a transfer of taxpayer dollars to private landlords who may be engaged in the predatory practices I have already outlined.

Affordable rental housing created through the rental construction financing initiative should have covenants in place to ensure the units remain affordable rather than allowing them to convert to market-rate housing in just 10 years. To guarantee long-term af-

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

fordability, investing in non-profit and co-op housing needs to be the focus of the national housing strategy.

**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 suspect we would have to go back 50 years or more to see a government, particularly a prime minister and a number of cabinet ministers, that has committed so much in financial resources and striven to get strategic plans before Canadians to deal with the housing issue.

Our government is focused on making changes that help as many Canadians as possible, including their ability to afford safe and adequate places to call home. This challenge is particularly true in Canada's largest cities, where a limited supply of affordable housing is making it harder for many Canadians to afford homes of their own. COVID-19 has exacerbated the existing housing affordability and the homelessness issue and called attention to the public health risks of substandard and crowded living quarters. Affordable housing is also essential for economic fairness and growth.

The hon. member has noted that speculative demand from foreign non-resident investors is contributing to the unaffordable housing prices for many Canadians in some of the biggest cities. To help make the housing market more secure and affordable for Canadians, the government has committed to ensuring that foreign non-resident owners who simply use Canada as a place to passively store their wealth in housing pay their fair share. That is why, in the fall economic statement, the government indicated it would take steps over the coming year to implement a national tax-based measure targeting the unproductive use of domestic housing owned by non-residents and non-Canadians.

Such a measure would ensure that foreign non-resident owners of Canadian residential real estate are contributing to Canada's tax base, either by paying income tax or rental income or through a tax on unproductive use of residential real estate. The fall economic statement also proposed to expand the existing rental construction financing initiative by \$12 billion over the next seven years. This initiative provides low-cost loans for the construction of new purpose-built rental housing. The expansion will enable the program to support the construction of 28,500 additional rental units and employment in residential construction and other skilled trades.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

This government is committed to doing whatever we can to ensure that homes are affordable for Canadians, and we are looking at ways to make a difference for as many Canadians as possible. I often talk about Habitat for Humanity, a non-profit organization that really makes a difference in Winnipeg North. Through that program, people are getting new homes in communities where they would never have had the opportunity before. It is not just about the federal government working with other levels of government; it is about engaging and supporting non-profit organizations wherever we can. I cite Habitat for Humanity for the fine work it has done in Winnipeg North, in particular, but obviously also in all regions of the province and in most regions, from what I understand, in Canada.

● (1830)

**Mr. Paul Manly:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate what the government is doing, but I believe that we need to be doing more. We need national standards to protect tenants with rent and vacancy controls. This should be tied to federal transfers to the provinces. Affordable housing created through the rental construction financing initiative should be protected with covenants so that it remains affordable. Foreign investments in residential real estate need to be heavily regulated or banned. The tax exemption for real estate investment trusts should be abolished and replaced with incentives to protect affordable rental housing.

Finally, I would challenge my hon. colleague to browse through some Canadian real estate listings and count how many times the words “investor alert” are applied to affordable properties. Canadians who are trying to buy affordable homes are competing directly with investors. This needs to end.

● (1835)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, every Canadian should have the ability to afford a safe and adequate place to call home.

The government is committed to ensuring that Canada's residential housing stock is not used unproductively by foreign or non-resident investors. More generally, the government is committed to a fair tax system so that it has the resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and to fund the programs and services on which Canadians rely.

The government is providing \$1 billion in funding through the rapid housing initiative. The funding in this initiative is available to municipalities, provinces and territories, indigenous governing bodies and organizations, and non-profit organizations. The funding is to be used for the construction of modular housing, as well as the acquisition of land and the conversion of existing buildings into affordable housing units.

Our plan is to continue to invest in Canadians and their families, so that the growth of Canada—

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

The hon. member for Kenora.

## INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to join the debate today to speak about an issue of immense importance to people across the riding of Kenora and across Canada, and that is the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Before the parliamentary break, I raised this issue in question period, asking when the government would confirm it would be able to provide its action plan, as promised, on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. However, I was not able to get an answer. I am hoping I will get an answer today.

As we know, the national inquiry released its final report in June of 2019. The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations had promised to release the government's action plan in one year's time. Of course, one year's time would have been last June. We are now into 2021, and the government has yet to show us that action plan.

I worry that this promise could follow a fate similar to the government's pledge to end all long-term drinking water advisories. We know the government had to walk that promise back very recently. We also know that the government has been using COVID-19 as an excuse not just for the lack of an action plan but also for the issue of the drinking water advisories, as well as many other issues.

Especially during a pandemic that has put vulnerable indigenous women and girls at an even greater risk because they may be separated from their support systems or perhaps stuck in a situation where there could be further harm, I believe the need for this plan is quite urgent, and I know the government recognizes that urgency.

It is also quite unfortunate this issue seems to disproportionately impact my riding. Over the last eight years, as I noted previously in the House, half of Ontario's identified cases took place in the Kenora district. That is why I am seeking these answers. I hope the government can provide them for us.

As I was not able to get a clear answer last time, I would like to ask once again if the government could tell us when its national action plan will be released.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, let me begin by acknowledging that I am speaking to you from the unceded territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit.

I always enjoy the interventions of my hon. colleague and friend from Kenora at the INAN committee and I look forward to working with him on this issue.

We share the sense of urgency of the hon. member and many Canadians. Our hearts are with the survivors and the families of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, two-spirit and gender diverse people.



In response to the first-ever national public inquiry regarding this ongoing national tragedy, our government is working with all provincial and territorial governments as well as indigenous leaders, survivors and families to develop a national action plan that sets a clear road map to ensure that indigenous women and girls, two-spirit and gender diverse people are safe.

As the Speech from the Throne and the minister's mandate letter highlighted, the co-development of the national action plan is a priority of our government and work is under way through a series of working groups led by indigenous women, with families and survivors at the centre of this work. The national action plan is being guided by families, survivors and grassroots community groups, and we will respond to this national tragedy in a progressive, accountable and enduring manner with an investment of \$30 million over five years to support this indigenous-led engagement.

With our partners, including over 100 indigenous women, we will ensure that the proper indicators and measurements will allow the plan to be accountable for results and can evolve over time. The groups are also comprised of indigenous governments and organizations, federal, provincial and territorial governments, two-spirit and LGBTQ organization leaders, family members and survivors.

As the member knows, our government also did not wait to act to ensure indigenous women and girls, two-spirit and LGBTQ+ people would be safe wherever they lived. We have been working since 2015 to address the systemic issues that contribute to this tragedy and our collective work continues.

We have passed legislation to address the child and family services system, to preserve and protect indigenous language and culture, to toughen criminal law in cases of domestic assault and to eliminate gender discrimination under the Indian Act, while also making historic investments in education, housing, policing and shelters.

We are ensuring that we get this right for survivors and families, to honour those lost and to protect future generations. The resulting national action plan will be distinctions-based, regionally relevant, durable and accountable, ensuring we make progress on ending vio-

lence against indigenous women and girls, two-spirit and LGBTQ people. We will continue to focus on prevention, healing and putting in place concrete measures to end this national tragedy.

• (1840)

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate a lot of what the parliamentary secretary had to say. Unfortunately, he was not able to answer the question again, specifically on the timeline. Could he provide more detail of the work the Liberals are doing? I know they are doing some good work on this file.

Is he able to provide any sense of what the timeline will look like? As he knows, many people are waiting to see this action plan, and hope to see it very soon.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** Madam Speaker, I want to assure the member that we look forward to working with him on this and will be in a better position to give him more detailed observations in person due to the limitations of time.

In the fall economic statement, our government has demonstrated the ongoing commitment to responding with concrete action to the issues identified in the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls calls to justice. As part of our work to develop a distinctions-based national action plan, the fall economic statement will invest an additional \$781.5 million over five years and \$106.3 million ongoing to combat systemic discrimination against indigenous peoples and expand efforts to combat violence against indigenous women and girls, two-spirit and LGBTQ people.

Our government is working with all partners to ensure we get this right for survivors and families. We will not let survivors and families down. We look forward to working with him on this issue.

[*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 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:44 p.m.)



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