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Tuesday, May 11, 2021

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 11, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)
[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources in relation to Bill S-3, an act to amend the Offshore Health and Safety Act. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

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PETITIONS

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have four petitions to present this morning.

The first petition is in support of Bill S-204, a bill that has just passed the Senate and that I presented to the House yesterday. The bill would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without the consent of the person it came from. This bill has been before the House in various forms for approaching 15 years. The petitioners are very hopeful that this will be the Parliament that finally gets these measures passed into law.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, in particular in China, and it calls on the government to use tools such as the Magnitsky act to sanction those responsible for the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition highlights the humanitarian and human rights situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Petitioners are calling for various actions by the Government of Canada

to respond to these events, including an international investigation into credible reports of war crimes and gross violations of human rights law. The petitioners and others are concerned about broader issues of human rights and intercommunal tensions in Ethiopia and are calling for greater engagement from the Government of Canada on them.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth and final petition I am presenting in the House today is with respect to Bill C-6. Petitioners are supportive of efforts to ban conversion therapy. They are also concerned about the definition of conversion therapy that is used in Bill C-6 and the effect it would have of prohibiting private conversations and the expression of personal views in conversation, things that, in reality, have nothing to do with conversion therapy but that could be falsely defined as such, based on drafting problems with the bill. Petitioners implore the House and the government to work toward a version of the bill that actually bans conversion therapy and to get that bill passed into law as quickly as possible.

I commend these four petitions to the consideration of members.

TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting virtually this morning a petition from a number of constituents concerning the Trans Mountain pipeline. The constituents initially launched this petition at a time when the Government of Canada had not finalized the purchase, but the points remaining to continue to present this petition relate to the fact that diluted bitumen has no scientific way to be cleaned up, which the petitioners emphasize puts the areas in which the Aframax tankers in largely increased numbers would transit from the Port of Burnaby to other ports at an unacceptable level of risk to the marine ecosystem. They call on the government to cease any federal spending on completing the Trans Mountain pipeline or purchasing it.

Speaker's Ruling

TRAVEL ADVISERS

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House and present this petition regarding the dire financial circumstances facing over 12,000 independent travel advisers across Canada. Over 12,000 Canadians have been forced into near bankruptcy, slipping through the massive cracks of the government's inept COVID response. These travel advisers have been left to languish, excluded from all COVID business assistance packages. This petition calls for the House to immediately get sector-specific funding to these long-suffering business owners.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two e-petitions to present today.

The first petition is related to animal testing for cosmetics. The over 600 petitioners would like the Canadian government to examine some of the other practices around the world, particularly in Europe, and update our laws accordingly.

• (1010)

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second e-petition, which is very dear to my heart, is regarding the interprovincial transit of Canadian wine, beer and spirits. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to support Bill C-260.

Unfortunately, the Minister of Finance did not include such measures in the budget bill this time, but I am hopeful that, by hook or by crook, we will see interprovincial trade of beer, wine and spirits in Canada. It should not be a crime to share some of the good ales and fine drinks across this great country.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED MISLEADING COMMENTS BY THE PRIME MINISTER—
SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on April 28, 2021 by the member for Portage—Lisgar concerning allegedly misleading statements made by the Prime Minister.

The member argued that the Prime Minister, by denying he knew of allegations of sexual misconduct against General Vance in 2018, intentionally misled the House during Oral Questions. In support of that allegation, she presented internal emails from the Privy Council Office and testimony given before the Standing Committee on

National Defence. The member then reviewed the precedents in this matter. Following this, she intervened again to point out that, when there is some doubt on the matter, the Chair should let the House decide, while stressing the importance of clarity for the deliberations and the integrity of the information provided by the government.

The member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke then argued that it would hinder members' work if they were misled in order to prevent them from holding the government accountable. In order to determine whether some officials were negligent, members must know whether the Prime Minister or staff within his office were aware of the allegations. He also urged the Chair to take note of the testimony given before the Standing Committee on National Defence.

[Translation]

In response, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons stated that the Prime Minister had not misled the House and that his answers had remained consistent.

The House leader covered in detail the points raised by the member for Portage—Lisgar while citing the statements, emails and committee testimony. He argued that the facts had been twisted to raise doubt about the Prime Minister's statements. He indicated that a simple doubt was not enough to establish a prima facie question of privilege and that, in this case, there was no possible doubt.

The member for Rivière-du-Nord added that there were differences between the Prime Minister's statements and the testimony heard by the Standing Committee on National Defence. He also urged the Chair to take note of the testimony and asked that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for clarifications.

[English]

The question of privilege which the Chair has been asked to rule on is the following: Did the Prime Minister's responses during Oral Questions contain contradictions that would allow one to conclude that he intentionally misled the House?

To answer this question, three elements must be proven to convince the Chair that statements were deliberately misleading: First, the statement must effectively be misleading or manifestly contradictory; second, the author of the statement must know, in making the statement, that it is false; third, the member intended to mislead the House.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Before continuing, I would be remiss if I did not mention the unusual nature of the argument put forward by the members. A thorough review of precedents, including those to which the member for Portage—Lisgar referred, shows and reveals a common trait. The remarks under review were always those made by a single member. In this case, what is being proposed is a review not only of the Prime Minister's responses, but also of the context in which they were made. The Chair is being asked, in fact, to conduct this review in light of the proceedings of a standing committee relating to a study currently under way. There is no precedent where the Chair has used testimony from a committee without there being a report on the subject.

● (1015)

[English]

This aspect of the matter is a concern for the Chair. It is not for the Speaker to untangle the committee evidence to determine who knew what and when. Such an initiative would trespass on the role of committee members and constitute a breach of my duty to act with impartiality. It is up to the committee to continue its own study and to inform the House of its conclusions, if it deems it appropriate, as has been the tradition.

[Translation]

In this respect, the scope of my mandate is thus limited. The question of privilege raised is tantamount to asking the Chair to, on the one hand, compare the responses given by the Prime Minister during question period and, on the other hand, rule on his intention when those responses were provided.

More broadly, as Speaker Milliken summed it up on April 21, 2005, at page 5412 of Debates:

In the present case, I must determine whether the minister's responses in any way impeded members in the performance of their parliamentary duties and whether the remarks were intentionally misleading.

[English]

When previous questions of privilege concerning misleading statements have been deemed to be prima facie questions of privilege, the three elements to be proven to convince the Chair that the statements were deliberately misleading were clearly satisfied. In the example cited by the member for Portage—Lisgar from February 1, 2002, at pages 8,581 and 8,582 of Debates, and in a similar case from March 3, 2014, at pages 3,430 and 3,431 of Debates, the members involved admitted that they had made false declarations. In both cases, given the indisputable evidence before the House, previous Speakers ruled on February 1, 2002 and March 3, 2014, at the aforementioned pages in Debates, that a prima facie case had been established. Given the contradictory statements made by the members in each case, my predecessors determined that there was no choice but to have the situation referred to the appropriate committee for further consideration.

[Translation]

With respect to the question of privilege before us, I have reviewed the responses to Oral Questions offered by the Prime Minister on March 10, 11 and 24, 2021, and on April 27, 2021. The Chair did not find contradictions in them or elements that would allow

one to conclude that they are misleading statements. There is thus no reason to continue this analysis.

[English]

I acknowledge that some members think that the Prime Minister's responses are contradicted by the information presented in committee, while others maintain that the same information confirms the validity of his responses. These disagreements occur frequently in the House, and it is not the Chair's role to adjudicate them. In the event that members are clearly and deliberately misled by deceptive statements, the Chair may have a role to play to ensure that members can perform their duties. Based on the information I have, that is not the case here.

Thus, the Chair cannot conclude that the Prime Minister deliberately misled the House. I find that there is no prima facie question of privilege.

[Translation]

I thank the hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1020)

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2021, NO. 1

The House resumed from May 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-30, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 19, 2021 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in the debate today. It is our second day of looking at the budget implementation act, Bill C-30. Given that the budget was over 700 pages long and the budget implementation act is over 300 pages, I will start at a higher level of extraction by examining the nature of this legislation and refamiliarizing some of us with the controversial issue of omnibus bills.

This is clearly an omnibus bill, but I want to set out why it is not offensive. At over 300 pages long, the budget implementation act contains well over 20 acts. It affects the Canada Labour Code, the Federal Courts Act, the Trust and Loan Companies Act, two different varieties of student loans and student financial assistance. I will not read them all, but a large number of pieces of legislation are affected.

Government Orders

The issue of illegitimate omnibus budget bills takes us back to the era of the Harper administration in a minority. They were the best way to push through offensive legislation when parties that formed the majority of the members of Parliament, but were not the administration, would have objected. With the use of offensive omnibus budget bills, the Conservative government quite shrewdly discerned that it could put through things that would not otherwise get public support or MP support, given that they are confidence votes. It put through things such as the Budget Implementation Act 2008 and Budget Implementation Act 2009, which weakened environmental assessment leading up to the majority actions of that government. It continued to put lots of things in budget implementation acts that were omnibus bills.

An omnibus bill merely means that many pieces of legislation are being passed all at once. This is not offensive if it is all to one purpose. Everything in Bill C-30 is mentioned in the budget. As far as I can see, there are no sneaky surprises, as we discovered in a recent budget in which there were deferred prosecution agreements for corporations. As I go through this bill, it is not like the omnibus budget bill of spring 2012 that destroyed our environmental assessment process, which has still not been repaired. It gutted the Fisheries Act and eliminated the national round table, among other things. This is an omnibus bill, but it is appropriate in that everything I can find in Bill C-30 is consistent with the budget itself and has to do with legislative changes to make it possible to enact the budget, which this Parliament has now passed.

There are items of concern. When the bill gets to committee, maybe improvements could be made on some of these, but certainly it is of concern to see withdrawal of supports for important things within our economy during COVID. We are clearly not looking at a post-pandemic budget. After not having had a budget for two years, this budget continues to face times of deep uncertainty. I have had my first vaccine shot. I will wait four months and then get a second shot. With vaccines, we see there is light at the end of the tunnel, but with variants, spikes and economies in various provinces opening up a bit and then closing rapidly, there are a lot of reasons why businesses and individual Canadians will continue to need support.

The notion that we would lower the Canada recovery benefit from the current \$500 a week to \$300 a week by July should be looked at. That is soon, and we may not be ready for that. The wage subsidy is ending by September. A lot of businesses in my riding know for sure that they will need that wage subsidy well beyond September. There are deep concerns particularly in the tourism sector, so I will focus on tourism for a minute.

The tourism sector has received \$500 million in the budget, and that is not nearly enough. We underestimate it, as Canadians and even as parliamentarians. All of us have tourism in our ridings, and collectively across the country tourism's contribution to GDP is roughly the same as the oil sands. It employs far more people, thousands and thousands of them, across Canada in every region, and \$500 million is not adequate to meet the needs of the tourism sector.

• (1025)

Big businesses in my riding, attractions such as Butchart Gardens, would normally have upwards of 700 to 800 employees seasonally. Butchart Gardens did not have anything like that number last summer because it was not open, but the wage subsidy allowed it to keep specialists employed: the hundreds of people who were recruited from around the world as horticulturalists. It simply will not be able to keep that workforce if we do not have a wage subsidy. If it loses that workforce and these specialists, horticulturalists and experts are not able to be employed here, they will go to other countries. Their skills are in demand.

We have a very big concern about the \$500 million provided for tourism and the \$1 billion for promotion. Some of the businesses in my riding feel rather hollowed out by the notion that we will have a billion dollars going to advertising attractions in Canada that cannot stay open.

It is also peculiar that we have a decision by the Department of Transportation that cruise ships on our coasts will not open until February 28, 2022. I have yet to see any justification for that arbitrary date. This is a big concern, because if we are letting people get on airplanes, are saying there are vaccination passports and that people are okay to travel, certainly we should be informed of why there is this arbitrary date. It would continue to damage tourism.

This budget is also very short on support for ground transport. The bus lines of this country, whether Wilson Bus Lines or Maritime Bus, need more connectivity between cities and towns. The support for Via Rail is welcome, at \$491 million, but it is all in the Windsor-Quebec corridor. What about Vancouver to Toronto and Montreal to Halifax? In the absence of Greyhound, the Irving Bus Line and others that run between communities, those routes need daily trains and an expanded economy service.

What is missing again is what we are going to do to improve our financial prospects going forward. If we are not going to be looking at cuts, we need more revenue. There are some new taxes in this budget and some ways to save money. I particularly applaud the idea that the Government of Canada is going to stop spending as much on travel by civil servants: That is a \$1-billion savings over five years. Most of that travel, as we know, was by air. We have learned during COVID that we can find other ways to meet that avoid greenhouse gases and avoid so much travel.

Long-term we need to look at more revenue. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has pointed out that our debt-to-GDP ratio is going to level out at about 51%. It was about 30.6% before the pandemic, and it will be 2055 before we get to pre-pandemic debt-to-GDP ratios. In 1995-96, we were at 66%, but we do not want to go through that deep austerity program ever again. We have to protect our health system. We have to expand it with pharmacare, which should have been in this budget and was not.

We need to look at where we can get more revenue and be consistent. For heaven's sake, it is time to stop subsidizing fossil fuels. It is time to cancel the Trans Mountain pipeline, which is going to cost another \$10 billion to \$12 billion. We are looking at excess profits from our banks. We should be going after those. We should be looking at a wealth tax. We certainly do not do enough in this budget. It suggests consultations on what to do about credit card interest rates and horrific payday loans. Those things need more attention.

We need to look at improving the revenue line so that we can afford universal pharmacare, which we must, and so that we can make sure the day care program takes place across the country for all Canadians. As well, we need to bring in support initially for low-income dental and get rid of the interest on Canadian student loans. All those need revenue in their appropriate place. With that, I am thankful for the time to speak to Bill C-30.

• (1030)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always appreciate the words of the member. She is very helpful, especially related to our Porcupine Caribou herd, which I will mention later. I thank her for clarifying the omnibus bill. All budget implementation acts are omnibus bills because they have to deal with so many bills and departments.

To clarify, there are \$1 billion for tourism. It is \$500 million directly to tourism, \$100 million to marketing and \$400 million to tourism events such as festivals and museums. On top of the existing support programs that are being extended, there is \$700 million for business financing and expansion of the small business financing program.

I wanted to thank the member for her great support over the years for the protection of the Porcupine Caribou herd that has so much effect on the Gwich'in people. Hopefully, she supports the \$24 million for pan-Arctic scientific research through the polar continental shelf program, which many MPs might not know of, but is very important—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, that is very generous praise for my work from the member for Yukon. My work to protect the Porcupine Caribou herd, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge just across the border from Yukon, is nothing compared with what the hon. member for Yukon has done. He was their champion well before I went into politics. We have worked together for decades.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. It was interesting to hear what she had to say about tourism in particular.

I would like to turn to another topic. In the budget, the government says it will send seniors 75 and up a \$500 cheque. The budget also says old age security will probably go up next year, but that is a whole year from now. It is creating two classes of seniors: those 75 and up and those under 75.

Government Orders

In Quebec papers this weekend, the seniors' federation spoke up, saying that seniors were not yet satisfied and were really angry. There is no reason to believe that a senior under 75 is poorer than one over 75.

What does my colleague think of the fact that this budget creates two classes of seniors?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

It is clear that nothing justifies creating two classes of seniors.

I myself am 66 years old. Seniors have been given no explanation for this decision. I completely agree with my colleague.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, during the member for Yukon's intervention, he thanked the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her clarity around omnibus bills. I thought she was quite clear. I have more a comment, not a question.

A large budget implementation act tabled by a Conservative government is bad, but a large budget implementation act that touches on different acts across the operation of government is good.

It was clear and I did understand very carefully what she was saying.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I am afraid to say that the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge misunderstood entirely what I was saying. I did point out that the Liberals had included a change to the Criminal Code that was not required on the notion of deferred prosecution. That was a specific measure as a result of lobbying by SNC-Lavalin. That should never have been in a budget implementation bill, but that was one measure.

The spring 2012 omnibus budget bill and the fall 2012 omnibus budget bill brought in measures never mentioned in the budget, such as getting rid of scrutiny over some of our spy agencies in the fall omnibus budget bill, killing the environmental assessment process in the spring omnibus budget bill, and getting rid of the Kyoto implementation act. Again, these were not mentioned in the budget.

The previous administration created monstrous omnibus budget bills without connection to the budget itself. It was quite different.

Government Orders

• (1035)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, all of us in this place know that so many Canadians have suffered great loss over the course of this pandemic. Some of us have also been affected by some of that loss. Whether it has been loss of life, health or paycheques, we know this past year has been extremely difficult. Certainly, we know no Canadian has been immune. All Canadians have experienced a loss of control and a loss of normalcy. It has been two years in the making, with Canadians across the country desperate and anxious to turn the corner on the pandemic.

There was a lot of expectation for the recently tabled budget. Unfortunately, for far too many, this budget fell flat, but by no means for a lack of spending. We know the Prime Minister has added \$155 billion in new debt this year alone, and Canada's federal debt will pass \$1.2 trillion this year for the first time ever. The government has tried to paint all its spending as stimulus spending, but that is not accurate. Yes, some spending will help stimulate the economy, but significant amounts are being spent on the Liberal government's own partisan interests.

Simply put, this is a spending budget, not a growth budget. The limited amount of funds being spent on stimulus have been confirmed by our Parliamentary Budget Officer, who also cautioned that continued debts and deficits will limit the government's future ability to introduce new permanent programs without cuts or tax increases. That fact is simply unavoidable. Massive deficit spending is unsustainable. It jeopardizes the long-term sustainability of the many social programs that many Canadians depends on. It limits the government's ability to react to future challenges and ultimately leads to higher taxes.

It is a hard truth that the Liberal government wanted to ignore the pandemic, but Canadians footing the bill will not have the luxury of ignoring it. Missing from the budget are focused spending on long-term growth and a clear plan to reopen Canada's economy safely. Unfortunately, that means more uncertainty for my constituents. This budget abandons the natural resource sector, one of the greatest contributors to our national prosperity, as a fiscal anchor. While the Liberal government's disregard for the energy sector is not a shock to any of my constituents, who depend on jobs in the industry to put food on the table and keep the lights on, it is nonetheless devastating for those workers who have lost their jobs, had their wages cut or are seeing opportunities and businesses in their industry dwindle. There is no support for them in this budget.

Emergency wage supports are not a meaningful replacement for a stable and predictable paycheque. That is exactly what Canadians want, stable and predictable paycheques. Our oil and gas workers have taken hit after hit at the hands of the Liberal government and now continue to be overlooked as the Prime Minister fails to see the financial and environmental opportunities in the oil and gas sector. That failure has a massive impact on my constituents, but the missed opportunity will ultimately be felt by all Canadians, who also benefit from the success of this sector.

Similarly, consistently overlooked and undervalued by the government are our farmers and farm families. While the budget introduces some measures to alleviate some of the ballooning costs fac-

ing our agricultural producers, it cannot be lost that it is the Liberal government's policies that are burying those agricultural producers in costs. The Liberal government has repeatedly failed to recognize the significant financial, food security and environmental contributions of our world-class agricultural sector.

• (1040)

The Liberal government's unfocused spending and failure to deliver a growth plan lets Canadians down. It lets down western Canadians, who do not see themselves or their livelihoods in the Liberal government's reimagined economy. It lets down those Canadians who have lost their jobs during the pandemic and do not know what the future holds. It lets down those Canadians who cannot afford more taxes and are already struggling to make ends meet, which includes low-income seniors, who were left out of this budget.

We know that seniors have been disproportionately impacted by this pandemic, from health to social isolation to financial costs. Not one senior has been immune to the fallout of this pandemic. Despite this, seniors have never really been a priority for the Prime Minister. The supports that are included in this budget and its legislation are either short on details or leave too many seniors behind.

Prior to the budget, Conservatives called on the Prime Minister to deliver increased financial supports for low-income seniors. The proposed one-time payment and the increase to old age security do nothing to support low-income seniors under the age of 75. For those seniors aged 74 and under who are facing an increased cost of living and unexpected costs due to the pandemic, and who are struggling with overstretched budgets, there is no support.

As shadow minister for seniors, I have been hearing from seniors from across the country who are upset and who feel forgotten. I share in their disappointment. Instead of focusing on spending on seniors who need it the most, the Liberal government has divided seniors. Our seniors, who have worked hard and helped build this country, should not be struggling to make ends meet. They deserve to live securely and with dignity, and this includes seniors living in long-term care.

The pandemic has sadly revealed how far we have missed the mark in ensuring the health and well-being of our seniors living in long-term care. Every level of government has a responsibility to Canada's seniors. We know that federal support is necessary to address the acute challenges in long-term care. While this budget proposes significant spending, there are unanswered questions on how it will be delivered.

The Liberal government has made many announcements, but seniors living in long-term care, their families and those who care for them need us to move beyond announcements. We need a federal government working in collaboration with provinces, territories, seniors advocates and caregiving organizations to ensure that meaningful and appropriate solutions are delivered in the immediate and the short-term. Collaboration is crucial to moving the needle.

As we look to improve the continuum of housing and care needs, aging in place is an important part of that conversation. It is good to see supports in this area, though the budget is short on details. However, noticeably absent from this budget is recognition or support for caregivers. There is also no clear plan for seniors concerned about managing their retirement savings through this crisis and beyond. Seniors deserve to live in dignity and security, but this Liberal budget leaves too many behind.

The potential permanent impact of unfocused and uncontrolled spending is also greatly concerning. Massive deficit spending without a clear plan for growth jeopardizes the long-term viability of our health care system and important social programs. It is critical that social programs, such as old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, continue to be viable in the long term for those seniors who depend on them. That is why Conservatives have put forward a recovery plan that is focused on long-term growth.

Canadians do not need the Liberal government to spend the most money to achieve less than our global counterparts. They do not need massive spending that fails to grow the economy, and instead saddles them and their children with higher taxes. Canadians need measures that create jobs and boost economic growth. They need a plan to safely reopen our economy. They need a plan that includes them regardless of where they live or what sector of the economy they work in.

Canadians want to return to normal and get back to work. Unfortunately, this legislation fails to do that. It leaves millions of Canadians behind. It is time for a real path forward.

• (1045)

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I very much enjoy serving with the hon. member on the standing committee for human resources. She talked about support for seniors and discrimination against seniors of different ages. In the very budget the Conservatives presented upon gaining a majority, they increased the age of eligibility for old age security for seniors from age 65 to 67. I presented a private member's motion to have this reversed, which the Conservatives defeated.

The rationale at the time was that people were living and working longer, and therefore, there was no need for support between age 65 and 67. Is that still the policy of the Conservative Party of Canada?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, I also enjoy serving with the hon. member on our committee. I will say that we heard the 10% increase for OAS for seniors age 75 and up was a campaign promise in 2019. It still has not been implemented, and I am not going to take any lessons from the Liberal government.

Government Orders

Liberals did not think that seniors were a priority when they had a majority last term, and they did not appoint a minister of seniors until very well into their term.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks of the fact that the government is behaving a bit like it has too much money. It is interfering in areas of provincial jurisdiction, when it is not even fulfilling its basic responsibilities, including transferring money for health from the federal taxes it collects from Quebec and the provinces. We know that all the provinces and Quebec are calling for increased health transfers.

Health care systems across the board are at a breaking point at the cost of human lives during a pandemic. Why not increase health transfers instead of interfering in Quebec's jurisdictions?

[*English*]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, I very much am a big advocate for respecting provincial jurisdiction. I definitely think federal government needs to act where a federal government can and provinces need to act where they need to as well.

I think this speaks to the failure of the Liberals and their plan to prepare for this pandemic and also their planning that has failed altogether going through this pandemic. What this budget fails to do is have a plan to reopen the economy. If government keeps spending the way it is, we are going to lose supports for programs such as OAS and GIS, which many Canadians rely on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. If we want to be able to have good public services for the long term, whether in health or to help the most vulnerable, like our seniors, we need to have the necessary revenues.

In that sense, there is nothing in the Liberal budget for collecting money from those who have it, in other words, companies such as Amazon, with its billions of dollars in profits, or web giants that are still not paying their taxes in Canada. We are also still not seeing a wealth tax.

Are those not things that the Conservatives would like to see in order to increase government revenues and avoid cuts in public services?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, what I would like to see is the Liberal government reduce its burdensome regulations on the oil and gas sector, which provides a lot of supports for many provinces, whether that is OAS, GIS, health care, schools and transfer payments. I would like to see the burden of the red tape and the regulations go away, so we can see increased revenue from our oil and gas sector.

- (1050)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people are starting to be cautiously hopeful. As vaccines roll out and we approach herd immunity, Canadians can dream, once again, of something approaching normality. What the new normal might be is, of course, anyone's guess. However, some people are starting to turn to thinking about how we are going to pay for the debts and deficits that have been necessarily incurred over the course of the last 14 months. Some 74% of Canadians are worried about the budget deficit, and it is a legitimate worry.

The government rightly injected billions of dollars into the economy. Looking at the charts in this 700-page budget, much of the money is sitting in Canadian savings accounts. I perceive that to be a good thing. Canadians have been notorious under-savers, more spenders than savers, but now, not quite so much.

Chart 22 in the budget shows that 8% of nominal GDP, year over year, has been put into savings accounts. That is a huge amount of money. It is such a huge amount of money that it will be looking for spending opportunities as we emerge from the pandemic. As it says in the budget documents, it may well become a bit of a tailwind to the economy.

However, what happens when significant excess money is released into the economy, money looking for places to be spent, generally speaking prices go up. Labour becomes more expensive, the cost of goods and services climbs and people's savings do not get them as much as before. Then we have another problem, and that is called inflation.

An article in *The Globe and Mail* caught my eye the other day. It was about the perceived mismatch between the consumer price index, CPI, and people's lived experience. The price of shelter rose 2.4% last year, which was consistent with the CPI of 2.2%, well within the Bank of Canada's inflationary band. Meanwhile, the average resale price of a home went up 32%. This is a mismatch between people's lived experience and the official numbers. As one commentator put it:

That leads to a cost-of-living indicator that doesn't quite reflect what consumers see and feel, and an inflation indicator that doesn't quite reflect the long-term cost of owned housing relative to other things we buy.... To that point, there is a consistent mismatch between CPI inflation as Statscan measures it and how Canadians typically perceive inflation.

The article goes on in great detail as to the various means to measure inflation, a quite academic debate which I will spare the House.

However, in an online survey conducted by the Bank of Canada last year, 55% of the respondents said that 2% inflation was not a realistic representation of their experience of inflation, while 66% of respondents believed that the inflation in Canada was generally

higher than 2%. All of the budgetary calculations are based upon a range of 2% to 3% inflation and a clear determination by the Bank of Canada to keep interest rates very low. The Governor of the Bank of Canada has repeated himself several times on that point.

The reason that Canadians are concerned about the size of the deficit is the fear that it will become overwhelmingly expensive to the detriment of other initiatives if inflation takes off and therefore interest rates take off. On the present consensus of numbers generated by the absolute best economists in Canada, Canada can afford a very large deficit and debt-to-GDP ratio.

- (1055)

Historically, we have been here before. Post-World War II, we had a debt-to-GDP ratio in the neighbourhood of 116% and, in 1995, we were named an honorary member of the Third World. At the time, we had a 67% debt to GDP. By virtue of economic expansion and some prudent measures, we were able to deal with those situations, and they were worse than what we are presently experiencing, which is a debt-to-GDP ratio around 50%, give or take, projected forward for the next five years.

However, there is a lingering doubt that the CPI does not quite get the picture right, not on housing, not on shelter, not on food, not on lumber, not on steel, not on cement. In this morning's *Globe and Mail*, the article entitled, "Copper hits record high", is a commentary on the rise of the price of copper, which is used for everything, from plumbing to electricity to alternative energy as well as Chinese supply-side jitters and accommodating monetary policy, which is motivating companies to ramp up spending.

Virginia-based trader, Dennis Gartman, said, "The monetary authorities, whether it's the Fed, the Bank of Canada, the Bank of Japan, the Bank of England, have all been extraordinarily expansionary. Copper, lead, zinc, aluminum, tin, iron ore, steel, are telling you something's going on in the global economy." He added, "This is inflationary, and this is more than transitory circumstances. This is secular in nature." This is where it might end badly.

I started by talking about Canadians having massive amounts of money in their savings accounts, some of which will go to feed a pent-up demand. What will happen if Canadians go to spend their money and inflation has eroded their pandemic savings account? It will create a lot of very unhappy and upset Canadians. As the great philosopher, Wayne Gretzky, once said, one should go to "where the puck is going, not where it has been." There are indications out there where the puck is going to inflation and if it goes to inflation, we will have yet another problem.

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I commend the government on its handling of the pandemic finances thus far, but we, as Canadians, need to recognize that the inflationary pressures are there. How we handle them will largely determine how we get through this period of “normalcy”.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is the type of debate we need, where we discuss important issues before the House, and inflation and his concern about it should be duly noted.

I am very pleased to hear the member raise inflation. At finance committee, for example, the testimony from officials and members of the government, members of his caucus, has largely not shared the urgency around getting a handle on ensuring that inflation does not harm Canadians in the months and years to come. The lived experience tells Canadians that prices on the critical things they need have gone up, like heating homes, rent and the price of a home, which has gone up 30% across Canada during the pandemic. I would ask the member to continue with his concern on inflation.

• (1100)

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I am glad to hear that the finance committee is actually debating this issue.

I do not profess to be a world-leading economist, but I have lived through the stagflation of the 1970s, the erosion of people's savings and the mismatch between what inflation was doing to their assets and to their income.

The issue is whether the CPI is actually measuring the right things. The argument is that the CPI measures the Canadian economy well and its inflation well during non-pandemic times, but during a pandemic, it may not be measuring quite the right things. This an interesting debate and I hope the finance committee carries on with that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood for his speech.

He spoke about inflation and purchasing power. Purchasing power is indeed shrinking, especially under the current circumstances. I wonder what my colleague and his party think about increasing old age security for seniors aged 75 and over.

He mentioned numerous complaints, including some from seniors, about the loss of purchasing power. Seniors aged 65 to 75 are complaining about the unfair decision to increase the pension only for seniors aged 75 and older.

What does my colleague think about this very sensitive issue?

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, it is an issue, but the first point I would make is that if inflation does take off, it erodes everybody's purchasing power, seniors and non-seniors alike.

The second point I would like to make is that the government had to pick one age, whether it is 70, 75, even 80 or whatever, because the government's finances are not unlimited. Therefore, the choice was to support those who were the most vulnerable, and it was deemed that those people over 75 had the least flexibility in

their financing and therefore needed the most support, most immediately.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, as we know, there is a fair deal to look at in the budget, but one of the areas we have yet to see action on is when it comes to reinforcing the powers of the Canadian ombudsperson for responsible business enterprise. The government has failed to create an independent office with real powers to investigate abuses and redress the harms caused by Canadian companies, particularly mining companies operating abroad. This is not acceptable. We know that Canadian mining companies the world over are wreaking havoc.

How important is it for the government to step up and have the power to stop the rampant exploitation in which we see companies engage in the name of our country?

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I have three points. The first is that the ombudsperson is a serious person and very capable. The second is that the government did give her a decent budget. The third is that she is right; we should have the appropriate suite of powers for the ombudsperson.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, what a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to this bill for the budget implementation act. I listened carefully to the previous speaker from the Liberal Party and wanted to say a couple of things in regard to working with him. I note, with appreciation, that back in 2017, he was the only Liberal member of Parliament who broke the whip on the Canadian autism partnership and voted in support of it in 2017, along with members from all of the opposition parties. I very much appreciate him for that.

I also appreciated the member quoting Wayne Gretzky. In my previous life before I was a member of Parliament, I worked for the Edmonton Oilers for a decade, and so I very much appreciated that speech. I loved the quote that he used. One of the things that was key to Wayne Gretzky's success was practice. His father had a reputation for building a rink in their backyard and Wayne would go out for hours on end just practising. One of the keys to practising, of course, is repeating something learned from the past, which is where I will turn my comments to now.

The member said that in regards to where we are going right now that it “might end badly.” This is of great concern to members on the Conservative side and to my constituents here in Edmonton—Wetaskiwin that this might end badly.

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In regard to learning from the past, I was very interested when the Liberal member for Scarborough—Guildwood said that “in 1995, we were named as an honorary member of the third world.” I listened with interest because that was where I was planning to go with my own speech. Of course, in 1995, Canada’s credit rating went down under the Chrétien and Martin Liberal government of the day. We slashed spending on things like health care, social services and education. We slashed international development spending; all of those things. Our spending was the lowest that has been in my lifetime. I am concerned that that is where we are heading right now. I am going to talk a little bit about what got us there in 1995 and the late nineties where, as the member said, we were named as an honorary member of the third world. To find out what got us to that point, we will have to go back to the Trudeau government of 1968 and the seventies.

When Pierre Trudeau and his Liberal government came to power, there was almost no debt in Canada. There was very little debt, relative to where we are right now, and that Trudeau government decided to conduct an experiment. It decided that running perpetual deficits was a good idea. It ran deficits in 14 out of the 15 years that it was in power. Of course, when the Liberals were no longer in power, interest rates were at an all-time high. There have been some comments about interest rates in some of the speeches so far. However, interest rates were not at an all-time high the entire time the Liberals were in power. When they were making decisions to run their massive deficit experiment, interest rates were much lower.

To give context, in August of 1981, interest rates were at 20.78%, which was a disaster for Canada. That was just before the equally disastrous national energy program experiment that the Trudeau government at that time ran. In August of 1971, 10 years earlier, as the government was just in its third year of power, interest rates were at 5%. By August of 1976, interest rates had risen from 5% to 9.25%, and by August of 1981 they had gone up to 20.78%. Folks who think that interest rates are just going to remain low forever maybe need a little bit of a history lesson, maybe to go back in time and take a look at what happened in the 1970s.

• (1105)

There was a transition of power in 1984 to the Mulroney government and the Liberals, pre-pandemic, prior to the massive deficit spending, liked to point out that in previous decades the highest levels of debt were incurred under the Mulroney government. What they do not say is that the debt incurred, the deficits run up, under the Mulroney government were almost entirely interest on Pierre Trudeau’s debt. The interest levels were so high that our biggest deficits in history were simply interest payments on the debt that Pierre Trudeau ran up. Of course, that bill came due and it came due more than a generation later than when the deficit started to be racked up by the Trudeau government. That debt came due in the late 1990s when, as the Liberal member for Scarborough—Guildwood pointed out, we were named as an honorary member of the third world.

I hope that we learn something today as we go down the road we are going down. We have to acknowledge that we are in a global pandemic and any government in power, any of the main parties, would be running large deficits at this point in time to deal with the

challenge we are facing. The Conservative government back in 2008, 2009 and 2010 had to run fairly large deficits to deal with the global meltdown. The difference between now and then is that the Conservative government had a plan right from the start to get our budget back to balance.

We knew that we could not incur these deficits forever and that eventually, in the long-term interest of Canadians, we had to ensure we got our budget back to balance, so in 2008 we laid out a seven-year plan to get back to balance. In 2015 we got back to balance. We followed the plan to a T. I had the pleasure of serving on the cabinet committee from 2012 to 2015 that reviewed the plans of the government, ministers and departments to play their role in getting back to balance. We got back to balance by 2015 and that was the fiscal situation that the government of the day inherited.

If we look at this budget, where the government is on program spending, in 2014-15 program spending in the Conservatives’ last year of government was \$254 billion. Now let us look at 2019-20, pre-pandemic, before anybody knew what was going to happen. We should remember that the entire way through, Conservatives were asking the government if it was prepared for a future eventuality where the global economy was not as strong as it was. During this entire time of global strength in the economy relative to what it had been previously, rather than continue with a balanced budget and increased spending because of increased revenues that the government could then have the flexibility to spend on priorities of Canadians, it decided to rack up massive new spending. In 2014-15, program spending was \$254 billion and by 2019-20, it was \$349 billion, up \$95 billion, 37.5%, in just five years. That is insane in terms of fiscal management. That was leading into the pandemic.

If we look at this budget, we are dealing with what we are dealing with now, but Canadians would expect to see a government that would have a plan for a post-pandemic world, for getting our finances in order and moving beyond the pandemic. In this budget, if we fast-forward to 2022-23, plans for spending after the pandemic is over, the government’s projected program spending is \$412 billion. We should remember that in the last year of the Harper government, it was \$254 billion. Eight years later, the government plans program spending of \$412 billion, an increase of over \$150 billion, over 62%, in just eight years.

If we go back to the Trudeau government of the 1970s and look at the disaster its fiscal plan was for a future generation, my concern is that we are heading down that exact same path now with the current government. We need a change in direction. We need a plan from the government, even if it is a long-term plan, to get back to balance eventually so that we can again continue on the path that we were on in 2015, an upward trajectory where governments had the flexibility to spend on the priorities of Canadians.

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• (1110)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, can the member explain why, if the Conservatives are so against debt and deficit, it is in their platform commitment for the next election that it will take them 10 years to balance that deficit?

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, when we were in government we laid out a seven-year plan to get back to balance and we got back to balance slowly during that time. It should be noted that during that time we could not spend enough to satisfy the Liberal members, and we see that in this very question. We laid out a plan to get to balance over 10 years. The current Liberal government has no plan to get back to balance, but an endless plan to continue to spend money. It is interesting that it criticizes our plan to get back to balance because it does not go fast enough when we have asked the Liberal government time and again what its plan is and there is no response from it.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague seems obsessed with deficits. It is rather rich to hear him say that.

The government has still not invested in several of the main sectors that were affected by the crisis. For example, the budget does not address health transfers. The Conservatives voted against the Bloc Québécois's amendment on health transfers. The budget has nothing for seniors, other than a few crumbs in August and perhaps next year, if the Liberals are still in power.

Furthermore, Quebec is grappling with a housing crisis. The vacancy rate is low. The budget provides for a small investment, but the Federation of Canadian Municipalities was calling for a \$7-billion investment to address the housing crisis.

There is no money allocated to these sectors that are vital during the pandemic. The government is not facing our current problems head-on, yet my colleague is obsessed with deficits.

How would he go about dealing with all of the serious problems that the pandemic has thrown at us?

[*English*]

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, that is a great question. I, like the member, absolutely care about those things. I care about them today and in the future. I care about them for us and seniors today, as well as for people who are not seniors now but will be in the future. I care about vulnerable Canadians. As the member might know, I have a 25-year-old son with autism. I care about what programs look like for him today, but I also care about what they are going to look like when I am not here anymore, down the road, for him. Right now, the path the current government is on is such that the spending we are doing today is going to necessarily result in a reduction under whatever government is in power down the road. We said we will have a 10-year plan, a nice long-term plan, to get back to balance, but the point of strong fiscal management is exactly the member's point, so that governments can make sure we have the money to spend on programs that are important to Canadians now and in the future.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would agree with the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin that there are very real concerns and that often, as we go toward a path of fiscal correctness, it is working families who bear the brunt of this.

When we look at investments in things like pharmacare, which can have notable improvements on health care spending in the long run; child care, which allows more family members to enter the workforce to improve the economic lot of their families; as well as making sure the wealthy pay their fair share so the brunt is not falling on working families, I wonder about those three specific measures. So far, the Conservatives have shown a bit of an aversion toward them when we know those types of investments will have notable and beneficial impacts in the long run.

I wonder if the member can respond to that.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, all of the things the member mentioned are good measures. We want Canadians to be able to have access to them, but I would point out for all members that we have to also look at the revenue side of the equation. As a member from Edmonton, from Alberta, I have to point out that we have absolutely robbed our economy of our opportunity to fund some of those things because of our disastrous pipeline policy in this country, which gives preferential treatment to oil coming in from Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Algeria, Azerbaijan and countries like that. For example, it gives preferential treatment to that \$25 billion worth of oil coming in from 2016 to today, relative to the oil coming from Alberta, Saskatchewan—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak to budget 2021. As we heard the other day and today, our government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Could I interrupt the hon. member and ask her to adjust her mike? I believe it is too close to her mouth.

• (1120)

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, today we are talking about all of the different issues in our budget. We are talking about the future and how we will manage to get where we are going and make sure we have a strong plan to finish the battle against this terrible COVID-19. Clearly, as we have been hearing, our plan is to execute a plan to deliver one million jobs, as promised. These jobs are critical for us to have a strong recovery from this pandemic. These jobs would help make the lives of the community members I represent, and all Canadians, that much better.

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The budget implementation act would deliver a plan to support the residents of my riding and all Canadians. It includes extensions and expansions of critical COVID-19 support programs for businesses and individuals. Examples of that are the wage subsidy, which has helped an enormous number of Canadians; the rent subsidy, without which so many businesses would have had to close; and, of course, the other recovery benefits we have provided.

The BIA would also implement the major policy planks of budget 2021, such as funding early learning and child care and supporting students to help them through these difficult times to find the employment they need to start their careers. It also includes a minimum wage of \$15 at the federal level. It sets out a clear foundation for a greener, more inclusive and more prosperous economy, and it would make life more affordable for students by extending the moratorium on student loan payments. These are all critically important for our young people.

Ensuring large multinational companies pay their fair share is a topic of much discussion during these difficult times. We know benefits have gone to many of the companies, so as one end of the spectrum suffered tremendously, another area benefited enormously, and I believe they should contribute much more to getting us through these difficult times. This is what we promised in budget 2021, and this is exactly why we need this BIA to pass, so that the legislation delivers.

I can tell members it is a great budget for the residents I know and love in Humber River—Black Creek, and for all Canadians.

Our government values the contribution that seniors have made, and continue to make, to our communities. I miss visiting my local seniors groups. I call the presidents of these organizations as often as I can. They all want to get back to playing bingo and cards at their local community centres, some of which are now being used now to deliver the important vaccines our government has secured to protect our most vulnerable from COVID-19.

I know these seniors will see their lives get back to normal soon because of the hard work the government is doing to end this horrible pandemic. Our policies are showing positive results. For example, 25% fewer seniors live in poverty than when the Liberals took office in 2015. That is a direct result of the good work our government has undertaken, including restoring the age of eligibility for old age security and GIS to 65 years as opposed to the suggested 67 years, and increasing the GIS for the most vulnerable single seniors.

The budget implementation act proposes to increase old age security by 10% for seniors—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. member.

The hon. member for Drummond is rising on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I think my colleague's microphone might be positioned incorrectly. Perhaps she could adjust it slightly.

We can hear a lot of noise, and although the interpreters are not complaining about it, it is probably making their job more difficult.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We noticed the same thing.

[*English*]

Could the hon. member try adjusting her mike again?

It is better now.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, it would increase by 10% for seniors aged 75 and over, which will help lift more seniors out of poverty.

Taken together, our government's ambitious and progressive measures are making a real difference in seniors' financial security. However, we know there is much more work to do. Canadian seniors can always count on the Liberals to listen, understand their needs and work hard to try to deliver for them.

Education is the smartest investment anyone can make, and our government is committed, as I mentioned earlier, to making life more affordable for students. To ease new graduates into working life and to make sure they are not prematurely burdened by loan repayments, budget 2019 made the six-month grace period after they finished their education interest-free.

During the pandemic, our government imposed a six-month moratorium on all student loan repayments, and committed to a one-year suspension of interest accrual on student loans in 2021-22. The BIA would extend the waiver of interest accrual on Canada student loans and Canada apprentice loans until March 31, 2023.

Let me assure Canadians that every little thing we do, or big thing we do, helps a lot of people and relieves their stress levels, as we know what they are going through at this particular time.

We are also increasing a threshold for repayment assistance to \$40,000 for borrowers living alone, so nobody earning \$40,000 per year or less will need to make any payments on their students loans. This will support an estimated 121,000 additional Canadians with student loan debt each year. These measures will ensure that Canada's youth are set up to succeed as we recover from the pandemic.

Now, let us talk about a favourite issue of mine, which is child care. I have always enjoyed visiting the local barbecues and events organized in the communities I represent. Getting to see the new families with their children brings a lot of joy to my life.

I know I will soon be back at the third annual Tastes and Sounds of Jane and Finch at San Romanoway. I want to see my friends Spider Jones and Mr. Jane and Finch himself, Mr. Winston LaRose. I know they are keeping safe, and I will see them soon.

Back to child care, the BIA would authorize \$2.9 billion in funding for a transformative investment to build a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. This would drive economic growth, and is a plan to increase women's participation in the workforce—

● (1125)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is a lot of noise and static. I would like you to ask the interpreters if it is a problem for them. It is problematic for me, and I am worried about the interpreters.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have not yet received a complaint, but we do know the interference is affecting us all.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

I would just like to step out of my area of expertise for a moment and give my hon. colleague some technical advice. The microphone boom is flexible. If my colleague tries to unfold it slightly, it will automatically move the microphone the correct distance away from her mouth, which should help solve the problem.

[*English*]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the help.

This would increase women's participation in the workforce and is a plan to offer each child in Canada the best start in life. It will aim to reduce fees for parents with children in regulated child care by 50% on average by 2022, with a goal of reaching \$10 per day, on average, by 2026, everywhere outside of Quebec. Budget 2021 will invest almost \$30 billion over the next five years and provide permanent, ongoing funding.

There has been a lot of discussion over whether this budget is fiscally responsible. Canada entered the pandemic in a strong fiscal position. This allowed our government to take quick and decisive action supporting people and businesses, and to make today's historic investments in the recovery.

Systemic racism is a painful reality for too many people. In particular, Black Canadian communities have suffered immensely during COVID-19, and the events of the past year have highlighted the inequities and racism targeted at racialized communities. Our government is taking action to tackle racism, support racialized communities and respond to the uneven impact of COVID-19. As we build back better and recover from the pandemic, we will continue to address systemic racism and empower communities by bridging the gaps that hold Canada back from reaching its potential.

Budget 2021 outlines the government's plan to build a healthier, more inclusive and more equitable Canada for everyone. The budget proposes \$200 million toward a Black-led philanthropic endowment fund to support Black-led charities and organizations serving youth and social initiatives, as well as \$100 million for supporting Black Canadian community initiatives. Both will be administered

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through Employment and Social Development Canada for 2021-22. There will also be a new anti-racism grant program to combat rising hate and racism during COVID-19 and a national coalition to support Asian-Canadian groups.

We will be enhancing the communities at risk with empowering and enforcing security infrastructure programs to protect communities at risk of hate-motivated crimes. We will expand access to community-led mental health programs for indigenous peoples, and racialized and Black Canadians. This is a historical first of its kind, groundbreaking, and an investment that we are speaking about. These ventures will have a direct positive impact on the communities I represent for years to come.

My apologies to my colleagues and the translators for the difficulties with my microphone. I thank them for their help.

● (1130)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know the member did touch very briefly on the issue of fiscal responsibility, but it is that area I want to discuss with her.

A couple weeks ago when the finance minister made her speech, she basically said, and I am paraphrasing, that it would be irresponsible not to incur more prospective debt because interest rates are so low. I know this morning the headline on CNBC is that the 10-year Treasury yield in the U.S. has risen amid inflation fears.

Last week, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen said she was concerned that interest rates might have to go up because of inflationary concerns. The Minister of Finance in New Zealand, who is a Labour minister, also recently said they will move to reduce debt and return to surplus as a responsible government should.

Given all of this, why is the Liberal government not following suit and taking heed, with respect to the possibility of inflation and interest rates rising, by bringing in fiscal anchors and a plan to get back to balance?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, the issue of fiscal responsibility is important to each and every one of us. I would say all members of the House care about the fiscal responsibility avenues of our country. Clearly, we have met the challenges and continue to do so. This pandemic is still not over. We are still trying to help as many people in our country as possible.

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We will deal with this, and we will have a plan to get ourselves back to the point where we want to be, but for the moment I believe we have to continue to help people overcome challenges and get our economy to bounce back as quickly as possible. By making these kinds of investments and helping put money in people's pockets, I expect that will happen much faster.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her speech despite the poor sound quality.

She stated that she was proud of what her party did for seniors in the recent budget, which increases old age security for those 75 and up.

If my colleague was in my riding office, she might feel a little less proud. Every day we receive telephone calls from people who are angry that they are not entitled to the increase because they are not at least 75 years old. These people are just as affected as the others because the cost of medications and groceries has increased. However, their purchasing power has not, and they currently feel cheated, alone and ignored.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague what she thinks these people are feeling. What would she have to say to people aged 65 to 74 who are not getting an increase? How can she explain this to them?

• (1135)

[*English*]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, my colleague was not the only one getting those phone calls. I think many of us did.

We talked about fiscal responsibility with my previous colleague, trying to be fiscally responsible while at the same time trying to help as many people as possible. People are living much longer today than they used to and the costs as people get older are much higher for those 75 and older than they for people between the ages 65 and 75. We would have loved to have done this kind of an increase for people aged 65 and older, but while we are trying to help people, we are trying to be fiscally responsible as well.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was speaking with a young Canadian who went to work in the United States, and within a month, she had the vaccine. She was called three days in a row by three different health agencies in her city to get the vaccine. I compare that to the Ottawa workers I know who are relying on Twitter, word of mouth, rumour. Two young workers who I spoke to in Toronto took an Uber 35 minutes across the city on the wild off chance they might get the vaccine.

We have to admit that between the feds and the provinces, Canada has absolutely failed in the delivery of the vaccines. We have had politicians patting themselves on the back, but there is such uncertainty for so many of our young millennial workers, our Gen Z workers, the frontline workers. The fact that they have no other choice but to rely on Twitter to find out where they can get a vaccine is a real condemnation of the government's response to the pandemic.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, this pandemic has been a tremendous challenge for everybody, the provinces, the federal

government. It was not something that we had a plan on how to do the rollout. I think everybody has done the best they could. A lot of issues—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I hope to avoid having any more microphone problems. If I do have any, I know I can count on my hon. colleague from Drummond to speak up; I rely on his sound advice.

I am pleased to take part in the debate on Bill C-30, budget implementation act, 2021, no. 1. My initial observations are that this budget sprinkles billions of dollars on just about everyone. The budget implementation bill contains a number of half measures, and we have noticed several things that are missing. For a stimulus budget, what it lacks above all is meaningful measures.

I would like to begin my speech by talking about the labour-related announcements included in the budget and pointing out how positive they are. The Minister of Labour is implementing one of the commitments included in her mandate letter, specifically to amend the Canada Labour Code to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. Although this measure affects only about 26,000 federal employees, it nevertheless sends a message to everyone who has come out of the shadows as a result of the crisis.

Madam Speaker, I am hearing a conversation going on, and a member's voice—

• (1140)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I cannot see which member it is, but I would ask that—

Ms. Louise Chabot: It is the member who spoke just before me.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask the member for Humber River—Black Creek to put her mike on mute, please.

The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Clearly, the microphones are a real problem.

I will continue my speech.

I was saying that raising the minimum wage to \$15 was sending the right kind of message. We found out that all our guardian angels, all the essential workers, who were brought out of the shadows by the pandemic, earned low wages. By ensuring them a minimum wage of \$15 an hour, we are sending them the right kind of message.

Still on the subject of labour laws, I would say this is a half measure. It is a good start, but it is only one step.

With regard to the practice of contract flipping, we can see the intention to add the word “airport” to the Canada Labour Code. The airport sector is hardest hit by this practice, which undercuts its workers. This is a demand that has long been supported by the workers of this industry.

I will now remind members of the situation and what constitutes contract flipping.

In the airport sector, the workers and unions have no leverage to protect the working conditions they have fought for over time. Consequently, with contract flipping, where the work is given to a different subcontractor, workers lose everything. They lose their jobs and working conditions. The subcontractor has no obligation to them, and so the workers' salaries can even be cut. This destroys lives and careers.

Workers could be hired by a new employer, but they have to start at the bottom, despite having 25 years' experience, for example. However, the work is the same, they must work with the same tools and equipment and work the same schedule. By adding the term “airport” in the budget implementation bill, there is some protection for these workers when contract flipping occurs.

I will now speak about half measures, since the Liberals seem to want to only protect salaries.

That is what happened during the recent dispute between Swissport employees and the Montreal-Trudeau and Mirabel airports. The Swissport employees' contract was changed.

Workers who used to earn \$23 per hour are now earning \$16 per hour for the same work. That obviously makes no sense. This bill would rectify situations like that. It has to go further, though. Why stop halfway?

This is a half-measure. Pay should not be the only thing the law protects. Working conditions, pension plans, insurance plans and union recognition should also be protected. That is what people want, and it is the right thing to do. That is what we are calling for, and that is what unions are calling for. We hope this part of the bill will be improved so we can go all the way.

When it comes to a given situation or practice, what we are asking for is simple. We do not want workers to suffer when the supplier changes. If the government tackles a particular issue, it might as well make sure that issue will not come up again later because it only went halfway. I am expecting to see amendments in this area.

There is something missing in our labour laws, something that workers have long called for. The government says it wants to protect workers and the middle class. That is easy to say but they are unwilling to lean left to better protect people in situations where they are really struggling. Something is missing, and that is anti-scab legislation to stop employers from using scabs in a labour dispute.

• (1145)

In Quebec, the issue has already been settled. The Quebec Labour Code prohibits the practice. Quebec's anti-scab legislation was adopted in 1977, but there is nothing like it in the Canada Labour Code.

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Using scabs during a strike is a completely outdated practice, and yet employers have no qualms about exploiting this weakness in the legislation.

For example, in February 2020, employees of the City of Fredericton had their jobs stolen by scabs in the middle of a lockout. There was a similar situation in June 2020 for the energy workers at the Co-op Refinery in Regina, as well as in March 2020, in New Brunswick, involving the workers of the Red Pine landfill.

Also, what about the situation at the Port of Montreal? In August 2020, the representative of the employer indicated that he intended to work with replacement workers or managers, ignoring the rights of unionized workers. We even saw that in the dispute between the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, or IAMAW, and Swissport, which I was talking about earlier with regard to contract flipping, and the workers went on strike. The employer took advantage of the opportunity to hire scabs to drag out the negotiations. The employer had no interest in quickly settling the dispute.

All that to say that the government could have taken action and corrected an injustice by passing anti-scab legislation, but it failed to do so with Bill C-30.

Now I would like to quickly talk about the employment insurance system. It is unbelievable to think that, after all these years, with all of the studies and consultations that have been done, the government is not doing anything about this social safety net that is so important for workers receiving EI benefits, workers—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is time for questions and comments, where the hon. member can continue her comments.

The hon. member for Yukon.

[*English*]

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 ask the member two questions and she can pick which one she would like to comment on.

The first is that we have a huge digital economy in Yukon. There is a large investment in this budget to help businesses transform to the modern digital economy. People have not talked much about that. Does the member think this is important?

The second is that Quebec has had great experience with hydro. Our mining people asked for more hydro support for electric planning and transmission in the budget, which they received. Does she think the money for hydro in the Arctic, in the north and in Yukon is helpful and beneficial?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

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Does the budget fully respond to that? One thing that is essential is the unquestionable need for a fair, greener environmental transition.

Some sectors of our economy such as natural resources and hydroelectricity will be key in that transition. To be consistent with what I said, in order to achieve fairer, cleaner, greener transitions, we have to make workers part of the solution. We have to imagine the green transition with our workforce and jobs in mind. That is essential to us.

• (1150)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville for her speech.

This is the first federal government budget in two years. We were all collectively hit by the pandemic. We have seen how much we rely on a robust and effective public health care system that treats its workers and professionals well.

The Liberal government says that it transferred a lot of money to the provinces for health, but we can all agree that it was a one-off, not a recurring amount. Why does my colleague think that the Liberals are unwilling to commit to permanently giving the provinces enough money so they can have a good, effective public health care system?

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which gives me an opportunity to finish part of my speech.

When I talked about the lack of meaningful measures, I was referring to the issue with the health transfers from the federal government. The government is saying that it will increase the transfers after the pandemic. It also says that it has sent billions of dollars. That money was a one-time thing, though. It is not meaningful or permanent.

This week is National Nursing Week, and tomorrow is International Nurses Day. The government is failing to give these workers the essential support they need by refusing to fix an injustice and give Quebec and the provinces the money they need to adequately fund their health care systems and pay the workers who provide these quality services.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville. I especially want to thank her for her comments on the subsidies for fossil fuels.

Does she agree that if we are serious about climate action, then we need to cancel the Trans Mountain pipeline and stop giving fossil fuels billions of dollars in subsidies?

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, a paradigm shift is crucial, and it should have happened a long time ago. We really need to recognize that we need to go in another direction.

Investing in fossil fuels is not the way to change course. These matters should have been resolved a long time ago. If we want to be serious, we really need to shift to clean energy, including energy from our natural resources. We have made plenty of proposals, including wood—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. We have to resume debate.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to rise in the House, virtually of course, to speak to Bill C-30.

• (1155)

[English]

This budget is an extremely important one. The BIAs are key elements that we will be moving forward very quickly.

We are in the third wave, and I want to thank Canadians right across the country for their efforts, and Nova Scotians as well. There are so many great stories when visiting various communities and organizations.

In my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, the Sackville Public Library was able to make changes during this pandemic so that people could go online, work virtually and have e-books to continue their learning and research, which is so important. The Sackville Legion, the Waverley Legion, all six legions in my riding were shut down for a while but worked closely with the government and the health agency to reopen when they were able to and continue to do their great work to support veterans and their families.

The First Lake Early Learning Centre had to lower the number of students and have smaller groups, but it continued to do the work that needed to be done. I cannot say enough about teachers, students and parents, who have done so well in continuing the education of students. The Waverley Heritage Museum had virtual learning experiences and had students working in this area last summer to support their community. The Boys & Girls Club in the Preston area, which is the African Nova Scotian community, was able to support the community by delivering food and assisting seniors in the area. In Porters Lake, Lake & Shore Community Recreation had a summer camp last summer and will do it again this summer.

Those are really interesting stories that many Canadians could talk about right across this great country.

There are two big areas of investment in the budget that I want to touch on before I get into the BIA.

One is the investment for veterans, an added \$5 million over the next three years, on top of the \$3 million that already exists for the well-being fund, which is extremely important for veterans and their families and organizations across the country. Also, there is an investment of \$45 million toward veterans homelessness. We are trying to eliminate homelessness right across the country, and we are focusing on veterans homelessness and mental health as well.

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I want to touch on the Black community as well, because my riding has the oldest intergenerational Black community in Canada. There is a major investment in the philanthropic endowment fund of \$200 million to support Black communities. This fund will be led by Black Canadians, which is important to fight anti-Black racism. There are also investments to support Black Canadian communities, \$100 million for programs to support capacity building, which is so needed in Black communities so they can continue working closely and supporting their communities.

In the BIA, there is an investment for child care, which is an important one because it would give students and children a better start and allow more women to enter the workforce because we will have a child care program. We will support Canadians by lowering the cost by 50% by 2022, and then down to \$10 a day in 2026. This is a big investment. The BIA has \$2.9 billion for Canada-wide early learning, which means that it is concrete, it is moving and it is real.

Education is one of the most important investments we can make. To support young Canadians, we would waive the interest on their federal loans until 2023, which is two more years. This would support 121,000 more Canadians than in prior years, and the threshold for repayment, which was \$25,000, will be pushed to \$40,000.

As I said, businesses have been doing well and being challenged at the same time. We have worked closely with them and will be extending many of the programs until September, such as the wage subsidy and rent subsidy, and there is room for us to extend them until November. If the economy is in need of more investment, we will be ready to move very quickly. Businesses can apply for up to \$500,000 in loans, and there are investments in rehiring and digitalization programs. Credit card merchant fees, which are so expensive for small businesses, will now be the same as for big businesses. That would be a big help for the business community, which has been asking for this for many years.

For health care, which is very important in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada and right across Canada, there will be an additional \$5-billion investment in the health transfer payments. This is over and above the health transfer payments that already exist, 10 years running. It is a big investment.

We will increase the EI sickness benefit for people who are challenged with illness from 15 weeks to 26 weeks. My colleague Mr. Eyking, the former MP for Sydney—Victoria, was a big proponent of this program.

We are investing in key areas where Canadians have spoken clearly to us, such as a national framework for autism, a national strategy for diabetes and, of course, all of the investments that we have put forward for vaccines and the success of moving those vaccines right across the country. We will have all Canadians vaccinated with a first dose by the end of June.

• (1200)

Seniors are very important to our economy. They have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the success of our great country. Since 2015, we have been able to reduce senior poverty by 25%. We made some major investments. In 2016, we increased the GIS by 10% for those who were most vulnerable. We also added \$300 to the OAS and \$200 to the GIS tax-free during COVID, which was

very important. We are investing in national standards for seniors residences and in the new horizons program, which will help many organizations support seniors. Let us not forget that the Conservatives wanted to move the eligibility age for OAS to 67, not 65 as we did.

With respect to green energy, people can apply for grants of up to \$5,000 for home improvements. For major refits there is an up to \$40,000 interest-free loan. The net-zero accelerator is supporting projects that will help reduce domestic greenhouse emissions. We will also reduce by 50% the general corporate and small business income tax rates for businesses that manufacture zero-emissions technology.

I see I have one minute left, so I will conclude. We will continue to support Canadians for as long as it takes. Before COVID we were in a very good fiscal situation with the lowest unemployment rate, and over 1.2 million jobs were created. Just by remortgaging our debt we have been able to save \$3 billion in interest payments. Not just Canada, but all countries are investing in their people. I am so proud of our government for continuing that work.

• (1205)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech by my colleague from across the floor very intently and I have a specific question to ask.

In the budget there is what seems like a last-minute addition of carbon capture, utilization and sequestration. My constituents are largely employed in the oil and gas industry, which has a tremendous capacity for carbon capture, utilization and sequestration. What is very concerning to them is that the budget specifically excludes any reference to the energy industry being able to access these future government funds.

Would the member be willing to commit today to ensure that the energy industry is added to that important development to ensure that we can have a green future?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we have been supporting the Alberta economy since the beginning with investments into pipelines. I am glad he is talking about carbon, because I understand that now the Conservatives are looking at carbon pricing as well. I am glad they see that, because polluting is not free and we need to invest in that area.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question.

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In his speech, he said that EI sickness benefits would be increased to 26 weeks in response to calls for such an increase. I question that because, for 10 years now, many people have been asking that EI sickness benefits be increased to 50 weeks. Many studies and statistics show that this is needed.

By only providing 26 weeks of benefits, the government will be leaving behind more than 50% of workers. Why not take immediate action and increase the duration of EI sickness benefits to 50 weeks right away?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her important question.

As we well know, we must continue to help Canadians, especially those in difficulty. We certainly know that, and we must do better. We increased EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks, and I am sure that this will help a lot.

We will work with companies to find other ways to support those who are ill, because they should not get into financial difficulty. I understand my colleague's question very well.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the member mentioning child care in his speech. Child care has always been very important to me and to the constituents of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. It is something I strongly campaigned on back in 2015.

My question is about the Liberal standard with respect to negotiating with the provinces. In Bill C-30, under division 34, we see that a legislative framework has been set up to get the early learning and child care system put into place, yet when the NDP came forward with a similar legislative framework in a version of Bill C-213 to set up pharmacare, the Liberals voted against it. Why was that?

Second, when can constituents in my riding and across Canada expect to see action on pharmacare, so that working families are no longer suffering under the huge burden of costs associated with unexpected pharmaceutical medications?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, those were two important questions. I think the pharmacare one is very important. We are continuing the work that we started on pharmacare in bulk purchasing. In many areas we are investing more in pharmacare than we ever did. We will continue that.

Child care is essential. I agree with the member 100% that this should have been done years ago. We are now moving directly forward on it with a \$2.9 billion investment, but also let me state that we are going to work. We have already told the provinces and territories that we are ready. It is time to talk about how we are going to implement that.

The provincial and territorial governments will have pressure from people, now that young families will be looking forward to having those costs lowered by 50%, and to \$10 in 2026. This is a partnership and a team Canada approach, and we will get there.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to budget 2021.

As I always remind my constituents, I am Beauce's representative in Ottawa, not Ottawa's representative in Beauce. That is why I would like to share with the House my many concerns about this budget and the changes that I would like to see made for my constituents and all Canadians.

The fact that the government took two years to announce its budget is unbelievable. One would think that, since the budget took two full years to develop, it would not have so many glaring problems, but it is important to remember that this government is constantly embroiled in scandal and other types of distractions.

Since coming to Ottawa during the last election, I have seen how complicated it is to work in federal politics. Everything moves at a snail's pace. It is extremely discouraging to have such good intentions but to feel as though this government never makes any progress.

As the associate shadow minister for rural economic development, I examined the budget carefully, and there are many things I would like to talk about today.

I would like to start by talking about the labour shortage that is affecting Quebec businesses. Business people across the country have found very creative ways to keep their businesses afloat during these uncertain times. Unfortunately, in rural areas, even before the pandemic, it has always been extremely difficult to fill all the available positions. The government should expand and enhance the existing temporary and seasonal worker programs to help fill the gap for these businesses.

The government also needs to cut the red tape associated with hiring. In some cases, businesses have to deal with three different departments to bring in the workers they themselves recruited in foreign countries. Current departmental wait times are destroying our businesses. The government cannot keep using the pandemic as an excuse. It is time for these ministers to stop gearing up for their next election campaign and start getting to work on these files.

Secondly, I want to talk about something that I have been passionate about for many years and that is public transportation in rural areas. The problem is that the money is simply not there. When the government promises to provide funding to the provinces, most of that funding ends up in major urban centres. With the population aging, keeping seniors in their rural municipalities could be easier with access to a public transportation system that would give them greater autonomy. In the absence of such transportation services, seniors choose to move closer to hospitals and health care centres for a better sense of security.

We see the same thing with newcomers. They also need transportation. In the context of a labour shortage, many businesses are recruiting foreign workers. It is the employer's responsibility to secure transportation to the workplace for employees with temporary work permits. However, these employees have no means of transportation to get to medical appointments, the pharmacy or the grocery store.

Public transportation in rural areas would help these workers and their families better integrate into their host communities. Without public transportation, students have no choice but to own a vehicle, carpool when possible, or live near post-secondary institutions, which are often located in major cities. For rural areas where about 20% of the Canadian population lives, a per capita contribution is not appropriate. Commuting distance should be a criterion for contribution. This approach would support the provision of transportation services in rural areas.

I would now like to quickly address a fairness issue that is not mentioned at all in this budget. It involves the current state of the Income Tax Act when it comes to the transfer of a family business. Currently, the reality for business owners is that it costs them more in taxes to sell their business to a family member than to sell it to a third party.

The current act unjustifiably disadvantages operators who wish to pass on their family business to their daughter or son, leaving owners to decide whether to keep their life's work in the family or sell it to the highest bidder.

• (1215)

As everyone knows, Beauce is all about small business, and I would like to share an example from my riding. Eddy Berthiaume of Les Escaliers de Beauce in Saint-Elzéar was forced to make the difficult decision I just explained to the House. As the owner of half the business, Eddy is a hard worker who devoted years and years to building his business. When he was ready to retire, he decided to sell his shares in the family business to his children. Unfortunately, he was unfairly forced to pay thousands of dollars in transfer fees.

The worst part is that his business partner sold his half of the business to a third party and had to pay next to nothing in taxes. Why is that unfair? That is just one of many examples of how the government is leaving this country's small businesses out in the cold. We do not need a government that is willing to grant exemptions to some Canadians while penalizing hard-working families like the Berthiaumes.

I therefore hope all parties in the House will support the Conservative Party when it is time to vote on Bill C-208 tomorrow.

I now want to talk about high-speed Internet access and, in particular, the quality of cellular coverage in rural parts of Canada. This is the biggest problem that continues to put rural and remote communities at a disadvantage.

More and more Canadians are required to work and learn from home, so stable and reliable Internet and cellular connections are crucial. The Liberal government has completely bungled this issue,

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which has lagged for years, through five different programs and three departments.

Fortunately for Quebeckers, our provincial government presented a real plan with dates and objectives to get all homes connected by the end of 2022. The federal plan was so bad that the province implemented its own plan and simply asked the federal government to share the costs. Other parts of Canada are unfortunately quite far behind. We do not need more talk. We need action on this urgent issue.

Budget 2021 does not contain a single initiative to help improve cellular networks in rural areas. In some parts of my riding, people are finally getting access to a decent Internet connection. However, if they walk five minutes down the road, they lose any reliable connection to the cellular network, which makes no sense.

When can we finally hope to have a plan that works from this government to connect all Canadians in rural areas? We need the government to show leadership. It cannot continue to sit on the sidelines and wait for the big telecoms to take the initiative and solve this problem.

Another file that I am very passionate about is our agriculture and agri-food sector, a very important part of Canada's rural economy. This sector has been neglected by the Liberal government for years. To improve the economic development of Canada's rural areas, it is essential that the government help fund not just farmers on the ground, but the entire food chain.

When I was the associate shadow minister for agriculture and agri-food for the Conservative Party, I tried to get the minister to listen to me, but it seems that her hands are tied by a Prime Minister who does not believe in this sector. I still sit on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, which released a complete report on business risk management programs. Unfortunately, nothing has changed.

It is essential to improve the business risk management programs for agricultural producers. The minister proposed a few changes to the program on condition that the provinces and territories share the cost. Unfortunately, some provinces cannot do that right now because of budget constraints. The minister is probably happy to wash her hands of it and say that she tried. However, agriculture and agri-food need to be considered as a real driver of Canada's economic recovery.

In closing, this budget is nothing more than a campaign tool for the Liberals, who are throwing money around without a real plan. I hope that, before the next election, Canadians will clearly see that the Liberals are just trying to buy votes with this budget.

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• (1220)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, with whom I have the pleasure of serving on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

I would invite him to consult page 22 of the budget, which sets out \$1 billion more than what was already announced in budget 2019. He can tell his constituents that there is plenty of money allocated to Internet access.

I would like to know whether my colleague supports the measure for supply-managed processors, for whom the government announced nearly \$300 million in the budget. Is he for or against that measure?

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague.

The answer to the first question is yes. I did see the billion dollars, but I think that Quebec's announcement last March must have nudged Ottawa to get it to move faster on this issue.

I agree with my colleague that Internet access will be resolved for us in Quebec, but elsewhere in Canada there are still serious problems to overcome. In my view, it is mostly the cellphone coverage issue that still has to be worked out.

As for providing assistance to food processors, I support that measure, because when I speak of the whole agri-food sector chain, food processors are definitely part of that.

It is an important measure, but I think the message we send should be more—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Beauce.

I am very fond of my colleague, and one part of his speech interested me in particular, namely where he spoke of public transportation in rural areas. It is an issue that also affects my riding of Lac-Saint-Jean.

What is his vision and how will he put solutions on the table?

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

This is an issue that has always been close to my heart in my former capacity as an elected municipal official.

I think that all of Canada needs better service in rural areas. This will require dedicated funding for the development of public transportation in rural areas across Canada. That will take a clear signal from the government.

Yes, it is important to have funding for public transit, but there are also significant needs in public transportation.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

In the last budget, the Liberals presented child care services as a key measure for economic recovery. Obviously, as Quebeckers, we

have seen the success of the network of child care centres and know that it is a good idea.

Given that the Liberals first made this promise in 1993, does my colleague believe it?

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his question.

I do believe it, but within a five-year time frame. When we look at what has been implemented in Quebec, that took 20 years, and there are still some adjustments to be made, so there are some grounds for skepticism.

[*English*]

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, within the budget did the member for Beauce see any specific strategies about growing the agri-food industry and gaining more market share throughout the world?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Edmonton Centre for his question.

From my reading of the budget, I did not see much to stimulate the growth of the agri-food sector in any way that would really help expand our export markets.

Canada is an agri-food exporter, and the budget should have included concrete measures to capitalize on the margins that we do have in Canadian agri-food to export, but unfortunately they just were not there.

• (1225)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have a brief question.

In his question, the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie forgot that the Conservatives, the NDP and the Bloc Québécois are responsible for the fact that the child care program was cancelled by the Harper government, following the promises and contracts with 10 provinces under the Paul Martin minority government.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

I cannot look back, because I was not here at the time. I cannot comment on that issue, but I do think it is up to the provinces to bring in those programs. We have to consider all jurisdictional issues.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-30, budget implementation act, 2021, no. 1, introduced by my colleague the Minister of Finance. This is a first in Canadian history and I think it deserves to be acknowledged once again, as many members of the House already have. As the first woman to introduce a budget implementation bill in the House, the finance minister has broken down another barrier and inspired young girls in the process.

The budget essentially has three main themes. First, since March 2020, our objective has been to help Canadians get through the pandemic. Second, we want to help build a bridge to help SMEs get through the pandemic, since many small and medium-sized businesses have had to close their doors because of lockdown measures. Third, once the pandemic is over, we want a fair, equitable and green economic recovery. My speech today will address these three themes.

The objective of budget 2021 is obviously to help Canadians, for example through programs like the Canada emergency benefit or the Canada emergency wage subsidy.

Many members know that workers have unfortunately lost their jobs as a result of lockdown measures or because schools are closed and they need to stay home with their kids. A number of measures in budget 2021 will be extended until September to help Canadians through the crisis.

I just mentioned the Canada emergency wage subsidy. I have spoken with several business owners who were calling for this benefit to be extended beyond June 2021. It has been extended until September 25. This is good news for our small businesses, which have done an outstanding job of adapting and finding new ways to serve their customers.

I want to take a moment to commend the Prescott-Russell Community Development Corporation for the work it has done through the minister responsible for economic development. The corporation gave subsidies of up to \$20,000 to help businesses adapt to the digital economy and develop an online presence, allowing residents to purchase products and services. Congratulations to everyone who made this happen.

As I mentioned earlier, the Canada emergency wage subsidy will be extended to September 25.

[*English*]

Regarding help for businesses that had to close down, we also extended the rent subsidy program. It has been so important for many of those businesses that are either paying rent or a mortgage but are forced to be closed. I think about hair salons that, in some parts of Ontario, have not opened in over a year. One can tell the region somebody comes from by the type of haircut they have. Some people have very long hair right now. Needless to say, these salons are an important part of our economy and I am glad we are helping them with the rent support program.

The CEBA loan was also extended. It has helped many businesses in my riding. Businesses can apply for up to \$60,000, and if they reimburse it prior to a certain date, they can get access to a \$20,000 grant.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Now, here are some of the measures we have outlined in budget 2021.

Fair, equitable and green economic recovery was one of the main themes of this budget. I am thinking primarily of child care. If we

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want a strong economy and economic recovery, we need to make sure that women participate equitably in our economy.

It is true that promises have been made before—some were even made when I was 7, apparently. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance are determined to ensure that this program is implemented once and for all. I hope we will have all-party support, as this is a very important measure.

When I was young, I could easily visit my grandmother, whose house was just behind ours. My mother had to go back to work after only three months of maternity leave. Not every parent has the option of having a family member look after their children. That is why access to child care and the cost of those services are so important.

We know that parents can spend from \$40 to \$100 a day per child for child care, sometimes more. They often wonder whether they should just stay at home to look after their children because it is simply not worth it for them to participate in the economy or to work while they have children at home. That is not a choice that people should have to make in our society, in a G7 country like Canada.

The Government of Quebec has had a proper child care program in place for decades. It is a great example. There is no reason why Ontario and the other provinces should not have a similar program. I am sure that the negotiations will be successful and that the Minister of Finance will get positive results for our families, who are so dependent on affordable child care. That is why we want to reduce the cost of such services by half by 2022 and cap it at \$10 per day by 2025-26. That is a realistic and worthy objective that will help families across Canada.

The other important measure in the budget and in this act is help for our seniors. During the election campaign, we promised to increase support for seniors by 10% starting at age 75 for a very simple reason. Starting at age 65, seniors have access to old age security, as well as the guaranteed income supplement for our most vulnerable seniors. The guaranteed income supplement was increased by 10% in 2016, another promise that we kept.

Now we have committed to increasing old age security starting at age 75 for another very simple reason, which is that most seniors exhaust their savings before they reach 75 and suffer the consequences, with some falling below the poverty line. The proposed increase has a noble purpose, and it fulfills our campaign commitment.

Another important aspect of budget 2021 is none other than the issue of a green economic recovery.

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I am so glad we are finally focusing on a green economic recovery. The measures in budget will reduce corporate tax rates by 50% for those manufacturers that produce zero-emissions technology. What a great incentive to position Canada as a go-to partner for the world to reuse our products. If we want to get to net zero by 2050, Canada has to do its part, but other countries have to do their part as well. There is no reason why Canada cannot be a provider of net-zero emissions technology. The incentive to reduce the tax rate by 50% is a great example.

Finally, I know we get accused of not being fiscally responsible. We are being compared to the 1990s, so I will recall some facts. In the 1990s, the debt-to-GDP was 66% and the interest rates were at 12%. Thankfully, we are no where near that. I know that the debt-to-GDP ratio will rise to 51.2%, but then it will decline to 49.2%. By next year, the deficit will be reduced by half and by the following year, the deficit will be reduced even further by half again.

We are on a clear path to get to a budgetary balance, but we will also ensure we do not leave anyone behind. Budget 2021 is all about that. We want a fair, green economic recovery that leaves no one behind.

• (1235)

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned seniors. He also mentioned how it was a promise made, promise kept. In actual fact, the Liberals have changed the eligibility. I have had many calls in regard to changing the age to 75. I understood from two of his colleagues that the reason the government did that was because it had limited finances and it wanted to be fiscally responsible.

Does the member understand how farcical those sorts of statements sound when so much money is being thrown around? The Liberals are trying to save money on the backs of seniors.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that it was not our government that proposed an increase to the age for eligibility of old age security from 65 to 67. That was her government. Our party and our Prime Minister said that we would bring that eligibility age back to 65. We said that would increase the guaranteed income supplement by 10% by age 65, which we did the first year in office. We are one of the only parties to list our party commitments on the Internet. I would invite the member to look at it. We said that we would increase the old age supplement by 10% at age 75, and we are doing that.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague touched on the green recovery, but I would like to hear what he has to say about climate change. It is fascinating to see what the government does and does not do.

The day before the budget, Canada's greenhouse gas reduction target was 30%. On the day of the budget, it was 36%. Three days later, on Earth Day, it was 45%. I would like to point out that Canada has never managed to achieve a single greenhouse gas reduction target. It has never, ever happened. Clearly, since the measures are not there, the numbers mean absolutely nothing. The U.S.

is at 50%. Since these are mere words, I wonder why the government did not say 58%. If the U.K. is at 78%, why are we not at 92%? Why did the government not say 154%, since they are just throwing words around?

Does my colleague agree that, to fight greenhouse gas emissions, the government should implement robust measures that are not currently in the budget?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question, but I do not agree with him about the budget. I think he should read it. I know it is 800 pages long, but there is an entire section devoted to the green recovery.

I come from an agricultural riding. I know that there are \$200 million in the climate action fund for our farmers, whether to promote intercropping or the presence of wetlands on their land. We know that wetlands absorb twice as much CO₂ as forests. There are other funds aimed at encouraging farmers to keep forested areas on their farms.

Several measures were presented in the 2021 budget. I invite my colleague to flip through it.

[English]

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke quite a bit about the promises made and promises kept. I recall that in the 2019 campaign, a promise was made on reducing cellular phone bills by 25%. I am somewhat concerned that in the 721-page budget document that was presented recently there was not a mention of that promise. Will this promise be kept or will it be another on the long list of promises that have been broken by his government?

• (1240)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, the member's question is very timely. I would invite him to look at a report that was published a few days ago. On average, cellphone bills have gone down by 25%. I forget the name of the report right now, but it is online. He just has to google it, and he can read it. There has been a reduction of at least 25% on average.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I would like to take a few seconds in the House to commemorate the work of anthropologist, radio host and distinguished author Serge Bouchard. For years, he filled our evenings with his reassuring voice and his profound vision of Quebec and our relations with the first nations. We have lost a great Quebecker. We will all miss him.

I would like to address several topics, because we are talking about the first federal budget in two years, so this is an important event.

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The past two years have left their mark and turned life upside down in every one of our communities. Over these two years, we have all had to relearn how to live, work, communicate and get things done. Worse still, we saw businesses suffer and close up shop, workers lose their jobs, and entire sectors get turned upside down, especially the tourism sector, the cultural sector, including our artists, and the restaurant and bar sector.

Then there is the health care system, which had to perform miracles with very limited resources and in difficult working conditions, but I will get back to that later. Thousands of Quebecers and Canadians fell ill and died in great numbers and are still dying or, even if they recover, can suffer long-term after-effects, known as long COVID.

Does the budget meet people's expectations when it comes to improving the situation and being better prepared for the future? There are some major flaws. There are tons of things missing. One of the first things is, how is it that the budget does not provide for stable and permanent health transfers so that Quebec and the other provinces can treat their employees well, treat their patients properly and face another crisis, another wave or another virus?

Over the years, the federal government has been investing less and less in our public health care system. That is very serious. In the NDP, we share the provincial governments' demand to raise funding to 35% of costs. In recent years, a Conservative government, under Mr. Harper, cut transfer payments to the provinces by reducing the annual increase from 6% to almost 3%. At the time, the Liberals made a big fuss about that, saying that it was a terrible thing that would threaten our public health care system but, when they came to power, they maintained and renewed exactly the same agreement. For that reason, our public health care system is now in dire straits. We need to make difficult choices. Times were hard even before the health crisis, with austerity budgets aimed at cutting corners everywhere. We are now seeing the results of those policies.

We need to give our public health system the means, the tools and the resources it needs. We need to work together to be able to care for our seniors in long-term care facilities. We saw the carnage in the first wave. Some of our seniors, the people who built Quebec by the sweat of their brow, were abandoned, left on the floor, left in their beds, dehydrated, without care and with rotten food, if they had any food at all.

As New Democrats and social democrats, we find this treatment disgraceful. It strips our seniors of their dignity, and we must do something to make sure it never happens again. We are not looking away and saying that it is not our problem. We are asking what we can do to help so that we never find ourselves in that situation again.

It feels like spring is coming, people will be getting vaccinated, and the recovery is on its way, so much the better. These are all good things. We are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel. However, we cannot forget what happened last year. If we do, things will never change. The cycle will start all over again, and the same thing is going to happen.

One of the reasons we did not have the means to ensure a basic level of quality care for our seniors in long-term care facilities is the lack of resources. There were management problems, but the Quebec government is taking care of that, because it is not the federal government's jurisdiction, of course.

● (1245)

If we do not help the provinces provide decent care and look after their health care workers, what happens?

When orderlies earning \$14 an hour are forced to work mandatory overtime and insane schedules, and this is compounded by a crisis, where a virus enters the workplace, it creates a vicious cycle. It is no longer worth their while to go to work because it is too dangerous, they are not paid enough and they do not want to take the risk. As a result, workers stay at home, and that exacerbates the problem.

Earlier, a member from Quebec said that this is world health worker week and that tomorrow is International Nurses Day. Let us consider. What are we offering them in exchange for caring for our sick patients and our seniors? What are we offering them to make the work attractive and make sure that they still want to go to work even when it is harder than usual, when there is a crisis and they are at greater risk?

For now, that is not what we are seeing, and the Liberal government's budget does not offer any answers. Sure, the government transferred some money, but only on a one-time basis, in the middle of a crisis. There is no plan for the future, yet we know that we need permanent, stable funding.

There is another important issue, and that is child care. We can see how accessible child care services help families and young parents in Quebec and how they allow women to rejoin the labour market. It is a good idea in itself, and I do not want to be a killjoy, but this was a flagship proposal in the NDP's 2015 and 2019 election platforms. It is a good idea, but only if it is executed properly. It could really help people, especially since we are in an economic crisis right now that is disproportionately affecting women. Women's participation in the labour market has dropped sharply, and we know that affordable public child care gives women greater access to the labour market, since they have unfortunately inherited traditional societal responsibilities, such as caring for children.

It is a good measure that is very fitting under the circumstances. We could be happy, if only the Liberals had a shred of credibility in the matter. As I said earlier, they have been promising a child care program for the past 28 years. The first time was in Jean Chrétien's red book in 1993. That was quite a while ago. Should we believe them?

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Let us see their action plan and what they are going to do, and let us watch how they work with the provinces. Perhaps the Liberals will want to act quickly to meet the need, because there is indeed a need. We see it in Quebec, where the minister of families is desperate. Quebec needs 50,000 more child care spaces, and federal money would be welcome. I met with Quebec's minister of families a few months ago. He asked us to try to put pressure on the government for a federal transfer so that he could open more spaces and pay more educators. That would be a good thing for the Liberals to do, but I have my doubts that it will happen.

Let us remember that, in the last budget, the Liberals' big promise for a major social program was public pharmacare. The NDP agrees that we should have a public pharmacare program, as do the Union des consommateurs, the FTQ, the CSN and the CSQ. There are holes in Quebec's system, which is a hybrid system and is not perfect. Such a program would also help many sick people in English Canada reduce the cost of their medication and access the drugs they need. How is it that pharmacare was a priority two years ago, and now it is suddenly off the table? How is it that we were told that other consultations would be held, but now there is no funding for this program and it is over and done with? One year it is pharmacare, and the next it is child care. The government is playing games by going from one to another. The government does not seem very serious about these things.

There is also a lack of funding for housing, even though there is a major housing crisis in Montreal and across Quebec. There is nothing in the budget about making the tax system fair and equitable. Web giants are still not paying taxes in Quebec and Canada. There is probably even a loophole so that Netflix does not have to pay taxes. The government is even playing favourites among the web giants. I think we need to get to a point where companies that make excessive profits, like Amazon, are taxed more and a tax is imposed on wealth over \$20 million. These are solutions that the NDP is putting forward so that we can pay for a vibrant, green and prosperous economic recovery that benefits everyone.

• (1250)

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has not been mentioned too much in this debate, at least not at all today, is the benefits in the budget for NGOs and charities.

This does not often show up in a budget, at least not to this great of an extent. There is a community services recovery fund of \$400 million; \$220 million for the social finance fund, which is exciting and new; \$50 million for investment readiness for social financing, which had expired and is now being refunded; the opening up the Canada small business financing to NGOs and charities; and studying an exciting new concept of social bonds.

Does the member support these types of supports for charities and NGOs? I always enjoy listening to the member, so I definitely wanted to comment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his kind words.

Yes, any support for community groups in our constituencies is a good thing in and of itself, because they have difficult working conditions and extremely limited resources. These groups are often the ones keeping the social fabric intact and holding our communities together, so any additional assistance is good. We know that public services are also underfunded, so there would be disasters and tragedies if these community groups were not there.

They often tell us that they also want the funding they receive to be for their mission, not for their projects. Project-based funding forces these groups to spend a lot of time filling out paperwork and doing a lot of administrative tasks instead of helping our fellow Canadians. I encourage my colleague to look at this approach.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will not ask my colleague from Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie too difficult a question.

He mentioned taxing the digital giants. A “Netflix tax” that will not apply to Netflix is incredibly ironic. Actually, if it were not so sad, it would be laughable. I would love to hear my colleague's perspective on the consequences of the government's negligence and lack of courage when it comes to getting the web giants, who are making a fortune on the backs of our creators, to pay their fair share.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Drummond for his question.

We are talking about fairness and about the resources we need to give ourselves to support our cultural sector and our artists so they can contribute to the production of original Quebec and Canadian content.

How is it that the corner store near my office is forced to pay taxes while the Googles, Facebooks and Netflixes of the world get billions of dollars richer without having to pay a cent in taxes to Canada? These companies do not even want to tell us if they would be willing to pay.

It is absolutely scandalous and, unfortunately, the Liberals have done nothing about it since they took office six years ago. In what they are tentatively promising for next year, we can already see there will be loopholes that Netflix could take advantage of. It is unacceptable.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his speech, which, once again, had plenty of substance and raised some extremely important issues.

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As he pointed out, the government is cutting emergency benefits. It refuses to recognize housing as a human right, while the state of social housing in this country is appalling. Meanwhile, Canada has no wealth tax and no excess profits tax on the web giants and the billionaires who hide their money in tax havens. This all adds up to billions of dollars in lost revenue each year.

What will it take for the Liberals to ensure tax fairness and understand that the government really needs to make the ultrarich pay in this country, instead of always making cuts on the backs of ordinary Canadians?

• (1255)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question and his comments.

I only touched on the subject, but we could talk about it at length. We could also talk about the capital gains tax and the tax loopholes that allow the wealthiest Canadians and Bay Street bankers to profit from the sale of certain shares. That money could help fund social housing, public transit, our health care systems, better access to university for students, and more research.

My New Democrat colleague raised a good point about tax havens. We hear about taxing the web giants and the wealthy, but the Liberal government has never done anything about tax havens. According to the Department of Finance, we lose about \$16 billion a year to tax havens. As for taxing excess profits, the Parliamentary Budget Officer recently estimated that we could recover \$8 billion that way.

The Liberals should truly work for ordinary people, for middle-class workers, not for bankers, as they are doing now.

[*English*]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-30 and to share some of my reflections, not only on the government's budget and its implementation, but also on how the government views its relationship to Canadians.

I have been open in my critique of this budget. There is some good, and there are some things to be optimistic about, but ultimately this long-anticipated budget lacks the courage required to lead this country into a bold, new future. Canadians were not given a clear picture of what concrete steps will be taken to lift us up from our darkest hour. What we all need is leadership.

A leader speaks with clarity. Instead, we often spin our wheels with mixed messaging. The government has clearly indicated that we will be net-zero by 2050, while missing the point entirely that the decade we are currently in is actually the most important to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

A leader speaks with consistency. On the one hand, the government declared a climate emergency in 2019. Then, within the month, it had purchased the Trans Mountain pipeline to shepherd it through construction and more than double oil sands production.

A leader acts with integrity. The government says that no relationship is more important than its relationship with indigenous peoples, yet court injunctions are being enforced on unceded lands

across this country in the name of law and order. Reconciliation has lost its meaning.

This budget is just another example of symbolism over substance, where we maintain the status quo under the guise of transformation. I am certain I am not the only one who feels as though the last 14 months have simultaneously trickled by at a snail's pace and disappeared in the blink of an eye.

Last March, the world had to stop. We had to stop travelling, stop going to the office and stop enjoying Sunday dinners with grandparents. We had to adapt. Week by week, month by month, we were tested. We saw COVID sweep through long-term care homes as residents had no access to PPE or rapid testing. We closed our borders as a nation and many provinces chose to do the same. In those early months, there was no certainty about vaccine production timelines. All the while, tremors were shaking the economy, hitting small and medium-sized businesses the hardest.

We now find ourselves 14 months into this pandemic, and the Deputy Prime Minister has tabled a budget said to focus on Canadians and the middle class, and those seeking to join it. This middle-class obsession is yet another way to avoid talking about the widening gap between those experiencing extreme poverty and the wealthy elite.

We are in the throws of a housing crisis from coast to coast to coast. Not only is it becoming more and more difficult for young people to purchase their first home, but people cannot afford apartments as rental market prices are skyrocketing. People across the nation still do not have access to a primary care provider, mental health care professionals or the ability to pay for their medications they require to live.

Research published last month exposed that over half of Canadians, 53% of them, are within \$200 of not being able to cover their monthly bills. This includes the 30% who report they are already insolvent with no money left at month's end to cover their payments. This is unacceptable. How have we let income inequality reach this point? How is it that we are unwilling to face it down directly?

Instead, our government would rather reflect wistfully on the middle class, while banks increase their profits and children go hungry. People are having a hard time. The people we work for. They have done their best to manage so far, but I have felt the increased weight of it all in their correspondences to my office over the last month or two.

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People's financial reserves are exhausted. Their emotional reserves are exhausted. They do not need insincerity from their government. They need to be seen. When over half of our population is living with the anxiety of maybe not being able to make ends meet, or already being unable to do so, perhaps this middle-class concept is a little more than a relic of a bygone era.

It is important to name things as they are so we can approach them with integrity. I want us to have real conversations about offering stability, health and well-being to Canadians, meeting them where they are at, understanding the urgency and acting. This budget is a missed opportunity to truly offer Canadians a shift to directly improve their quality of life.

I had been hoping that one lesson taught by the pandemic would have been that we were able to act quickly and put in place life-changing programs, such as the Canadian emergency response benefit. In many cases, it kept people quite literally alive. However, even with the CERB, the government demonstrated indifference to the most vulnerable. We determined an amount that would be livable, knowing full well that we were continuing to ask persons with disabilities, seniors and those on social assistance to live on much less.

We had a chance to offer Canadians the stability of a ground floor to ensure that basic needs are met. We could have offered a collective sigh of relief with a guaranteed basic income. Instead, many Canadians are still holding their breath. I will not hold mine while I wait for the promises of the government to come through.

Another lesson I was had hoped to see reflected in the budget was the need to address racism and systemic inequality. We are still waiting for action on missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people. Words will not protect them. Words will not have their cases investigated the way they should be, and words will not root out hate and white supremacy in our society.

• (1300)

The Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat should have a robust plan to reach into every corner of our institutions to confront the vectors of power that have been at play since colonization began. Racism kills. We must adopt Joyce's principle that aims to guarantee that indigenous people have equitable access to all health and social services and to the highest attainable standard without discrimination.

We also need concrete, long-lasting actions for change in the Criminal Code, police enforcement and the carceral system. We know that our society will not be able to thrive until we break down the barriers that prevent people from living their full lives. Until there are real reparations and real justice, we cannot talk about reconciliation.

This budget is supposed to be about building a more resilient Canada, one that is better, fairer, more prosperous and more innovative, but without implementing a guaranteed livable income, I do not see how it will help Canadians to be more prosperous. While refusing to hike the capital gains tax and a reticence to impose a significant wealth tax, this has nothing to do with being better or more fair.

Who will bear the brunt of the deficits anticipated for the next decades? It is one thing to announce long-overdue investments in health care and housing, but these were needed decades ago. Will the government have the courage to implement a tax to target the large corporations that are profiting off this pandemic? As things stand, these corporations are the ones building back better and they are doing it on the backs of Canadians.

The minister also said that this budget is in line with the global shift to a green, clean economy. Everyone here should know without any surprise that I strongly support that vision, but I wish I was able to believe that this statement had value beyond the rhetorical. I see the situation we are facing as a potential opportunity. As the entire world looks to shift away from fossil fuels, we are given an incentive to figure it out now, to invest in innovation that will meet the energy demand with renewable energy or that will reduce our total energy demand.

The economic opportunity of new industries combined with an effort to redirect workers to these sectors holds immense potential. I know that some Canadians, indeed some members of this House, see me as an idealist or perhaps even naive, but my commitment to the rotational workers in my home province and beyond is real. I believe with every fibre of my being that their best futures are not travelling to and from Alberta for dwindling work in a dying industry. Their knowledge and skills can be transferred to benefit the economy of the future, one that is sustainable and renewable, one they can proudly leave to their children and grandchildren. That takes courage to stand one's ground and to do what is right, even when some people do not like it.

I know that with all of my colleagues in this House, we share the common objective of improving the lives of Canadians, but I also know we see different ways of getting there. As a woman, a mother and an educator, I want to put the emphasis on the well-being of people above all. I know that with a healthy and happy society, we can all thrive. What we need is a government with the courage to lead, a government that will share a vision for Canada that inspires us and a resolve to charge forward in that direction with confidence. This is how we will transform our society. This is how we will build the Canada of tomorrow.

• (1305)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Fredericton ended her speech with something that is very interesting: perpetuating the myth that the oil and gas industry is dead. I do not believe that to be true. Canadian oil and gas is more ethical and environmentally friendly than any other gas and oil sector in the world. Therefore, why would we not, as Canadians, do our best to export our oil and gas to countries across the world so that they do not use dirty, environmentally less friendly oil and gas from countries such as Venezuela, Saudi Arabia or Russia?

Why would we not promote our energy sector so that we could lower emissions around the world instead of perpetuating the myth that Canadian oil and gas is dead?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's passion and support for the oil and gas industry. To be clear, I said the oil and gas industry was dying, not that it was dead.

We clearly still have a need for Canadian oil and gas and I absolutely want to highlight the ethical standards that we have here in this country, but it is about the transition. It is about using that oil to lead us into the future. We know that petroleum products are still in use and are going to be in use for some time to come, but we can make a conscious effort to change some of the ways that we use them to lead us into the green economy future.

It is not about it being dead now, it is about preparing for that day to come and acknowledging that we need to shift. We cannot wait.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated the answer that the member just gave to that last question. Conservatives seem to have this narrative that when it comes to oil it is all or nothing, and people either support it or they do not. I appreciate the position that the member is taking on it, realizing that we have to use oil in the short term, but ultimately we would like to get to something that is less dependent on oil.

What does the member think that means for the future? She has young children. I have young children. We both care about what the future holds for them. How does she perceive this transition benefiting future generations?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly appreciative of that question as well, especially in light of being a mother. Any decision that we make as a government must be made with the foresight of future generations and how they are going to benefit. Certainly, oil and gas contributes to building wind turbines, solar panels and the renewable energy that we know is ready, available and affordable for Canadians now. That is very much how I see this transition and how this will happen in Canada.

I also really want to highlight the need to reduce our energy demands. There are so many ways that we can retrofit commercial buildings and residential buildings. Look at all the personal decisions that we make on a daily basis as far as energy consumption goes. There are ways that we can reduce it while meeting the demand that we currently have with renewables.

I just have a comment as well that I do not believe we need to emphasize a broader future of nuclear energy. I really think it is about reducing the demand for energy first and then utilizing the amazing renewable technology we have now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I really liked my colleague's speech, especially the part about her concerns for the most vulnerable. I certainly have the same concerns.

This morning, there was a newspaper article about the very sad situation of a single mother of three children who was the victim of domestic violence. She is having a hard time finding housing that she can afford. In Longueuil, rent for a two- or three-bedroom apartment is between \$1,500 and \$1,700. That is outrageous.

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The government launched a housing strategy in 2017. However, Quebec received no money for years because negotiations failed. There could have been housing for this woman if the Government of Canada had signed an agreement and not insisted on putting up flags everywhere. In Montreal, encampments for the homeless have been dismantled. People are calling for social housing.

Does my colleague believe that the government is doing enough to help the most vulnerable, especially with respect to housing?

[*English*]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we are in a housing crisis that is playing out in multiple ways: we see the impacts of victims of domestic violence who are not able to turn to a safe place and put a roof over their head with their children; and we see some of the tent cities that we are seeing in our big city centres. It is devastating. This is Canada. It is a beautiful, prosperous country where everyone should have the right to affordable housing. We are just not there yet.

I really would have appreciated seeing stronger steps taken to address this. Some more investments have been made in housing, but we know the rapid housing initiative was so oversubscribed. We have to do so much more.

• (1310)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering if I could get the member's thoughts. This budget implementation act provides for the legislative framework for setting up child care, yet in an earlier attempt by the NDP to set up a legislative framework for pharmacare, the Liberals voted against.

Can the member comment the different approaches the Liberals have on child care, which is arguably very good, and on pharmacare, which certainly needs more work?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, it was nice and encouraging to see the plan to implement a national child care strategy, but without the groundwork for conversations with provinces and territories to get on board. That was the largest criticism we have as far as the NDP motion that was tabled for a national pharmacare program. There is a little bit of a cognitive dissonance there. Really, we just need to put our heads together, get the job done, deliver for Canadians, and do the groundwork that is required to make sure that happens while respecting provincial jurisdictions.

I am ready to do that work and I know that my colleagues in the NDP are also willing to do that. Let us get the rest of this House on board to do it as well.

Government Orders

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to join in the debate on the budget implementation act today. This is the first time I have responded to a federal budget as a member of the opposition. For eight years, I was a member of the government in Saskatchewan and replied to some budget speeches as a member of the government, so this is a new experience.

In listening to the responses from the opposition members, they never talk about anything positive, so for the member for Kingston and the Islands I will talk about some of the positive steps that have happened in Saskatchewan, but I will point out some areas of criticism as well.

As is my tradition, I have some thanks to give. First and foremost, none of us could do this job without our spouses and the support from back home. My wife Larissa is back home with our three kids Jameson, Claire and Nickson. It is Nickson's birthday on May 15, so I have to get home for that.

While I am on the topic of birthdays, this is a special day. I grew up on a farm in Rush Lake, Saskatchewan. My dad and uncle farmed together. We celebrate two birthdays on May 11, my cousin Jason Steinley's, whom I wish a happy birthday, and one of my childhood heroes, my big brother Quinton's. He turns substantially older than me today. It is an honour for me to wish him a happy birthday from the House of Commons. I am sorry we cannot see each other face to face, but hopefully we can have a celebration sometime in the near future.

Moving forward to the budget debate on the implementation act we are talking about today, there are some positives for the people of Saskatchewan. We have a fantastic facility called VIDO at the University of Saskatchewan and this budget has a \$40-million to \$45-million investment for VIDO, which we appreciate. Not only will it help us get out of this pandemic, it will prepare us for anything that is coming in the future. Investments in science and technology and the health care sector are very important. We appreciate that investment into the University of Saskatchewan. That is something we have talked about for a long time and we wish it had happened a bit sooner, but like we always say, it is better late than never coming from the current government.

We are also seeing a return to bigger government and bigger spending. That is something we have seen throughout this budget. I think it is on track to be 30% more permanent spending by 2026, which is \$100 billion more added to the annual budget of the Government of Canada. When it comes down to it, the question we on the opposition side is this. How are we going to continue to pay for that?

We have heard that the Liberals expect this to be a stimulus budget. There is \$101.4 billion earmarked for stimulus spending and the opposition is asking if that is true. Some comments have been made by some people that that may not be the facts exactly of the stimulus spending.

I am going to quote the PBO, who stated:

Parliament's spending watchdog says the federal Liberals' budget overestimates how much of an impact its stimulus measures will have on Canada's economy.

The budget last month outlined what the government said was \$101.4 billion in new spending over three years aimed at helping the country climb out of the economic hole caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

But the budget officer's report on Wednesday estimated that only \$69 billion of that spending could be considered stimulus, such as the extension of emergency supports that were outlined prior to the budget.

Yves Giroux said his estimates of stimulus spending would boost economic growth by one per cent next year and create 74,000 jobs, compared with the budget's estimates, respectively, of two per cent and 334,000 jobs.

He went on to say that the higher deficits and debt in the coming years could limit the ability of a government to introduce any new, permanent programs without spending cuts or tax increases.

The crux of the argument today in this House of Commons and in my presentation is that the overestimations by the government have continued to hurt our economy. I do not have any doubt, and I do not think anyone in my constituency of Regina—Lewvan has any doubt, that the Liberals know how to spend money. They have full faith that the Liberals have not met a dollar they do not want to spend on insiders, friends and family. What are they going to deliver for average Canadians? When are they going to deliver jobs for average Canadians?

● (1315)

We just saw a report that, once again, 200,000 Canadians lost their jobs last month. The question is, out of this spending, if the Liberals are saying 334,000 Canadians are going to go back to work, why is the PBO saying it is only going to be 74,000? That is an important question that needs to be answered. Are they saying that Canadians need to trust what they put on paper or what the non-partisan PBO has put on paper? I think I know who Canadians are going to trust more.

There are also comments, from other sectors and from the CFIB, that they would like to see a plan to reopen. When I have talked to small businesses in Saskatchewan, a lot of them do not want to be dependent on government programs or government cheques. They would rather see clients and customers coming in their doors. They would rather have their doors open and be able to earn that money than wait for a government cheque.

What we would also like to see is what is going on in Saskatchewan. I am quite proud of our provincial government and the plan it has rolled out as to how to safely reopen. There is a three-phase plan, where on May 30—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member's microphone is off. We will just see if we can get it back working again.

Let us go back to the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Government Orders

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, the provincial government under Premier Moe has laid out a very concise plan to reopen its economy in three phases. The first phase starts with having over 70% of 40-year-olds vaccinated. They are actually there already, so phase one is going to reopen on May 30. Three weeks after that, if 70% of people 30 and over are vaccinated, they can go to phase two, where there will be more opportunities and businesses can open and have more clients and customers coming through their doors. If we get 70% of people 18 and over vaccinated, hopefully in mid-July, we can get back to a little of the normal life we all are hoping to get back to this summer, sooner rather than later.

Some of how to safely reopen our economy is missing from the budget, and that is what we look at from an economic development point of view. One thing that I have seen, and once again this is a positive thing for the member for Kingston and the Islands, is that in the Regina area we have had almost a billion dollars' worth of private investment over the last month. That is great news for agriculture and manufacturing. Viterra has said it is going to bring one of the largest canola-crushing plants on earth to Regina. That is fantastic. We just spoke with a person from Cargill. That company is investing in having a canola-crushing plant come to Regina. Federated Co-operatives Limited just bought True North Renewable Fuels, and it is going to be expanding and setting up a renewable diesel refinery in the Regina area.

There is good news on the horizon in Regina, but there has not been much from the federal government side. It has been private business. The Government of Saskatchewan has set up an economic atmosphere of success, and that is what I want to talk about toward the end of my comments. We need to create more opportunities in our major industries. One of the industries that continually gets left behind by the government is the oil and gas sector. Through the economic downturn in 2008, what brought us back faster than any other G7 country were our oil and gas sector, our manufacturing sector and our agriculture sector.

I want to talk about that, being a member of the agriculture standing committee. We just finished work on how to increase processing capacity across the nation, and the government had lost out on a major processing facility from Maple Leaf Foods. Actually, the chair of the agriculture committee, who is a Liberal member, asked a VP from Maple Leaf Foods why the company did not build in Canada instead of building its new processing plant in Indiana. The VP of Maple Leaf Foods said it was because of the uncertainty in regulations and the changing atmosphere of the regulatory system in Canada. He said that it seems like whenever someone is going to be investing big private capital in Canada, the goalposts keep moving.

It was there in black and white in the Hansard, and it is happening on way too many occasions with the current government. It continues to change the goalposts when it comes to regulatory guidelines and what it needs from people when they invest in Canada. It happened to Teck Frontier, and it happened again here with Maple Leaf Foods. What we need to see from the Liberal government is more certainty, and that is why I will be voting against the budget.

• (1320)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by extending a happy birthday to the member's brother, and on his behalf, I would perhaps raise a point of order. I doubt his brother is that much older than him despite the fact the member indicated that.

In all seriousness, going to his speech, we heard the member talk about how the government needs to be doing more to establish a plan to reopen. We know the Conservatives brought forward a motion demanding a plan to reopen about a month ago, but then the member went on to talk about how the premier of Manitoba had developed a plan himself.

This is what we have been saying from the beginning. It is not the federal government's job to determine how a province is going to reopen, just like it is not the federal government's responsibility to determine what lockdowns are happening from time to time. I am just glad to hear the member finally admit that it is the provincial government's responsibility to determine when the economies need to reopen in those provinces.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I raise a point of order as well, as it was the premier of Saskatchewan and not Manitoba. That is my home province.

What escapes the member for Kingston and the Islands is that there also has to be federal leadership from his government to show the way when it comes to reopening. Obviously the provincial governments across the country have a lot to do with the reopening plans, but they have to know there is certainty in vaccination.

As the member said, and as we saw in his comments, we would not be standing in this place right now if the government had gotten the vaccine rollout right in January and February. I admire his honesty in saying that the federal Liberals made a mistake. They screwed up and did not get the vaccines here in January and February, and that is why we are in the position we are. There is leadership coming from the provinces. I just wish a little more would be coming from the federal government.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague from Saskatchewan, which was one of the first provinces to bring in a public universal health care system.

In terms of vision and leadership, does my colleague agree that to support the economy and our health care sector the government should immediately honour its commitment to transfer the necessary funding through the Canada health transfer to cover 35% of expenses, as Quebec and the provinces have been calling for?

Government Orders

• (1325)

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, there needs to be more collaboration between the provinces and the federal government. Coming from the provincial government, I know there are always conversations between federal and provincial health ministers. Those conversations need to be taken very seriously, and there needs to be more collaboration between health ministers. We saw in this pandemic that there needed to be co-operation as our vital food supply chains and vital systems could be shut down. There needs to be a collaborative approach with the federal government and all provincial and territorial governments across the country.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot from the Conservatives about the need to take the COVID crisis more seriously, and I agree. We have seen the deadly toll COVID has taken, especially in long-term care homes. So many elders and seniors have been lost during this COVID crisis. They should not have been.

We in the NDP have made it clear that we need to ensure the long-term care system is in public hands. However, the Conservative leader does not seem to have an issue with for-profit long-term care.

Why is it that the Conservative leader and the Conservative Party cannot seem to recognize the deadly impacts of for-profit, privatized long-term elder care in our country?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, long-term care is vital. Seniors are the pioneers who helped build this country, and there are many different aspects we can continue to invest in to create better atmospheres and outcomes in long-term care. We talked about having standard metrics to make sure people are being treated equally across the country, and that comes with those same conversations to have with health ministers. Many arrows need to be in the quiver for long-term care in order to treat seniors with the respect they deserve and to make sure the ends of their lives are as successful, prosperous and comfortable as possible.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I was surprised by my hon. friend for Regina—Lewvan's reference to Maple Leaf Foods as an example of where it was unfair that a company might go to the United States.

Maple Leaf has had several outbreaks across the country, with workers complaining at Maple Leaf Foods in the Brandon, Manitoba, plant as well as at the Ontario poultry plant. There is a history of listeriosis in one of the plants. The model of major industrial livestock and massive meat plants has had a rather harsh light shone on it during COVID.

Would we not have potentially safer production and more plants if they were not mega-industrial livestock slaughterhouses?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, there is just so much wrong with that member's question. I do not know when would be the last time she was on a farm.

My family and my cousins still ranch. Ranchers are some of the best stewards of their land when it comes to grasslands and when it comes to how they treat their cattle. That is their livelihood. I just

got home from helping my cousins vaccinate heifers to make sure they were safe and they were going to grow.

It puts a terrible lens on industrial agriculture. In Canada, we have great producers. We have great agriculture and people across the country from east to west. To even cast doubt on how good they are and how much they care about their land, their cattle and their livestock really does an injustice to them. The member should be embarrassed by that question.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that this is an important week, National Nursing Week. I want to take this opportunity to thank not only the amazing nurses of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford but those who work across Vancouver Island, the province of B.C. and our great country for the hard work they do every day.

For people who doubt how severe an illness COVID-19 really is, they need only speak to a nurse who works incredibly long hours in an ICU, who helps patients in respiratory distress and who is often the only one there when a patient meets his or her end. I want to acknowledge our amazing nurses and thank them for their service. They do an amazing job on behalf of our communities.

We are at a point now where we have been battered quite hard by COVID-19, and this third wave has certainly been the worst of them all. I know people are exhausted everywhere. Some members before me have referenced the physical, mental and emotional exhaustion that we all feel at this moment. We are all looking for some light at the end of this very long and dark tunnel.

However, we are at the stage now where there is a noticeable uptake in vaccinations. We are certainly at a point in British Columbia right now where people in my age group are starting to book their vaccination appointments. In fact, I just booked mine today. I am looking forward to getting that first shot and joining the growing list of my fellow citizens who have received theirs.

Today, we are here to discuss Bill C-30, the government's budget implementation act, which followed its April budget. It proposes several legislative changes to bring those measures into force. However, I do not think that all the measures that were announced in the budget are contained in the bill. I have heard reference that a second implementation act will follow in the fall of this year.

I have been listening to the speeches on Bill C-30 today and to some of the concerns about the spending that is going on in this budget and the eye-watering deficit in which we find ourselves. We would not be at this stage if it had not been for the pandemic. We have had to open up the federal taps to help struggling small businesses and individuals weather this storm, and to ensure those small businesses are still in operation when we finally are clear of the pandemic.

Government Orders

However, in all the concerns I have heard about the spending, I have not really heard much discussion from either the Liberals or Conservatives on how we address the revenue shortfall, how we ensure that when we get back on the road of recovery, when we try to get the books back to a balanced status, that we do not unfairly place the burden on working families. We need only look at the example in the 1990s when the Liberal government, with finance minister Paul Martin, had a very large axe, and they swung it everywhere. There were incredible slashes made to health care transfers and housing, and that left a lot of working families in extreme pain.

How do we move forward in a way that saves working families from continuing to bear the brunt of the costs from this pandemic? The answer is simple. It is a wealth tax, which is a simple 1% on fortunes of over \$20 million. We have proposed that because we are in a state now where over the last year we have seen Canada's billionaires increase their wealth by an exponential amount.

I am still scratching my head when I hear my Conservative colleagues say that this is not time to impose a tax. Clearly, Canadians of all political persuasion have indicated strong favour for imposing a wealth tax, for ensuring that the wealthy and well-connected are paying their fair share. A 1% tax on fortunes of over \$20 million is not targeting our normal constituents. In fact, I do not think I know anyone personally with a fortune of over \$20 million. This is a smart economic policy to ensure that the burden does not fall on most of our constituents. It is about finding that way forward.

● (1330)

I would have liked to have seen Bill C-30 and, indeed, the budget speech from April 19 contain some specific references to targeting very wealthy individuals, maybe putting in a profiteering tax, similar to what the Canadian government did during World War II, as well as harsher measures to crack down on tax evasion. So much revenue is slipping through the fingers of the CRA right now. People who can afford to pay that money, who have the means to pay the tax, are not paying their fair share and are using existing loopholes to escape notice. It is shameful behaviour and it is morally wrong. It means that the rest of our constituents have to shoulder that unfair burden.

I am also very interested in the part of the budget implementation legislation that deals with child care. I am a very strong believer and supporter of child care. I ran very strongly on this platform in 2015. I remember the Liberals criticizing the NDP plan back then, so it is nice to see they have now adopted it, almost six years later, and that it is finally in the budget.

However, I compare the rationale behind child care versus what the Liberals have said on pharmacare. Under division 34 of the bill, we see a legislative framework to set up child care, yet when the NDP proposed a legislative framework that was based on the Canada Health Act to bring in a pharmacare system, the Liberals voted against that.

Child care is great, and I really hope this time around it does succeed, but when it comes to pharmacare, we have been waiting since 1997, when the Liberals last promised it. Every month, families right across the country are having to make those difficult decisions when there are unexpected medical costs. It can really break the family budget. Those investments can have a tangible impact on the

budgets of working families and help them make it from month to month.

The member for St. John's East, my great colleague, has introduced a motion in the House of Commons to expand our health care system to include dental care. That is also a key missing element. For the life of me, I cannot understand why health care coverage ends at one's tonsils and does not include strong oral care. We know that poor oral health is a very strong indicator of more serious medical conditions. It is ultimately a class issue. People who have the means and the wealth can afford good dental care. Often people are lucky enough to have good dental coverage through their work. However, a lot of people have lost those benefits in this pandemic. They have had their hours reduced or they have lost their jobs altogether. We need to make those very important and specific investments in health care.

It is great that the budget implementation bill addressed EI sickness benefits, unfortunately raising it only to 26 weeks. The House of Commons has repeatedly indicated support for the full 52 weeks or even 50 weeks, which I have heard in some iterations. This is important because Canada pension plan disability benefits do not often kick in unless someone has a demonstrated illness or injury that will make them incapable of work for over a year. Often people are falling in the gap between what the Liberals are now proposing, the 26 weeks, and a full year, which is 52 weeks. That could have been done quite easily.

The Liberals do enjoy their half-measures, so if 26 weeks is what we will get this time, I will accept, but I want it to be known that it is not good enough. Definite improvements need to be made to that.

I know I am within my last minute, so I will end on a positive note. The budget is certainly a mixed bag, but as the NDP critic for agriculture, it is nice to see some investments coming to that sector, really trying to concentrate on the area of environmental sustainability. Our farmers are on the front lines of climate change, but they also have the tools to be one of our greatest weapons in fighting climate change. In the future, I would love to see more investments come their way, investments that concentrate on the sector's ability to sequester carbon.

● (1335)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the end of his speech, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford touched on something that is very important to me, and that is the issue of rural Canada, particularly the agricultural industry.

Government Orders

The reality is that the Liberal government totally has a misunderstanding of rural Canada. My riding of 42,000 square kilometres has rural people. The government has basically said that it will put money toward public transit. Let us see someone put a bus line in from Maryfield, which is a two and a half hour to Regina if people are lucky.

I would like to hear a little more about carbon sequestration. I am sure the member is well aware that farmers are great stewards of the land. They sequester carbon every time they crop. They recognize their crops. Organic farmers do not use nitrogen, etc., to enhance that, but they use cover crops to put nitrogen into the ground. I would love to hear some further comments on that.

• (1340)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I, too, am a representative of a rural riding, certainly not the size of my colleague's. My riding is about 4,700 square kilometres. The Cowichan region has a long and storied history in agriculture. We have generational farms.

This is an exciting policy area. Through techniques such as no-till, cover cropping, appropriate use of fertilizer, farmers can use regenerative agricultural methods, stuff they already know, but can be encouraged to do more of it. This an exciting policy area. It might help us get out of the bunfight over the carbon tax and find incentives and rewards to give farmers the credit they so very much deserve in fighting climate change.

There are areas where we can work together in developing these policies.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague elaborate a bit more on the problem with the health transfers and the fact that the new bill does not provide anything for changing the balance and helping Quebec and the provinces?

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I know the member is speaking from his province's perspective, but the province of British Columbia, my home province, and many premiers in our federation have called for increased health transfers because provincial budgets are breaking in trying to deal with the costs.

I support what the member wants to do. As I very clearly laid out in my speech, I also want to see very targeted investments in a pharmacare system and a dental care system. These can fit very well under the existing Canada Health Act, which lays out conditions that provinces must meet to qualify for those transfer dollars. I would really like to see us make bold steps in both of these areas.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my hon. colleague about the need to establish a national dental care plan. I talk to people all the time who are unable to get their teeth fixed and the huge impact that has on families, workers and people's health.

We know the Liberals have promised many things like pharmacare and failed to deliver, but on the issue of dental care, we have been told that it is doable, that is not overly costly. Could my hon.

colleague explain how practical it is to establish a national dental care plan that would have such an impact for so many people?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely huge. I put a post on my Facebook page and it was filled with comments from constituents about the costs they personally had to bear for fixing their teeth.

I think the member will join me in recognizing our colleague from St. John's East, who has put forward this motion. Unfortunately, the Liberals have indicated they will not support it. Even though the motion is non-binding, the Liberals still cannot bring themselves to support at the least the intent or recognize the importance of dental care.

It is inconceivable that our health care coverage ends at our tonsils when poor oral health has been linked to so many serious medical conditions. I am proud to be a member of a party that will fight tooth and nail for both dental care and pharmacare.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech on Bill C-30, budget implementation act, 2021, no. 1, I would like to take a moment to extend my sincere condolences to the friends and family of Serge Bouchard. He was Quebec's favourite anthropologist, and a wonderful communicator and speaker. He was an exceptional man. We learned of his death today. I wanted to express my deepest condolences to his family and tell them that we will miss him dearly.

I rise today to talk about the budget. Bill C-30 is a big omnibus bill with lots of measures. Some are better than others. The Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-30, and I would now like to look at the positive aspects and then look at what could have been improved. We agree that the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency rent subsidy should be extended to 2026.

There is also the tax deferral on patronage dividends from agricultural co-operatives. I met with Jean-Sébastien Leblanc and Sylvain Brault of the Coop fédérée, which is now called Sollio. They stressed the importance of this measure for co-operatives. We are very pleased that they can take advantage of this measure. It will be good for this great Quebec co-operative.

We will certainly follow rigorously and closely all the measures surrounding tourism, including small and large cultural and special events. They are also major victims of this pandemic and will probably be the last to fully resume their activities.

Government Orders

This brings me to two topics that are really important to me: seniors and sick workers. Starting with seniors, clearly Bill C-30 announced with great fanfare an OAS increase for people aged 75 and over, not right now, not as soon as the bill is passed, but in 2022. Quite frankly, I am not the only one who wonders why only those aged 75 and over, and why in 2022.

FADOQ, which has 550,000 members in Quebec, is the largest seniors' organization in Canada. It wasted no time condemning what is going on. Truthfully and to the point, FADOQ said that the budget's 10% OAS increase for people aged 75 and over creates two classes of seniors: those aged 65 to 74 and those 75 and up. Specifically, the Liberals' proposal is to give seniors 75 and up a raise of \$63.80 per month.

For quite some time now, the Bloc Québécois has been calling for an increase of at least \$110 per month for all seniors over 65. There is a reason for that. For years, seniors' spending power has been shrinking while costs have been rising. Some seniors were not lucky enough to have a job with a pension or were not able to save much money. Some seniors, more than one might think, have trouble making ends meet.

I worked with seniors my whole professional career. I dedicated my working years to them. I know that, as we speak, there are seniors who cannot afford to buy medication or food. They have a hard time buying services because they are losing their independence. Their independence and their ability to do things depends on an old age security increase.

The president of FADOQ, Gisèle Tassé-Goodman, did not mince her words. I met Ms. Tassé-Goodman at the debate on seniors during the last electoral campaign. She is a smart woman.

• (1345)

She said that by increasing old age security exclusively for people age 75 and over, the government was creating two classes of seniors. To avoid this divide, her organization recommended that the 10% increase in old age security be extended to everyone eligible for this benefit, starting at age 65.

The Bloc Québécois advocated for this and asked the government to include it in the budget. We are also calling for it in our platform. We know that Quebec seniors need to increase their spending capacity, because everything costs more.

When seniors realized that the Bloc Québécois understood their situation, as the issue is well documented, some ministers responded immediately through the newspapers. They said that it was not true that the government gave nothing to seniors, that on the contrary, it gave them a lot of money.

However, we know seniors do not have money in their pockets. The government has taken money from a host of programs—three-quarters of which fall under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces—and given it to seniors. The government is interfering in a whole slew of programs.

A parliamentary secretary even had the nerve to say that the government had given a lot of money to seniors through the new horizons for seniors program. This is definitely a worthwhile and important program for our communities and seniors' clubs that helps

seniors, but it does not provide the money they need to pay the rent, utilities and grocery bills every month.

By creating two classes of seniors, the government has really rallied seniors around this cause. This is my third term and I have never received this much correspondence from seniors, who are criticizing this decision. There is an outcry on social media because people do not understand. They are also not satisfied with the answers they are getting.

Organizations such as the Centre d'action bénévole de Beauharnois, the Popote roulante de Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, the Club de l'âge d'or de Bellerive and the Club l'âge d'or de Saint-Timothée, which look after seniors and are dedicated to their well-being, all wrote to me asking me to continue speaking out about this situation. This is a major form of discrimination.

We hope that the voices of our seniors will be heard, and that the increase in old age security will be revised so that seniors 65 and over can receive it.

I cannot end my speech without mentioning how disappointed I am and how disappointed all the *Émilie Sansfaçons* of Quebec and Canada are. The government turned a deaf ear and did not really listen. It amended the Employment Insurance Act by extending the EI sickness benefit from 15 to 26 weeks. It has been documented that 26 weeks are not enough. On average, people need 41 weeks. Why commit this injustice? Why decide that seriously ill people who are fighting for their lives in the hope of returning to work do not deserve to get the support they need?

During a briefing, the government gave a truly awful answer. They said that essentially EI was there for people who are not sick for a long time and it was not in the spirit of the legislation to help those who are, since there is little chance that they will go back to work. If I had been at that briefing, I would have been very angry because none of that is true.

Tomorrow we will debate my bill at second reading and I hope that it will be passed and referred to committee. Then we could document and prove that 26 weeks are not enough and that we need 50. We hope that common sense will prevail and that in committee we will be able to convince government members that we need 50 weeks for workers who are sick.

• (1350)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her comments, especially what she said about seniors.

Statements by Members

I am wondering if she could talk a little more about the impact of COVID-19 on seniors, who want to be able to see their friends and their grandchildren. Sometimes spouses can even be separated when one of them is in care.

We need a plan to roll out testing and to make vaccines available. The failure to do so is having a significant impact on seniors—and yet there is no plan in the budget to get us out of this pandemic.

Has the member heard from any seniors who are asking for a COVID-19 recovery plan?

• (1355)

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

Vaccine distribution is Ottawa's responsibility. It was delayed, and that has delayed mass vaccination in Quebec. Now that Quebec has received the vaccines, it has become a leader, like Saskatchewan. All seniors living in long-term care homes in Quebec have received their first and second doses, and those living in seniors' residences have begun to receive their first dose. The lack of a plan therefore has no impact on us at this time. Quebec is doing very well at vaccination.

Instead, I am trying to understand why the government is creating two classes of seniors when everyone is against it. Only the party opposite does not understand that we need to support the purchasing power of seniors by increasing old age security from the time they turn 65 until the end of their lives, to help them with their financial obligations.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to follow up on that last comment, in the last federal election there was a very clear commitment made to seniors aged 75 and over that we would be providing a 10% increase. Over three million seniors across Canada will benefit as a direct result of the promise and what we are seeing in the budget. Does the member not agree that fulfilling a campaign commitment is a good thing?

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. People who are 75 and will receive the old age security increase are quite pleased, because they need it and it is a good thing.

I have heard from many seniors who are 65. It is important for people to understand that someone who has worked all their life as a server in a restaurant, for example, is exhausted by the time they reach the age of 65. Their body and their mind can no longer keep up.

What the government's arguments imply is that people aged 65 to 74 still have a little bit of energy to work, that they just need to find a side job to make ends meet and that when they turn 75 and are exhausted, they will get the old age security increase.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her interventions and for her ardent defence of the interests of seniors and the elderly.

The housing crisis is severe in Quebec, as it is pretty much everywhere. After years of neglect by the Liberals and the Conservatives, who cut investments in social housing, people are finding themselves in situations where they could end up out on the street, unable to afford their absolutely exorbitant rent. For example, near my home in Montreal, I recently saw a two-bedroom unit for rent for \$1,700 a month, plus heating. I wonder who can afford that in our society.

I would like to hear my colleague's views on the Liberals' half measures to help people access a home or social housing.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I know that the housing issue is very important to him. It is to me too.

I have to say that the current situation is crazy. It took four years to come up with a national housing agreement between Quebec and Ottawa, and still Quebec's expectations are far from being met because the needs are so great. The problem is that the money for affordable housing and social housing is in Ottawa, whereas the need is in the provinces.

Quebec has excellent programs, such as AccèsLogis Québec. To make new social housing units available faster, Ottawa must give Quebec the money it needs to start building affordable housing and social housing.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some heroes wear capes; others wear masks, face shields, gloves and gowns, but all heroes protect our communities by keeping them safe. Since the start of this pandemic, nurses across Canada have been at the front lines in our battle against this virus. Many have been going to work every day in conditions that could pose a threat to their health, and many have been isolating from their families so they could care for ours.

As we celebrate National Nursing Week, it is important for us to recognize that nurses are the soul of our health care system and have always been so. Let us recognize, too, that each one of us has a role to play in keeping our nurses safe as the pandemic continues. Let us do our part to stop the spread of this virus, follow public health advice and get vaccinated when it is our turn.

To the nurses in Newmarket—Aurora and across Canada, I thank them for their courage, commitment, compassion and sacrifices. They truly are our superheroes.

* * *

AMBROSE WON-CHUL CHOI

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past week, greater Vancouver lost a pillar of its community. Ambrose Won-Chul Choi and his family immigrated to Canada in 2004 and started their family business. After years of hard work, Ambrose Holdings Canada became a successful exporting company and started to give back to the community.

The Ambrose and Matilda charity concerts have raised funds to benefit hospital foundations, homeless shelters and numerous charities. They have also touched many hearts in my riding of Richmond Centre. I was there during Veterans' Week last year at a special concert they coordinated at YVR to honour the veterans and to thank the frontline people at the airport. To cheer the medical staff of the Richmond Hospital, the Richmond Food Bank and children with disabilities, they delivered to them boxes of chocolates, the locally made Matilda's chocolates.

Ambrose, a proud Canadian of Korean descent, suffered a heart attack and is now with the Lord. To Matilda, Eric and Alex, I thank them for sharing with us their beloved husband and father. He will surely be missed.

* * *

NATIONAL TRADE CORRIDORS FUND

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Saint John—Rothesay is home to Port Saint John, an economic jewel in our region and one of Canada's busiest ports by volume. It is our province's gateway to the world.

I am thrilled that through budget 2021 we have committed to strengthening our regional, cross-border and international trade by allocating \$1.9 billion in funding over four years to renew the national trade corridors fund, which is great news for our port's future growth and development.

This funding will attract almost \$3 billion in private investment in our hardest-hit communities. This will reduce barriers to trade and bring stronger supply chains, improving container business opportunities right here, which will strengthen our local economy and help create meaningful employment in southern New Brunswick.

I am proud of our government and budget 2021 and what it means for Canadians across the country and here at home in my great riding of Saint John—Rothesay.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, every year, hundreds of farms are closing down in Quebec. It is obvious that there is an urgent need to encourage the next generation of farmers. However, the federal government is making it more profitable for a farmer to sell their business to outside shareholders

Statements by Members

than to their own family. The farmer can either sell their land to a third party and secure a decent retirement, since the sale will qualify for the lifetime capital gains exemption, or sell it to their family and forgo a comfortable retirement.

Tomorrow we will have the opportunity to rectify this situation that the Bloc Québécois has opposed for 15 years now. Bill C-208, which aims to facilitate the transfer of businesses, will be put to a vote. I personally co-sponsored this bill, because the Bloc Québécois votes in favour of initiatives that are good for Quebec farmers. That is what being reliable is all about. This vote will be a moment of truth for the future of farming in Quebec, and I urge all parties to truly support the next generation of farmers.

* * *

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to recognize the work of all the nurses in Canada. I have been lucky because until last year, when I was sick, my grandmother always answered the call. She was not only my grandmother, but also a nurse who was driven by a desire to help her patients. In honour of National Nursing Week, I want to acknowledge all the nurses who always answer the call.

● (1405)

[English]

At the start of this pandemic, nurses were there caring for COVID-19 patients, despite the fact that the world knew very little about this infectious disease. They were there for those patients who had close calls but made it through. They were there to hold the hands of patients who took their last breath, and nurses are now administering vaccines so Canadians can get back to a normal life.

I personally want to thank Ms. Sherry McDonald, a registered nurse in my riding who took care of my ailing aunt until she passed last month.

[Translation]

I want to say a huge thank you to all the nurses who answered the call and supported their communities.

* * *

RESIDENTS OF CHARLESBOURG-HAUTE-SAINT-CHARLES

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I have the honour to rise in the House to commend the organizations, businesses and residents of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for their strength during the COVID-19 crisis.

Statements by Members

We talk about resilience and acceptance, but I have also seen wonderful examples of people who came together to help each other. Since March 2020, the Knights of Columbus, food banks and other organizations, such as Patro de Charlesbourg and RAFAL, just to name a few, have all come together to help their community. They all demonstrated that those who decide to work together can accomplish great things in the face of adversity.

A year into the pandemic, I am also proud to recognize the work of frontline workers, who I visited this time last year to honour their courage, the courage to continue the fight. A flag that reads “Together We Stand” hangs in every seniors’ residence and long-term care home in their honour.

I am proud to represent the residents, business owners, volunteers and organizations of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, but more importantly, I am inspired by them and their commitment, which breathes fresh air into our riding.

* * *

[*English*]

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Ms. Jennifer O’Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize National Nursing Week, which takes place from May 10 to May 16.

Nurses play a critical role in delivering health care services, shaping our health system and improving the health of Canadians. The dedication of nurses has never been more evident than it is right now during the COVID-19 pandemic. Across Canada, nurses have provided unwavering support to patients, demonstrating leadership and professionalism under challenging circumstances. Nurses have been working around the clock at great personal sacrifice and with the knowledge that being on the front lines may expose their own families to risk. I commend the great work nurses have done and continue to do.

I would like to acknowledge one special nurse to me, the member for Brampton West, who put her scrubs back on to help her community during this pandemic. She is an inspiration to us all.

I invite all my colleagues to use the hashtag #NationalNursingWeek on social media to celebrate the nurses across Canada and to thank them for their dedication to our communities.

* * *

MOTHER’S DAY

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, mothers across Canada were celebrated for their courage, hard work and resilience. As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child. Across the country this past year, families such as my own saw their villages shift and oftentimes disappear.

Kudos to all the moms out there for single-handedly embodying the village our children need. Their efforts day in and day out to get children and communities through the past year cannot be overlooked. My hat goes off to all the mothers who took on more hats than anyone should have to, from teacher to referee, IT support, camp counsellor and oftentimes a friend to children struggling to adjust.

I would like to give special thanks to my mom and my mother-in-law for the countless care packages, video calls and impromptu dance classes with my children. To my wife Jo, Ayva and Maya’s mom, I say that we are incredibly lucky to have her in our lives.

Once again, to all those taking on a motherly role, I wish a happy Mother’s Day. No amount of celebrating will ever truly live up to the tireless work they do each and every day.

* * *

PARKLAND COUNTY WILDFIRE

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the unseasonably dry weather in northern Alberta has wreaked havoc on our local communities. Today, I am thinking of the folks out in Parkland County, where at least 300 people had to evacuate their homes in the face of a wildfire that broke out last Thursday night, covering over 2,200 hectares.

I am incredibly proud of the leadership at Parkland County, including Parkland fire chief Brian Cornforth, and the over 60 firefighters who came from across Alberta, some as far as High Level, to help battle this blaze. Mayor Rod Shaigec of Parkland County also wanted me to particularly thank the staff at the emergency operations centre, the towns of Drayton Valley and Stony Plain, and the counties of Clearwater and Brazeau for their considerable assistance to our communities.

The fire is not out yet, but it has stopped growing and we will defeat it. This is the spirit of Alberta. We have made it through floods and fires, and now we are getting through this pandemic. One thing I know for sure is that nothing will keep Albertans down. We will always come back up: Alberta strong.

* * *

● (1410)

NEW BRUNSWICK MUNICIPAL COUNCILLORS

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was election day for most municipalities of beautiful New Brunswick. The results will be known in a few days.

[*Translation*]

Before the results come out, I want to congratulate the 15 mayors and municipal councils in my beautiful riding of Madawaska—Restigouche for their hard work and dedication. Their terms were extended by one year because of COVID-19.

[English]

They have been hard at work during these years working on infrastructure projects, for instance festivals, cultural events, etc. Being on a municipal council takes a lot of time, and I thank all of these people for generously giving their time for the best interest of their respective communities.

[Translation]

To the outgoing mayors and councillors who will be retiring, I want to say thank you so much for your work, and I wish you luck in your future endeavours.

[English]

To the ones re-offering a new mandate and to all the new candidates, I wish the best of luck.

[Translation]

I look forward to working with the new municipal councillors. Together, we will accomplish great things for Madawaska—Restigouche.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is now less than 24 hours before Enbridge's Line 5, carrying important petroleum products through Ontario and Quebec, is due to be shut down. If the Michigan governor follows through on her promise, thousands of jobs in western Canada will be in jeopardy. More important, the impact will be felt by Canadians east of the Great Lakes.

When we wake up in the morning, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who has spent much of his adult life hanging from the sides of buildings protesting pipelines, will have to explain to his constituents why they do not have propane to heat their homes. Liberal MPs from Toronto who want to phase out fossil fuels will have to explain to their constituents why planes carrying vaccines can no longer land at Pearson airport because there is a shortage of jet fuel.

On second thought, maybe Conservative MPs should allow the Michigan governor to shut down this pipeline, because she may be able to drive home a point to political parties in this place that no amount of debate to date could accomplish.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we watch other countries begin to open up and reduce their pandemic restrictions, the world witnesses Canada trailing far behind due to a lack of leadership from the Prime Minister.

I was recently asked by a constituent if there was any hope. Canadians are desperate for leadership and clarity on when they will see an end in sight and how we will navigate through the coming months. They have been asking for transparency and a strategic plan to open the economy.

Statements by Members

I rise today to say yes, there is hope with the Conservative Party. We are ready to lead where the Prime Minister has failed. We have a plan to secure the future, which includes the growth of jobs, renewed investment and ample opportunity inclusive to every sector and every person in this country. This means taking full advantage of the abundance of natural resources, highly skilled and educated workforce, and expanded access to global markets.

Together, coast to coast to coast, we will foster a prosperous future for all, ensuring that no demographic and no region is left behind.

* * *

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador's fiscal situation is not sustainable. A bad situation has been made worse by the pandemic, and major changes are recommended. There are revenue, debt and other issues to be addressed by the province, but the Government of Canada has a role to play, too.

We support four measures proposed by the Greene report that can help greater federal-provincial fairness. Significant improvements need to be made to the fiscal stabilization program, including removal of the per capita tax. Health transfers must increase. Health care costs now dominate provincial budgets, and Ottawa pays only 22% instead of the 50% at the outset of medicare. We need to fix the equalization formula to remove non-renewable natural resource revenue, and provinces need access to Canada's credit standing and borrowing rates through a new bond program. The federal government has a vital role in helping ensure there is a sustainable financial path forward for Newfoundland and Labrador.

So far, the Liberal government has simply not done enough to hold up its side of the bargain.

* * *

[Translation]

SERGE BOUCHARD

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Serge Bouchard has passed away, leaving us with the memory of his wisdom, his distinctive voice, and his fondness for our heritage, for the first peoples and for what we have in common.

Serge Bouchard was a host, an author and an anthropologist whose talent I could never hope to match. He provided a reassuring and necessary voice advocating for the right to nationhood for all nations, especially the first nations.

He was known for his curiosity and his honesty, and for looking upon Quebec, Quebecers and indigenous peoples in Quebec, in particular the Innu, with a gaze that was always compassionate, never condescending.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I offer my sincerest condolences to his family, friends, colleagues, readers and listeners.

Oral Questions

We will miss the man, we will miss the voice, we will miss the unassuming wisdom. I already miss the anthropologist.

The first words in the story of the great beyond are being penned today.

* * *

• (1415)

[*English*]

BILL C-10

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have heard from hundreds of constituents in Kelowna—Lake Country expressing their concerns about the Liberal government's attempted overreach to regulate individual Canadian Internet users through Bill C-10.

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute stated Bill C-10, "constitutes a full-blown assault" on free expression.

University of Ottawa Professor Michael Geist, Canada's Research Chair in Internet and E-commerce Law, said that Bill C-10 represents, "an exceptionally heavy-handed regulatory approach where a government-appointed regulator decides what individual user generated content is prioritized".

The CBC reported, "free speech is at risk".

However, the Prime Minister says that those in Parliament who question him on this topic wear tinfoil hats.

Now the Liberal Minister of Canadian Heritage has been trying to undo the confusing pretzel of information he has twisted, but Canadians in this free and democratic country are smarter than he thinks they are.

Conservatives will persist in standing for the freedoms of Canadians who post their content online.

* * *

CANADIAN LIVE MUSIC ASSOCIATION

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to recognize a campaign launched by the Canadian Live Music Association and one that holds a special place in my heart. I have been a professional musician my entire adult life and understand that making a living as an artist is challenging at the best of times. The pandemic has had a devastating impact on live events, with every stage in the world going dark.

The Canadian Live Music Association launched the awareness campaign #ForTheLoveOfLive, which is focused on the impacts felt by our artists, festival and concert employees, venues, promoters, talent agencies, production crews and many others.

Everyone associated with the live events industry has our support and respect for the resilience they are demonstrating. We all have cherished memories connected with live music and events. Let us show our support by posting messages with #ForTheLoveOfLive. We look forward to the day when live performances return and all the world is a stage once again.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the Governor of Michigan wants to shut down the Line 5 pipeline that is critical to the Canadian economy. After many months of inaction, this morning, mere hours before the deadline, the Liberal government filed an objection with the court.

Is this last-minute legal action an admission that the Prime Minister's outreach to President Biden has failed?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Line 5 is a critical piece of infrastructure for both Canada and the United States. It is vital for energy workers and families on both sides of the border. Today, the Government of Canada filed a submission in U.S. court in support of the continued safe operation of Line 5 and in support of continued mediation between Michigan and the company.

As we have for many months, Ambassador Hillman and government officials will continue to engage with our counterparts on this important issue.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the Governor of Michigan wants to shut down the Enbridge Line 5 pipeline. This closure will affect every worker from Montreal to Lévis. After many months of inaction, this morning, mere hours before the deadline, the Liberal government filed an objection with the court.

Is the Liberal government too late once again to protect Canadian jobs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite. Line 5 is a critical piece of infrastructure both for Canada and the United States and that is why we have been working on this issue for months. It is vital for energy workers and families on both sides of the border. Today, the Government of Canada filed a submission in U.S. court in support of the continued safe operation of Line 5 and in support of continued mediation between Michigan and Enbridge.

As we have for many months, Ambassador Hillman and government officials will continue to engage with the American authorities on this important issue.

• (1420)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office used the term "sexual harassment" five times in emails regarding General Vance.

Why did the Prime Minister personally sign off on General Vance's pay raise while his office was investigating the allegations of sexual harassment?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition well knows, it was not my office that looked into these allegations because it would be inappropriate for a politician's office to follow up on and investigate allegations.

That is precisely why my office made sure that this file was handed over to the appropriate authorities for independent follow-up. Our government has always taken the responsibility of protecting the women and men who serve in the armed forces seriously, and we will always be there to support survivors.

[English]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, five different times the Prime Minister's Office, the Privy Council Office and the minister's office all used the phrase "sexual harassment" in emails regarding General Vance. A senior Liberal told the Toronto Star this weekend that the PMO and PCO both knew it was of a sexual nature.

Why did the Prime Minister personally sign off on General Vance's pay raise while his office was actively covering up allegations of sexual harassment?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is simply not the truth. When allegations were brought forward from the ombudsperson to the Minister of National Defence, he knew that it would be inappropriate for politicians to engage in such an investigation. That is why he forwarded it to the appropriate authorities at the PCO, so they could follow up on it. That, by the way, was exactly the same process followed when the leader of the opposition was in government and received allegations concerning General Vance.

We followed the right process on this and we know we have much more to do to ensure the protection of anyone who wants to come forward.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): The right process, Mr. Speaker? The Prime Minister just contradicted his chief of staff. Katie Telford did investigate the nature of the allegations because she told committee that she knew the complaint was not "a safety issue". If she knew it was not a safety issue, she would have had to know the underlying elements of the allegation made against General Vance.

It sounds like Ms. Telford was conducting an investigation and spoke to someone about the nature of the complaint. Who was it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a government, from the very beginning we have taken extraordinarily seriously the responsibility of standing up for survivors, and of making sure that women and men who serve in our

Oral Questions

armed forces and in our institutions across this country have the right kinds of support and recourse. What is very clear is that, despite all the significant actions that we have taken as a government, all the significant progress that we have had, women and men who are survivors of sexual assault or harassment are still not getting the right support. That is why we are doing more. We will always take this seriously and put survivors' interests first.

* * *

[Translation]

ELECTIONS CANADA

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the pandemic, we all agreed that we did not want an election during a pandemic.

The government has consulted on what could be changed in the Canada Elections Act in this context, but it did not finish the job. It has introduced a bill but has not allowed anyone to study it. Now it has to impose a gag order, with help from the NDP, to allow an election during the pandemic.

Does the Prime Minister want an election during the pandemic?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is no.

With the bill that we are now referring to committee, parliamentarians will be able to study ways to hold an election safely during a pandemic. However, we do not want an election.

It was the Bloc Québécois and the Conservative Party that voted against a confidence motion that could have made the government fall. They are the ones who seem to want an election.

We on this side of the House are working to support Canadians and get them through this pandemic.

• (1425)

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is a slight difference. I am not afraid of an election; bring it on. We just do not want one during the pandemic.

Elections are not normally held during pandemics. If there is no pandemic, there is no need for legislation to manage an election during a pandemic. The only logical conclusion is that the government wants an election during the pandemic.

What is the Prime Minister's priority?

Is his priority the health, lives and safety of the people, or does he want to take advantage of the Conservatives' weakness to call an election immediately?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that logic is a little far-fetched, unfortunately.

Oral Questions

This pandemic has taught us that it is important to be ready for anything. When we are in a minority government situation, we know an election could be triggered at any time. The Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives actually voted for an election just a few weeks ago.

We will make sure we are prepared if there is an election, but we do not want an election. The opposition parties are the only ones talking about an election.

We, in contrast, are working for Canadians.

* * *

[English]

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me get this straight, the Prime Minister takes a knee at a Black Lives Matter protest, and then turns around and sends the military to spy on those protesters.

We just learned that the military spied on protesters to learn how protesters organize, who the major actors were and what the core narratives were all the while using the pandemic and the crisis in long-term care as an excuse, which makes no sense.

These are people who are concerned about systemic racism killing Black people. Why did the Prime Minister send the military to spy on concerned people who are raising their voices about systemic racism and how it kills Black people?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the leader of the NDP that these reports are extremely concerning. People have a right to gather and protest, and we are looking into this matter. These reports are very disturbing.

We know that there are systemic challenges that the military is facing that must be addressed. It is a priority for this government that we promote equality, equity and inclusion in all of our activities, including in the Canadian Armed Forces, and we will be following up on those troubling reports.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that the Prime Minister sent the Canadian Forces to spy on Black Lives Matter protestors and that he used the pandemic and the health care crisis as an excuse. That makes no sense, because there is no connection. The BLM movement is about racial justice.

Did the Prime Minister send the Canadian Forces to spy on other protestors demanding racial justice in other provinces, such as Quebec?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like the leader of the NDP, I am extremely concerned about these reports and information that came out this morning. It is definitely extremely disturbing. That is why we are going to follow up on this issue, because people across Canada must be free to protest and show that they disagree with the policies of the government and our society. We will always be there to defend freedom of expression and the freedom to protest. At the same time, we recognize that within the military there are challenges related to racism and systemic discrimination. We will follow up on that as well.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the heritage minister himself confirmed that government regulations could apply to social media accounts with a large following. He even said that the CRTC, not the government, would be in charge of the regulation. I cannot believe that the content of Canadians who have a lot of followers and who have found success online will be subject to regulation. The Conservatives are proud of Canadian culture and talent.

Why are the Liberals trying to regulate those things?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been clear from the beginning that what we want to do is focus on two things. First, we want social media platforms to contribute financially to our cultural industry in Quebec and Canada. Second, we want to make our Canadian artists discoverable on platforms such as YouTube.

I was relieved to see that the Conservative Party is finally listening to the cultural sector and that they have put an end to their pointless two-week filibuster.

We will continue to be there for our artists and creators. We look forward to the committee resuming its work in the very near future. The cultural sector is behind us and supports this bill.

● (1430)

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first the minister said that the government's and CRTC's regulations in Bill C-10 would apply to people who have a lot of followers, earn money and could be considered influencers or broadcasters. The following day he said the opposite. I do not know whether the minister understands his own bill, but one thing is for sure. The bill is vague, confusing and unacceptable.

Why is the Liberal government trying to subject Canadians to a law that will violate freedom of expression?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-10 is designed to level the playing field between Canadian creators and the web giants. It will force powerful foreign broadcasters to provide information on their revenue, contribute financially to Canadian stories and music, and enable different audiences to discover our culture. The bill explicitly stipulates that these obligations apply only to web giants and not to Canadian users. The web giants have been exempt from regulations for far too long. Our government has chosen to take action instead of simply reacting.

[English]

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, aspiring creatives have found a way to successfully market themselves on social media platforms. In doing so, they pose a threat to big arts and culture groups that have traditionally relied on government favours in order to stay afloat.

Finding it hard to compete with savvy YouTubers, those arts and culture groups knocked on the government's door and asked the Prime Minister to tip the scales. Enter Bill C-10.

How does picking winners and losers protect Canadian culture?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately we have another sad example of a Conservative Party member dragging, through the mud, our great Canadian creators, who are wildly renowned around the world. Recently, a number of them won a number of awards at a number of different festivals.

It is a sad moment. Unfortunately, it is another example of the Conservative Party listening to the most extremist elements of its own party while dragging our Canadian artists through the mud and—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lethbridge.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is talking about those groups that receive handouts from the government in order to stay afloat. He is not talking about those individuals who work hard in order to capture an audience organically on YouTube.

Canadian content creators have worked hard to capture massive audiences without any help from government, yet we see the Liberals attempting to tip the scales in favour of those big lobby groups. They are doing so by penalizing individual Canadians for finding success on social media without government support.

Bill C-10 is a disastrous attack on freedom and those with a creative or entrepreneurial edge. When will the heritage minister listen to Canadian content creators and back off?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-10 aims to level the playing field between creators and web giants, and I continue to be baffled by the fact that the Conservative Party of Canada has decided to side with some of the wealthiest and most powerful companies in the world, against our Canadian artists in this country and our musicians.

We would require big, powerful foreign streamers to provide information on their revenues in Canada, to financially contribute to Canadian stories and music, and make it easier for individuals to discover our culture. The bill explicitly says that obligations apply to web giants only, not to Canadian users.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage outdid himself yesterday by tweeting that public opinion is being manipulated by a deliberate misinformation campaign orchestrated by commercial interests that would prefer to avoid the same regulatory oversight applied to broadcast media.

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Does he honestly think that the concerns of Canadians, analysts, experts, professors and all those who have spoken out against his bill are part of a huge conspiracy theory? Seriously?

• (1435)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to read an excerpt from a letter that was published in *La Presse* this morning. It was written by Alain Saulnier, a communications professor at the University of Montreal and former executive at Radio-Canada.

“Quebec's entire cultural community is aware that francophone content is being increasingly marginalized by foreign companies on their platforms. What kind of dangerous game is the Conservative Party playing?”

The opposition member claims to be a great defender of the French language, when he and his party would deprive Quebec creators, artists and musicians of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this minister is a pro at deflecting questions.

I find it a serious matter and quite insulting that this minister, after his repeated failures, would put the blame on honest Canadians who are shocked by the Liberals' attack on our freedom of expression. This only happened because he is unable to introduce a good bill. Judging by his recent public statements, he is doing nothing to dispel the doubts surrounding the bill.

Why is the minister insisting on playing politics, as he just did when he attacked those who are defending freedom of expression?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for providing me with this opportunity to read a long list of organizations that have already lent their support to Bill C-10 in the past few weeks.

I am thinking of the Société civile des auteurs multimédia, the Société des auteurs et compositeurs dramatiques, Copibec, the Alliance nationale de l'industrie musicale, the Association des distributeurs exclusifs de livres en langue française, the Fédération nationale des communications et de la culture, SOCAN, the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française, the Union des artistes, the Association des professionnels des arts de la scène du Québec, the Association québécoise des auteurs dramatiques—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, whenever we ask the government about the allegations of sexual misconduct against General Vance we are told that the government took immediate action.

Oral Questions

However, the government did not dismiss General Vance. There was no investigation, no disciplinary action and no implementation of the recommendations in the 2015 Deschamps report. Nothing. The general was allowed to stay in his position for three years with a nice salary increase, while the government shelved the Deschamps report.

When the government says that it acted swiftly what is it talking about exactly?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Mr. Walbourne brought the information forward, I reached out immediately to the Privy Council Office. Privy Council Office officials then reached out to Mr. Walbourne the very next day. That is immediate action.

However, we know that we have a lot more work to do. Our government takes allegations of sexual misconduct very seriously. No one should feel unsafe to work. Some of the work we have been doing includes passing Bill C-77, a declaration of victims rights, to put victims at the core of the military justice system. It also reviews unfounded cases. We have more work to do, and we will get it done.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is really embarrassing that he is still the minister answering the questions on this.

After three years of inaction, he no longer has any credibility to act, unfortunately. After refusing to look at the allegations against General Vance, he no longer has credibility to advocate for victims. That is why the Bloc Québécois demanded that he be relieved of his duties. He no longer has any credibility.

Does the leader in the House realize that he is undermining the credibility of his own government every time he asks this parliamentarian to speak to sexual misconduct in the military?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no politician should ever be involved in the investigation. We take swift action and swift action was taken. The information was brought forward, and it was immediately passed on to the Privy Council Office, which followed up with Mr. Walbourne the very next day.

As I stated, we have a lot more work to do, and we will get it done.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while small businesses in my riding are struggling with yet another lockdown, the Liberals have been showering their rich Bay Street friends with millions of taxpayer dollars. We recently learned that a hedge fund company worth \$180 billion in assets received nearly \$3 million from the taxpayer through the wage subsidy.

Meanwhile a woman entrepreneur in my riding who opened up a gym right before the pandemic hit has been unable to qualify for any federal programs. The Liberals refuse to fix it.

Will the Prime Minister explain to women entrepreneurs why Bay Street hedge funds deserve more support than they do?

• (1440)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member's question gives me an opportunity to talk about how important it is that our business support programs, including the wage subsidy, continue to be in place and will be in place until September 25. The wage subsidy alone has supported more than 5.3 million jobs, that is 5.3 million Canadians and Canadian families.

When it comes to small business and women entrepreneurs, I am very pleased to inform the member opposite that this budget provides unprecedented support for small business and unprecedented support for women entrepreneurs.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member did not answer my question, particularly not for the female entrepreneur in my riding. She did not address the fact that Liberals provided \$2.9 million to Fiera Capital, a hedge fund whose executives and shareholders made over \$100 million in bonus and dividends last year.

I feel this is a tremendous disrespect to Canadian taxpayers because we are seeing regular hard-working middle-class Canadians struggling through yet another wave of lockdowns, and they will be the ones who will pay for all this Liberal borrowed debt through tax hikes.

Why is the minister sticking hard-working Canadians with the bill and allowing rich money managers to make millions on taxpayers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of suppositions in that question that are not accurate, but let me talk about the most important thing, which is that our business and income support programs have provided and continue to provide a critical lifeline to Canadians and to Canadian businesses. The wage subsidy alone has supported 5.3 million jobs across the country. We are going to be there to support Canadians as we fight this third wave.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have an important question.

As small businesses fight to survive, especially in Quebec's red zones, the minister is turning a blind eye to problems with the Canada emergency wage subsidy.

JM Fund Management was so successful in 2020 that it was ranked as the third-best-performing hedge fund in Canada, and it received thousands of dollars from the federal government. Meanwhile, countless small businesses got nothing and are angry about ultra-rich funds cashing in on the pandemic.

Why does the Prime Minister think his Bay Street buddies deserve more support than Canada's small businesses?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which gives me an opportunity to reassure all Canadians and all Canadian businesses that the federal government will be there for them. All of our programs to support businesses and Canadians have served a critical purpose, especially now as the third wave of the pandemic is hitting us hard. The wage subsidy enabled 5.3 million Canadians to keep their jobs.

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RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three years ago today, in Lac-Mégantic, the Premier of Quebec and the Prime Minister of Canada jointly announced the construction of a rail bypass.

Three years later, the residents of Lac-Mégantic are worried. Work has yet to start on the site, and time is going by. On March 15, I asked the Minister of Transport to reassure the public. It was only this morning, because of pressure from the mayor and the intervention of columnist Bernard Drainville, that a press release was finally issued.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Can the public still trust his promise to put the rail bypass into service by 2023 at the latest?

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have made this important file a priority since I was first appointed.

[English]

Today, we reiterated our commitment to have this project completed by 2023. I have had recent conversations with CP, with the mayor of Lac-Mégantic and with the mayors of local municipalities to reiterate our commitment. Construction will begin next year, and we are committed to completing the project by 2023.

* * *

● (1445)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the government opened 50,000 permanent residency spots for essential workers, but the minister excluded many from applying, including refugee claimants, undocumented workers and many other temporary foreign workers. Essential workers in Winnipeg Centre and throughout Canada deserve better. They put their lives at risk every day.

Why does the minister perpetuate a two-tiered system of migrants instead of granting permanent residency status for all?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the pathway that we announced that will allow 90,000 essential workers and recent graduates to stay in Canada with permanent residency. These newcomers are already contributing in our hospitals and long-term care homes. We have also introduced pathways for those

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asylum seekers who helped similarly in Quebec and across the country.

I will always stand up for the work that we are doing on immigration in Canada as it will accelerate our economic recovery and ensure prosperity for all Canadians.

* * *

PRIVACY

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Privacy Commissioner Daniel Therrien is raising serious alarm bells that Bill C-11 would undermine the fundamental privacy rights of Canadians. As a case in point, Clearview AI broke Canadian law when it took millions of photos of Canadians without their consent for its controversial facial recognition technology. The Privacy Commissioner is saying that Bill C-11 would actually protect the interests of companies like Clearview over the rights of Canadians.

Why are the Liberals using Bill C-11 to rewrite the privacy laws and stack the deck in favour of corporate outliers such as Clearview over protecting the rights of Canadian citizens?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question, because I think we share a commitment to protecting the privacy interests of all Canadians. That is why we very much value the advice that we receive from the Privacy Commissioner.

While it is important to ensure that we provide the national security intelligence establishment and law enforcement with the tools they need to keep us safe, at the same time we must always make an effort to ensure the protection of the privacy interests of all Canadians, and we will—

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Speaker, a point of order. My apologies, but the minister's camera was not on. We could not see him.

The Speaker: We were hearing him, but I would remind the hon. minister to turn on his camera in case he gets another question.

The hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that human trafficking is a modern form of sexual slavery, which disproportionately affects women and girls as well as other vulnerable and marginalized persons. It is crucial that survivors of these crimes have access to support services, yet many do not know how or where to turn for help.

Can the Minister of Public Safety inform the House of the resources our government has made available to support survivors of human trafficking?

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Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me begin by thanking the hon. member for Vancouver Centre for a very important question and for her unrelenting advocacy on behalf of survivors.

We acknowledge that human trafficking is one of the most heinous of crimes, and we are committed to ending it. To that end, we are making significant investments of nearly \$75 million. In particular, we are also assisting with wraparound care funding for organizations such as REACH Edmonton Council and the YWCA in Moncton. The National Human Trafficking Hotline connects survivors with services any day and at any time. We are also investing in all of the supports required for the survivors of human trafficking to help them recover from this terrible offence.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there can only be trust in our military when Canadians have confidence that their elected representatives will hold the military in check. An unelected and unaccountable member of the Prime Minister's staff decided to withhold critical information from the Prime Minister, breaking that trust.

Any allegation against Canada's top general is serious and could jeopardize the safety of the country and its citizens. Who told Katie Telford that the allegations against General Vance were not a safety issue: the defence minister, the Privy Council or General Vance?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take allegations of sexual misconduct very seriously and immediate action was taken. We need to make sure that no politician is ever involved in any type of investigation. That is why the information was given to non-partisan public officials. It is also very important that the previous government followed that process.

We need to make sure that we listen to survivors and that we have a harassment-free workplace in the Canadian Armed Forces. This is something that we are absolutely committed to doing.

• (1450)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the defence minister and Katie Telford withheld critical information about Canada's top soldier from the Prime Minister. Tragically, the Prime Minister gave General Vance a performance bonus, a pay raise, and allowed him to continue in his position despite serious unresolved allegations of misconduct against him. This is reprehensible and should never have happened. Under the Prime Minister, no one is at fault. No one is held accountable.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he was wrong to reward General Vance while allegations of misconduct remained unresolved?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government takes allegations of sexual misconduct very seriously. No one should feel unsafe at work. That is why we created the sexual misconduct response centre, which provides confidential 24-7 support services to CAF members anywhere in the world. We also listened to survivors. We put in place a response

and support coordination program for CAF members who have experienced sexual misconduct.

We have a lot more work to do and we will get it done.

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HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this morning, the Prime Minister stated that, "A one-dose summer sets us up for a two-dose fall". Many Canadians may now be wondering when they can expect to get their second dose of vaccine and/or become fully vaccinated, if they will have to wait longer than four months to get a second dose of vaccine and if this means a longer period of lockdowns due to delayed vaccinations.

By what date can every Canadian who wants one expect to have access to both doses of vaccines and/or be fully vaccinated? Is there a clear date?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first let me say that today is a very important day. We hit 20 million doses delivered to Canadians across the country and we are now administering the most doses daily in the G7.

I want to thank all Canadians who are stepping up to accept vaccination. This is an important tool that we have. We can see the finish line and as Canadians get vaccinated, indeed, we see case numbers go down. I want to thank all Canadians for accepting vaccinations when it is their turn.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Prime Minister said at a press conference that a "one-dose summer" is setting us up for a "two-dose fall". We will let the confusion go. Besides, we are used to it, it is always confusing with the Liberals. The Prime Minister had already said that everyone who wanted to be vaccinated would be by September 30. However, I remind him that fall begins on September 21.

Can the Prime Minister be more clear? Can he give Canadians a specific date as to when they will be vaccinated and when they can regain their freedom?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a great day for Canada.

[English]

We have received 20 million doses in this country as of today and we are seeing Canadians step up in unprecedented ways to get vaccinated. In fact, I will say we are now administering the most doses daily in the G7. What that means is that Canadians are taking their health seriously, they are taking the health of their communities and their loved ones seriously and we can see the finish line.

I encourage all Canadians to take the vaccine when it is their turn.

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[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the people of Lac-Mégantic were victims of a rail disaster. The people are still waiting for a bypass so they can rebuild their town with peace of mind.

The Prime Minister has committed to building the bypass. He even signed a petition to get it done. Will he keep his word and work toward getting the bypass completed as quickly as possible?

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since my appointment, I have prioritized key issues.

[English]

Today I was pleased to reiterate our government's commitment to have this project completed by 2023. I have been in touch with CP on a regular basis. I have been talking to the mayors of Lac-Mégantic and the region. Our government is committed. Project construction will begin next year and we are committed to completing it by 2023.

• (1455)

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the question I just asked the Prime Minister is exactly the same as the one asked by my colleague from Terrebonne on May 19, 2016, five years ago.

What has changed since then for the people of Lac-Mégantic? Nothing has changed, nothing at all. The train still travels through downtown, which was ravaged by fire and where 47 people were killed.

The Prime Minister promised that the rail bypass would be ready in 2022. The date has been changed to 2023. Now, people are concerned because it could be postponed to 2025.

The tragedy happened eight years ago. When are we going to move on this issue?

[English]

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tragedy of Lac-Mégantic is still with us today. We stand in solidarity with the people of Lac-Mégantic. Our Prime Minister and our government made a solemn commitment to the people of Lac-Mégantic. We have been working diligently on completing this project. I am pleased to say that progress is being made today and we have reiterated our commitment.

I understand my hon. colleague wants to make a political issue out of this, but we remain committed to the people of Lac-Mégantic.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the public safety minister has presided over a deadly spike in organized crime. NSICOP said it has become “pervasive” in Canada. By 2019, groups had more than doubled in less than a decade. There have been 12 new high-level threat organizations in the past five years alone. B.C. has already faced 15 gang-related murders so far this year.

Instead of targeting law-abiding firearms owners and retailers and reducing penalties for serious offences, as they are, when will the Liberals actually crack down on gangs and criminals?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member is likely aware or will recall, our government invested \$327 million into not just the RCMP but the capacity of the provincial and municipal police services to do gun and gang investigations. We have also made significant investments in communities and kids to address the causes of gun crime, all of which the member opposite voted against, by the way.

We are also listening to victims and the police about the need to restrict the access criminals have to guns. That is why, in Bill C-21, we have introduced strong new measures to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, to remove guns from dangerous situations made deadly by the presence of firearms, and to prohibit a number of weapons that have no place in our society.

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my home riding of Richmond Centre, on the front steps of the domestic terminal at the YVR airport, a 28-year-old was gunned down. All major roads leading out of Richmond were then shut down and the roads were jammed for miles in an unsuccessful attempt to locate the getaway vehicle, which was later found burned. At least as of this morning, the multiple shooters had not been arrested.

The RCMP confirmed that this was related to an ongoing gang conflict. When will the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness prioritize action against truly violent crimes?

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Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to remind this member that when we made available \$327 million to the RCMP and provincial and municipal police services across the country to tackle gun violence, she voted against it. I will also say that we have been in contact with the police of jurisdiction with respect to the recent spike in gun violence. I spoke recently to the Solicitor General in British Columbia. We are committed to working together to continue to address the incidents of gun and gang violence taking place in British Columbia. We are also making significant investments, particularly in the community in the lower mainland, to invest in community organizations that help kids make better choices with respect to gun violence.

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was at YVR mere hours before greater Vancouver's 10th shooting in three weeks took place publicly in broad daylight.

In this past year the government has cracked down on legal firearms owners, airsoft players and paintball gamers, ignoring the real issues threatening Canadian lives. With its Bill C-22, criminals may not even have to serve prison time.

When will the government stop harassing law-abiding citizens, stand on the side of ordinary Canadians, tackle illegal guns and remove those violent thugs and gang criminals from our streets?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we promised Canadians that we would strengthen gun control in this country and of course the Conservatives have promised the gun lobby they will weaken it.

We brought forward strong legislation. We prohibited weapons that have no place in society and, additionally—

An hon. member: That's a lie, Bill, and you know it.

Hon. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I was interrupted by a heckler. I wonder if you might want to address that.

● (1500)

The Speaker: I will address that. I want to remind hon. members to stay on mute. Heckling online is really not a polite thing to do. It is very unparliamentary. I want remind hon. members of that.

The minister might want to start over so we can get his full answer.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With all due respect, I think the intervention from our hon. colleague was more than the average heckle. It was very unparliamentary language and very disturbing.

The Speaker: We will take that up after question period. It is a point of order that is worth looking at, but for now we will continue.

I want to remind hon. members that if it is a point of order emanating from question period, we take it up after question period. If it is a technical issue, I will take it right now.

Does the hon. member have a technical issue?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauson: Mr. Speaker, not only did the hon. member interrupt the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, but he was not wearing proper attire.

The Speaker: I would appreciate it if the hon. member could wait until the end of oral question period before raising his point of order.

[English]

We will go back to the hon. Minister of Public Safety and let him answer the question without an interruption.

Hon. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, as I have said, our government has promised Canadians that we will strengthen gun control and take the actions that are necessary to reduce gun violence and to keep Canadians safe. At the same time, we know that the Conservatives have promised the gun lobby that they will weaken gun control.

In addition to introducing legislation, which will make it more difficult for criminals to gain access to guns. To interdict their supply coming across our borders, we have also invested hundreds of millions of dollars in law enforcement's important work of interdicting these criminals who are engaged in gun violence in our communities right across Canada. Those investments, along with strong legislation to control guns in our communities—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Laurent.

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[Translation]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the aerospace sector has been recognized as a leader and one of Canada's flagship industries for decades now.

This sector contributes more than \$25 billion to our economy and accounts for more than 210,000 jobs, including in my riding, Saint-Laurent.

That industry has been hit hard by the pandemic. Can the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry provide an update on the measures our government has put in place to support this innovative sector?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her excellent question and for all her hard work.

We recognize that the aerospace sector and its workers were hit particularly hard by the pandemic, which is why budget 2021 includes historic investments. These investments include more than \$1.7 billion to foster innovation and \$250 million to better position our small and medium-sized businesses.

Aerospace is one of our most innovative industries, and we will continue to drive innovation and accelerate the green transformation.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are trying to regulate the Internet and the algorithms of social media platforms. Bill C-10 is an attack on accounts with blue check marks that are simply wanting to express their opinions.

Recently, University of Ottawa law professor Michael Geist stated that Bill C-10 had been a fundamentally flawed piece of legislation from the outset. The former CRTC chair, Konrad von Finckenstein, also said the legislation should not be passed in its present form.

It is clear that the heritage minister is struggling with his own bill. Why is the Liberal government so determined on attacking Canadians' freedom of speech?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member that Peter Grant, counsel at McCarthy Tétrault LLP and past chair of Technology, Communications and Intellectual Property Group, came out in support of Bill C-10. Others that came out in support include Jane Yale, chair of The Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review Panel; Pierre Trudel, law professor at the University of Montreal and first head of the L.R. Wilson Chair in Information Technology and E-Commerce Law, and communications professor; and the Coalition for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which actually represents 200,000 artists across the country, musicians from coast to coast to coast, artists, creators, the Canadian actors—

• (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents of Red Deer—Mountain View are shocked to discover that the Liberal government is planning to regulate what content they can post on social media channels like Facebook. They are also shocked and disturbed by the confused, contradictory and misleading statements from the minister. On Monday, we found out that thanks to public backlash, the Liberal government's Bill C-10 has now been forced on hold pending a charter review.

Canadians have fought and died to defend our right to free speech and freedom of expression. Why is the Liberal government so determined to wipe out that proud tradition and put these rights at risk?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this will allow me to continue enumerating the list of supports that Bill C-10 has received. It includes, the Music Managers Forum Canada; the League of Canadian Poets; Quebec English-language Production Council; Professional Music Publishers' Association; Canadian Media Producers Association; Professional Music Publishers' Association; Directors Guild of Canada

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and the The Writers Guild of Canada; Songwriters Association of Canada; Access Copyright; and the list goes on.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the International Grand Committee brings together parliamentarians from around the world to discuss the issues surrounding the role social media platforms play in our democracies. As one of the committee's founders, I have always stressed the importance of ensuring our fundamental right to freedom of speech is protected. It is why I am so deeply disturbed by Bill C-10. As former CRTC commissioner Timothy Denton wrote, the bill is "Clearly intended to allow speech control at the government's discretion."

What does the Liberal government have against free speech in Canada?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the Professional Music Publishers Association, which said, "It is absolutely fundamental for the future of Canadian culture...It makes sure that we have Canadian creation and production, and that this production reaches Canadians" and "There's a misunderstanding of what this means." It also said that the situation had created an unfair advantage for companies like YouTube, which must be changed.

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CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with Canada's most capable icebreaker, the CCGS *Louis S. St-Laurent* set to retire in 2030, it is critical that the Coast Guard has the capacity it needs to continue to provide support in the north. To meet this need, it is imperative that construction of new vessels begin as soon as possible.

Could the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard update the House on how her efforts to expand the Coast Guard fleet are going?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that the Coast Guard has the tools it needs to do its very important work. That is why, last week, we were pleased to announce the construction of two new Polar icebreakers, one to be built at Seaspan in Vancouver and the other in Quebec at Davie Shipbuilding.

The construction of these ships is going to support over 3,000 jobs across the country, including in places like Heddle Shipyards in Ontario and Genoa Design in Newfoundland and Labrador.

These icebreakers are critical to the north, and we are committed to ensuring the Coast Guard has what it needs.

*Routine Proceedings***FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have spent well over \$19 million fighting the Nuu-chah-nulth people in court, denying their fishing rights. Last month, the courts reaffirmed the rights of these nations to viable commercial fisheries for the third time.

The government needs to allow these nations to implement their rights so that indigenous fishers can get back on the water and contribute to their coastal economy.

Will the minister and the Prime Minister respect indigenous rights and confirm that it will not appeal this ruling?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to working with first nations to make sure they are able to implement their rights.

As members know, the Nuu-chah-nulth won the court case last week. We are committed to working with them to make sure they are able to get out on the water as quickly as possible.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, last week, Bill C-3 became law. It is an important step, but so much remains to be accomplished.

Whether the person was a member of the military or a victim of domestic violence, the evidence is unequivocal. The legal system is failing the vast majority of sexual assault survivors. Consultations have already taken place and experts have laid out a road map that includes establishing a specialized sexual assault and domestic violence court and ensuring consistency between criminal, family and youth protection court decisions.

Even if judges are now receiving training, they are still operating inside a broken system. Is the Minister of Justice ready to commit to doing more, to tabling legislation that would truly reform the system and ensure that all survivors of sexual assault could access justice?

• (1510)

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have committed in the budget a significant amount of money to help, precisely, victims of sexual assault get free legal advice. We will be implementing that with the provinces across Canada.

We know there is more work to be done. We will continue to do that, particularly in the context of indigenous women and girls, and two-spirit people. For sexual assault victims across Canada, we will continue to invest, we will continue to train and we will continue to support, because they are the most important part of this equation.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to apologize for my intervention during

question period and retract the comments that were made. I apologize.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for bringing that up.

I do want to remind all members that when we are in the chamber and there is heckling, it is not accepted, but it is tolerated. However, when it is online, it really makes it impossible to conduct business.

I know it does get emotional and we do get carried away sometimes, but I just want everyone to please keep that in the back of their mind out of respect for each other.

The hon. minister for seniors.

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to also just reflect on what has happened during question period.

You have been, very kindly for many months, advising us all on how to behave in this virtual environment. However, despite those repeated reminders, we have seen an increase in interruptions. I think that it is completely unacceptable. You are doing a great job trying to remind everybody, but I would like you to consider whether there is some further action that you could take that would really deter these very inappropriate interruptions during responses to questions. It is totally inappropriate. Reminders have been nice, but I think it is time for more than reminders. Everybody knows now exactly how they should behave, so what they are doing is obviously intentional.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. minister for her point of order. I will take it under advisement.

The hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to point out that in this place we typically accept apologies and retractions when offered by members.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for bringing that up. It is a practice in the House.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1515)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

The Speaker: It being 3:14 p.m., pursuant to the order made on Monday, January 25, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the first report of the Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States.

[Translation]

Call in the members.

Routine Proceedings

● (1525)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 110)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison	Gray	Green
Albas	Alghabra	Guilbeault	Hajdu
Alleslev	Allison	Hallan	Harder
Amos	Anand	Hardie	Harris
Anandasangaree	Angus	Hoback	Holland
Arnold	Arseneault	Housefather	Hughes
Arya	Ashton	Hussen	Hutchings
Bachrach	Badawey	Iacono	Ien
Bagnell	Bains	Jaczek	Jansen
Baker	Baldinelli	Jeneroux	Johns
Barlow	Barrett	Joly	Jones
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste	Jordan	Jowhari
Beaulieu	Beech	Julian	Kelloway
Bendayan	Bennett	Kelly	Kent
Benzen	Bergen	Khalid	Khera
Bergeron	Berthold	Kitchen	Kmiec
Bérubé	Bessette	Koutrakis	Kram
Bezan	Bibeau	Kurek	Kusie
Bittle	Blaikie	Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Blair	Blanchet	Lake	Lalonde
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Lambropoulos	Lametti
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block	Lamoureux	Larouche
Blois	Boudrias	Lattanzio	Lauzon
Boulerice	Bragdon	Lawrence	LeBlanc
Brassard	Bratina	Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe	Lehoux	Lemire
Calkins	Cannings	Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Carr	Carrie	Lightbound	Lloyd
Casey	Chabot	Lobb	Long
Chagger	Champagne	Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Champoux	Charbonneau	Lukiwski	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Chen	Chiu	MacGregor	MacKenzie
Chong	Cooper	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Cormier	Cumming	Maloney	Marcil
Dabrusin	Dalton	Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Damoff	Dancho	Masse	Mathysen
Davidson	Davies	May (Cambridge)	Mazier
DeBellefeuille	Deltell	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
d'Entremont	Desbiens	McCrimmon	McDonald
Desilets	Dhaliwal	McGuinty	McKay
Dhillon	Diotte	McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Doherty	Dong	McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Dowdall	Dreeshen	McLeod (Northwest Territories)	McPherson
Drouin	Dubourg	Melillo	Mendès
Duclos	Duguid	Mendicino	Michaud
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Miller	Monsef
Duval	Dzerowicz	Moore	Morantz
Easter	Ehsassi	Morrison	Morrissey
El-Khoury	Ellis	Motz	Murray
Epp	Erskine-Smith	Nater	Ng
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Normandin	O'Connell
Fast	Fergus	Oliphant	O'Regan
Fillmore	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	O'Toole	Patzér
Finnigan	Fisher	Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Fonseca	Fortier	Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Fortin	Fragiskatos	Plamondon	Poilievre
Fraser	Freeland	Powlowski	Qaqqaq
Fry	Gallant	Qualtrough	Ratansi
Garneau	Garrison	Rayes	Redekopp
Gaudreau	Gazan	Regan	Reid
Généreux	Genuis	Rempel Garner	Richards
Gerretsen	Gill	Robillard	Rodriguez
Gladu	Godin	Rogers	Romanado
Gould	Gourde	Rood	Ruff
		Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Sahota (Brampton North)
		Saini	Sajjan
		Saks	Samson
		Sangha	Sari
		Saroya	Savard-Tremblay
		Scarpaleggia	Scheer
		Schiefke	Schmale
		Schulte	Seeback
		Serré	Sgro

Routine Proceedings

Shanahan	Sheehan	Blaikie	Blair
Shields	Shin	Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard	Block	Blois
Simms	Singh	Boudrias	Boulerice
Sloan	Sorbara	Bragdon	Brassard
Soroka	Spengemann	Bratina	Brière
Stanton	Steinley	Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Ste-Marie	Strahl	Cannings	Carr
Stubbs	Sweet	Carrie	Casey
Tabbara	Tassi	Chabot	Chagger
Thériault	Therrien	Champagne	Champoux
Tochor	Trudeau	Charbonneau	Chen
Trudel	Turnbull	Chiu	Chong
Uppal	Van Bynen	Cooper	Cornier
van Koeverden	Van Popta	Cumming	Dabrusin
Vandal	Vandenbeld	Dalton	Damoff
Vecchio	Vidal	Dancho	Davidson
Viersen	Vignola	Davies	DeBellefeuille
Virani	Vis	Deltell	d'Entremont
Wagantall	Warkentin	Desbiens	Desilets
Waugh	Webber	Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Weiler	Wilkinson	Diotte	Doherty
Williamson	Wilson-Raybould	Dong	Dowdall
Wong	Yip	Dreeschen	Drouin
Young	Yurdiga	Dubourg	Duclos
Zahid	Zann	Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Zimmer	Zuberi — 330	Duvall	Dzerowicz
		Easter	Ehsassi
		El-Khoury	Ellis
		Epp	Erskine-Smith
		Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
		Fast	Fergus
		Fillmore	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
		Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Finnigan
		Fisher	Fonseca
		Fortier	Fortin
		Fragiskatos	Fraser
		Freeland	Fry
		Gallant	Garneau
		Garrison	Gaudreau
		Gazan	Généreux
		Genius	Gerretsen
		Gill	Gladu
		Godin	Gould
		Gourde	Gray
		Green	Guilbeault
		Hajdu	Hallan
		Hardie	Harris
		Hoback	Holland
		Housefather	Hughes
		Hussen	Hutchings
		Iacono	Ien
		Jaczek	Jansen
		Johns	Joly
		Jones	Jordan
		Jowhari	Julian
		Kelloway	Kelly
		Kent	Khalid
		Khera	Kitchen
		Kmiec	Koutrakis
		Kram	Kurek
		Kusie	Kusmierczyk
		Kwan	Lake
		Lalonde	Lambropoulos
		Lametti	Lamoureux
		Larouche	Lattanzio
		Lauzon	Lawrence
		LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
		Lefebvre	Lehoux
		Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
		Liepert	Lightbound
		Lloyd	Lobb

NAYS

Members

Manly May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) — 2

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to order made on January 25, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-19.

● (1540)

[*English*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. III*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison	Blais	Blair
Albas	Alghabra	Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Alleslev	Allison	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Amos	Anand	Block	Blois
Anandasangaree	Angus	Boudrias	Boulerice
Arnold	Arseneault	Bragdon	Brassard
Arya	Ashton	Bratina	Brière
Atwin	Bachrach	Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Badawey	Bagnell	Cannings	Carr
Bains	Baker	Carrie	Casey
Baldinelli	Barlow	Chabot	Chagger
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval	Champagne	Champoux
Battiste	Beaulieu	Charbonneau	Chen
Beech	Bendayan	Chiu	Chong
Bennett	Benzen	Cooper	Cornier
Bergen	Bergeron	Cumming	Dabrusin
Berthold	Bérubé	Dalton	Damoff
Bessette	Bezan	Dancho	Davidson
Bibeau	Bittle	Davies	DeBellefeuille
		Deltell	d'Entremont
		Desbiens	Desilets
		Dhaliwal	Dhillon
		Diotte	Doherty
		Dong	Dowdall
		Dreeschen	Drouin
		Dubourg	Duclos
		Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
		Duvall	Dzerowicz
		Easter	Ehsassi
		El-Khoury	Ellis
		Epp	Erskine-Smith
		Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
		Fast	Fergus
		Fillmore	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
		Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Finnigan
		Fisher	Fonseca
		Fortier	Fortin
		Fragiskatos	Fraser
		Freeland	Fry
		Gallant	Garneau
		Garrison	Gaudreau
		Gazan	Généreux
		Genius	Gerretsen
		Gill	Gladu
		Godin	Gould
		Gourde	Gray
		Green	Guilbeault
		Hajdu	Hallan
		Hardie	Harris
		Hoback	Holland
		Housefather	Hughes
		Hussen	Hutchings
		Iacono	Ien
		Jaczek	Jansen
		Johns	Joly
		Jones	Jordan
		Jowhari	Julian
		Kelloway	Kelly
		Kent	Khalid
		Khera	Kitchen
		Kmiec	Koutrakis
		Kram	Kurek
		Kusie	Kusmierczyk
		Kwan	Lake
		Lalonde	Lambropoulos
		Lametti	Lamoureux
		Larouche	Lattanzio
		Lauzon	Lawrence
		LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
		Lefebvre	Lehoux
		Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
		Liepert	Lightbound
		Lloyd	Lobb

Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Lukiwski
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Maloney
Manly	Marcil
Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
McPherson	Melillo
Mendès	Mendicino
Michaud	Miller
Monsef	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Morrissey	Motz
Murray	Nater
Ng	Normandin
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Powlowski	Qaqqaq
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Rayes	Redekopp
Regan	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rood	Ruff
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Sahota (Brampton North)
Saini	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Saroya	Savard-Tremblay
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Schulte	Seeback
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shin
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Simms	Singh
Sorbara	Soroka
Spengemann	Stanton
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tabbara
Tassi	Thériault
Therrien	Tochor
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Van Popta	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vignola
Virani	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Weiler	Wilkinson
Williamson	Wilson-Raybould
Wong	Yip
Young	Yurdiga
Zahid	Zann
Zimmer	Zuberi — 330

Routine Proceedings

NAYS

Members

Sloan — 1

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today virtually to officially tender my resignation as the member of Parliament for Haldimand—Norfolk, effective immediately.

You were gracious enough last November to allow me to deliver a lengthy farewell speech, so I will make this intervention, like me, short and sweet. I would like to say thanks again to all the wonderful people whom I have been blessed to have in my life in what has been an amazing political journey over the last 16 years, 317 days.

Farewell and be well.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few seconds on behalf of the Conservative caucus and Conservative members all across Canada to thank the member for Haldimand—Norfolk. I think I can use her name now.

We want to thank the Hon. Diane Finley for her exceptional career in this Parliament. She was one of the true giants of the Conservative movement over the last couple of decades, and certainly a true giant of this Parliament over the last couple of decades. As a key cabinet member in the Harper government, and then later in opposition as the caucus party liaison, she did a great service for both the Conservative Party and for all Canadians.

Above all, she did politics the right way. We can never truly say anyone is not partisan in any way in this place, but she was never more partisan than she needed to be. She always worked to be as co-operative as she could be and to advance what she was trying to advance, but she always did it with integrity.

Without a doubt, the hon. member, Ms. Finley, leaves this place with the respect of all members of this caucus, all her colleagues, all her constituents and probably all members of this place because she did politics the right way. She did it with integrity, and was able to get things done on behalf of her constituents and all Canadians. We thank her for her service to this country.

● (1545)

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be as tall and sweet as the member is short and sweet.

Points of Order

I had a wonderful opportunity to thank her for her career when she gave her farewell speech many months ago. There is great fondness, great respect, great admiration and just a bit of fear that we all have for the hon. member. We wish her nothing but the very best in the next chapter of her life. I am interested to see what she will be doing and the differences she will be making for the people of Ontario and Canada.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I will try to be short and sweet as well. Just as my hon. colleague said, we had a chance to give longer speeches, but I am surprised today as I did not expect a sudden resignation. I want to say to our hon. colleague for Haldimand—Norfolk that she is indeed honourable. She is sweet, and she sent me chocolate after my last speech, but she does not have to send me chocolate again, although who would complain?

I worked in Parliament with her when she was a minister. She said she was partisan and fierce. She was partisan, and she was fierce, but in the House she was respectful and willing to work across party lines with one lone Green Party MP. I remain grateful, and her service will be remembered as a service to our country and to our democracy.

I hope she will be well and enjoy retirement. I send her much love.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is my turn to thank Diane on behalf of the Bloc Québécois. I will use her first name, just like my Conservative colleague did.

I had the opportunity in December to tell her how much I admire her great career. The House is losing a woman today, which is sad news. However, I know that her retirement is well deserved, and I hope she enjoys the time with her family and loved ones. She has given a lot, and now it is her turn to receive and to enjoy the rest of her life.

I wish her a happy retirement and all the best for the future.

* * *

[*English*]

VACANCY

HALDIMAND—NORFOLK

The Speaker: Ms. Finley, a member of the electoral district of Haldimand—Norfolk, having resigned, it is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation. Pursuant to subsection 25(1)(a) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I will address a warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

I hope the hon. member fares well. It was always a pleasure to have her here. She has been here for the bulk of the time I have been here. I had someone to talk to, and we had great conversations. I am going to miss her. We will all miss her and wish her all the best.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation on a point of order.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to wish Diane a happy retirement on behalf of my colleagues and myself.

I would also like to thank her for all the years she has devoted to politics. We know it is not an easy job. I also thank her for her attitude in the House of Commons, which I will always look up to.

[*English*]

Diane is an example for all of us. We thank her and wish her a good retirement.

[*Translation*]

That was not my point of order, but I could not miss this opportunity.

Now for my point of order. The member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner violated the public health guidelines during the first vote. He was seen in the presence of two people in his office. They were not socially distanced or wearing masks.

I believe it is still important to follow the public health guidelines, and I sincerely believe that they must apply to everyone, even MPs.

• (1550)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for raising this issue. I will take the matter under advisement and get back to the House with a decision if necessary.

The hon. member for Banff—Airdrie.

[*English*]

HYBRID VOTE

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was made aware of something during the last vote, and I raise this for a couple of reasons. A member of the Conservative caucus, the member for Edmonton West, received confirmation that his vote was received, yet it appears as though, at least in the dashboard we have, that his vote was not actually counted. It appears some kind of technical error has occurred.

I raise this for two reasons, and I did not become aware of this until after the result was announced. First of all, I would ask, if it is discovered there was some kind of technical glitch that prevented his vote from being entered, even though he confirmed it was registered, that his vote be allowed to be counted. Second, if a technical glitch did occur, we would want to ensure that whatever it was is addressed and fixed, so the problem does not arise in the future for other members.

Points of Order

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for bringing that up. I believe we could count his vote, seeing as it was a technical issue, and that it is being brought up as soon as possible.

The hon. member for Edmonton West.

While we are waiting for the member for Edmonton West to connect, we will send a message to our technical team to look into this to find out exactly why it happened. We do not want that to happen again. I thank the member for bringing that up.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, while we are waiting for the member to connect, I think it is the right thing to do to allow this member to still cast his vote. I would not object to unanimous consent on that.

However, I would ask the House, and in particular the members here, to reflect on the fact that the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek was not given that luxury last week when a user error was made on his part. He brought that forward, but for some reason unanimous consent was not given. I think it is something worth considering and reflecting back upon, as we are willing to allow this member to have his vote included today.

The Speaker: I would remind hon. members that there is a lot of humility involved when asking for something, and asking for unanimous consent is normally done in a position of asking for permission for something. Members can reflect on that the next time a member asks for unanimous consent.

The hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I have been having trouble with my technology.

My Wickr Pro showed both votes being accepted as yes, but I understand that only one was accepted and shown in the House. I would appreciate it if the House would accept my second vote as yes.

The Speaker: Although I thought we could get around it for a technical difficulty, I am being advised we will have to get unanimous consent.

All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay. Hearing none, it is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay. Hearing none, the motion is carried.

To the hon. member for Edmonton West, both of your votes have been accepted as yea.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

• (1555)

[Translation]

COMMITTEE STUDY OF BILL C-216

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on March 10, Bill C-216, an act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development

Act with regard to supply management, was referred to the Standing Committee on International Trade pursuant to an order of reference from the House.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the bill has still not been studied as ordered by this House on March 10. According to House of Commons Procedure and Practice, third edition, Bosc and Gagnon note on page 1003, “When a bill is referred to a committee, the bill itself constitutes the order of reference.”

With respect to private members' bills, Standing Order 97.1 provides that the committee to which such a bill has been referred has 60 sitting days from the date of the order of reference to complete its study and report the bill to the House. However, the schedule dated May 3 for the work of the Standing Committee on International Trade, as proposed by the chair herself, calls for a clause-by-clause study of Bill C-216 on June 7, almost three months after the March 10 order of reference.

I believe it is worth noting that this same schedule proposes seven committee meetings, all prior to June 7, to conduct the business that the committee itself adopted.

I maintain that orders of reference issued by the House must take precedence over work initiated by the committee itself.

On this issue, I refer you to page 1058 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, on which the authors report Speaker Milliken's remarks in debate in 2002: on November 21, on pages 1738 to 1740; on November 25, on pages 1841 and 1842; on November 26, on pages 1912 and 1913; on November 27, on pages 1949 to 1950.

According to Speaker Milliken, the freedoms that committees have to organize their work as they see fit are not total or absolute. Speaker Milliken stated, “First, it is useful to bear in mind that committees are creatures of the House”.

On page 1058 of Bosc and Gagnon's *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, in reference to page 230 of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, sixth edition, it is stated that:

...[committees] have no independent existence and are not permitted to take action unless they have been authorized or empowered to do so by the House.

The freedom committees have is, in fact, a freedom limited on two levels. First, committees are free to organize their proceedings as they see fit provided that their studies and the motions and reports they adopt comply with the orders of reference and instructions issued by the House. Second, committees may adopt procedural rules to govern their proceedings, but only to the extent the House does not prescribe anything specific. At all times, directives from procedural sources higher than parliamentary committees...take precedence over any rules a committee may adopt.

By that logic, all studies of bills, including Bill C-216, must take precedence over the studies that the committee has decided to undertake, since the bill is considered an official order of reference from the House.

Government Orders

The House already spoken on this issue as part of its debate on the adoption of Standing Order 97.1. I am referring to the debate starting on page 9469 of the Debates of April 8, 1997.

Many hon. members at the time were in favour of Recommendation No. 4 made by the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business in its report of October 31, 1996, following a study carried out pursuant to an order of the House on House business that is votable.

Thus, I would like to remind the House that, when a bill is tabled before it, whether it is a government bill or not, it belongs to the House, and the committee to which it is referred must give priority to studying it, as it is an order from the House.

Unfortunately, in the case before us, Bill C-216 does not seem to have generated the interest it deserves as an order of reference, since the studies undertaken by the Standing Committee on International Trade on its own initiative were given priority, in spite of the order of reference for Bill C-216 dated March 10.

I refer you to the schedule dated May 3 provided to committee members by its chair. On May 3, 7, 10 and 14, witnesses testified for the committee study on Canadian exportation of green, clean and low-carbon technologies.

• (1600)

On May 28, the committee is scheduled to hear from witnesses and officials from the management and consular office and from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada for the study on Canada's international trade and investment policy pursuant to the motion adopted on April 30, 2021, more than 40 days after Bill C-216 was referred to the committee.

On May 31, the committee will begin its consideration of the draft report on the reform of the World Trade Organization, or WTO, and investor-state dispute settlement, or ISDS.

On June 4, the committee will study the draft report on the WTO reform, and the meeting will be held in camera.

Members will all agree that the agenda of the committee, which plans to begin studying Bill C-216 on June 7, nearly three months after the date of the order of reference from the House, shows that the committee has very little political will with regard to the bill. In my opinion, that completely defies the parliamentary principle that a committee, as a subordinate entity of the House, must comply with an order of reference from the House and put the study of bills ahead of its own work.

That is why I am asking you, Mr. Speaker, to rule accordingly and order the Standing Committee on International Trade to immediately begin the study of Bill C-216.

The Speaker: I would like to thank the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for his comments. I will come back to the House shortly with a ruling.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 26 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2021, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-30, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 19, 2021 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to start my speech with a single line: Mr. Speaker, I told you so.

I mean no disrespect, but about a month ago, in mid-April, I said that I would not be surprised if Bill C-14 would not go through the other place by the time we got our hands on this 2021-22 budget. Obviously, I was right. To make it even better, Bill C-14 has not been returned to us and it has been a month since I made that prediction. However, I am not here to speak to Bill C-14.

I am here to speak to another bill. It would spend a lot of money. It would massively increase our national debt and it would not do a whole lot to help Canadians. I am going to be speaking to Bill C-30 because, like I said, this budget would spend a lot of money: \$154.7 billion. Even if Bill Gates were to liquidate his entire net worth, that still would not be enough to cover the bill for this. I want to talk about all of this money.

If my colleagues here would think back to last year, when this finance minister started her current portfolio, she was very eager to bring Canada's fiscal firepower to bear if September's throne speech is to be believed. However, there is a bit of a problem with that. This is not Hollywood. We can run out of ammo. Our barrels can overheat. We need some way to not burn through all this firepower too fast or, in other terms, we need some sort of fiscal anchor.

Why do we need a fiscal anchor? Fiscal anchors serve as 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: one, retaining the confidence of lenders and global markets, like credit access and favourable rates; two, establishing a positive investment climate for businesses; and, three, providing a measure of fiscal discipline inside government. If the finance minister does not have one, it becomes very difficult for her to put any sort of constraints on her colleagues in cabinet and caucus, and ensure that the government has the ability to respond to future economic shocks and unforeseen crises.

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Before COVID-19, the current government's fiscal anchor was to decrease the debt-to-GDP ratio. That anchor has disappeared. Now the budget has one, a vague, pretty useless one. Great, they are committed to reducing the debt, but the fiscal anchor is supposed to be a prudent, specific debt target, not "we will lower it over the medium term". Fiscal anchors need to be a target that people can use to hold the government to account with no vague statements.

It is clear that this budget does not have a fiscal anchor. It is clear that this is just written in there to hide the Liberals' lack of future planning. What kinds of fiscal anchors could the government have used? I am not talking about that vague, literally, one line that is in the budget.

The first one is the debt-to-GDP ratio. This is what the Liberals would clearly claim they have got right now, but, again, they need targets and accountability, not vague statements and no accountability. A good example would be keeping the debt-to-GDP ratio under 30%. Any of my colleagues here may remember that as Bill Morneau's favourite target. The so-called anchor in the budget says it wants to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio, but it does not provide a goal or a target. Therefore, when debt to GDP is at nearly 50%, a reduction is pretty easy to do, but whether the reduction is effective is another matter.

Another anchor the government could be using is something like the deficit-to-GDP ratio. Again, they have a one-off section about this one, simply saying that the government will reduce COVID spending. Great, but what about other spending? This budget introduces a lot of spending, permanent spending, including stuff like made-in-Ottawa child care programs and made-in-Ottawa pharmacare. This is a lot of new permanent program spending, and these are just small drops in the bucket.

The PBO found that the purported growth spending in the budget would only produce a fraction of the government growth that the government said it would. Therefore, the PBO found that with 1% growth on 74,000 jobs, \$100 billion would result in over \$1 million per job.

• (1605)

If keeping the deficit-to-GDP ratio down is one of this budget's fiscal anchors, why would the government spend so much money frivolously? In all honesty, had I asked that in question period, I would have received the government's famous non-answer, which is disappointing.

Since we both know that it will not answer, I will tell the House what the real reason is that the federal government wants to spend this avalanche of cash. It is an election budget. That is why there is a lot of growth funding that would not cause growth. There are no productivity measures, and there is nothing to address Canada's uncompetitive regulatory regime. It is just a lot of money for programs that look good in a nice, red-covered election platform with a big L on the front of it.

What really, deeply worries me is that the government does not seem to care about what all of this purposeless spending will cause. It is not just from this budget, but all of the previous ones too. The government has spent more than all previous prime ministers in the history of Canada combined. At this point, the government is

spending so much that our grandkids, if not our great-grandkids, will still be paying it off. It is like taking out a credit card in their names, maxing it out, and leaving it for them to deal with.

As with actual credit cards, the interest rate is critical to this. I know that the minister would say, "Oh, it's fine, the interest rate is low so we can borrow easily," a quote from the minister, but again, our national debt is like a credit card. If there is even a one-percentage-point jump in the interest rate, that is another \$10 billion per year in debt-servicing costs. Just like with credit cards, the interest can go up if we do not pay down our debts.

What if another massive crisis comes up, and we end up spending another few hundred billion dollars? Our creditors might start wanting us to pay the money back, and it will be tougher for that future government if it needs to borrow money during that crisis.

We also have to consider inflation. What if inflation goes up in the future? Right now, the Bank of Canada has the inflation rate at 2.2%. I know they like it around 2%, but what if the inflation rate keeps increasing? If we keep injecting all this money into the economy, it could cause inflation to spike.

Consider if inflation rose to 5%. Everything would cost more, which is a normal practice, and the value of our currency would drop by 5% year after year. That might not sound like much, but it would add up if it went on like that for a decade.

I am sure all of us who are old enough to remember the 80s and 90s will remember that it was not pretty stuff. Most of us are only a decade or so out from retirement and we will all get good pensions, but not all Canadians will.

My kids are in their early twenties, and I know a lot of our colleagues have kids who are younger than that. Do we really want to leave this fiscal mess in their laps, or in our grandchildren's laps? I know that I do not.

Our legacy should be having rebuilt Canada with a strong, competitive economy that will be there for decades to come, not spending our money for no purpose other than to help the government win an election. We need to spend within our means, not outside of our means, our kids' means and our grandkids' means.

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• (1610)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is right. Over the last number of months, the Government of Canada has spent a great deal of money, supporting programs such as CERB for nine million people, the wage subsidy program and the rent subsidy program. It has supported seniors and people with disabilities through one-time payments, provided hundreds of millions toward non-profit organizations, and so forth.

My understanding is that the Conservative Party of Canada supported the spending of those billions of dollars. Is the Conservative Party now reversing its position on the many worthwhile expenditures we made to support Canadians through the pandemic, and is it now saying that we should not have spent that money?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has been around long enough to know that we are not changing our minds. The government is changing its promises. The Prime Minister promised to balance the budget before 2015. That is what the Liberals are changing. They are walking away from what they believe in. Remember the Paul Martin era? They are walking out of this. They do not believe in balancing the budget anymore or being fiscally responsible. They want to borrow money and buy out elections. That is what the current government is focusing on. It can hide behind the programs, the support and all of that, which is fine. We agreed to the support because we stand by Canadians all the way, but the government is changing what has been done historically, which is to be fiscally responsible and balance the budget. That is what the government is doing, which is concerning and scary.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his intervention. Of course he is my neighbour in Edmonton, so it is nice to see him virtually since we cannot see each other face to face.

He spoke a bit about the plan the Liberals have. I have concerns as well that the government does not have a good plan going forward. I wonder if he feels the federal government has a bit of a role to play to ensure we finish this race. This has been a very difficult year. It has been very hard on small businesses in Edmonton, as he knows. I think if we pull out those supports for individuals and businesses now, we risk losing the race because we stopped before the end.

How does he feel about the government stopping its giving \$500 per week to Canadians who are on CERB? Would he support continuing to make sure Canadians can get through this pandemic?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for Edmonton Strathcona. Of course, it is good to see her.

My speech was focused on the fiscal anchors and what we can do to make sure we do not pile on debt with unnecessary spending. I was not talking about necessary spending. That is very clear. I was talking about unnecessary spending and the crazy promises that keep piling up. Where is the answer? Where is the government on telling Canadians what it is going to do with this debt? How long can we continue spending?

We have to deal with the pandemic and of course with all of the mistakes the government has made, such as not being able to provide vaccines on time or test kits so we could get out of this as soon as possible. What we are talking about is why the government is not being responsible with how much debt it is bringing to Canadians, what we are going to do with it and how we will pay for it generation after generation.

• (1615)

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, through you to my hon. colleague, something I have been talking about and worrying about is how someone in the next generation is going to be able to start a family, have a car and afford a house.

What could have been done differently in this budget to look to the future, for people to start families and look toward a new Canada?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, I focused a lot on the fiscal anchors. I focused on the government being responsible in order to be able to calculate and tell Canadians the true story. Where we are going? The budget that was introduced is a suicidal route toward a non-end. It is something somewhere that nobody understands, including Canadians, which is very scary. The fiscal anchors are the answer, and they do not exist in this budget.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past year has been challenging for all Canadians. Today it is my honour to represent Brampton South to speak in support of Bill C-30, the budget 2021 implementation act. In budget 2021, the priority is to support Canadians through the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and create more jobs and prosperity for all Canadians across the country.

This budget outlines the many challenges Canadians have faced throughout the past year and recognizes that Canadians need support in order to recover financially from the pandemic. As more people are eligible to get vaccinated, businesses are still in need of support to make it through this third wave of the pandemic. That is why this government is extending business and income support initiatives through to the fall.

I would like to focus on some key areas for my community. During the series of pre-budget consultations, I met with many businesses and many seniors from Brampton, including organizations such as CARP, the International Seniors Club, Young at Heart Seniors and others. With budget 2021, Brampton seniors will not be left behind. Many seniors find it difficult to adjust their financial situation after retirement, especially in the pandemic.

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This is why the government is providing a one-time payment of \$500 this summer to those aged 75 years and older as of June 2022. It is essential aid for seniors who have been impacted by COVID-19. Old age security benefits will also be increased by 10% for seniors over 75, and will be adjusted annually for inflation. All of these actions proposed in budget 2021 will help our seniors live more independent lives and have a dignified retirement.

One of my constituents, Myrna Adams, who is a member of our local CARP chapter, requested that more action be taken to prevent elder abuse in Canada. I am happy to report to my constituents, and to all Canadians watching, that budget 2021 will provide funding for the Public Health Agency of Canada to design and deliver interventions that prevent family violence, including elder abuse. Budget 2021 was designed with the feedback of many seniors from Brampton and across Canada. This pandemic has shown us just how important it is to protect our loved ones and community members.

Some of the people hardest hit by COVID-19 are women, especially low-income women. More than 16,000 women have left the workforce, while more than 91,000 men have re-entered. In order to recover from this pandemic, we need women in the workforce.

Access to affordable child care has been a top priority in my riding of Brampton South this past year. With school closures and many parents still needing to go to work, finding affordable child care for their children has been a struggle. In urban centres such as Brampton, many young families are struggling with increases in the cost of living, including child care. This is not only a social issue but also an economic problem. If parents are unable to work because they cannot afford care for their children, they lose out on their full potential for contributing to the economy.

Proposed in budget 2021 are supports for parents and more affordable options when it comes to child care. The proposed Canada-wide early learning and child care system will help to ensure that all families, no matter their socio-economic background, have access to child care across the country and will increase women's participation in the workforce.

Not only do children need access to high quality education and affordable care systems, but so do our youth. When the pandemic hit last year, young Canadians were among the hardest hit demographics, experiencing more job loss than any other age group. The mental well-being of youth has been an issue that my riding has taken very seriously over the past year. Being isolated from their peers, attending online school and experiencing the stress of finding summer jobs have affected young people greatly.

• (1620)

In budget 2021, the federal government is investing \$5.7 billion over the next five years to help youth by creating more job opportunities and providing them with the ability to finish and further their education. The government's overwhelming support for young Canadians has been apparent over the last year: \$7.4 billion was spent on youth when COVID-19 hit Canada last year to help young Canadians through this difficult time as well as create more opportunities for them to get meaningful work experience while supporting small businesses.

Making education a little more affordable is a pillar of this budget. Waiving interest on student loans for another year is giving students an opportunity to save money and not worry about making additional payments. Summer employment opportunities have been increased, with 75,000 job placements in 2022-23 through the Canada summer jobs program.

In my riding, over 600 young Canadians will be employed through Canada summer jobs and my riding will benefit with over \$2.7 million. This will ensure that students are securing job opportunities for the summer and learning important skills and gaining work experience. Students and young Canadians will benefit from the new Canada recovery hiring program. By offering small businesses the ability to hire more people faster, this in turn will help young Canadians looking for summer jobs.

Our government recognizes infrastructure investments create good jobs and build healthy communities. It is the right time to start investing in Canadian communities for the economy to recover from this pandemic.

I know that in the coming years, my community will benefit from some recent infrastructure investments the government has made. This includes over half a million dollars to create a youth hub at the South Fletcher's Sportsplex; upgrading The Rose theatre and making it more accessible, with a grant of over \$2 million; \$35 million in safe restart funding to support the city of Brampton; a grant of \$38 million for flood mitigation that will allow us to protect and transform our downtown Brampton and build the city's transformative Riverwalk project; more transit funding like we saw last summer, where the federal government invested millions of dollars to upgrade Brampton's transit system; and the largest federal housing investment ever made in Peel Region of \$276 million, which will create 2,200 much needed affordable housing units.

These are just some of the most recent investments from our federal government. I know there is more coming in the budget and Bramptonians look forward to seeing their fair share of investments.

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Finally, I would like to thank the government for using the budget to recognize that 2021 is the 100th anniversary of the discovery of insulin in Canada, with a commitment to establish a national framework for diabetes. Members of the House know I have long advocated for this to help the 11 million Canadians living with diabetes and pre-diabetes. With a focused strategy, we can help them all and perhaps find our way to a cure.

Brampton is a community of essential workers. Many of my constituents work in health care, manufacturing, food processing, distribution, transportation and other essential industries. I extend my thanks to all of them for the hard work they have continued to do over the last year. Throughout the pandemic, they had to continue going to work to keep our supply chain running so the rest of us could stay safe.

I thank all essential workers in Brampton and across Canada who have had to work in essential roles. The Government of Canada has their backs. This bill is essential to restarting the economy and ensuring that no Canadian is left behind. Since the start of the pandemic, it has been this government's priority to protect the health and safety of all Canadians, help businesses endure COVID-19 restrictions and ensure we have a plan in place for a strong economic recovery. This bill would do just that.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her speech.

She began her speech by talking about seniors and said she was taking into account comments she had heard from those around her about seniors.

Let us look at what is being said in Quebec. People think it is unacceptable to create two classes of seniors, namely young seniors aged 65 to 75, and older seniors. Everyone finds that unacceptable.

Why does the member's government refuse to take into account what is being said elsewhere in the country?

[*English*]

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her passion for seniors. Our government values the contributions that seniors have made and continue to make to our communities. We have taken action to combat poverty, including poverty among seniors.

We are helping the seniors who need it most, those over 75, who may have taken some time to adjust their spending in retirement and have discovered they need extra support.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, surely the member for Brampton South is not suggesting that the paltry \$500 one-time payment is lifting those seniors out of poverty. It is to the contrary.

We know that for-profit long-term care facilities like Extencicare and Sienna received \$157 million in support and paid out \$74 million in dividends. The previous speaker talked about supporting frontline workers, yet thousands of seniors have died in inhumane conditions at LTC facilities.

Despite the evidence that more people have died in private long-term care facilities, the government continues to protect its profits. Could the member explain why the government is putting the profits of for-profit care providers ahead of the quality of care for the seniors in her riding of Brampton South?

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, for long-term care, our government is there to help seniors. Our policies are also showing positive results as 25% fewer seniors live in poverty than when we took office in 2015. That is a direct result of the good work our government has undertaken, including restoring the age of eligibility for OAS and GIS to 65 years, and increasing the GIS for the most vulnerable single seniors.

• (1630)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the speaker talked a bit about her home riding and a lot about the constituents in her riding, particularly children. What she did not expand upon was the huge impact that the budget will have on those children and their grandchildren. The rationale to do this is because the interest rates are low. However, the one thing we do know is that interest rates are going to go up. That is going to have a huge impact on her constituents, particularly those who are buying homes now, which are escalating through the roof.

How does this budget help those children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren? Who is going to pay that debt back?

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned child care. The status of women committee has been studying issues to do with the effects of the pandemic on women and children.

When it comes to the fiscal sustainability of our budget, it is important for Canadians to know that the Government of Canada supported over 9 million Canadians through CERB, as an example, but there have been many other supports. A week after we delivered the budget, S&P Global reaffirmed Canada's AAA rating, saying that it expected the Canadian economy would post a strong recovery.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before resuming debate, 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 Vancouver East, Public Safety; the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Canadian Heritage; and the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Foreign Affairs.

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for those following the debate on this budget implementation act, I will provide the necessary context for how we ended up with the most expensive federal budget in our lifetime.

It is imperative that we as legislators look at the full picture and to the future when debating a bill like this. Right now in Canada there are countless families and businesses on the brink of losing everything they have. The recent job numbers are horrendous, as our economy shed another 207,000 positions and our unemployment rate is 8.1%. These are not just numbers and statistics; they are people's livelihoods and careers. Many of these jobs were in the service and retail industry. These workers now find themselves without a pay cheque and some fear their jobs will never come back.

Every single constituency has been hit hard. All we have to do is look at the empty storefronts and vacant buildings to understand the severity of the economic and health crisis our country is facing.

We are now in the third wave and my province of Manitoba is back in lockdown. We are not unique as every province is in a race to stop the spread of COVID variants. While other nations have done a tremendous job of procuring enough vaccines for the first quarter of 2021, which helped them to mitigate against the third wave, we, in Canada, have not been so fortunate. We find ourselves in this terrible position due to a series of failures.

For my Liberal colleagues who might not take my word, I only need to point to the recent Auditor General's report that proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the government was woefully unprepared for the pandemic. My Liberal colleagues could also review the speech given by the member for Kingston and the Islands when he admitted, "if vaccines came sooner we probably would not be standing in this place right now," which was in response to the emergency debate that took place just last week. For once in my parliamentary career I can say that I agree with my hon. Liberal colleague.

I do not plan on litigating everything that has happened to date. For the purposes of this debate, it must be said that if we were able to procure enough vaccines for the first quarter of 2021, we would be in a far better position than we find ourselves today. If the government had moved quickly to shutdown flights from countries, where the variants are out of control, it would certainly have helped limit the spread of these variants. Not only has those failures cost people's lives, but it has resulted in prolonging the pandemic.

There is a direct correlation between those failures and their direct impact on our economy and the nation's finances. Within this omnibus bill, the government has acknowledged that the pandemic will continue for quite some time.

It is clear that the government needs to extend the programs on which many businesses and companies are relying, as either their doors are now locked or they are operating with very limited capacity. Just because the doors are closed, though, does not mean the bills do not continue to pile up. To no fault of their own, businesses and their employees are paying the price of the federal government's failure of not procuring enough vaccines for the first quarter

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of 2021 and for failing to keep the variants out of our country, and certainly for the lack of distribution of the same.

The last thing people want to do is to continue to apply for more financial support, but they do not have a choice. They cannot afford to go through another lockdown and they need to pay their bills. Therefore, I support those very specific clauses in the legislation to extend these programs. In fact, there are other specific measures I support, but in a bill as lengthy as this one, there are bound to be a few things that every member can get behind.

The road ahead of us is paved with uncertainties and risks, so we are already seeing the unintended consequences of the government's policies. The first risk is the very real threat of inflation. The Bank of Canada recently sent out a warning to investors that rising inflation numbers could result in it hiking the interest rate. If we couple that with the recent report that close to half of Canadians are \$200 or less away from not being able to cover their bills and debt payments at the end of each month, that should keep every member of Parliament up at night.

● (1635)

If we look at the skyrocketing housing prices, we are witnessing in real time the dream of home ownership slipping away. I shudder at the thought of what is going to happen to those who will have to remortgage their homes at a much higher interest rate.

The second threat is the growing size of our country's debt and the cost to service that debt, as was mentioned by many of my colleagues. I know that every government must grapple with making choices and setting priorities, but I fear there are some who cannot see the forest for the trees. In a perfect world, every government has the financial capacity to carry out its mandate, but we do not live in that utopia where everything can get funded all at once. The size of this deficit makes one wonder who got left out.

Last week, the Parliamentary Budget Officer issued his analysis of the budget. He projects that the ratio of federal debt to gross domestic product will hit 52.1% this year and remain well above the pre-pandemic level of 31.2% for quite some time. In the report, there was another startling number that deserves repeating. The long-term projections presented in the budget show the federal debt-to-GDP ratio remaining above its pre-pandemic level through to the year 2055. That is a staggering 34 years from now. I doubt that I will witness the momentous occasion when the Government of Canada returns to pre-pandemic debt numbers, but my grandchildren and their families will most certainly be stuck with the bill, and that bill right now is that the average Canadian family owes over \$77,000 in federal debt.

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Any time a government goes this far into debt, it is completely irresponsible to not have a road map or a plan to get its fiscal house back in order. The interest payments alone on our debt are expected to hit almost \$40 billion a year in the next few years. For my Liberal colleagues who do not share the same hesitations about their spendthrift ways, I will quote Paul Martin, who was a long-serving Liberal finance minister. He said, “The debt and the deficit are not inventions of ideology. They are facts of arithmetic. The quicksand of compound interest is real.” He said those words over 20 years ago and they still ring true. It would seem that modern monetary theory has found a receptive audience within the government.

I want to reference Jonathan Hartley, an economics researcher, who recently wrote about the pitfalls of this new economic model being touted by the left-of-centre politicians. He said, “The defining feature of [modern monetary theory]—and what distinguishes it from [other] economic theories—is its insistence that, so long as a government's debt is denominated in its own currency, there is no upper limit on the state's monetary borrowing.” He went on to say that under this theory “public debt is irrelevant”. He did not say that, but he referred to it as part of that theory. He further stated, “a country's central bank can always avoid default by printing more money.”

We know that there are real risks to this approach, and there are countless examples of debt monetization leading to out-of-control inflation. The Bank of Canada must adjust to the reality that this cannot go on forever. The Bank of Canada has been buying a minimum of \$4 billion in government bonds every week, accumulating more than \$250 billion of the securities over the past year. As reported, its share of the holdings of the outstanding bond market continues to grow, and it currently owns more than 35% of the total marketed outstanding Government of Canada debt. We should all be watching the Bank of Canada's actions and future decisions.

I do not say these things to cause alarm, but rather as someone who witnessed the crushing interest rate hikes and inflation in previous decades. I fully understand the necessity to help get our economy back on track and those suffering. However, we must quickly turn our attention to getting our finances under control. As parliamentary committees gear up to study the various parts of this omnibus bill, Canadians are counting on all of us to get this right, so we must ensure that every dollar being spent will, in fact, grow our economy and improve the lives of those we represent.

• (1640)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I are both on the international committee representing the Arctic nations together. We have a great working relationship, and I always appreciate hearing from him. We work very well together.

He started out by explaining that many businesses and individuals are on the verge of bankruptcy, so I assume he supports the items in the budget. He mentioned that he supports the extension of the wage subsidy, the rent subsidy, the lockdown subsidy and the RRRF. I assume he also supports the extension of the flexible access to EI for another year and the Canada recovery benefit to September 25, adding another 12 weeks. Then there are brand new

programs on top of these extensions: \$1 billion for tourism, \$700 million to support business financing, improving the Canada small business financing program and enhancing the low-income workers benefit to help all the people in these dire situations.

Is there any one of those items that the member does not support?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right. I did say in my speech that I support those items. In fact, as a Conservative Party, we helped the government make sure there was more inclusion in the programs he mentioned: the wage subsidy, the rent subsidy, the areas of CERB when it was active. We are supportive of the employment insurance program going on now.

We know there are other sectors of our society that will need to be kick-started and helped to get back into it. He mentioned tourism as being one of those sectors, which I know is very important in his region, and the infrastructure spending as well. The problem we have with the infrastructure spending is that there has not been a lot of it coming out the door. There have been lots of announcements, but we need to make sure we get into activity. There are many projects in many areas of Canada that need to go forward. We need to look carefully at the programs to see how we can do that.

A big part of it, which was mentioned by some of my colleagues, is that there are many things in this budget. As I said, hardly anybody was left out of it. It certainly looks like an election budget.

My only concern—

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: I must interrupt the hon. member to move on to other questions.

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I think he would agree that it is hard to listen to the Liberals say that we would have ended up in a recession after the pandemic and that they needed to invest a hundred billion dollars.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer believes that \$69 billion would have been enough to stimulate the economy. He is also of the opinion that the GDP will increase by 1% after the pandemic and that roughly 70,000 jobs will be created. The Liberals, however, think the GDP will increase by 2% and more than 300,000 jobs will be created.

What does my colleague think of the Liberals' statements, what is presented in the budget and the Parliamentary Budget Officer's projections?

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[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, answering this question will probably finish off the answer to the previous one as well.

When I say there is no plan, I mean there is no fiscal plan for how to come back to balance. A situation where it takes 34 years to get back to where we were pre-pandemic, which was still out of control at that time, with many years of deficit financing and increased debt of about \$80 billion even at that, is not good enough.

It is really irresponsible to look at the situation Canadians are in, the situation we are putting Canadians in, and to say that we would not have an accountability program for 34 years.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the countless families facing bankruptcy and financial collapse.

One of the things I have been hearing across the country is about the seniors omitted from the budget, those aged 65 to 74. They are angry, frustrated and disappointed, as they only have the GIS and OAS to live on. I am hearing this as the critic for seniors. I want to know what the member is hearing in his riding on the issue of seniors being omitted.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that observation, and his question from that observation as well. Certainly, seniors are telling me that they are concerned about the levels that have been imposed upon us by the Liberal government in this activity as well in this budget.

Seniors have suffered a great deal through the pandemic. With the vaccine rollout, I was very much in favour of their being vaccinated up front, for many of them, along with our frontline workers, who have done a great job as best they can with the vaccines that they were limited in getting. That is certainly a good observation that my colleague has heard and one that I have heard as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I notice that many members are interested in participating in the question and comment time, which is quite normal for budget bills and their ilk, so we should be able to get at least three exchanges in that five-minute period of time, sometimes even more. I would ask hon. members to keep their observations and their questions concise, and the same goes for the member who is responding to those questions, and we will see if we can give more members the opportunity to participate in the debate this afternoon.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

• (1650)

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after a record two years, Canadians were finally provided with the federal budget. Unfortunately, it was the longest wait in our nation's history in some of the most troubling times in a generation.

Before I begin addressing the budget and the impact it will have on the people I represent, I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance on making history. Last month, she became the first woman to deliver a federal budget in Canadian history, and for that I ap-

plaud her. This is a historic step forward in inspiring women across our country.

Unfortunately, the current Liberal government has a problem, a spending problem. It has said that increasing the national debt to an unimaginable \$1.4 trillion is to stimulate the economy, but we all know the only thing the government is focused on is stimulating voters. It is obvious the Prime Minister is more focused on keeping his job than on doing his job. By next year, he will have accumulated more national debt than all previous prime ministers combined.

One of the world's most respected investors, Warren Buffett, famously said, "Price is what you pay. Value is what you get." The current government does not understand the difference between the two. It is more focused on how large the price tag is instead of how much value it will bring to Canadians.

The foundation to any good economic policy is to measure the output or the results. The federal government has tried to justify that its record-breaking deficit is a strategic investment so our economy can come roaring back, but that is not the case. This budget fails to provide a real plan for job creation and long-term economic growth. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister's former adviser questioned this budget. He admitted the Liberals are, "doubling down on programs that do not address our innovation shortcomings and have yielded few results to date." Where is the plan for coherent growth? Where is the plan to be competitive on the world stage? Where is the plan to foster an economic environment that allows the agriculture, forestry and tourism industries to thrive? There is no plan because the government is fixated on price instead of value.

My constituents know what happens when governments spend money without a plan. They understand because they have experienced it before. It was the Prime Minister's father who famously took the same approach in the 1980s, with record deficits, reckless spending, no fiscal guardrails and no plan. As a result, Canadians suffered a debt crisis. My constituents can remember the all-time high interest rates, the extreme inflation, the record unemployment rates and the massive increase in poverty. My constituents are concerned about spending without a plan because they have lived through the damage before.

Government Orders

I think of Diane in Minitonas, who reached out to me and expressed her concerns regarding the budget. She is concerned this budget is unaffordable for Canadians. As a mother of four, she is worried about the future of her children, who will have to pay for the record spending. I share her concerns. My constituents are seeking a plan in this budget that would outline the future of our recovery from this pandemic, but they did not get one. I represent thousands of locally owned and operated businesses throughout rural Manitoba. Agriculture, forestry, tourism and hospitality are the foundations of the communities and families of our region. Whether it be the businesses surrounding and within Riding Mountain National Park that rely on tourism or the restaurants and coffee shops that rely on regular local visitors, the small businesses that I represent want certainty for a secure economic future. What they are not seeking is a reimagined economy.

The finance minister sees things differently from my constituents. She has stated that the COVID-19 pandemic “has created a window of political opportunity”. Thousands of Canadians have died, jobs have been lost and businesses have been shuttered, but the government sees the tragedy as a political opportunity.

I recently heard from an outfitter in my riding who relies on business from American clientele. She is frustrated that the government refuses to discuss what the future will look like with our American neighbours post-pandemic. Unfortunately, because the federal government has failed to provide our country with enough vaccines, it cannot have these important conversations.

• (1655)

While other developed nations reopen for travel and business, Canada is experiencing a third wave because of this Prime Minister's own incompetence. Premiers across Canada have called on the federal government to increase health care funding. However, this budget has no new money for health care transfers to provinces such as Manitoba. In a time when the federal government should be stepping up to support the provincial health care system, the Liberals turned a blind eye in their budget.

The seniors in this country were also disappointed to read this Liberal budget. Once again, the current government has failed our seniors by not providing them the support they need. Seniors across my constituency are telling me that they can no longer afford to live with dignity on a fixed income, due to the rising cost of living.

I will admit that there are some things that sound good in this budget. For example, I welcome the proposed investments for connectivity. Access to high-quality Internet and cellular service is essential for all Canadians, and investments into rural Canada are key to closing the connectivity divide. However, I am skeptical of this promise because, as of today, no money from the existing universal broadband fund has been announced for Manitoba. Proposals such as the Parkland multi-community broadband project have yet to receive any funding. I would strongly caution Canadians on the promises in this budget. The Liberals are notorious for over-promising and under-delivering, and my constituents know that.

The best way to predict the future is to look into the past. Let us examine the record on a few of the previous promises. The Liberals promised to plant two billion trees. They promised to end the boil water advisories. They promised not to raise the Liberal carbon tax.

They promised to be accountable. They promised to balance the budget. Guess what? They failed to deliver all of these promises.

I should remind the House that it was only last year when the government mentioned the importance of the fiscal anchor and fiscal guardrails. Well, Canadians will be shocked to learn that the car has driven off the cliff. The government does not believe in fiscal sustainability. In nearly 750 pages, there is no clear mention of a fiscal anchor.

Canadians of today may not experience the full impact of government debt, but I can assure this House that Canadians of tomorrow will experience not only today's debt but the interest as well. Each Canadian is now responsible for \$33,000 in federal debt, and that number is growing. By 2026, interest payments on the federal debt could reach \$40 billion a year. By next year, this Prime Minister will be responsible for more debt himself than all of the previous prime ministers combined.

Unfortunately, this budget does not tell Canadians how the government is going to pay for this record amount of debt. I suspect that the explanation of how the Liberals will pay for the new debt will not be shared until after the next election. I am confident that if the current government is re-elected, taxes will go up and promises will be broken as soon as the campaign is over, because history is bound to repeat itself. Canadians will not be tricked. They understand that higher spending today means higher taxes tomorrow; and, when inflation decreases the value of hard-earned savings accounts and higher interest rates prevent home ownership, the last thing Canadians want are higher taxes.

I will conclude with the words of former American president Herbert Hoover, who said, “Blessed are the young, for they shall inherit the national debt”. I can assure Canadians that a Conservative government would unleash the economic potential of our nation, stand up for rural Canada, and secure the future for all Canadians.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is getting really tiring to hear the misrepresentation of a quote by the Minister of Finance. A number of Conservatives have done that throughout just about any debate that relates to the budget since the budget was introduced and they always are very good at cherry-picking half of the sentence that they want to say. This member did it too, when he said that the Minister of Finance said, “I really believe COVID-19 has created a window of political opportunity”.

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Of course, the Conservatives stop the quote there because finishing it would just look horrible. If we actually finished the quote, which I would like to do, the Minister of Finance went on to say, "...political opportunity...on the importance of early learning and child care".

Does this member not feel any kind of remorse for grossly misquoting the Minister of Finance?

• (1700)

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, this budget really has no focus. What I cannot not get over is the conversation I had with Diane. Thinking back, this was a young female with a family of four worried about how much government debt is being acquired. Those are the things I am focused on. That conversation really set me back. I really do wonder why my colleague across the way would be wondering about how we are misrepresenting something when everybody in Canada except the Government of Canada is worried about how much debt is being acquired.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa for his speech.

Bill C-30 increases the envelope for the Canadian Securities Transition Office, which was one of the Harper government's pet projects.

The member spoke at length about SMEs in his speech. In Quebec, SMEs, the financial sector, labour-sponsored funds and political parties are against this bill.

Can the member explain why the parties in power in Ottawa listen to the Bay Street banks more than they do Quebec?

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, I know the current government in particular does not want to listen to any of the provinces in Canada. This has been an ongoing battle as we respond to COVID-19.

I totally sympathize with the battle Quebec is going through in dealing with these SMEs.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all I heard in that speech were partisan shots. New Democrats are here right now to help people who are struggling right now, because there are a lot of businesses, like the ones he talked about, that are struggling to get through this third wave of the pandemic, including start-ups that have not been able to get any help so far.

The government has an opportunity to look at new baseline revenues for the wage subsidy or for the commercial rent program. The government could actually help those businesses that have been left out and have not received any supports to date if it amended those programs. It could help businesses like the Wildflower bakery that opened in Port Alberni in my riding, which opened in July but has been waiting for several months to get its business up and running after years of planning.

Does my colleague support calling on the Liberals to take action and help preserve a generation of businesses that need help right now by amending those programs to give them the emergency support they deserve and need?

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, I would support all those businesses. The problem with this budget is it misses so many of those businesses in my riding, those start-ups, and is creating a huge amount of uncertainty for the future. They do not know what kind of future bills are going to come from the government. Can one imagine starting up a business and having a special item line that says if inflation goes up another 1% or interest rates go up one has to allow for that in one's taxes. That is the kind of future the government is creating—

• (1705)

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be in the chamber today to speak to Bill C-30, the Liberals' budget implementation act. It has been more than two years since the government has tabled a budget, and the expectations of Canadians were high. With all the platitudes, like "build back better", the government had increased expectation and set the stage for something that we were led to believe would be momentous. Unfortunately, the Liberals once again fell back to their default setting of over-promising, overspending and underachieving. Plain and simple, this budget is a letdown for the hard-working Albertans in my riding of Red Deer—Lacombe.

It is reasonable that a number of essential COVID-19 support programs that many Canadians rely on are being extended. This is only fair considering they are necessary because of the failings and mismanagement of the pandemic by the Liberals in the first place. However, while Americans are able to attend stadium sport events and mass gatherings because of a successful vaccination and therapeutic drug strategy, Albertans have just been placed under the most stringent public health measures so far. The Liberals' failure to procure an adequate number of vaccines is devastating, not only to those who will undoubtedly get COVID, but to all Canadians who are being forced to sacrifice more for longer than our friends and families in other countries.

The budget completely fails to lay the road map for how the Liberals plan to get out of the pandemic and get back to life as we once knew it. That is job number one right now, and it was missed entirely in this budget. It is clear that the Liberals have no plan to get back to normal. Instead, they came up with creative solutions to try and mask their failure by trying to compare Canada's first-dose vaccination rate, with our four-month gap between doses, with those of our G20 partners, which are following the manufacturers' instructions on timelines for administering the second dose. Maybe that should not be surprising. After all, this is a government that is well practised at spin, starting with its ethically challenged Prime Minister.

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The Liberals' failure to prevent variants of concern from entering Canada and their failure in acquiring vaccines are not just health related. The longer it takes for us to begin the post-COVID recovery, the further we will fall behind.

While the Liberals may be spending money like it grows on trees, which is easy to do when one is printing money to offset spending, the reality is that only the private sector can lead us out of the pandemic, and private sector investment is going to flow to the jurisdictions that welcome it. Unfortunately, with so much uncertainty about when we will be on the other side of the pandemic and with a budget that does nothing meaningful to cut red tape or improve the business climate in this country, Canada is not and will not be prepared for the necessary private sector investments.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has made it clear that the government sees the current quagmire of misery that Canadians are living in as a window of political opportunity. This budget shows us exactly what kind of opportunity the Liberals are seeking: an opportunity to shore up their political fortunes for re-election. This budget is full of unnecessary, unproductive spending and electioneering that the government is trying to disguise as stimulus.

The Minister of Finance promised that they would spend up to \$100 billion in stimulus, but only if it was necessary. With many economists speaking out and telling us that stimulus spending of that magnitude was not necessary, I was hopeful that the Liberals would pull in the reins on their spending spree. However, when it comes to the government, the devil is always in the details.

We know that the full \$100 billion has been allocated even though the Parliamentary Budget Officer has made it clear that a significant portion of it is not actually stimulus at all. I guess no one told the Minister of Finance that if she does not need the whole \$100 billion in stimulus, she should not spend it, because it is borrowed money. It certainly does not mean the government should spend the rest supporting political or ideological goals instead of economic ones.

The Prime Minister is set to rack up more debt than every prime minister preceding him. The real issue is that the Liberal government does not even seem to see this as a problem. Time after time we see the government brag about the size of the investment instead of the quality of the return on the investment. That is the problem when a government is all talk and no substance. The Liberals value the press releases more than the result reports, and they clearly plan to continue this trend with budget 2021.

The Liberals promised that they were going to build back better. Well, for central Albertans, this is a plan that will ensure that we build back poorer, as sectors of the economy that Albertans rely on have been largely ignored in this budget, if not outright attacked.

• (1710)

Small businesses that are a critical part of our economy and our communities have been let down. While some much-needed pandemic relief programs were extended and loans remain on offer to those able to shoulder even more government-forced debt, the lack of certainty is crippling. Last year, 60,000 small businesses failed

and another nearly 200,000 are in danger of closing now. Small businesses in the tourism sector have been especially devastated.

A single mom in my riding who has been a self-employed travel agent for 30 years recently had to go out and start looking for a new career. This is in large part because the government did not ensure any safeguards for small, independent business people when they were dealing with the airlines. Their commissions are now being clawed back by airlines for services rendered months or even years ago.

In 2020, countless community events were cancelled because of COVID-19, events that our communities rely on to bring in tourists. Many of these community events are once again faced with a fast-approaching deadline to decide what 2021 is going to look like for their events and their businesses.

My riding is home to the Ponoka Stampede, Canada's largest seven-day rodeo. Losing an event like the Ponoka Stampede is not just a loss for the competitors or spectators. It is a loss to the community and surrounding areas, which would otherwise benefit from the event. The estimated economic impact for the local area is \$150 million every year. That is a lot of money anywhere, but especially in a rural community like Ponoka with a population of just 7,200 people.

We are getting to a point where organizers need to make these tough decisions again, but the government has not given them the certainty they need to make them. We can see how that ripples across the community. Just last year in Red Deer, the Black Knight Inn closed its doors after running successfully for nearly 45 years.

Guides and outfitters are another part of the tourism sector that have been left behind by the government. With many businesses getting 90% or more of their clients from the United States or other foreign countries, times have been tough for the industry, causing spinoff problems related to food security for local communities and wildlife management. These businesses have lost nearly all of their clients and have no way or ability to pivot to clients from the domestic market.

The budget implementation act has no mention of the tourism relief fund committed to in the budget, which many of these businesses could certainly use. We would expect that a fund geared toward helping businesses adapt their services to public health measures and start to recover would be implemented right away. While funding for Destination Canada could have been helpful in promoting our world-class hunting and fishing opportunities to other Canadians, the government quietly stopped letting lodges access the fund for this purpose a number of years ago.

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The agriculture sector was also essentially forgotten. Throughout the pandemic, it has become routine for the government to point to the original set of business risk management programs, which were in need of a overhaul long before the pandemic, as somehow now a solution to the problem. The proposal to refund a portion of the carbon tax on natural gas and propane for vital activities like grain drying is a pittance of what farmers pay to run them. Hopefully, we can get this corrected through the private member's bill of my colleague from Northumberland—Peterborough South, which would remove the carbon tax from a broader list of farm fuels. The Liberals, I might add, recently voted against it at second reading.

When it comes to the oil and gas sector, there was literally no support whatsoever. In fact, we can see the next step shaping up in the Prime Minister's plan to phase out the oil and gas sector entirely, through the proposed changes that ensure several types of fossil fuel powered energy equipment are no longer eligible for accelerated capital cost allowance deductions. In other words, the Liberals are driving away investment.

When it comes to Alberta's energy sector, the budget is also ensuring that the modest money that is being committed for carbon capture is not eligible to companies that perform enhanced oil recovery. During past challenging economic times, Canada's energy sector has been able to be an integral and central part of our recovery.

Instead of working to empower our world-class oil and gas sector, which abides by the strictest environmental standards in the world, the government prefers to increase the pace with which they are mothballing this industry. They work to end the Canadian industry and ironically welcome oil from places like Venezuela and Saudi Arabia, which lack our commitment to environmental standards and human rights.

This budget is extremely frustrating to my constituents. A recent survey in Alberta by ThinkHQ Public Affairs suggested central Albertans are more likely to report a negative financial impact from the pandemic. It is about 57% in the place I call home compared with 46% for the provincial average. With these realities, we would think that if the government is going to spend money to stimulate our economy, it would ensure that industries important to local economies in places like central Alberta are included.

• (1715)

I do not know what would matter to the government. It simply does not seem to care about the needs of central Albertans. I look forward to the day when a Conservative government once again takes care of the needs of all Canadians.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just so the member knows, Destination Canada is now supporting domestic marketing. I am glad he has called for supporting tourism. There is \$500 million for a special tourism relief fund, another \$700 million for small business financing and another \$100 million for Destination Canada so we can get ready to market Canada. I am also glad the member mentioned the carbon tax and that the Conservatives are putting that forward.

The member said there is all sorts of unfortunate, unneeded funding in this budget. Could the member go over the funding that he thinks is not necessary and not needed for supporting businesses and individuals? That would be interesting to hear.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I would simply suggest that Canadians should not believe that the Liberals' expensive ideas in budget 2021 are needed to fix the previous Liberals' bad ideas. What we need is a budget that gets our Canadian economy back on track, gets people back to work and gets us through the pandemic, rather than one that relies on support programs. The best solution for this is a free market economy, with people with real jobs driving our economy forward, not a Liberal government driving us further into debt.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues have highlighted, this budget creates two classes of seniors and it denies provinces and territories the health transfers they need to fight the pandemic.

The member spoke of small businesses, and a detail in the budget caught my attention, which is that charitable enterprises will be excluded from the definition of a small business. Does the hon. member not think that this will further weaken small charitable enterprises?

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois need to understand that for federal transfers to the provinces to work and pay for the things she is asking for, the Government of Canada needs to grow the Canadian economy. The Alberta economy has contributed disproportionately, in a positive way, to the overall budget and to the federal government's balancing of the books, to the tune of several hundred billion dollars in the last few decades alone. If the member and her party would just stop attacking the oil and gas sector in western Canada and promote the use of pipelines, there would be enough resources for all of us to share in equitably.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning I met with the Canadian Health Coalition, and they had just one question for me: Why do the Liberals and the Conservatives not want to add pharmacare to our national health care system, when over 90% of Canadians want it, it would keep us all healthy and it would save us over \$5 billion a year? Why are the Conservatives against it?

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• (1720)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, my colleague should know that over 98% of Canadians currently have access to a pharmaceutical plan, either through their employers or through provincial programs offered to seniors and those living with disabilities. If my colleague wants to work constructively on a plan that would help the other 2% of Canadians who do not have access, he would find me to be a willing partner.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Red Deer—Lacombe for citing two things: one, that we need to have a thriving economy here in Canada; and two, that it should be led by the private sector, because it knows where the opportunities are and how to multiply returns for the benefit of everyone.

Today Suncor and ATCO, in collaboration, announced a new project that would actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions in existing refineries via the production of clean hydrogen. However, the government in its budget has excluded natural gas-based hydrogen projects from the list of zero-emission technologies eligible for tax reductions.

Does the member believe that the government needs to start supporting the private sector in these kinds of things, rather than just applauding, but not really supporting, made-in-Canada technology and solutions?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I think that is an excellent question. I would point out to my colleague from Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola that, in the budget, the Liberal government is supporting carbon capture and sequestration but not carbon capture, utilization and sequestration.

There is a major project in my constituency right now that produces net-zero oil, and it is creating jobs, wealth and economic opportunity here. However, because of this current Liberal government's ideological bent to stop everything that involves the use of oil and gas, the technologies, the innovations, and the expertise in Alberta, western Canada and in any oil-producing provinces will get short shrift from this government. Its ideological bent is to do anything and everything to stop the oil and gas sector.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, do you remember learning history in grade school? One of the students would raise her hand and ask why the king did not just create more money if there was not enough, because after all, he was the king and he could increase the amount of money available in order to spend more.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: I am hearing there is no interpretation.

[Translation]

The interpretation is not working. We will check the French interpretation again.

Everything seems to be working now.

The hon. member for Carleton can continue his speech or he can start over from the beginning.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, do you remember grade school history class, when a student would raise her hand and ask why the king did not just create more money if there was not enough? He was the king, after all. Almost all children ask that question at school at some point when they are learning history. Then the teacher has to explain that, if the king creates more money, inflation goes up.

Young students are not the only ones asking that question and thinking about the concept of creating more money to cover government spending. Academics, U.S. members of Congress and even former U.S. presidential candidate Bernie Sanders have endorsed a concept called “modern monetary theory”, which states that a government can spend as much as it wants and the central bank can just print more money. If inflation goes up, as the grade school teacher tells the students, all the government has to do to reduce inflation is raise taxes. Ultimately, the people are the ones who have to pay, but in the beginning, everyone thinks it is all free.

This theory is becoming more popular. The current federal government says it is against the theory, but is that really the case? Let us look at the numbers. Last year, the government ran up a \$350-billion deficit, of which the Bank of Canada bought \$300 billion, or over 75%. The fact is, the Bank of Canada now owns almost one-third of the federal government's debt. The debt that is now in the hands of the Bank of Canada has increased by hundreds of percentage points.

This year, the government announced that it would borrow \$3 billion per week. How much will the Bank of Canada provide to the government each week? Also \$3 billion. For every dollar the government borrows each week, the Bank of Canada will provide the same amount. This has never happened in the history of the country. Even during wartime, when money was needed to finance armies, money was loaned by citizens. They bought interest-bearing bonds, allowing them to save money while financing the war against the enemy. Now, however, the government has decided to print money.

Is this really a modern concept? If my colleagues think that a concept used over 2,000 years ago is modern, then I guess we can call it modern. Let us recall the dictator Dionysius of Syracuse, who never had enough money because he was always fighting wars and living lavishly. Unable to pay his bills, he collected all the coins on his island, each of which was worth one drachma, the currency of the Greeks at that time. He then stamped each one-drachma coin with the number two. Now he had twice as much money to spend.

• (1725)

It was like magic, except now the public had to pay twice as much for all the goods and services on the island because the money was worth half as much as it was before. The ultrarich, the dictator's entourage, the bankers, the big businessmen and the military leaders were much richer, but the workers had to pay more just to put food on the table and survive.

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That is not the only example. In Europe, throughout the great Napoleonic Wars, kings and leaders tried to mint more coins with less silver to fund their wars. During the wars, people noticed that there was less silver in the coins and that the cost of living was going up for ordinary citizens.

In Germany, during the First World War, the government inflated the value of its currency tenfold. After the war, the Germans had to cart around a huge amount of money just to buy a loaf of bread. At the restaurant, they would order 10 or 15 beers at once as soon as they arrived because the price could shoot up hour by hour over the course of the evening. They were better off ordering as soon as they got to the restaurant.

The economist Milton Friedman, who won the Nobel Prize in economics for his work on inflation and the creation of money, demonstrated that in the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany and Brazil, there was a perfect correlation between an increase in the production of money and an increase in prices.

That is the history of the creation of money. When there is too much money chasing too few goods and services, prices go up. Have prices gone up in Canada since the government began paying its bills with printed money?

A Financial Post article states that the central banks and government are out of touch with Main Street when it comes to the rising cost of living. According to the latest Canada's Food Price Report, every year, the cost of meat increases by 5% to 7%, the cost of bread increases by 4% to 6%, and the cost of vegetables increases by 5% to 7%, and gas prices have increased by 78% to \$1.18. Yes, prices are going up.

Home prices have also gone up by one-third, or 30%. Young Canadians cannot even dream of owning a house because of the skyrocketing prices. That is good for the wealthy. The ultrawealthy are seeing their assets increase in value, but the working class, the people doing the work, are seeing their wages decrease in real terms. A lot of money is being transferred from workers to the ultrawealthy.

Elected officials never voted for this inflation tax. This tax is worse than all other taxes because it targets the poor, who do not have assets and cannot increase their net worth.

We must control the spending and stop the central banks from printing money so that we can protect the value of our dollar and the value of workers' time. This will give us an economy that compensates people based on merit, on their contributions, not based on the inflation of their assets and cost of living.

• (1730)

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, a lot of people in this debate have been very constructive, coming up with good ideas and good criticism, so I would like to ask the member this.

In a 700-page document with hundreds of items that support businesses and individuals, of all the members in the House, the

former finance critic should be able to analyze what he supports and, to be fair, what is good in it. Could the member enumerate some of the positive things in the budget?

• (1735)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I rise today to point out that this extremely costly 700-page half-trillion-dollar budget will raise the cost of living for working class people. When money is printed to pay bills, the cost of living is driven up, increasing inflation, which drives up interest rates. Those higher interest rates that will apply to record levels of household corporate and governmental debt will lead to an inevitable debt crisis.

The government is not giving anything. It actually is taking away and it is doing so through the most surreptitious and insidious method, which is an inflation tax brought on by heavy doses of printing money, which is going to hurt the working class while helping the super-rich and causing a debt crisis. We should not be going in that the direction.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really like the member for Carleton and I enjoy his presentations.

He spoke to us about modern monetary theory. We do not agree on it. In terms of approaches to political economics, I do not share the classical view.

However, I would like to draw a parallel. In the budget, I would like to see a new theory, modern oil and gas theory. This theory tells us that we can reduce our GHGs through the oil and gas industry. That is the strategy that the government is proposing with the green plan they have introduced, more specifically the \$17 billion to be invested in grey hydrogen.

I do not know if my colleague sees the parallel I am trying to draw. Does he think that oil and gas can be used to reduce carbon in a green recovery plan? Is that not a little like the modern monetary theory he was telling us about earlier?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I think the theory he is referring to is the one about how, in Quebec, the most popular vehicle is the Ford F-150. What goes in a Ford F-150? Oil.

The Bloc Québécois is constantly asking for subsidies for Bombardier to cover the cost of airplane construction and huge executive bonuses. What goes in those planes? Oil.

Right now, the Bloc Québécois and Quebeckers are worried about Line 5 being shut down, depriving Quebeckers of half the oil destined for refineries in Montreal and Lévis. They are worried people will not be able to go to work. What goes in those pipelines? Oil.

Government Orders

Acknowledging that we have to reduce oil consumption and greenhouse gas emissions is all well and good, but we also have to acknowledge that oil is important, that it exists and that it should come from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, not from other countries.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague's intervention was very illuminating as to his perspective on things. He expressed a lot of concerns about the budget and, of course, I have concerns with it as well. I suspect that our concerns are very different. I am concerned that people will not thrive as we finish the third wave. I am concerned that we do not have paid sick leave. I am concerned that we do not have dental care and that there is not enough support for post-secondary students.

The member's colleague from Red Deer—Lacombe just talked about how 98% of Canadians, from his perspective, had access to pharmacare. Does the member believe that and if so, how?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the vast majority of Canadians do have access to drug coverage either through their employer or through their provincial social assistance. A small minority do not. We should look at how we can address that.

What shocks me with the NDP, once again, is how its members seem to have no problem with this money printing exercise even though it has been proven, and the Governor of the Bank of Canada has admitted, it balloons the assets of the super-rich while diluting the wages of the working class. It is an inflation tax that transfers money from the have-nots to the have-yachts. I would think the NDP, which claims to care so much about the gap between rich and poor, would have something to say about that inflation tax.

• (1740)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad to speak to the budget implementation act, and I want to congratulate my friend from Carleton for an excellent speech.

It is very clear that the Liberals' so-called stimulus fund in this budget is really all about spending on Liberal pet projects and partisan priorities, not creating jobs and growing our economy. We continue to see no plan to get back to a balanced budget. We know spending in certain areas is completely out of control. This budget has been panned by the parliamentary budget officer and a number of financial experts. Editorials in major newspapers have not given it a passing grade.

It has been said many times through this debate that the Prime Minister of Canada, the Liberal Prime Minister, has racked up more national debt in the past six years than all previous prime ministers and governments of all political stripes in the 150-year history of Canada.

My granddaughter's birthday is today, and Sarah turns one, and I wish her a happy birthday. When she was born last year, she was already on the hook for over \$31,700 of her share of the national debt. Today, she is now on the hook for almost \$40,000. That is how much it has gone up because of the Liberal government.

There is no doubt we are dealing with a pandemic and there is no doubt a lot of emergency spending had to happen. However, we also know that a lot of money has been wasted and has gone into Liberal priorities, not the priorities of Canadians. As has been said many times, we are getting very concerned about the cost of this borrowing and how all this new printed money that is being pumped into the economy is going to impact inflation.

Whether we are looking at new home prices or when trying to buy lumber at a local lumber store to rebuild a fence or put a new deck in the backyard, all these prices are skyrocketing because of this injection of cheap money printed by the Government of Canada.

We went through this once before under Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. I took out my first mortgage to buy some farm land back in 1984. Because inflation was out of control and the Bank of Canada was trying to control it, interest rates were pegged at over 21% for mortgage borrowing. If we have that type of escalation in the cost of borrowing, there is no way people will be able to afford the homes they bought. They will be more than mortgage poor; they will be into foreclosures. The Government of Canada's borrowing will grow exponentially and it will have to take money from other programs just to pay down the interest on this huge debt, totalling over \$1.4 trillion.

In this budget, we have another \$101 billion in new spending over the next three years. We have a deficit left over from last year of \$354 billion. This is not sustainable and we need to ensure we do not bring forward programs that will be structural and cause structural deficits. We have to ensure the assistance is there, but that it is short-lived and is removed as soon as we start to recover. The PBO has already said that we need to continue to balance our spending so we can adjust as people come out of the recession caused by COVID.

We have to remember that today's deficits are tomorrow's taxes, and 74% of Canadians, according to a Nanos poll, have already said that they are incredibly concerned about the deficits the government is racking up under the Liberals.

One of the things missing in this budget is that there is nothing to increase productivity and competitiveness. When we were in government under Stephen Harper, we provided dollars to businesses to accelerate their capital gains losses against any equipment they were buying to increase productivity. They could buy new machinery or tools for their shops.

Government Orders

● (1745)

By increasing productivity and increasing competitiveness so they would be able to compete on the world market, they were creating more jobs. By creating more jobs, Canadians are back at work. They are stimulating the economy, because they are spending more, and they are paying taxes.

The budget we have in front of us right now is not a growth budget, and it fails to have any way to get Canada into a position of prosperity down the road. As I said, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that a significant amount of the spending in this budget by the Liberals will not stimulate the jobs or create any economic growth, and that is going to hurt the long-term outlook on this budget, which is that they are expecting to see growth exponentially to fund that debt down the road.

I am really concerned about how this is affecting local businesses, especially in my riding of Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman. So many businesses are slipping through the cracks, especially seasonal operations. Here we are, going into a second summer under COVID with lockdowns and no ability for so many different businesses to operate.

I am thinking about caterers. I had a conversation with Danny's Whole Hog recently. All the weddings that were booked for this summer have now been cancelled. The company went last summer with almost no events to do and no catering available, and its barbecue business right now is pretty much dead. Instead of running 20-plus teams around the province, doing barbecues every weekend, it is down to only several staff. The owner is glad that he has had access to the wage subsidy program, but there is no guarantee that it is going to be extended down the road, especially as these seasonal businesses do not have revenues once they get through the summer and fall, and by then it is going to be too late for many of these companies.

There are summer camps in my riding, along beautiful Lake Manitoba, Lake Winnipeg and over in the Whiteshell: Camp Arnes, Camp Massad, Gimli Bible Camp and Camp Cedarwood. They did not have any campers last summer and again camp has already been cancelled for this summer, so they are looking for help.

One of my constituents, Jennifer Mills, has just been so tenacious in dealing with the loss of revenues to her company. She is in the carnival business. I have a neat industry in my riding where we have three main carnivals that go and set up at the midways, local fairs, rodeos and festivals: Canuck Amusements, Select Shows and Wonder Shows. Again, they are going into the second summer, over 20 months now without any revenue, and there have been no programs to support them. Jennifer has emailed the Liberal government over 200 times over the last 20 months, and still nobody has bothered to respond to her, whether the Minister of Small Business, the Minister of Finance or anyone.

That does not even deal with hairdressers, restaurants, libraries, outfitters and museums. They are all suffering, yet there is no help coming from the government for most of those businesses.

Agriculture is key to this economy. It is key to my riding. It is in my blood, as I am a farmer myself. I look at my family and immediate family and I am worried about young farmers and how they

are going to be bearing the cost of these programs. I am glad to see that after we asked the Minister of Agriculture for a year to exclude the carbon tax on propane and natural gas that is used for drying crops, the Liberals are finally doing that and refunding it. It is a start.

This budget is proposing funding for more efficient grain dryers and farm equipment not powered by diesel fuel. There are no alternatives out there, and young farmers depend upon having to use used equipment. They buy used equipment, which is going to be based on older technology, so diesel fuel is the lifeblood of agriculture. If we want to eat, diesel fuel is going to be part of that for a very long time to come. There is no reference here to how the government is going to reward farmers for bringing in better crop rotation, low-till practices, zero-till practices and carbon sequestration. It is a public good, but there is nothing there.

Farming depends upon trade, and there is no funding in this budget to help our farmers trade more, especially as places like Communist China become more unpredictable on whether we will be able to access it.

I have more to say, and I will deal with that in the questions and answers afterwards, but I am glad to be able to get on the record talking about the gaps and the failures of the Liberal budget.

● (1750)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have heard Conservatives today talk about how this budget is not going to do anything for Canadians and will certainly cripple our economy, in their opinion. I respect that opinion. However, it is not an opinion that is shared by everybody. The former governor of the Bank of Canada, who I might add was a Stephen Harper appointee, had the following comments in relation to the government's plan. He said, "ingredients that one needs to have in a sustainable plan are present, and that was done without a meaningful increase in taxes of any kind."

Would the member like to reflect on the comments that were made by the former governor of the Bank of Canada, who was appointed by Stephen Harper?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands can pat himself on the back all he wants. The Liberals may not increase taxes in this budget, but they will. It is just a matter of time, because these massive out-of-control deficits are not sustainable.

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The one thing we need to remember is that the number one ask of the provinces was help with health care. We are dealing with COVID-19, and hospitals are overwhelmed. There are not enough nurses, doctors, health care aides and other support staff. We know the provinces wanted the federal government to step in and be a partner. What did it do? The Liberals turned their backs on the provinces and funding health care properly, and instead are now sticking out their hands to the provinces and asking them to be their partners on a national child care program. This is something that the Liberals have been promising for the last 20 years and have failed to deliver each and every time. The provinces cannot afford to be in a national child care plan while we are dealing with a national pandemic.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have heard many Conservatives today bemoaning what has happened with the working class. This is newfound language the Conservatives have found with the working class, yet we have not heard any critiques whatsoever of the Liberal government's \$750 billion Bay Street bailout. We have not heard anything about companies like Imperial Oil, which took \$120 million in subsidies and then paid out \$300 million in dividends.

What does the member tell the farmers in his riding about all the big corporations that have been at the trough while small businesses and rural farmers in his constituency continue to suffer?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, the farmers in my riding want the government to get out of the way. They want to eliminate the red tape. They want to get away from all the enforcement of new regulations that do nothing to enhance productivity or to allow farmers to feed the world. We need to make sure processors are there to buy and process our products so we can export them around the world.

There is one thing in this budget I did not get the chance to talk about. I am the critic for national defence. There is new money in the budget, and I congratulate the government for finally realizing that we need to invest in our sovereignty and put more money into modernizing NORAD, we need to do our responsibility under NATO, and we need to deal with sexual misconduct and gender-based violence within the armed forces. The one thing I am worried about is that out of all of the funding it announced, over half of it is, as the budget says, "Funds Sourced From Existing Departmental Resources".

Essentially, the government is robbing Peter to pay Paul. Those dollars have been transferred out of military infrastructure, which will hurt the overall competitiveness or capability of our armed forces in dealing with security threats in the future.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked quite a bit about small businesses and the small business sector. Conservatives have supported more inclusive expanded programs during the entire pandemic, but one issue that I hear about quite a bit in Kelowna—Lake Country, and I wonder if the member hears this as well, is that businesses that opened in late 2019 or early 2020 are still ineligible for a lot of COVID relief programs. They are hit even harder because quite often they have personal and business debt intertwined.

How does this budget work to give hope to small businesses through an economic recovery plan that the member can see?

• (1755)

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Kelowna—Lake Country for her comments, and this is the one thing we are very concerned about. A lot of our seasonal businesses, especially in my riding of Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, have a lot of people come up from the City of Winnipeg, from other places across the country and internationally, but they are not coming these days. People are taking staycations at home with all of these lockdowns and limitations.

However, there is little offered in this budget that provides long-term hope to those businesses, especially those that have not been able to access the programs that are out there. Maybe they are ma-and-pa-type operations that do not have the opportunity to use things like a wage subsidy program or an emergency business account, and we have to remember that the emergency business account is just another loan. There may be some relief for it down the road, but it just means inheriting more debt and that, of course, has to be paid back.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:56 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

BANKRUPTCY AND INSOLVENCY ACT

The House resumed April 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-253, An Act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (pension plans and group insurance plans), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to put some thoughts on the record today regarding Bill C-253. This bill would put pension plans in priority to secured creditors in the event of bankruptcy proceedings.

Prior to my life in politics, I practised commercial law for over 20 years as a partner in a downtown Winnipeg law firm. Much of my practice involved doing commercial loan securitization for financial institutions. For the most part, it was my job to ensure that proper legal documentation was in place to ensure a first charge against the assets of the borrower on behalf of the lender. A first charge was always essential to the security requirements of the lender.

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The concept of a secured creditor having a first charge is also fundamental to the functioning of our economic system. Without that guarantee, lenders would be far more reluctant to make loans and would view this as a major risk in their security position. Many businesses require debt financing to function, do business, provide jobs for their communities and hire employees.

When I saw this bill, my first concern was what would financial institutions do if this law was changed, in other words, if pension funds had priority over the secured position of lending institutions. How would it affect existing indebtedness? In other words, that would be loans that have already been made predicated on a first charge against the borrower's assets.

I suspect many financial institutions would be very concerned and we could see some instances where they might say that if pensions were to come first, they could no longer take the risk and call in their loan. This is a likely outcome of this legislation as it is currently presented and could pose a serious threat to businesses that fall under federal jurisdiction for pensions and result in challenges for them. In other words, the bill could have the exact opposite effect from what it intends. It could force businesses to close if the lenders see this as an increase in the risk profile, an unacceptable risk, jeopardizing pension plans and pensioners.

On the other hand, one could also argue that this law would incentivize banks for new loans to insist that pension funds were secured and in solid shape by the company before they would agree to make a loan. The problem with this approach is that in the case of defined benefit plans, if there is a precipitous drop in the value of the assets of the fund or of the company after the loans are made, then it may still be difficult for the company to pay back the bank if it must first satisfy the pension plan. This could create a drive toward conversion of many plans to a defined contribution model.

Another problem can occur where a company is failing and needs to restructure its debt but cannot find a lender to take on the additional risk if it is forced to subordinate to pension obligations.

It is clear there are serious issues with any bill that has, as its goal, a fundamental shift in security prioritization away from lending institutions. However, as a society, we must also recognize the importance of labour. I can see the argument being made of why a bank should have priority over people who have worked their entire lives for the company. It is not the fault of those workers that the company went bankrupt and so their pensions should be protected. It is here that we have a conundrum. If lenders cannot be first, they may not lend. If they do not lend, there may not be a job. If pensioners do not receive their pensions in the event of a corporate bankruptcy, workers might not work and, again, there may not be a job.

This is a difficult predicament and as I was writing this speech, it made me think of the biblical tale of King Solomon's baby. In that tale, two women claimed to be the mother of the child. To settle the dispute, Solomon decreed that the child be cut in two, upon which the true mother revealed herself by insisting the baby be given to the other woman to save its life.

I do not have any such Solomonesque wisdom in the case of pensions, banks and public companies, but I do think this bill, as it is

presently constituted, could result in the end of some companies for lack of willing bank capitalization.

What this debate does make clear is that we must find a better way to support businesses and their employees, and I think we would be hard pressed to find anyone who disagrees with this idea. When bankruptcies occur, far too often there is a long list of creditors and individuals who need to be made whole and there is unfortunately not enough money to go around in many instances.

• (1800)

We also must consider the effects on the supply chain of a company that is unable to restructure its debt. What happens to the employees that work for the suppliers? There are all kinds of small business suppliers that could be shut out in the event of a bankruptcy.

A working paper by the OECD regarding priority creditor rights for pension funds discusses this issue. One of the arguments against measures like what Bill C-253 proposes is that, if this were allowed, a range of social issues could come forward claiming priority rights, such as health benefits or environmental claims to name a couple. Would these be prioritized over pensions? How would we decide that?

The OECD working paper also makes a strong case against changing the position of pension claims within the creditor rankings. This argument centres upon the fact that, aside from the complications of changing bankruptcy legislation, doing so may be harmful to capital markets and damaging to the investment climate.

If pension funds are given superpriority status, other creditors, who may be small trades and personal creditors, would be bumped down the line, increasing their credit risk. These suppliers may also be hesitant to provide their services in a pension superpriority environment. Also, lenders, given the additional risk, could in turn pass this risk on to businesses in the form of more expensive interest rates and capital. As well, the marketplace could be adversely impacted with increased bad debts and potential failures. This could result in less confidence in our financial markets. It could also make Canadian businesses less competitive vis-à-vis foreign jurisdictions that do not have such a law.

It could also be argued that any change in the ranking of pension obligations would have a negative impact on credit cost and availability. One alternative to help address the issue might instead be to make it illegal for shareholders to strip a company of its cash in the form of dividends when there is a pension shortfall. If we look at what happened with Sears Canada, it is an example of where this type of change would have benefited pensioners.

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Its majority shareholder, an American hedge fund, took out billions in cash from the company. In 2005, the hedge fund took out \$1.5 billion. In 2010, it took out \$750 million, and in 2012, it took out \$100 million. However, in 2007 there was already a pension shortfall of \$36 million and that shortfall continued to widen, reaching \$267 million by 2015. There would have been more than enough cash available to Sears Canada to cover its \$36-million pension shortfall in 2007, and any other future shortfall, if cash were not being withdrawn from the company at a challenging time, so rules to prohibit dividend stripping when a pension is in a shortfall could be beneficial by allowing a company access to more cash to cover its losses. As a result, that could serve as an effective tool.

Another option could be pension plan insurance, which companies would pay into in the event a pension is unfunded and a company faces insolvency.

There are different alternatives to solving the problem this bill proposes to address. I believe at committee there will be more alternatives discussed. There we will have a chance to have a full discussion of the benefits and pitfalls to be brought forward and addressed by hearing from witnesses, such as workers, employers, academics, financial institutions and others. I think as we work toward a solution on this issue, we must remain focused on ensuring there is a balanced approach.

The security of pension plans for workers must remain top of mind, but we must also avoid measures that could discourage investors and lenders from trying to save a company in despair. King Solomon would expect nothing less of us.

• (1805)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to a bill that we in the NDP think is long overdue. Of course, one of my colleagues from Hamilton presented a similar bill in the last Parliament to finally address pension obligations and the benefits that workers expect to receive when they pay into a pension plan over the course of their working life. They deserve their due.

It is one thing for members to talk about hypothetical situations, such as what this might mean for bank lending practices or what it might mean for creditors of various kinds. However, what is not hypothetical is that right now, when a company does go bankrupt, the pensions that workers have paid into for their entire working lives are not given the respect and priority they are due. What is not hypothetical is that real working people are losing out on the retirement that they paid into and saved for through a company pension. That is wrong. What is not hypothetical is that right now, when there is a bankruptcy proceeding, the very real investment on the part of the worker is not given the same due as the investment made by international hedge funds that expect to get their money back.

Frankly, we can work out the details, and the market will adjust to a new framework. We hear in other instances of the incredible faith, on the part of the Conservatives and Liberals alike, in the power of the market to adjust to new circumstances. Our argument is that there is a moral imperative here to ensure that people who have their entire future, their entire retirement, wrapped up in the future of a company and its plans get what they are owed. Of course, in some cases they may not be able to get everything they

are owed because there is simply not enough money. However, they should not be last in the pecking order. They should not be waiting for the scraps off the table of international investors. They should be given their due alongside investors and lenders to ensure that their lives are not ruined.

We understand very well that lending institutions have to assess risk when they offer loans and that it has to be worked into a business plan. However, our current practice says that when businesses are making those business plans and lenders are assessing that risk, they can literally bank on being able to take away the pension contributions of workers. There is something fundamentally wrong with the idea of them knowing from the outset, whether it is a company, lender or investor, that they can take it to the bank, and that workers who currently work at a company and, in good faith, pay into a pension plan will get screwed in the event of a bankruptcy so that those investors or lenders can get paid out. Workers do not have an equal say at the table. That is what companies are allowed right now. It is wrong, and it is not a hypothetical situation. It is a real injustice that is taking place right now.

The role of government, if nothing else, is to set a fairer framework and a fairer set of rules for the economy to work under. Then it is up to players within the market to adapt to those rules. The NDP thinks it is of fundamental importance that we recognize the status of workers and their retirement funds and ensure that they have to be part of the business plan of a business and part of the business plan of lenders and investors so that they pay workers their due.

It is frustrating to have to keep talking about this, particularly in light of an election commitment by the Liberal Party, which is running the government right now. The Liberals keep saying they respect workers, that this is very important and that they are going to get to it, but they never really get around to it. However, we see proposal after proposal being brought forward by private members in order to fix this fundamental unfairness. The sooner we fix it, the sooner the markets can adjust to the new reality, and it is an adjustment that needs to come.

• (1810)

Workers need to know that they can pay into a pension plan and have it be there for them, and that they are not always going to be playing second fiddle to investors and others, as was the case in the example of Sears raised earlier. It is not hypothetical that the Sears pensioners lost a massive amount of their pension: It is true. They lost it at the point of bankruptcy, and a whole bunch of that money went to Sears' creditors. They lost it before, too, in terms of investors coming in and stripping the business of all its cash, and the company not making the payments it ought to have made into the pension fund.

There is a large issue around pensions. There are other issues and injustices with respect to how the system is set up that prejudices itself against workers and their pensions, which ought to be addressed. That is not an excuse not to move forward with a perfectly good proposal that would change the situation. It would, and actors within the market would have to adjust to that. That is the point.

The point is that the situation needs to change, because right now there is a serious wrong being done to workers who deserve an equal seat at the table, just as when Nortel went into bankruptcy and workers lost over half of their pension earnings.

These are the kinds of things that we need to do if we want to talk about the larger issue of pension reform. Employers should be making their regular contributions to company pension funds. We often see that employers are allowed to take vacations on contributions to their pension funds when things are going well, but of course the plan for pension funds is that contributions are made in poor years and in good years, and that the contributions made in the good years help put enough capital in the fund for it to ride out the bad years. When employers are allowed to take vacations on that, we sometimes see the accumulation of really extraordinary pension fund deficits.

Other arguments are trotted out about how pension funds are not sustainable and employers would have to contribute totally unrealistic amounts to the pension funds in order to keep them going. That is because in good years, instead of continuing to contribute to the funds, in some cases employers are allowed to not contribute anything at all. That is certainly a problem.

Many Conservative members in the House refer to the Canada pension plan as a simple payroll tax, which I think is a serious deception. It is something that employees and employers pay into as part of their wage package, in order to provide further retirement security once employees' working years are done.

When it was set up, the CPP was meant to be a third of a person's pension income. Their company pension would provide another third, and their personal savings would provide the final third. Frankly, we are talking about how to better protect company pensions for those who are fortunate enough to still have them. The fact is that many companies have been divesting themselves of pension risk altogether and are not providing real pension plans, certainly not defined pension plans. Something like 7 in 10 workers in Canada today do not have a pension at all.

We have not seen the Canada pension plan really pick up the slack in the way that it needs to in order to make sure that everybody could be contributing towards a defined benefit that would provide the cornerstone of their retirement income. Even now when we see a proposal from the government to raise the old age security amount, it is doing it in a way that, again, is unhelpful, by creating two classes of seniors rather than offering the same increase to all seniors 65 years old and older. The government is only offering it to seniors aged 75 and up, when we know that the very same income and cost pressures are there for seniors regardless of whether they are 75 or older, or 65 or older.

This piece of legislation is very important. It is important from a moral point of view. It is important from an economic point of

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view: There are advantages to protecting the incomes of seniors in our local communities who spend that money in our communities. Let us absolutely make it part of a larger package of reform to better protect and strengthen the pensions of Canadians from coast to coast.

● (1815)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

There seems to be a technical problem, but it will be fixed fairly quickly. I would like to remind all speakers to be well prepared before speaking.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I apologize for the hiccup. I hope I will be forgiven, as it is my birthday today.

I am pleased to participate virtually in the debate surrounding Bill C-253, proposed by the hon. member for Manicouagan, of the Bloc Québécois. The purpose of this bill is to amend the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. Bill C-253 is the logical continuation of Bill C-372 that the hon. member for Manicouagan introduced in 2016, during the previous Parliament.

At the time, this bill was only debated for an hour before it died on the Order Paper because the Liberal government did nothing. The purpose of the bill was to prevent other retirees from unfairly losing their pension funds that they have worked all their lives for, which is what happened to the workers at Cliffs Natural Resources.

Let us set the scene for a moment. In 2015, this U.S. company wants to place its two Canadian subsidiaries under the protection of the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act. Meanwhile, Cliffs Natural Resources announces plans to restructure its activities with a view to shutting down its operations in eastern Canada. However, the restructuring had quite dire consequences, not only for existing employees, but also for pensioners, who lost much of their pension fund and group insurance.

That tragic situation was the impetus for the bill, which was intended to make legislative fixes, which my colleague will be much better able to confirm since I was not yet in the House at the time. Had Bill C-372 become law when the events had taken place a year earlier, the Cliffs Natural Resources pensioners would certainly have been given a bigger piece of the pie, namely the claim that was owed to them.

By proposing to amend the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, I think that we are calling today for legislation that will ensure fairer treatment for retired workers while maintaining fair treatment for creditors.

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The purpose of the bill is therefore to prevent other creditors from getting access to what, in the end, amounts to the workers' life savings in the case of bankruptcy or restructuring. That seems logical. Since seniors are more financially vulnerable than other demographics, today, we would like this bill to fill a gap that has been created by the Liberals' silence on the matter by providing proper, fair and equitable legal protection centred on two main initiatives.

First, before the court approves a business's proposal for bankruptcy or restructuring, it must account for the total amount of special payments, as well as the amount needed for the liquidation of unfunded liabilities or solvency deficiencies of pension plans.

In plain language, the company's proposal must provide for a pension fund bailout if the court is convinced the company is capable of doing that. This rule would protect workers' pensions from being cut off, and we think it is crucial to protecting workers' savings.

• (1820)

Second, a reread of the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act reveals six categories of creditors: first, creditors whose claims are deemed to be held in trust; second, unpaid suppliers; third, super-priority creditors; fourth, secured creditors; fifth, preferred creditors; and sixth, ordinary, unsecured creditors.

Bill C-253, which we are arguing in favour of today, would add other payments and indemnifications to these six categories of creditors. For example, special payments would get preferred claim status. The same goes for indemnification for beneficiaries of group insurance plans in which the company participated as an employer. The total amount of special payments, as well as any amount required to liquidate unfunded liabilities or solvency deficiencies, would also be secured claims against the bankrupt's assets as of the date of bankruptcy.

In keeping with our principles and our values, my Bloc Québécois colleagues and I support this bill, which has been introduced for the second time by my colleague from Manicouagan, and we support it for many reasons. First, the bill will recognize that a pension plan is a form of deferred wages, and second, it will cushion the financial blow to pensioners when their former employer declares bankruptcy. I was just talking about that a moment ago. With our bill, bankrupt companies or ones that are restructuring their operations will have to provide the total amount of any special payments and the total amount needed to liquidate their unfunded liabilities or solvency deficits in the pension plan fund. In this same spirit, this bill is beneficial because it will protect retired workers' group insurance plans. It will also compel businesses to better fund their pension plans. Finally, it will enable the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology to study this important social issue. That will surely please my Bloc Québécois colleague who sits on that committee, as well as all other members of the committee.

In closing, dear colleagues, if passed, our proposed Bill C-253 would protect workers and retirees so that they would never again lose the pensions that they earned after a lifetime of hard work. We find such injustices unacceptable. It is our moral duty to defend and respect active workers and retirees who, generation after genera-

tion, have slowly forged and are still forging the way of life we are fortunate to cherish today.

Ottawa's wait-and-see attitude and inaction have gone on long enough, and while this is the position that requires the least effort, it remains the least honourable. If we do nothing, history will judge our politicians by the way we let down the citizens, who spend more time looking backward than forward.

• (1825)

[*English*]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to join my colleagues in the debate over Bill C-253, as we consider the important issues of protecting the retirement security of Canadian employees and pensioners when an employer faces insolvency.

Our government recognizes that all Canadians deserve peace of mind when it comes to their retirement security. We have taken several major steps to strengthen all aspects of Canada's retirement income system, including enhancements to old age security and the Canada pension plan. At the same time, corporate insolvencies create a challenge for workplace pension plans, as well as for the economic security for employees who may have unpaid wages and benefits. Bill C-253, while well intentioned, takes a flawed approach to these issues.

By contrast, our government has taken important and practical steps to enhance the retirement security of all Canadians and better protect the interests of Canadian employees and pensioners in cases of employer insolvency. First, in 2019, the government made changes to insolvency corporate and pension laws to strengthen the protection for workplace pensions, taking a whole-of-government, evidence-based approach. These changes were based on feedback from national consultations with labour and pensioner groups, company lenders, experts and the public at large.

After listening to Canadians, our government enacted a comprehensive package to enhance retirement security via budget 2019, which strengthened security for pensioners and workers, but also built on the internationally recognized successes of Canada's marketplace framework laws. The changes made to our insolvency laws have made corporate restructuring fair, more transparent and more accessible for pensioners and workers. Participants in insolvency proceedings are now required to act in good faith. As well, corporate directors will have to think twice before approving excessive payments to executives at the expense of pensions or benefit plans in the lead-up to a firm's insolvency, as courts will have more powers to review these payments and find directors liable where appropriate.

In proceedings under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, courts have been given greater power to order the disclosure of economic interests to enhance fairness and transparency in insolvency negotiations. The relief that a large corporation can seek on the first day of a CCAA restructuring is also now limited to what is absolutely necessary to avoid immediate liquidation. This means that pensioners and employees will have greater opportunities to participate in restructuring proceedings and make representations to the court before decisions are made on issues such as changes to employee group insurance benefit plans or pension contributions during the restructuring.

In our consultations, Canadians told us that a proactive approach to retirement security is the best and most sustainable approach. We received that message loud and clear, and that is why the government also amended federal corporate law to allow for more market oversight of corporate decision-making and worked to better align corporate incentives with the interests of workers and pensioners. Moreover, we have taken measures to restrain unreasonable executive compensation by requiring federally incorporated publicly traded corporations to hold advisory shareholder votes. Taken together, these measures will further regulate corporate behaviour and instill market discipline and oversight on corporate decision-makers.

Finally, our actions in budget 2019 also improved federally regulated pension plans by clarifying that if a pension plan is terminated, it must still provide the same benefits as when it was ongoing. Moreover, federal pension plans are permitted to transfer the responsibility to provide pensions to a regulated life insurance company to better protect pensions and pensioners from the risk of employer insolvency. In addition, our government has taken strong actions to directly support workers impacted by employer insolvency. The wage earner protection program provides financial assistance to Canadian workers who have lost their jobs and are owed wages, including termination and severance by their insolvent employer.

Since 2008, the program has paid more than \$337 million in wages to nearly 129,000 Canadian workers. In 2018, this government increased the amount available to workers from four to seven weeks of insurable earnings.

• (1830)

In budget 2021, the government committed to further strengthening the program by eliminating a 6.82% deduction that was previously in place. Quite simply, these reforms will put more money in

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the pockets of Canadians who have lost their jobs and are owed wages by their employers.

The best way to protect economic and pension security is by preventing employer insolvency in the first place. This is an incredible challenge in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been so hard for so many of our businesses from coast to coast to coast. That is why an essential part of Canada's fight against COVID has been unprecedented federal financial supports for Canadians and Canadian businesses, which have helped keep insolvency levels down.

While the other side has dismissed these programs and the timely support they offer to Canadian families, businesses and workers, we made a promise to Canadians to have their backs through this pandemic for as long as it takes. In budget 2021, our government committed to extending these support measures as long as the fight against this virus requires it. The actions I just described will create better outcomes for pensioners and workers affected by the insolvency of their employer.

In contrast, Bill C-253 is coming from a good place, in terms of its intention of helping pensioners, but it takes a misguided approach in trying to do so. It would prevent some companies from restructuring, which would result in unnecessary job losses; hurt pensioners; harm small business; reduce access to credit and investment; and hurt Canadian competitiveness. Many firms are already struggling due to the pandemic. This bill would worsen, not improve, the situation.

I am pleased to say, however, that our government has taken effective action. Our insolvency and corporate law changes, our wage earner protection program improvements and support for businesses during the pandemic have all served to protect pensions and workers, while also supporting the central objectives of Canada's economic recovery. These measures help to ensure that our farms remain competitive and can continue to employ hard-working Canadians throughout the country.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am coming to you from the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

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When I saw this was to be debated this afternoon, I thought I would like to add a few personal comments, because the issue of people's pensions has always been a point of passionate interest for me. In fact, over the years, I was aghast to learn that people could actually lose their pensions. I do not know if people who are in their golden years and live on pensions like the OAS, the Canada pension plan, or their company plan or a government plan think that those could all of a sudden partially or fully not be there. I do not think anyone ever thinks about that. I was aghast to find out that people could lose the pensions they had worked for all their life. I assume they have planned their life around living on those pensions when they are no longer able to work.

For years, I have been hearing from people who worked for Nortel. They lost their pension years ago, and must be in a terrible situation now.

The previous speaker outlined, in great detail, how this was a very complex legislated area and he outlined a number of positive steps the government had taken. It helped to enhance retirement security through the Budget Implementation Act, 2019 when it added balanced changes to the BIA, the CCAA, the Canada Business Corporations Act, the CBCA, and the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985, the PBSA. These changes followed national consultations with companies, labour groups, pensioners, experts and the general public. Therefore, along with those changes and the consultations, which the previous member mentioned, these are all steps in the right direction. In fact, I was really delighted when the government was able to work with the unions and make a deal with the provinces and territories to expand the Canada pension plan, which again is sustenance for people who otherwise would not have it or have access to it.

However, there are still situations where there are problems. What I want people to think about, whether this gets to committee or other forums, is how we solve the problem of protecting the money people and their company have put into a pension fund. People plan to retire on that money. They plan to use that to buy food or pay for heat in their senior years. I am not an economist or a pension expert so I do not know exactly how that would be done.

If hard-working people are putting aside contributions to a pension fund through their company, there should be some way to protect that. I do not know if that might mean legally requiring that money be put in a different bank account or an institution and it cannot be taken out. I am looking for an answer to the problem. Whether this bill is the answer or not, I do not know, but I certainly think this discussion has to occur.

That is why I am glad this concept is before Parliament. If that money were legally required to be separated, then I am not sure we would be debating this issue today. I think this has been debated at times in the past.

The Conservative speaker mentioned there were a number of solutions to this problem and that is all I am looking for, is a solution to this problem.

● (1835)

The NDP acknowledged what the Conservatives were saying in that this will change the financial situation and the financial sys-

tems. It would for secured creditors. Certainly, we have to look at a different system.

We want Canadian businesses to thrive. We want them to be competitive in the global world. I think the point was brought up earlier in the debate that we have to consider how to keep our companies competitive with those around the world because that is what our companies are competing with in this modern connected world. That is an important consideration as we determine a solution that must be found for this problem.

When the system is set up with rules in place so pensions are somehow protected, those people starting and running companies will know that right from the very beginning. Their business plans will be structured on that. Their financing will be structured on that, so there will be no surprises, and the business could move on under whatever those rules are.

A point was made about struggling companies and certainly, whatever the solution is, it has to make sure as much as possible that companies can be helped when they are getting close to insolvency. We want to keep them in place so there are still jobs for the workers. The solutions to that should not be the life savings of hard-working people. That should not be the solution to keeping a company solvent so people have jobs.

They have to find other methods to deal with the restructuring and keeping companies solvent, making sure they can get adequate financing, but it should not be on the backs of people who have worked their entire lives to support their families. When they get to a few years of rest and retirement, they should be able to have that support.

I am looking for whatever solution can be found for that. The problem still exists. Government has made very good progress toward improving the situation, but it needs to be completely improved so people's pensions will always be there.

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be in the House tonight to conclude debate on my bill, Bill C-253, an act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act with respect to pension plans and group insurance plans. The bill has a long name, but it is actually quite simple. I will move on to its principle.

What I want to do is protect the deferred salaries of employees, of pensioners. In other words, when people contribute to a defined benefit pension fund, they expect that when they retire, they will be able to get or have what they have earned over a lifetime of work and labour. This is a very simple principle. We do not want a company or multinational to walk away with a large chunk of the fund because it has underfunded the pension plan. In very simple terms, that is what Bill C-253 is seeking to address.

Of course, we have been told, in many different ways, about all the problems we might face with a bill like this one. While the principle is simple, the devil is obviously in the details, but I would like to remind the House that our primary goal is to work for the people.

During the debate, I heard many comments about how, in the end, the government did good things in its budget. Let us hope that is the case, but we cannot rely only on hope. What I am putting forward here is not a one-time budget measure. Rather, it is intended to be a permanent legislative measure, since we are legislators. I am therefore proposing a solution.

I would like to thank the many people who worked with me over the past few years. Things take a long time in the House. We have been working on this bill for five years with the help of many people, including workers, pensioners and unions in Quebec and the rest of Canada.

I have an extraordinary team who has believed in this bill since we began our work for one good and simple reason, and that is the fact that the people from my riding of Manicouagan asked for this bill. That is the standard by which we should always measure the work that we do here. The people of Manicouagan had a need for this bill and they made it clear even before I was elected. They made that need clear during the election campaign, when I met with them, so many people contributed to the development of this bill.

I would therefore like to thank my entire team, all the organizations, local agencies, unions, pensioners and many others. I would also like to thank all of my Bloc Québécois colleagues, who also believe in this bill and who worked on it with me. I obviously want to thank my colleagues in the House. I believe I heard that many of them will be at least voting in favour of the principle of Bill C-253 so that it can be examined in committee.

I would now like to say a few words to each party.

The official opposition indicated it would support the bill, saying that it could be improved upon—which is true of anything, in my opinion. I hope the opposition will support the bill and we can discuss it. As several colleagues have already said, we have been talking about it for many years, but no action has been taken.

With all due respect to the government, the fact that it is increasing old age security in no way responds to what I am asking here on behalf of my constituents and other Canadians. That might be a nice infomercial for the government, but it has nothing to do with what I am calling for.

The official opposition has said it will vote in favour of referring this to committee for study. At least some mental effort is being made.

Adjournment Proceedings

As for the government, it will probably vote against it, even though I have heard several people applaud the solutions to the difficulty we are facing. Even at its own Liberal convention, several party members, including government members, tabled a resolution in favour of a bill like mine. I would expect the governing party to vote in favour of something called for by a majority of its members, possibly.

Furthermore, the bill presents a balanced position. We often hear fearmongering about how this is going to result in business closures, but no, this takes a balanced approach.

● (1845)

I will conclude with this example. When Cliffs Natural Resources went bankrupt, its main creditor was itself. It gave itself \$400 million. That \$400 million belonged to the pensioners in my riding. I would prefer that, with a bill like mine, this money be returned to the workers and pensioners, not to the multinationals that continue to turn a profit.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. member for Manicouagan.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to an order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 12, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, racism and structural inequity existed even before the pandemic, but COVID-19 has shone a light for many on the serious inequality in our country.

Adjournment Proceedings

Since the beginning of the pandemic, there have been public actions and calls against anti-Asian violence and racism; mass public protest movements against police violence, and to say that Black lives matter; rallies to call for justice for migrant workers; and people gathering in the streets to protest the resource extraction and development taking place on unceded indigenous land without free, prior and informed consent, and calling for a true reconciliation that dismantles colonial institutions and laws.

Transformative changes are needed in our laws, governments and institutions to reconcile and make reparations for Canada's colonial history, to root out systemic discrimination and to eliminate the root causes of poverty and inequality. Equality of rights is supposed to be at the core of Canadian law, as enshrined in our charter, yet this is not the reality for far too many people.

People do not have equal access to housing. There is no national rights-based approach to housing. There is no national urban indigenous housing plan that is by indigenous, for indigenous. Law enforcement disproportionately affects Black and indigenous people. People living with addictions cannot access the health care that they need, and instead they are criminalized. People do not enjoy equitable access to supports for early intervention, mental health and addiction. The chronic underfunding and defunding of these services is a sample of the systemic racism that exists within government.

Canada must take bold action to tackle systemic racism and recognize that racial disparities in education, learning, employment, food and water security, health and child welfare, housing and homelessness, income and social assistance, immigration and newcomer settlement, justice and policing, and poverty are persistent and real.

To improve safety for members of our community, we must invest in people. Canada can afford to have a guaranteed livable income so that everyone will have access to income, food security, safe housing and safe transportation. The Atlanta incident is a reminder of the intersections and the deadly effects of not only racism, but also misogyny. We must also address policy issues that increase people's vulnerability to violence, including fighting against the stigma that sex workers face.

While we are often tempted to think that racism is a problem confined to the United States, the truth is that racist verbal and physical attacks on Asian Canadians are on a sharp rise. According to Bloomberg, Vancouver is the Asian hate capital of North America. In Vancouver, anti-Asian hate crimes have gone up 717%. Every attack is aimed at stripping us of our sense of safety and dignity. It is a clear message to say that we are not wanted and that we do not belong.

I am glad that the House of Commons unanimously adopted my motion that calls on the government to include anti-Asian racism in Canada's anti-racism strategy and in all anti-racism policies and programs. However, we need to ensure that NGOs are provided the resources they need to help fight against Asian hate and provide support to victims. NGOs have the trust of, and relationships with, the people on the ground. They can break down cultural and language barriers, but they cannot do this from the side of their desks.

Dedicated stable and predictable core funding, not just project funding, is needed to tackle this essential work.

I call on the government to take action to support the community.

• (1850)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague across the way for her advocacy on behalf of her own communities and other Asian communities.

Like millions of Canadians from coast to coast to coast, our government is very concerned by the proliferation of anti-Asian hatred and racism in Canada and in other parts of the world. Anti-Asian racism, discrimination and stigma have no place in Canada, and we condemn all forms of them.

[*Translation*]

By taking a stand, it reminds us that contrary to what many believe, anti-Asian racism is not new to Canada. Anti-Asian racism has a long history in Canada.

[*English*]

In a society governed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Multiculturalism Act and the Human Rights Act, hatred and racism have absolutely no place in Canada today. They pose a direct threat to the foundation of our democratic institutions, to the security of our communities and to our nationwide efforts to combat the pandemic that we face today.

[*Translation*]

Statistics Canada data, the unprecedented work of national pan-Asian organizations and data from law enforcement agencies show unequivocally that anti-Asian hatred is currently a sordid reality for far too many Canadians.

We are determined to take every measure necessary to work with the Asian communities in order to put an end to anti-Asian racism.

• (1855)

[English]

We have already made record investments to combat racism, including anti-Asian racism, through Canada's \$45-million anti-Asian racism strategy. The Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat is working closely with Asian communities to help ensure that the federal government consistently addresses anti-Asian racism in all its programs and policies, not only in its anti-racism policies and programs.

Through budget 2021, we are investing \$11 million in the Canadian Race Relations Foundation to facilitate initiatives, like the establishment of a national coalition to support Asian Canadian communities. The Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat is also collaborating with Asian organizations to see anti-Asian racism addressed in the upcoming Asian Heritage Month activities. This year's theme is recognition, resilience and resolve, an important theme to urge all Canadians to come together to combat all forms of anti-Asian racism and discrimination.

[Translation]

Our digital citizen initiative also supported the work of key Asian community organizations to fight anti-Asian racism.

Through budget 2021, we also invested in improving the collection and use of disaggregated data. The anti-racism strategy also provides support to the Department of Public Safety. It seeks to develop a national framework and guidelines to better respond to hate crimes, hate incidents and hate speech.

[English]

We recognize that there is much more that we need to do.

[Translation]

That is why our government remains committed to taking concrete action to fight anti-Asian racism. Canada's anti-racism strategy, along with all other related government programs and policies, must be introduced and designed to be effective in combatting anti-Asian racism.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, May is Asian Heritage Month. This is the second Asian Heritage Month to take place amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and rising anti-Asian hate.

To the Asian community, let this be a month to strengthen our connection to our heritage, history and community to find the strength, resilience and love that we need to fight against racism and hate. Let us hold each other in solidarity and care as our communities grieve the ongoing pandemic tragedies, especially our South Asian community with the devastating crisis in India now.

Inclusion and justice mean that all entities required for dignified living, such as income, health care and housing are accessible, and that essential workers on the front lines, including migrant workers and undocumented workers, are recognized and protected.

There must be a comprehensive and co-ordinated response to rising hate crimes that prioritizes support for NGOs on the ground. Systemic racism at all policy levels must be addressed. The government has an urgent responsibility to act.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, anti-Asian racism is unacceptable in Canada today. We all have a role to play in preventing and stopping the spread of stigma and racism, whether online, on our streets, in our homes or in the workplace.

[Translation]

Unfortunately, what we have witnessed over the past year shows us that, right now, the anti-Asian racism that exists in Canada stems from hatred and misinformation related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[English]

Data from Statistics Canada, law enforcement and Asian community organizations across the country shows that anti-Asian racism is bringing fear and violence to far too many of our communities.

[Translation]

That is why our government is committed to doing everything it can through Canada's anti-racism strategy, including the Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat, and in partnership with communities of Asian descent, to combat hatred towards people of Asian descent.

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister and his heritage minister are engaged in an offensive against their critics. Yesterday the heritage minister, quoting an article, accused his critics of “a deliberate campaign of misinformation by commercial interests that would prefer to avoid the same regulatory oversight applied to broadcast media.”

While the heritage minister is quoting individuals who are part of the groups that have lobbied him and his ministry, the opponents, which he and the Prime Minister accuse of being part of a conspiracy theory and wearing tinfoil hats, number in the tens of thousands of Canadians. They include noted professors of law, Internet law experts and the former chair of the CRTC.

The government is rightly under siege for its flawed bill, Bill C-10. It is a bill that the minister seems to know shockingly little about, as evidenced in his disastrous appearances on news shows over the past two weeks.

Adjournment Proceedings

While the minister and the Prime Minister are threatening the freedom of expression of Canadians and proposing draconian measures that would restrict and limit the expression of Canadians online, they are also proposing measures that would establish a regulatory body that could block websites from Canadians being able to see them and have social media posts ordered to be taken down. It is concerning when any government seeks to limit the freedom of expression of its citizens, especially so when it is completely unable to articulate the rationale for why this is appropriate.

The government says it is to protect Canadian culture, but there were protections included in the legislation for individual Canadians. However, the government stripped those protections, saying the bill did not need them, and now is proposing half measures that would still not address Canadians' concerns.

Some of the concerns Canadians have include the fact that the Prime Minister has a history of silencing his critics. When he is talking about being able to order web pages blocked, social media posts taken down and the regulation of social media users who have followings that meet no decided threshold, but just have a lot of followers or views, it raises concerns.

This is the same Prime Minister who fired his attorney general, the member for Vancouver Granville, as she was speaking truth to power and stopping him from his attempts to interfere in the criminal prosecution of his friends at SNC-Lavalin. This is the same Prime Minister who kicked the member for Vancouver Granville and Dr. Jane Philpott out of the Liberal caucus for speaking out against him. This is the same Prime Minister who obstructed the investigation in what was later labelled the "Trudeau II Report", which detailed his attempted interference in the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin. It is the same Prime Minister who silenced committees and parliamentarians investigating the WE scandal when he prorogued Parliament and locked the doors to this place.

Canadians are rightfully wondering, as are Internet law experts and the former chair of the CRTC, to name a few, what the government is really trying to do with this clumsy legislation and its spokesperson, the minister, who does not seem to have even read the legislation. Is it really about protecting Canadian content or, in fact, is this legislation about silencing critics of the government?

● (1900)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to have the opportunity to respond to the issues raised by my colleague tonight.

[*Translation*]

Our government is committed to upholding the ideals of freedom of expression and protecting Canadians' rights as guaranteed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That is why I want to clarify that Bill C-10 in no way seeks to silence Canadians.

[*English*]

Our government stands strongly in favour of the protection of freedom of expression and charter rights, and it is incorrect for the opposition to state that Bill C-10 would regulate the Internet or that it would restrict freedom of expression.

I would like to point out that the act itself has a specific requirement that the Broadcasting Act be construed and applied in a manner that is consistent with freedom of expression and journalistic, creative and programming independence. I would like to further clarify that the changes that we are proposing through Bill C-10 to modernize the Broadcasting Act do not have the impact that the member opposite states.

The purpose of this modernization is to update a law that has remained unchanged since we were renting videos from the local corner store and we had yet to even imagine streaming services. The law is outdated and has created an uneven playing field for web giants that do not have to contribute to the creation of Canadian stories and music. Our artists have shown overwhelming support to update this law.

The bill does not apply to individuals posting content to social media. In fact, individuals are specifically excluded. This bill is not about what Canadians do online; it is about what web giants do not do in Canada, which is support Canadian works, languages, stories and music.

There is an amendment before the heritage committee that clarifies the powers that the regulator, the CRTC, would have over social media companies and the companies alone. The only things that will be asked of social media companies are the following. The first is how much revenue the platform makes in Canada, second, they are asked to invest a certain percentage of that platform's Canadian revenues into our cultural production funds. Third, they are asked to promote and make discoverable our artists.

Another important point is that the discoverability requirement for social media companies is not the same as the one that applies to traditional TV and radio broadcasters. The social media company will not need to show or play a proportion of Canadian shows or music. The discoverability requirement for social media companies is only to make our creators discoverable, for example, to include them as suggestions in playlists.

Finally, the regulator will not have any powers relating to broadcasting standards for social media companies. The only powers will be the three that I have stated on Canadian revenue, investing in Canadian stories and music and making our artists discoverable.

● (1905)

[*Translation*]

I was pleased to see that Quebec's National Assembly unanimously supported Bill C-10. I would like to thank its members for their commitment to creative artists. The CRTC is not just going to start regulating content posted by users. Let me reiterate that this bill is in no way an attack on Canadians' freedom of expression.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

I look forward to welcoming the justice minister's new charter statement on Bill C-10 as well as hearing from expert witnesses on the changes that have been proposed.

Canadians are at the heart of Bill C-10.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary said that this was not designed to target individual Canadians. However, the protection that would have protected Canadians was stripped out by Liberal members at the committee. Amendments that were proposed by the opposition that would have enshrined protections and would have done what the parliamentary secretary purported to be the intention were rejected again by Liberal members at the committee.

The Liberals and the parliamentary secretary want to make this out as if the opposition is Chicken Little and the sky is going to fall, but it is the public that is saying this. It is experts and it is law professors. Canadians have legitimate concerns about this bill. The minister went on national television and said that the bill would, in fact, apply to individual Canadians if they had enough views.

The government needs to make a decision. Is it targeting Canadians or is it not? If it is not, it needs to scrap this and come back to Canadians with something that protects their freedoms.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, I would invite the member opposite to actually review the amendments that are before committee at this moment. This bill had nothing to do with regulating users' content, and it is specifically excluded in the bill.

I look forward to the Conservatives doing the responsible thing and helping us to move this bill forward. We can work together to support our artists.

[Translation]

Numerous stakeholders have said that the Broadcasting Act is in dire need of an update. It has not been significantly updated since 1991, which was well before most Canadians had home Internet access.

[English]

I think we can all work together to make sure that we modernize the Broadcasting Act.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to be here and to be returning the House's attention to the horrific ongoing genocide of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China.

My question earlier was to the Prime Minister, asking if he and his government recognized the reality of this genocide and, therefore, the responsibility to protect and the obligation that the government has under the Genocide Convention to respond appropriately to that genocide by reforming supply chain legislation, by applying Magnitsky sanctions and by taking other vitally important measures that are required. As well, in my question to the Prime Minister, I specifically cited the testimony of women who had been victims of sexual violence. I asked the Prime Minister if he believed those women in their testimony, testimony that provides clear evidence of

the nature of the crimes being committed by the Government of China.

I note the presence of the parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs. I welcome his response, and I welcome the fact that he voted in favour of a Conservative motion to recognize the Uighur genocide. I salute the fact that he did so. I anticipate that his response will reflect his own views on that subject.

However, what we really need to know is what the position of the government is. Why is the position of the government important? As members of Parliament, we have our voices. We have the opportunity to pass legislation. We have the opportunity to advocate, but it is the government that must take so many of these critical measures in response. It is the government that has obligations under the Genocide Convention. It is the government that speaks for Canada at the United Nations and other important multilateral bodies like that. We need to know the government's position, the government's assessment of the evidence. Otherwise, it is not good enough for the Prime Minister to abstain on a critical question like this, even while most of his caucus is not convinced of his own position.

Since the House of Commons recognized the Uighur genocide, we have had recognition by the British Parliament and the Dutch Parliament. Prior to the House of Commons in Canada taking this action, two American administrations had recognized the ongoing genocide targeting Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims, so there needs to be recognition by the Government of Canada.

The parliamentary secretary recognizes that a genocide is taking place; he voted to recognize that a genocide is taking place. Why is it that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs are unconvinced by the same evidence that he was convinced by? In other words, why did they refuse to vote in favour of genocide recognition when he did? Why were there no ministers? Why was the Prime Minister not willing to take this step?

Now it is months later, since that genocide recognition vote. We are into May at this point. There has been new evidence, new reports, new international actions. I wonder if the government has had a moment of clarity, an epiphany, since this issue was last discussed in the House of Commons.

I would welcome the parliamentary secretary to share with this House what the current position of the Government of Canada is with regard to whether or not Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China are subject to an ongoing genocide, and what the position of the Government of Canada is with regard to its responsibility to protect under the Genocide Convention.

● (1910)

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for not only his question tonight, but his questions in the House that led to this adjournment debate opportunity.

Adjournment Proceedings

I know it is a bit unconventional, but before I begin I want to just commend the member for Vancouver East for her Adjournment Proceedings speech and the questions today regarding racism that is directed toward Asian Canadians and Asians in the world. It was a very moving speech, and it is not unrelated to this in how we handle these issues extremely carefully and cautiously, as parliamentarians.

The hon. member is raising important human rights issues, and he is correct in the fact that I share his concerns. The government shares his concerns as well, and we are gravely concerned with the human rights violations in China, particularly those affecting Uighurs and other ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

The government is also deeply disturbed by a recent report by the BBC, which I had thought the member might bring up, regarding documenting systemic sexual violence in the so-called re-education internment camps. Canada has reviewed the recent report as well as other compelling testimonies that have been provided to us, and I want to thank the members of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights for their work on this issue, as well as many civil society partners and human rights experts who continue to document atrocities and bring them to the attention of Parliament and of government. The government takes all reports of gender-based violence extremely seriously, and we stand with those victims and survivors and call on all governments to repair, to seek justice and to bring perpetrators to justice.

There are dehumanizing acts that are abhorrent to all of us in society, and that is the crux of this. The crux of this is not about words and language; the crux is about doing something proactively and ensuring that Canada's voice is heard on the world stage and that we will make a difference. We know that survivors of these kinds of atrocities will have lifelong effects. We will stand with them always and it is incumbent upon the international community to speak out against discrimination and violence wherever and whenever it happens.

The member is also correct in understanding that Parliament has spoken on this issue and the government has listened to Parliament, and that a few parliaments in the world have spoken and, in very similar ways, their governments are also assessing the situation differently. Governments and parliaments have different roles. This Parliament needs to reflect the concerns and the cares of the people we represent, and we do that; we represent our people well and we bring those issues to the fore. The government needs to ensure that they listen to that and bring to the world's attention those concerns, in maybe different ways but with equal import.

Canada has raised the human rights situation in Xinjiang on numerous occasions at the UN, which I have elocuted here before, including at the UN Human Rights Council and at the UN General Assembly. We have met with multilateral bodies and raised these

concerns, as I have said, plus we have raised these issues with our like-minded partners as well as those who do not always agree with us. We have raised the human rights issues as well in China, and will continue to do that on a regular basis.

I appreciate the opportunity to expound on this conversation. I look forward to the member's further comments.

• (1915)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I certainly agree with the parliamentary secretary's opening comments about condemning racism in all its forms, whether it occurs here or in other places. Sadly, the parliamentary secretary did not answer my specific question, though, which is what is the position of the government with respect to the genocide.

He is right to say that parliaments and governments have different roles, but if it is a genocide then it is a genocide. Surely it is the role of Parliament as well as the role of government to tell the truth, to truthfully acknowledge genocide when genocide is taking place. We are asking the government to tell that truth, just as Parliament has.

The member is saying that the main point is not the terminology, but I would say back to him that what victims are asking of us is that they be heard and believed and protected. How can we say that we are hearing and believing the victims if we do not use the correct term to identify the atrocities that have been taking place? It is a correct identification of those atrocities that impels us to a response to action.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, what victims of this atrocity are asking me, and I believe many members of Parliament, for is that we promote, protect and respect human rights and put them at the core of our foreign policy. That is what we are doing. We put them at the core of our foreign policy.

Canada and the Government of Canada stand in total opposition to violence and discrimination in all their forms. We will continue to speak out against acts of violence such as these and call on governments to address the root causes of all violence: systemic racism, gender-based violence, hatred, crimes against humanity and other atrocities. We will continue to work with like-minded partners and with allies in multilateral fora. We call upon the Chinese government to address egregious human rights abuses in Xinjiang, and we will do that together, I hope, with one voice from Canada.

[*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 7:19 p.m.)

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