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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 26, 2021

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Provencher.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

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AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 8(2) of the Auditor General Act, two reports from the Auditor General of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), these reports are deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

JIM ST. CLAIR

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am speaking today in honour of Cape Breton historian and storyteller extraordinaire, Jim St. Clair, who passed away earlier this month.

For 30 years, we heard Jim's compelling stories of Cape Breton folklore and history across CBC Radio's *Information Morning* in Cape Breton.

Like many across my community, I loved listening to Jim on CBC, where his talent for storytelling taught us so much about our rich history in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia and the entire Atlantic region.

On behalf of Cape Breton—Canso constituents and members of the House, I offer my sincere condolences to his family and loved ones. I have no doubt that Jim's legacy will be a strong one in Cape

Breton. He will be missed greatly by all who knew him and, of course, his listeners.

It is my hope that we can carry forward Jim's passion for storytelling and use it as a tool to learn from the past to better help today.

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CLOVERDALE WILDFIRE

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, a Cloverdale wildfire devastated over 5,000 hectares, or less than 14,000 acres, of my riding and it took three days to contain.

Without the swift response of our fire departments and the bravery of our firefighters in the face of very dry and windy conditions, the damage could have been much worse. Their excellent work undoubtedly saved lives and homes.

On behalf of the people in the riding of Prince Albert, I would like to thank all the first responders to the Cloverdale fire, the volunteers and supporting agencies, which all worked together to support our community during this uncertain and frightening time.

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HEART OF ORLÉANS BIA

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, I had the pleasure of joining small business owners from the Heart of Orléans BIA to host a town hall and discuss the crucial measures our federal government was bringing in to spur growth.

During an engaging evening discussion, these local leaders shared their thoughts and enthusiasm for the future of Canada's small businesses as we look ahead to the end of the pandemic.

I was happy to discuss what the budget meant for Canada's main streets, how it would help them keep their employees on or hire new ones, and what digital adoption could do to help their businesses and Orléans continue to grow and thrive.

I would like to thank the Heart of Orléans BIA for its outstanding work as well as all the attending business owners for sharing their continuing strength as we approach the end of this crisis.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

FRANÇOIS GENDRON

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the 45th edition of the Salon du livre de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue kicked off yesterday. This year's event is 100% virtual.

For anyone wondering if the great François Gendron will be doing an interview next Saturday on the Salon du livre de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue's Facebook page, the answer is yes.

Mr. Gendron will be talking about his book, *42 ans de passion pour le Québec et ses régions*, written in collaboration with Samuel Laroche, a prolific young writer from my region.

Members may recall that François Gendron was elected in 1976 and re-elected 10 times. He sat as a sovereigntist MNA for 42 years, headed 11 ministries and held the prestigious titles of Deputy Premier of Quebec and Speaker of the National Assembly.

I would like to take advantage of my forum abroad to thank my mentor, François Gendron, for always speaking true, for being a straight talker and for being so passionate about this place and its people, known to this day as the “Gendronie”.

Thank you, François, for continuing to play such an active role in society.

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ÉMILIE GAGNÉ

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to Ms. Émilie Gagné.

During the pandemic, the Sainte-Colette school, in the riding of Bourassa, called on Ms. Gagné. Some of the five- and six-year-old children were showing certain signs: They squinted and held their paper up close to their eyes. These children had vision problems.

The school teaches students whose parents are asylum seekers who have not yet received their health cards. Ms. Gagné, who is a trained optician and whose two children go to Sainte-Colette school, gathered together professionals, volunteers and sponsors, and gave the children eye exams.

Over 20% of the students needed glasses. Ms. Gagné offered free glasses to 21 students to help them learn and succeed at school.

On behalf of the parents, the school, and on my own behalf, I congratulate Ms. Émilie Gagné for her extraordinary initiative.

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● (1410)

[English]

PETRONELLA PEACH

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the life of one of the most upbeat advocates I have ever known.

Petronella Peach, or Nel, as most knew her, immigrated from Holland. Nel was born during World War II and often spoke of her love of Canada and our role in liberating the Netherlands in 1945.

Throughout her lifetime, Nel took on many challenges with a positive attitude and a strong voice for all those facing similar challenges.

Nel was a breast cancer survivor and, as she put it, a person living with diabetes. For almost 40 years, Nel met diabetes head on and became one of Canada's strongest advocates for diabetics. Whether talking to people on the streets or participating in international Team Diabetes marathons, Nel continuously worked to raise the awareness of diabetes. Nel was a volunteer extraordinaire and will be remembered for how much she cared for people and for her community.

Our thoughts go out to Nel's husband, Gordon, and to her family and friends. Nel will be missed.

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METRO DRY CLEANERS

Hon. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to congratulate my constituent and a true community builder, Mrs. Lamia Dib, on the 50th anniversary of her outstanding local business, Metro Dry Cleaners.

In 1958, Lamia came from Lebanon to join her siblings in Canada. In 1962, she married Maurice Dib and, together, they saved every penny to purchase a dry cleaning machine. They worked very hard to establish themselves as leaders in the industry in Ottawa. Since Maurice's passing in 2001, Lamia and her family continue to provide exceptional service to a multitude of clients.

Metro Dry Cleaners has served three prime ministers, MPs, MPPs, our mayor and countless local residents looking for consistent high-quality work and always a friendly smile at the counter.

I congratulate Lamia and her family on 50 years of excellence.

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DAVE SOPHA

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this month, Cambridge has lost a great Canadian, Dave Sopha.

Dave was an incredible artist who memorialized the 158 Canadian Forces personnel who lost their lives in Afghanistan, through his iconic painting *Portraits of Honour*.

Dave was a community builder, teacher and a dedicated volunteer. He wanted to share his art and spread a message of love in commemoration for our troops, and he succeeded. His artwork took him all across Canada.

Dave was recently honoured with a Governor General Meritorious Service Medal. He received a Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation, the Kinsmen's Hal Rogers Fellow, the Rotary's Paul Harris Fellow and the Kiwanis Walter Zeller Fellow.

Dave has left a lasting impact on our community and Canadians across the country.

As chair of veterans affairs and as a friend, I thank Dave. We will miss him.

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JOHNSON SU-SING CHOW

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour a well-respected, world-renowned Chinese Canadian artist, Professor Johnson Su-sing Chow, who contributed significantly to the cultural fabric of Canada. He just passed away at the age of 98.

I have known Professor Chow for many years. In fact, his calligraphy of a Chinese classical piece on governance is still hanging in my office as a constant reminder of his kindness, talents and humbleness.

As the founder of the Chinese Canadian Artists Federation and a dedicated educator at UBC and overseas, he donated generously his artwork to many charities.

Professor Chow's passion in the classics, calligraphy and landscape won him many awards.

He once said, "Since I moved to Canada [in 1980]...I refuse to do anything else such as making a fortune. My aspiration for life is to promote the traditional Chinese art and culture to the world."

Our condolences to Frank, Jackie and the Chow family. Professor Chow will be greatly missed.

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[Translation]

MOISSON ESTRIE

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past long weekend was a very busy one for Sherbrooke and for Moisson Estrie, an organization that redistributes food and helps people experiencing financial vulnerability.

Once again this year, Dr. Sébastien Roulier ran as part of the "Avançons tous en cœur" fundraising campaign for Moisson Estrie. The course, in the shape of a four-hearted cloverleaf, had him running 420 kilometres over four days across the length and breadth of the Eastern Townships. I was there to see him off Friday morning, and he was on fire.

I want to congratulate the organization on the success of its non-perishable food drive. My team and I took part and distributed 100 bags that will be filled by generous donors.

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• (1415)

TOURISM WEEK

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week is Tourism Week.

It is a time to celebrate one of Canada's leading industries, tourism.

Statements by Members

[English]

Unfortunately, it is not to celebrate significant milestones like in the past, such as record-breaking visitor numbers or another new award. Instead, we celebrate the spirit this great industry has to survive and persist, despite the great challenges that the pandemic and the lackluster government response have placed upon it. Tourism was one of the first hit by the pandemic and will likely be the last to recover, but when it does, I know it will be better than ever, showcasing Canada's breathtaking sights and great attractions. Prior to the pandemic, it was one of the fastest-growing industries, making up 2% of Canada's GDP and one of every 11 jobs, and I know that post-recovery those numbers will only continue to grow.

As we mark Tourism Week, we all need to show our tangible support for the employees and small business owners who make up this important sector.

[Translation]

I wish everyone a happy Tourism Week.

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[English]

ANTI-SEMITISM

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, throughout history, Jews have experienced ongoing anti-Semitism with waves of pogroms, expulsions and genocide around the world. There are intergenerational sensibilities that this history carries. Canada, too, once added to their plight, when on the eve of World War II, 907 Jewish refugees aboard the MS *St. Louis* were refused entry into Canada. Later, 254 would face death and the atrocities of Nazi concentration camps.

Lately, our country has seen a spike of hate and intimidation against Jewish communities. There is no place in Canada for vandalism of synagogues, violence or threats against people just because of their race or religion. No one should have to live in fear because of their cultural identity. "Never again" means standing against anti-Semitism whenever it rears its ugly head, starting in our own backyard, right here in Canada.

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WOMEN VETERANS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Canada, women veterans who are unhoused are invisible. A report from Canada in 2015 noted that veteran women experience much higher rates of homelessness. Women who served our country deserve much better than this. One of the biggest gaps is the lack of investment in Canadian-specific research. The voices of these veterans must be heard, and the support should better reflect their needs. One woman veteran said she never thought she would be living in a van.

Oral Questions

We look at what is happening to the women in our military today. We look at the fact that this government still supports the gold-digger clause, sexist legislation from the early 1900s that was created to protect old male veterans from predatory young women who were marrying them for their pensions. Now, this results in spouses, largely women, who have married veterans over 60, living with them well over 20 years, not receiving a penny when their loved one passes.

Women who serve deserve better in Canada. Today, I acknowledge the silenced voices of our women veterans. The government must do better.

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[Translation]

CENTENNIAL OF THE TOWN OF DEUX-MONTAGNES

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to mark the centennial of Deux-Montagnes, a town in my riding. Formerly known as Saint-Eustache-sur-le-Lac, Deux-Montagnes was founded in August 1921.

The town gets its name from the two mountains that the *coureurs des bois*, the voyageurs and the first nations would see from the Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue portage. One of them is the Calvaire d'Oka hill and the other, its twin, is the Saint-Joseph-du-Lac hill.

Back in the day, I was the principal at the Polyvalente Deux-Montagnes and for 30 years I soaked in the dynamic and beautiful community spirit of that town.

Today, economic and residential development in Deux-Montagnes is exploding. Well located, welcoming and full of green space, this commuter town is ideal for families.

Happy centennial.

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[English]

JOHN GOMERY

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today and pay tribute to the late and lamented Justice John Gomery.

Known for his patience, Justice Gomery had served as a lawyer and judge for 50 years when his name rose to national prominence after his appointment as commissioner for the inquiry into the sponsorship scandal. The months-long inquiry looked into allegations of fraud related to Liberal-friendly advertising firms being paid millions of dollars for little to no work. In the face of constant attacks from the Liberal government and its supporters, Justice Gomery stood unwavering and resolved to seek the truth in the name of the public interest. His findings of clear political involvement, secrecy, subversion and insufficient oversight demonstrated that the government had betrayed Canadians' trust. Because of his commitment to truth and justice, Canadians now expect the bar of accountability and ethics in government to be held to a high standard.

On behalf of Conservatives, I wish to express my condolences to the family and to thank Justice Gomery for his unquestionable lega-

cy and protecting the public's confidence in their democratic institutions.

* * *

• (1420)

GAELIC NOVA SCOTIA MONTH

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to call Nova Scotia home.

[Member spoke in Gaelic]

[English]

The month of May is *Mios nan Gàidheal*, and to recognize it, I wanted to ensure that this historic chamber can hear the language once again, even if for only one minute.

Alba Nuadh is the only region outside of Scotland where Gaelic language and traditions are passed down within families and communities. Hard-working community members, dedicated volunteers, local institutions and our tradition-bearers continue to ensure that the language and the Gaels as a unique ethnic, cultural group continue to contribute to the life of our province.

At the time of Confederation, Gaelic was the largest non-official language spoken in the country, and there have been several MPs who have spoken fluent Gaelic in the House, including a relative of mine, MP Samuel McDonnell, whose father was raised in Kings—Hants.

To all those who are working hard to ensure that Gaels, their language and culture continue to contribute to Canadian society, I would like to say this:

[Member spoke in Gaelic]

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in order to work at the National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg, one needs a security clearance. In order to work with human pathogens like Ebola in that lab, one needs a higher level of security clearance.

Can the Prime Minister tell this House how a person with deep connections to the Chinese military obtained a high-level Canadian security clearance?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the two scientists in question are no longer employed by the Public Health Agency of Canada. We cannot disclose additional information or comment further for privacy reasons and confidentiality, but the National Microbiology Laboratory continues to play a critical role in protecting the health and safety of Canadians.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister cannot comment on his failure to keep our country safe. For years, Canada's security services have been warning the government and universities about the risks of research co-operation with communist China. The government needed to escort two scientists it had approved to work at our most senior lab in the country.

Will the Prime Minister today rise in this House and commit to ending all partnerships with China's Academy of Military Medical Sciences?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to supporting open, collaborative research, while also protecting our research, our national security and our economic interests. In March, we announced that we would be taking further steps to better integrate national security considerations into the evaluation of federally funded research projects, which builds on the work of our research security working group. This will protect Canadian knowledge and intellectual property and ensure that international research partnerships are always beneficial to Canada and Canadians.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's research security working group is not working. International experts have warned about China's developing capacity in bioweapons. They have also warned that any academic working in China is available to the state for military and defence purposes. This would include the scientists that his government approved to work at our high-security lab in Winnipeg.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to increasing security at the National Microbiology Lab, yes or no?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, espionage and foreign interference pose real threats to Canadian research security, intellectual property and business interests. This is a threat that our government has always taken seriously. In March, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry requested the development of specific rules that integrate national security considerations into research partnerships. Public Safety and CSIS are leading outreach to universities to help them keep research safe. Canadian universities and research organizations must remain vigilant to protect their IP, and we have not hesitated to support them.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is an "always takes our security seriously" from a Prime Minister who was caught in cash-for-access fundraisers with Chinese leaders in his first year as Prime Minister, a Prime Minister who reversed a decision to block a sale to O-Net Communications of a firm that had contracts with the Pentagon and our closest allies; a Prime Minister who refuses to take a stand on Huawei, the only Five Eyes country that has not acted, and how many days have the two Michaels been in prison?

Oral Questions

I will ask the Prime Minister again. After this serious breach of our security at the National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg, will he commit to ending all partnerships with the Chinese national military medical institute?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always taken this threat seriously. Public safety officials have met with more than 34 universities to help them keep their research safe. In 2020, CSIS engaged more than 225 different organizations, including universities, to ensure they were aware of foreign threats. The Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, in March, requested the development of specific guidelines that incorporate national security into the evaluation of any research partnerships.

[Translation]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's security services have been warning the government and universities about the risks of cooperating with communist China for years. This government only took the threat seriously when it had to escort two scientists out of our high-security lab.

Will the Prime Minister end the partnership with China's Academy of Military Medical Science, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, espionage and foreign interference pose real threats to the security of research. Our government has always taken this threat seriously.

In March, the minister requested the development of specific rules that integrate national security considerations into research partnerships. Public safety and CSIS are leading outreach to universities to help them protect their research. Canadian universities and research organizations must remain vigilant, and we will always be there to support them.

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that this morning, Quebecers and the Prime Minister saw the motion that the Bloc Québécois will be presenting shortly. The Prime Minister has surely seen that we have attempted to get a consensus and not present anything that was not legally and constitutionally sound or that could be controversial.

When the Bloc Québécois's motion is presented, can we expect a positive response from the Liberal Party to the affirmation of the French-speaking Quebec nation?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we look forward to seeing this motion in the House in an hour, but I remind the member for Beloeil—Chambly that the House declared in 2006: “That this House recognize that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada.”

That remains our position.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I deliberately made the motion public this morning, but I acknowledge the Liberal Prime Minister's references and the Conservative Party's actions.

As the Prime Minister has seen, the Bloc Québécois was very open and careful about the wording of its motion. It includes the words that were chosen and submitted to the Quebec National Assembly. It repeats the wording used in the Constitution of 1982 because there is a very broad consensus in Quebec, across party lines, with regard to the strong and legitimate affirmation of the Quebec nation, whose only official language is French and whose only common language is French.

Can Quebec really count on the voice of the Prime Minister?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers and all French-speaking Canadians can count on this government to protect their rights, their culture, the Quebec identity and the Canadian identity. We will always be there.

We will recognize the Quebec nation within a united Canada, as we have done before. We will always work to protect French across the country, including in Quebec, while ensuring respect for linguistic minorities, particularly Quebec's anglophone linguistic minority.

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are still in the midst of a pandemic. Many sectors are still shut down, and there are many workers who cannot go back to work. There are nearly two million Canadians who are relying on the CRB to put food on the table and to pay their bills. Despite this, the Prime Minister is cutting the help these families need by \$800 a month in July and August.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to reversing this decision to cut the help for families who are still in need of support?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of this pandemic, we have made a straight-forward promise to Canadians to have their backs, whatever it took, for as long as it took, and that will absolutely continue.

Our income supports have helped buffer the worst economic impacts and helped Canadians put food on the table. To get Canadians through the pandemic, budget 2021 proposes to extend the Canada recovery benefit up to 50 weeks and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit up to 42 weeks.

At the same time, we are helping Canadians get back into the labour market through the Canada recovery hiring program and by

creating almost 500,000 new job and training opportunities. We will have Canadians' backs as we recover this economy.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, cutting the help that people need by \$800 a month is not having their backs.

While we know that this pandemic has been difficult for people, it has not been hard on banks. Banks took public money from the government and then turned around and made billions of dollars in profits. Now, on top of that, they are increasing their service fees, in a pandemic. That is outrageous.

Even worse, the Prime Minister is letting the banks do that. The Prime Minister and the federal government have the power to limit the fees banks charge. They have the power to stop them. Why is the Prime Minister allowing banks to gouge Canadians in a pandemic?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while financial institutions make decisions on bank fees independently from the government, we have been clear in our discussions with these institutions that Canadians are going through a difficult time and that we must all have their backs.

Our government's top priority is supporting Canadians during this pandemic. That is why we put in place new income support programs, including the CERB and the recovery benefits, and expanded EI. We are focused on making life more affordable for Canadians and making sure that the wealthiest pay their fair share.

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everything this government does is shrouded in secrecy. The Prime Minister refuses to inform Canadians about allegations of sexual abuse in the military, about contracts signed with Liberal friends and, now, about a threat to national security.

The Prime Minister has given the Chinese military access to research information that includes deadly virus samples. The Prime Minister has created a very dangerous situation for Canada's national security. Can he tell us how many scientists with ties to the Chinese government are working in our Canadian laboratories?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for reasons of confidentiality and privacy, we cannot provide any further information or comments.

The National Microbiology Laboratory continues to play a critical role in protecting the health and safety of Canadians. We remain committed to supporting open and collaborative research, while protecting our research, national security and economic interests.

Oral Questions

In March, we announced that we would be taking further steps to better integrate national security considerations into the evaluation of federally funded research projects.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised an open and transparent government, but here is yet another example of how he never intended to keep that promise. Canadians need answers about this national security threat.

Two scientists with ties to the Chinese Communist regime shared top secret research information from the lab in Winnipeg with the Chinese People's Liberation Army. The two scientists were then fired. If the Prime Minister agrees with their dismissal, can he also admit that such sharing of information with the Chinese Communist regime is unacceptable?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always and will always take this threat seriously.

Public safety officials have met with more than 34 universities to help them keep their research safe. In 2020, CSIS engaged more than 225 different organizations, including universities, to ensure that they were aware of foreign threats.

I also want to mention that we are seeing a disturbing rise in anti-Asian racism. I hope that my Conservative Party colleagues are not raising fears about Asian Canadians.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the Liberals, the easiest defence is to label us as racist. However, we are talking about the Chinese Communist regime, which has nothing to do with the people of China.

We know that CSIS advised the National Microbiology Laboratory that something had to be done. However, we want to know whether there are still Chinese scientists working on behalf of the Chinese Communist regime in Canadian laboratories.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the international scientific community collaborates extensively with researchers from various countries and backgrounds. We have long known that diversity is our strength as a country, especially in scientific research.

We will always strive to do more to protect the integrity of our research institutions and their data. However, we will never play into the hands of intolerance towards people from other countries, simply because they look different. We will always stand up for diversity.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that he takes these threats seriously, but he is not giving serious answers. He should be able to say that scientists who are sponsored by the Chinese military and the Chinese government will not be allowed in these facilities.

Will the Prime Minister ditch the script and the woke talking points and answer yes or no? Will he bar scientists who are sent here from the Chinese government and the Chinese military from accessing sensitive Canadian research facilities?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past number of years we have taken significant steps to strengthen security around our sensitive institutions, particularly our universities and research facilities. We will continue to ensure the work that is done there is protecting Canada's interests and Canadians in general.

We will always ensure we are working with our security agencies to keep Canadians safe, and we will not give in to pandering to anti-Asian racism. We have seen enough of a rise in intolerance across the country these past months. We need to continue to stand strong in supporting diversity.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says he is working with our security agencies, but it was CSIS that called for the security clearances of these scientists to be revoked. This is not anything other than the government's failure to do its due diligence to protect Canadians from the real threat of viruses that could wipe out an entire population.

Will the Prime Minister tell Canadians why these scientists, who represent the highest risk to our national security, were given clearance to work in these labs? What is he covering up? Why is he protecting them now?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the two scientists in question are no longer employed by the Public Health Agency of Canada, and of course, we cannot disclose additional information nor comment further for privacy reasons and confidentiality.

We will continue to ensure that we are welcoming of the international scientific community in advancing the knowledge that will help us to understand not just this pandemic but also how to build a better future for everyone in Canada and around the world. At the same time, we are working with CSIS and our security agencies to keep Canadians safe, all while standing strongly against intolerance.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told us the Liberals were partnering with the universities. These are the same universities that are partnering with Huawei. The same Huawei all the other Five Eyes nations have banned, unlike the Prime Minister.

What is with the Prime Minister's admiration for the Chinese Communist Party, for its basic dictatorship, and for its interest in our intellectual property? What is the Prime Minister trying to hide? Is it his connections with the Chinese Communist Party that have him protecting these individuals again?

Oral Questions

• (1440)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to ensure that our institutions and our networks are kept safe and secure. An examination of 5G technologies and a review of the security and economic considerations are ongoing. We will carefully weigh these matters with our allies and partners.

We will make the best decisions for Canadians. We will move forward, and at the same time, stand against anti-Asian racism, stand up for diversity and stand against intolerance.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the cultural community and the media have been waiting for decades for Ottawa to reform the CRTC and compel web giants to co-operate. Quebec culture has waited long enough. Bill C-10 must be passed before the end of the session, here and in the Senate.

The leader of the Bloc Québécois offered the government its highest possible level of co-operation. The House leader of the Bloc Québécois offered the same kind of co-operation to his counterpart. The Bloc has held out its hand. Will the Prime Minister finally take that hand so we can pass Bill C-10?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased with the co-operation we have received from several parties to improve protection for our artists and cultural communities. We must, of course, hold debates in the House and we must also act to protect Canadian content and content creators in a world that is increasingly digital.

We gladly welcome and are grateful for the goodwill of the members of the House who want to work together to protect our artists and continue to ensure a strong cultural sector for our economy.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, those fine intentions are music to our ears. However, it seems that the Liberals do not understand the important role they have to play in advancing this work. They are the ones who decide which bills to prioritize on the calendar. They are also the ones who delayed the appearance of two ministers in committee.

In the meantime, the future of francophone arts and culture is at stake. The Bloc Québécois reached out to resolve the problem quickly. The cultural sector is watching us and wants an answer. When will the Prime Minister accept the Bloc Québécois's offer to help pass Bill C-10?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-10 seeks to level the playing field between Canadian creators and web giants. It forces powerful foreign broadcasters to provide information on their revenues, make financial contributions to Canadian stories and music and enable different audiences to discover our culture.

We will continue to work diligently and enthusiastically to protect the Canadian and Quebec cultural sector as we have done all along since coming to power in 2015.

[English]

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2018, the current Liberal Minister of Justice said, "Our government supports an open Internet where Canadians have the power to communicate freely and have access to the legal content of their choice." That seems like a good idea.

Sadly, Bill C-10 does the exact opposite. It actually takes choice away from Canadians by dictating the content they should and should not view online. It is sneaky. It is controlling, and it is wrong. Why is the Prime Minister insisting on regulating the Internet?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just as Canada's analysis confirms that Bill C-10 remains consistent with the charter's guarantee of freedom of expression, Bill C-10 aims to level the playing field between creators and web giants.

It requires big, powerful foreign streamers to provide information on their revenues in Canada, to financially contribute to Canadian stories and music, and to make it easier for individuals to discover our culture.

The bill explicitly says that obligations apply to web giants only: not to Canadian users. Web giants have gone unregulated for far too long. Our government has chosen action over reaction.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister insists on misleading the House and thereby the Canadian public.

In 2017, however, the Prime Minister was committed to defending the concept of net neutrality, which is the principle that Internet users should have equal access to all sites, all content and all applications without blocking or giving preference.

Now, he wants to put an Internet czar in place in order to promote some creators and demote others. It is wrong.

With Bill C-10, the Prime Minister is turning Canada into the most digitally regressive democracy in the world. Why?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2017, the Conservatives demonstrated they did not understand net neutrality, and they certainly do not understand it now.

Bill C-10 seeks to promote Canadian music, storytelling and creative works. It does not affect the work and activities of Internet service providers in Canada. It has no impact on Canada's commitment to net neutrality.

• (1445)

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Wow, Mr. Speaker, I thought the Prime Minister was going to mansplain net neutrality there for a moment, but it looks like he does not even understand the definition because he could not define it.

The Prime Minister tries to mislead Canadians by saying that Bill C-10 is against web giants and it is about promoting Canadian artists and content. Let us have some fun and do a little quiz.

Oral Questions

There is a movie called *Ultimate Gretzky*. It is about none other than Canada-born Wayne Gretzky, who is often described as the greatest hockey player ever. It was also filmed largely in Canada.

Could the Prime Minister tell us if this movie is Canadian enough to pass as Canadian content?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for many years, Canada has put in place measures to support and promote Canadian content and to create the kind of film and production industry that led to the creation of much of the great content the hon. member is talking about.

The fact is we made choices to highlight and privilege Canadian content over foreign content. That is exactly what we are going to continue to do, and give the CRTC the tools to do, in an increasingly digital world to make sure we continue to find, tell and share stories of great Canadians like Wayne Gretzky.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was embarrassing. There were a lot of um's and ah's and a few stumbles, yet the Prime Minister is not able to define Canadian content. He likes to talk about it a lot, though.

Let us talk a little more about Canadian creators, shall we? Brian Wyllie from Calgary is an expert gamer who has over a million followers on Twitch. Montrealer Kiana Gomes created a whole business using TikTok. Sadly, these self-made creators just are not Canadian enough to be considered artists by the Liberals. Bill C-10 would punish them, demote them and prevent them from being further successful.

Why is the Prime Minister hell-bent on punishing these ingenious creators?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, what we have demonstrated from the very beginning of our time in office in 2015 is that we are there to support Canadian content and Canadian creators right across the country, particularly after a Conservative government did nothing but attack culture and content creators, and limit the cultural industries in this country.

We will continue to stand up for producers and creators of great Canadian content right across the country. Bill C-10 is about giving the CRTC the tools to do just that in a world where people do not only get their Canadian content from CBC or CTV or on the radio.

We need to make sure we continue to support Canadian content. That is exactly what we are going to do. It is no surprise the Conservatives do not get it.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are still in the midst of a third wave of COVID-19, and things are pretty scary.

A surge in COVID-19 cases in Manitoba has overwhelmed the hospitals, and they are now sending patients to Ontario. We have learned that many of the cases come from workplace transmission, which is not a surprise: We have long known that workplace trans-

mission is a concern. That is why New Democrats fought to bring in paid sick leave. The problem is that it is not working.

Will the Prime Minister commit to fixing the federal paid sick leave program so we can save lives in Manitoba and across the country?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment at the beginning of the pandemic to have Canadians' backs, whatever it took, for as long as it took, and part of that was moving forward on sick leave. We brought in a federal sick leave program that people could apply to, particularly those who are gig workers, who are self-employed and who do not have access to sick leave through their employers as many jurisdictions do. We recognize that the best way to deliver sick leave is through employers: workers could call and say they could not go in because they might be coming down with COVID, and employers would be able to continue to give them their paycheques and support, but that has to happen through the provinces.

We did our part from the federal side. We need to make sure the provinces do their part as well.

* * *

[Translation]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the president of Laurentian University had several meetings with the Liberal government to discuss the university's difficult financial position. Although this situation was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Liberal government refused to help the university. Why did the Prime Minister refuse to save Laurentian University?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will always be there to defend Canadians, especially linguistic minorities, and that is what we will continue to do.

It is crucial that we have quality post-secondary institutions for francophones in Ontario. These institutions are vital to official language minority communities. We are carefully following developments in this matter, and we are ready to collaborate to ensure that francophones in northern Ontario have access to a quality post-secondary institution.

We recognize that this is a provincial jurisdiction. We will work in partnership with the Province of Ontario to ensure that francophones have quality services.

Oral Questions

• (1450)

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over a year ago, Canada was hit with the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. Canadians faced daunting challenges, our government supported us and we banded together. Sadly, some chose to sow fear for partisan gains. Contrary to claims by the Conservative health critic, we received our first COVID-19 vaccines in 2020, not 2030, and all will have access to vaccines by September 2021. Canadians need to remain positive and [*Technical difficulties—Editor*].

Can the Prime Minister list the rollout dates to dispel this fear-mongering?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. doctor colleague for Vancouver Centre is absolutely right. Our plan is working.

I would like to share some important dates to remember: on December 13, 2020, the first vaccines touched down at Pearson airport; on December 14, 2020, the first shot was administered; and, as of this weekend, May 22, more than 50% of Canadians had received their first doses. That number is going to keep going up fast because millions more doses are coming. It is clear that working together as one big team Canada is paying off.

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members that under the COVID conditions where we have people joining us virtually, we do not have the numbers to absorb the sound in the chamber, so when members shout to speak, it is like they are talking directly to a person. If they are going to heckle, maybe they could do it respectfully with a lower tone.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we were shocked yesterday to hear the Minister of Canadian Heritage say that Bill C-10 would not limit net neutrality in any way.

However, in Bill C-10, the Liberal government gives the CRTC more powers to regulate social networks, blogs, online gaming sites, apps and even audiobooks.

I have a very simple question for the Prime Minister. Does he believe that regulating these platforms is in keeping with the principle of net neutrality, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some time ago, the Conservatives demonstrated that they did not understand net neutrality, and they certainly do not understand it now.

Bill C-10 seeks to promote Canadian music, storytelling and creative works. It does not affect the work and activities of Internet service providers in Canada. It has no impact on Canada's commitment to net neutrality.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I invite the Prime Minister to open the dictionary and look up the definition of net neutrality. I think he will get a good idea of what it is.

His Minister of Justice stated on May 22, 2018, that the Liberal government supports net neutrality to ensure that all Canadians have the power to express themselves freely and access the legal content of their choice.

The government cannot say it supports net neutrality while introducing measures in a bill that restricts it. Is the Prime Minister on the side of his Minister of Justice, who is in favour of net neutrality, or on the side of his Minister of Canadian Heritage, who is undermining freedom of expression on the Internet?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a shame to see Conservatives attacking the Canadian cultural industry once again.

Justice Canada's analysis confirms that Bill C-10 remains consistent with the charter right to freedom of expression.

Bill C-10 aims to level the playing field between Canadian creators and web giants. It requires powerful foreign broadcasters to provide information on their revenues, to contribute financially to Canadian stories and music, and to enable different audiences to experience our culture. This is what we will always strive to do.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an internal memo given to the Minister of Canadian Heritage by senior officials clearly states that applications such as YouTube, TikTok, Amazon Prime, NHL.TV, MLB.TV, RDS Direct, Sportsnet Now, Google Play, Cineplex, PlayStation and many others would be subject to CRTC rules.

Can the Prime Minister tell us if he really thinks it is a good idea to regulate all these applications, yes or no?

• (1455)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite the Conservatives' attacks on Quebec and Canadian creators, we want to emphasize that an individual who posts on social media platforms will never be considered a broadcaster under Bill C-10.

The obligations that apply to the web giants will not apply to Canadian users. This protection is clearly set out in clause 2.1 of the bill.

Why do the Conservatives continue to hammer on this? It is simply because they do not support Canada's cultural industry.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Prime Minister, unfortunately, he did not read Bill C-10 and did not follow the committee's work. If he had, he would have seen that, by removing clause 4.1, the government was clearly attacking freedom of expression by legislating the Internet.

I read out a whole list of apps that did not come from Conservative offices but from an internal memo from senior officials that was personally given to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The Prime Minister needs to do his homework, look at the document, stop attacking the Internet and the freedom of expression of all Canadians, and stop leading people to believe that there are members in the House who are against culture.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers and all Canadians have seen what is happening in the House for a long time.

The fact that the Liberal Party, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP can rally today to support content creators in Canada says a lot about the position of the Conservatives, who are once again attacking Quebec culture, Canadian culture and the cultural industry, which sustains us, inspires us and creates so many jobs across the country.

We will continue to be there to support our cultural industry and our artists, despite the Conservatives, who never miss an opportunity to attack culture here in Canada.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, people are still angry about the Prime Minister's decision to increase old age pensions for seniors 75 and over.

Today, FADOQ, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons and the National Association of Federal Retirees have all three condemned the creation of two classes of seniors. FADOQ president Gis le Tass -Goodman said, "Financial insecurity does not discriminate based on age".

All seniors deserve a pension increase starting at 65. Will the Prime Minister fix this now that it is clear people will not stand for the creation of two classes of seniors?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always been there for seniors, and we will always be there for them.

We increased the guaranteed income supplement by 10% for the most vulnerable seniors. That was one of the first things we did when we took office in 2015.

Ever since, we have continued to be there to help the most vulnerable seniors and acknowledge the challenges they face.

We realize that those who are older have many more expenses, so we are going to increase by 10% the old age pension for seniors 75 and up.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, some people have been overlooked.

Everyone agrees that pensions need to be increased for all seniors aged 65 and above.

FADOQ, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons and the National Association of Federal Retirees are asking for this today. All the parties in the House are demanding it.

Oral Questions

Everyone agrees, except the Liberal Party. The Prime Minister is alone. He alone is insisting on creating two classes of seniors. The people who built Quebec and Canada deserve proper support.

When will the Prime Minister finally listen to reason, come around to everyone's way of thinking and increase pension payments for all seniors?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been there for seniors and we will continue to be there for them.

We understand that there are many seniors who are worried they may outlive their pension and their savings. People are living longer and longer, which is a good thing.

We recognize that starting at age 75, certain costs increase, and that is why increasing old age security for seniors aged 75 and over is a good thing.

We will also continue to invest to help seniors with housing and pharmacare, and we will offer supports and projects to provide for them throughout their golden years.

* * *

• (1500)

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a problem in this country when operatives who are part of the Communist China regime are allowed into our very sensitive labs here in Canada, specifically in Winnipeg. We have an even greater problem when our Prime Minister does not realize how dangerous that is.

Again, will the Prime Minister commit today to ending research co-operation with Chinese Communist military?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that the two scientists in question are no longer employed by the Public Health Agency of Canada. We cannot disclose additional information nor comment further for privacy reasons and confidentiality. We are committed to supporting open, collaborative research while also protecting our research, national security and economic interests.

In March, we announced that we would take further steps to better integrate national security considerations into the evaluation of federally funded research projects. We will continue to work with all of our intelligence agencies to keep Canadians safe.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, the problem is, and the Prime Minister maybe does not realize this, that Communist China cannot be trusted. I know that he admires their basic dictatorship, I know he liked to do fundraisers with them over the years, I know he thought they were the first go-to for vaccines, but at this point, we would hope that he would learn a lesson and put the safety, security and protection of Canadians above this fascination he has with the Communist regime.

Oral Questions

Again, will the Prime Minister commit to ending this research and this co-operation with the regime that not only does not have our interests in mind, but actually wants to hurt Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, from the beginning of my career onwards, I have worked with many Chinese Canadians and indeed had fundraisers with them. The rise in anti-Asian racism we have been seeing over the past number of months should be of concern to everyone. I would recommend that the members of the Conservative Party, in their zeal to make personal attacks, not start to push too far into intolerance towards Canadians of diverse origins.

We will continue to stand up to defend Canadian interests and Canadian security. We will continue to make sure that we are doing everything we can to keep Canadians safe while participating in the global research community, and stand up for tolerance and diversity.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I want to remind hon. members that if they are going to have discussions to please do it through the Chair and not directly across, which seems to be a basic rule in this chamber, although these days I kind of wonder myself whether the rules are being followed.

I am not sure who it was, they did not pop up and I am not sure how they did it, but there were some voices coming out over the speakers from outside, and that really does cause quite a few problems. I would remind all members who are joining us virtually to please not talk while someone is either asking a question or answering a question. It really does make it difficult for everyone, not only here in the chamber but at home, and there are a lot of people who are interested in hearing the questions and the answers.

The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

The Speaker: There are no points of order unless it is a technical issue.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, only because it is not the first time, but Mr. Genuis has in fact interrupted and it does—

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt the hon. member for Winnipeg North, as that is something he can bring up after question period.

We will start the clock over again. The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised that the Prime Minister just hurls insults of racism; it is his usual tactic.

I am not talking about Chinese Canadians. I am talking about a Communist regime that nobody in the world trusts except, it would appear, the Prime Minister of Canada. I again will ask him about the Communist regime and the military that supports that regime. Will he stop research co-operation with that military, seeing the danger it poses not only to Canada but to the world, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, espionage and foreign interference pose real threats to Canadian research security, intellectual property and business interests. This is a threat our government takes seriously.

In March, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry requested the development of specific rules that integrate national security considerations into research partnerships. Public Safety and CSIS are leading outreach to universities to help them keep research safe. Canadian universities and research organizations must remain vigilant to protect their intellectual property and we have not hesitated to support them. We will continue to.

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● (1505)

[*Translation*]

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is Tourism Week. Tourism is a sector of our economy that supports nearly two million jobs from coast to coast to coast.

Back home in Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, tourism supports countless fun activities typical of summer in the Maritimes. Magnetic Hill is a prime example.

However, over the past year, people had to stay home because of the pandemic, and the tourism industry was one of those hardest hit.

Could the Prime Minister tell the House how our government is supporting our tourism sector during the pandemic and beyond?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe for highlighting the importance of the tourism sector in Canada.

Tourism businesses shown tremendous resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have been there for them with more than \$15 billion in support. In budget 2021, we announced that we are investing an additional \$1 billion to help businesses get ready to welcome tourists as soon as it is safe to do so.

I thank the tourism businesses for doing everything in their power to keep Canadians safe.

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Major-General Dany Fortin, the general in charge of Canada's COVID-19 vaccine rollout, is under investigation and has been removed from his position. The Prime Minister and his defence minister say they knew about these serious allegations weeks before he was suspended.

Major-General Fortin served closely in Afghanistan alongside General Vance and the Minister of Defence. Did the Prime Minister leave Major-General Fortin in his position for weeks because he is another Afghanistan war buddy of the defence minister just like General Vance?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are committed to building a true culture of inclusion in our Canadian Armed Forces. We became aware of an ongoing CFNIS investigation involving Major-General Fortin. As it is an ongoing investigation, I am not able to comment further, but we remain focused on the vaccine rollout with millions more vaccines arriving every week.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. General Vance served alongside the defence minister in Afghanistan and the Prime Minister left him as chief of the defence staff for three years after the government was told of allegations of sexual misconduct. Major-General Fortin also worked closely with General Vance and the defence minister in Afghanistan and was left in charge of our vaccine rollout for weeks after the Prime Minister learned of the investigation into his misconduct.

However, Admiral Art McDonald who never served with the defence minister was shown the door within hours. Why is the Prime Minister helping the defence minister cover up sexual misconduct for his war buddies?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that our institutions are not living up to the needs of those who have experienced misconduct. That includes the military justice system. That is why we have taken concrete actions to address this. We named Lieutenant-General Jennie Carignan as the chief of professional conduct and culture. We named Morris Fish to conduct the third independent review of the entire military justice system. We also recently appointed Louise Arbour to conduct an independent review of the treatment of sexual misconduct.

These are just the first steps. We know there is much more to do and we will do it to ensure that every woman and man who serves in the Armed Forces is properly supported.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the claim by the Prime Minister that they take sexual misconduct in the forces seriously is a myth and that was destroyed by his deputy minister of national defence. Jody Thomas said that Justice Deschamps' report was treated as a mere checklist. The Prime Minister wrote in the defence minister's mandate letter to establish a workplace free from harassment, but we now know the Liberal government conspired to do nothing to implement Justice Deschamps' report.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister admit that he and the defence minister failed to protect the women and men in our Canadian Armed Forces from sexual misconduct?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that going back decades there has been a real challenge at the Canadian Armed Forces in terms of supporting people who come forward with allegations of misconduct, with unacceptable experiences and that is why we need to change the culture.

We have taken significant steps since we arrived in 2015 to improve the culture at the Canadian Armed Forces, but we recognize there is much more to do. We are committed to doing that. We are not going to point fingers or attack others for choices that they have made. We are going to make sure that the support is there for women and men who actually serve in the Armed Forces.

* * *

● (1510)

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, our government has been a champion for students and young Canadians. When the pandemic struck, we were there to make sure they had the supports they needed.

As we move toward a strong economic recovery from this pandemic, it is important we make sure young Canadians and students have the supports they need to continue going to school and starting their careers.

Despite the fact that the Conservatives find this funny, I would ask the Prime Minister to please inform the House about our government's efforts to support students and young Canadians through budget 2021.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kingston and the Islands for his hard work here in this House.

Young Canadians are Canada's future and they are at the centre of our recovery efforts. To date, we have invested more than \$7.4 billion in pandemic supports to young Canadians and students. Budget 2021 builds on this investment with an additional \$5.7 billion so that young Canadians and students can keep up their studies, pay for tuition and find jobs.

I am proud that this is one of the largest youth support packages in the world. We will continue to be there for young Canadians.

Points of Order

[Translation]

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are learning that there are alarming cases of racism in the public service.

Black public servants are being exposed to harassment and verbal abuse in their workplace. The complaints are ignored, or the employer spends thousands to buy the silence of those involved in these cases of racism. Racism does not have a price. It must be eliminated.

What will the Prime Minister do to fight systemic racism in the public service?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognized system racism in this country from the outset.

We worked hand in hand with the Black community and with diverse and marginalized communities. We also worked within the public service to improve hiring and retention practices for racialized Canadians.

We will always be there to promote diversity within the public service, but we recognize that there is still a lot more work to be done. We will be there to work hand in hand with our public service professionals to include everyone.

The Speaker: That is all the time we have for oral questions today.

There is a point of order. I will recognize the hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly and then the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That the House agree that section 45 of the Constitution Act, 1982, grants Quebec and the provinces exclusive jurisdiction to amend their respective constitutions; and acknowledge the will of Quebec to enshrine in its constitution that Quebecers form a nation, that French is the only official language of Quebec and that it is also the common language of the Quebec nation.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: There is not unanimous consent.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order rising out of question period. I know we tried to address this issue during question period, but we continue to have members who are participating virtually interjecting into the debate and making comments, which is making it extremely difficult for members who are participating virtually to par-

ticipate. I know that on at least one occasion it was the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. He has routinely been called out by you or the Chair occupant at the time to discontinue this practice.

I would encourage you to ensure, by whatever means you have possible, Mr. Speaker, that those who are participating virtually have the ability to do so unimpeded by members who are participating in this manner.

• (1515)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you will indulge me, I will just briefly address the same point, because it is important for members to hear what is at stake in this conversation. Canadians of Asian origin are speaking out about the impact of—

An hon. member: This is not a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. members: Debate.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I note that I am being heckled—

The Speaker: Order please. I am going to interrupt. It sounds like it is getting into debate, so I am going to leave it there. However, on that note as well, when someone speaks, the Chair usually determines whether it is debate or a point of order. I appreciate the help, but I would like a few seconds to determine what the member is about to say or is saying so we can determine whether it is debate.

While I do appreciate the people shouting out and trying to help, it just makes it very disorderly, which leads us to the point of order from the member for Kingston and the Islands, where, if we are here and someone does interject, it does make it difficult for everyone. This is about respect for each other in the chamber, and that is what I am asking.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I remind the House that the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is the one who brought up the participation of the member from Alberta who spoke earlier. I apologize, but I cannot remember his riding name.

If he was called out by the government member, it is perfectly normal and appropriate for him to get a chance to explain himself. That is why I think he should have the floor.

I want to point out that members on the government side are enthusiastic advocates of virtual participation, so they certainly know what they are talking about.

Points of Order

[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, on the same point of order, over the last number of months, I, as have many of my colleagues, tune in virtually and understand what our obligations are. If we want to get the attention of the Chair, we put our hand up and then we wait until we are recognized.

On several occasions during question period, members, and in this case it was the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, intentionally undo the mute button to interject. It is one thing to do it by accident, but it is the same member on several occasions, and there needs to be a consequence—

The Speaker: I am going to have to interrupt, because it sounds like we are getting into debate again. The point of order is not interjecting in the chamber. We will deal with that one a little at a time.

Again, I want to remind all members that it is on the individual member's honour that we are in here following the rules. I want to encourage everyone to follow those rules so we can run smoothly.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems as though, in raising the point, which has been raised before by the member opposite and by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, that it is in effect itself an attempt at a commentary or debate or to name and shame particular members, in this case the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

However, while that member was responding to that point, the member for Milton and the member for Winnipeg North also took their microphones off mute in the same way that the member for Kingston and the Islands said was inappropriate, and the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader and the member for Kingston and the Islands were seeking for the Chair to sanction the member for doing just that.

I defer always to the judgment of the chair occupant. Perhaps, if there is to be a ruling in the opinion of the Chair, we just ask members to appeal to their honour and the regular traditions and customs of this place and not look to tattletale every time they hear a member engage in what has been a traditional practice in this place for many years.

• (1520)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the intent of my rising to indicate this point of order was because of the fact that the particular member has done it repeatedly on a number of occasions. He routinely does this where he interjects. It is not affecting the ability for those in the House to listen to the debate; it is affecting those who are online, because suddenly the entire feed and sound is eliminated and they are unable to hear anything.

The point is that those who are doing this are doing it repeatedly, and I would encourage you, Mr. Speaker, to somehow enforce some kind of rule that would prevent this from continuing to happen.

The Speaker: We have two more people rising on points of order, and then we will get on with the business of the day.

The hon. member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation): Mr. Speaker, in connection with that same point of order, I would like to note that the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan keeps turning his microphone on and off to interject deliberately and repeatedly.

Interjecting once and being called to order is not the same as repeatedly failing to listen to the Speaker of the House. On this point of order, I would ask that you watch the videos and see how many times the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has deliberately raised a point of order in the House.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I was, with all due respect, interrupted when I was initially trying to make some comments on this matter. Many members have now intervened with various aspersions about me, and I have been very interested in setting the record straight about some matters of the context. I will be in your hands as to whether I can share that context.

As I was saying before, Canadians of Asian origin are speaking about the impact on their lives of foreign state-backed interference, and this is part of the racism being faced by Asian Canadians. It is the pressure from foreign governments, in particular the Government of China, to deny them of the freedom—

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt the hon. member there. Normally when we get up on a point of order—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Can I have the attention of the chamber, please.

Normally when we get up on a point of order, it is because the process was broken. If we are not staying within those parameters, it becomes debate.

I will ask the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan to go on, but remember that it sounds like he is debating something, and I would like to know the point of order and what was disrespected.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will try to jump to it, simply in this sense. Fighting racism, which is something I know we all should wish to do, requires us to understand that Canadians are individuals, not extensions of foreign governments, and it is always important to make a distinction.

That is why what the Prime Minister said in question period today was itself deeply racist, because he was failing to make the necessary distinction—

Mr. Bryan May: With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, this is not a point of order.

The Speaker: I am sorry, but I am going to have to interrupt. This is becoming a debate; it is not about the process itself. I am going to have to cut the hon. member off.

Private Members' Business

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

ÉMILIE SANSAÇON ACT

The House resumed from May 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-265, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (illness, injury or quarantine), be read the second time and passed.

The Speaker: It being 3:25 p.m., pursuant to order made on Monday, 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-265 under Private Members' Business.

Call in the members.

• (1535)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 120)

YEAS

Members

Aboulaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Angus
Arnold	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benzen
Bergen	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blaikie
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boudrias
Boulerice	Bragdon
Brassard	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Carrie	Chabot
Champoux	Charbonneau
Chiu	Chong
Cooper	Cumming
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Duvall	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Findlay	Fortin
Gallant	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Gray	Green
Hallan	Harder
Harris	Hoback
Hughes	Jansen
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram

Kurek	Kusie
Kwan	Lake
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Manly	Marcel
Martel	Masse
Mathysen	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLean
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McPherson
Melillo	Michaud
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Nater	Normandin
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perron	Plamondon
Poilievre	Qaqqaq
Ratansi	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Rood	Ruff
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shin
Shiple	Simard
Singh	Sloan
Soroka	Stanton
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Thériault
Therrien	Tochor
Trudel	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Viersen
Vignola	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williamson	Wilson-Raybould
Wong	Zann
Zimmer— 181	

NAYS

Members

Amos
Anandasangaree
Arya
Bagnell
Baker
Beech
Bennett
Bibeau
Blair
Bratina
Carr
Chagger
Chen
Dabrusin
Dhaliwal
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Fillmore
Fisher

Private Members' Business

Fonseca
 Fragiskatos
 Freeland
 Garneau
 Gould
 Hajdu
 Holland
 Hussien
 Iacono
 Jaczek
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Khalid
 Koutrakis
 Lalonde
 Lametti
 Lattanzio
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Long
 Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Martinez Ferrada
 McCrimmon
 McKay
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendès
 Miller
 Morrissey
 Ng
 Oliphant
 Petitpas Taylor
 Qualtrough
 Robillard
 Rogers
 Sahota (Brampton North)
 Sajjan
 Samson
 Sarai
 Schiefke
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Brampton East)
 Simms
 Spengemann
 Trudeau
 Van Bynen
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Weiler
 Yip
 Zahid

Fortier
 Fraser
 Fry
 Gerretsen
 Guilbeault
 Hardie
 Housefather
 Hutchings
 Ilen
 Joly
 Jordan
 Kelloway
 Khera
 Kusmierczyk
 Lambropoulos
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon
 Lebouthillier
 Lightbound
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 Maloney
 May (Cambridge)
 McGuinty
 McKenna
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Monsef
 Murray
 O'Connell
 O'Regan
 Powlowski
 Regan
 Rodriguez
 Romanado
 Saini
 Saks
 Sangha
 Scarpaleggia
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Sorbara
 Tassi
 Turnbull
 van Koevorden
 Vandenberg
 Virani
 Wilkinson
 Young
 Zuberi — 150

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

● (1540)

SUPPORT OF OIL AND GAS SECTOR

The House resumed from May 13 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded

division on Motion No. 61 under Private Members' Business in the name of the member for Edmonton Manning.

● (1550)

[English]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 121)

YEAS

Members

Aboutaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Calkins
Carrie	Chiu
Chong	Cooper
Cumming	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Deltell	d'Entremont
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeschen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Harder	Hoback
Jansen	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Maguire	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLean
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Melillo
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Nater	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Poilievre	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Rood	Ruff
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shin	ShIPLEY
Sloan	Soroka
Stanton	Steinley
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tochor
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williamson	Wong

Private Members' Business

Zimmer— 119

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Bains
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bergeron
Bessette
Bittle
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Cannings
Casey
Chagger
Champoux
Chen
Dabrusin
Davies
Desbiens
Dhaliwal
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Garneau
Gaudreau
Gerretsen
Gould
Guilbeault
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Ien
Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Larouche
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lemire
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacGregor
Maloney
Marcil
Masse
May (Cambridge)

Amos
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bagnell
Baker
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bérubé
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blanchet
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boudrias
Bratina
Brunelle-Duceppe
Carr
Chabot
Champagne
Charbonneau
Cormier
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Fry
Garrison
Gazan
Gill
Green
Hajdu
Harris
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Jaczek
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Manly
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saainich—Gulf Islands)

McCrimmon
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Ng
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Qaqqaq
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota (Brampton North)
Sajjan
Samson
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Thériault
Trudeau
Turnbull
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Vignola
Weiler
Wilson-Raybould
Young
Zann

McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès
Michaud
Monsef
Murray
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
Petipas Taylor
Powlowski
Qualtrough
Regan
Rodriguez
Romanado
Saini
Saks
Sangha
Savard-Tremblay
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Spengemann
Tassi
Therrien
Trudel
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vaughan
Virani
Wilkinson
Yip
Zahid
Zuberi— 212

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

STANDING ORDERS OF THE HOUSE

The House resumed from May 25 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 38.

● (1605)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 122)***YEAS**

Members

Aboultatif
Albas
Alleslev
Amos
Anandasangaree
Arnold
Arya
Atwin
Badawey

Aitchison
Alghabra
Allison
Anand
Angus
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bagnell

Private Members' Business

Bains	Baker	Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Baldinelli	Barlow	Lake	Lalonde
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval	Lambropoulos	Lametti
Battiste	Beaulieu	Lamoureux	Larouche
Beech	Bendayan	Lattanzio	Lauzon
Bennett	Benzen	Lawrence	LeBlanc
Bergen	Bergeron	Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Berthold	Bérubé	Lehoux	Lemire
Bessette	Bezan	Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Bibeau	Bittle	Lightbound	Lloyd
Blair	Blanchet	Lobb	Long
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block	Lukiwski	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Blois	Boudrias	MacGregor	MacKenzie
Boulerice	Bragdon	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Brassard	Bratina	Maloney	Manly
Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe	Marcil	Martel
Calkins	Cannings	Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Carr	Carrie	Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
Casey	Chabot	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
Chagger	Champagne	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
Champoux	Charbonneau	McCrimmon	McGuinty
Chen	Chiu	McKay	McKenna
Chong	Cooper	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
Cormier	Cumming	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Dabrusin	Dalton	McPherson	Melillo
Damoff	Dancho	Mendès	Mendicino
Davidson	Davies	Michaud	Miller
DeBellefeuille	Deltell	Monsef	Moore
d'Entremont	Desbiens	Morantz	Morrison
Desilets	Dhaliwal	Morrissey	Motz
Dhillon	Diotte	Murray	Nater
Doherty	Dong	Ng	Normandin
Dowdall	Dreeshen	O'Connell	Oliphant
Drouin	Dubourg	O'Regan	O'Toole
Duclos	Duguid	Patzner	Paul-Hus
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Pauzé	Perron
Duval	Dzerowicz	Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Easter	Ehsassi	Poilievre	Powlowski
El-Khoury	Ellis	Qaqqaq	Qualtrough
Epp	Erskine-Smith	Ratansi	Rayes
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Redekopp	Regan
Fast	Fergus	Reid	Rempel Garner
Fillmore	Findlay	Richards	Robillard
Finnigan	Fisher	Rodriguez	Rogers
Fonseca	Fortier	Romanado	Rood
Fortin	Fragiskatos	Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Fraser	Freeland	Sahota (Brampton North)	Saini
Fry	Gallant	Sajjan	Saks
Garneau	Garrison	Samson	Sangha
Gaudreau	Gazan	Sarai	Saroya
Généreux	Genus	Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Gerretsen	Gill	Scheer	Schiefke
Glada	Godin	Schmale	Schulte
Gould	Gourde	Seeback	Serré
Gray	Green	Sgro	Shanahan
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Sheehan	Shields
Hallan	Harder	Shin	Shipley
Hardie	Harris	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Hoback	Holland	Simard	Simms
Housefather	Hughes	Singh	Sloan
Hussen	Hutchings	Sorbara	Soroka
Iacono	Ien	Spengemann	Stanton
Jaczek	Jansen	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Jeneroux	Johns	Strahl	Stubbs
Joly	Jones	Sweet	Tabbara
Jordan	Jowhari	Tassi	Thériault
Julian	Kelloway	Therrien	Tochor
Kelly	Kent	Trudeau	Trudel
Khalid	Khera	Turnbull	Uppal
Kitchen	Kmiec	Van Bynen	van Koevorden
Koutrakis	Kram	Van Popta	Vandal
Kurek	Kusie	Vandenbeld	Vaughan

Routine Proceedings

Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vignola
Virani	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Weiler	Wilkinson
Williamson	Wilson-Raybould
Wong	Yip
Young	Zahid
Zann	Zimmer
Zuberi — 331	

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to six petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled "Indigenous Housing: The Direction Home".

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

As something that I think we should do on a more regular basis, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the support team that the parliamentarians had in the development of this report, particularly the committee clerks, Danielle Widmer and Andrew Wilson, and the analysts from the Library of Parliament who did such excellent work, Brittany Collier and Elizabeth Cahill.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to echo the thanks given by my colleague for Charlottetown.

The Conservative Party of Canada supports the desire of urban, remote and northern indigenous peoples for autonomy over their housing needs in line with the "for indigenous, by indigenous" principle. The fundamental nature of this principle, however, is that indigenous people decide for themselves how their housing needs

are addressed. While this report contains helpful information and shares the realities faced by many, the recommendations at times were overly prescriptive and wordy. That said, it was a good process, and I would like to thank all of my parliamentary colleagues for their participation in this report.

[Translation]

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations, pursuant to the motion adopted on Monday, May 10, regarding a recommendation that the House order the production of documents from the Public Health Agency of Canada and any subsidiary organizations respecting the transfer of viruses and two former employees.

• (1610)

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, entitled "A Study on the Implementation of the Pay Equity Act".

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

As well, the committee is calling on the government to really accelerate the pace at which we are implementing these fixes on pay equity. Since 2015, when I was first elected, we have studied it and we are still waiting, so we urge the government to hasten the implementation.

* * *

FISHERIES ACT

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-297, An Act to amend the Fisheries Act (selective fishing programs).

He said: Madam Speaker, it is an honour to introduce my private member's bill, the selective fisheries bill, which would provide more opportunities for public selective fisheries in my riding of Chilliwack—Hope and across the country.

Vulnerable salmon stocks need to be protected and conservation is the number one priority, but it is possible to protect certain species of salmon with low numbers and allow public selective fisheries for plentiful species at the same time.

My bill, through an amendment to the Fisheries Act, gives the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard the power to do just that. The bill also allows the minister to increase the number of hatchery-raised salmon that have their adipose fins clipped, which would allow them to be easily identified and retained as hatchery fish during public fishery openings.

I am asking all members of Parliament to support my bill and support responsible selective fishing opportunities in Canada.

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

SCHOOL FOOD SECURITY

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-298, An Act to develop a national strategy on school food security.

She said: Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the House to present my private member's bill, an act to develop a national strategy on school food security, seconded by the member for Kingston and the Islands.

[*Translation*]

The bill provides for the development of a national strategy on school food security so that all elementary and secondary school students in Canada have access to proper nutrition.

[*English*]

As many members in the House and many of my constituents know, I was a high school teacher before entering politics. During that time, I saw far too many students coming to school without a lunch or without lunch money. I have wanted to do something about this for many years.

This strategy would allow our government to study the impact that nutritional deficiencies have on the health and learning outcomes of elementary and high school students, and to work with provinces to fund food security programs that would result from a national school food security strategy to ensure that they operate at little to no direct cost to students and their families.

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

* * *

• (1615)

PETITIONS

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am happy to table four petitions in the House today. Hopefully, I will be able to get through them without being interrupted by heckling from the member for Cambridge or the member for Kingston and the Islands, who have a habit of doing that from time to time.

The first petition is with respect to Bill C-6. Bill C-6 is the government's conversion therapy legislation that is currently before the House. Petitioners support the objective of the bill, which is to ban conversion therapy. However, they note that the bill poorly defines the practice of conversion therapy. The definition, as written, is so broad that it could apply to many conversations that simply have nothing to do with conversion therapy.

Petitioners want to see the government support reasonable amendments to Bill C-6 and then work hard to pass a bill that would ban conversion therapy with an effective definition that isolates that particular horrific practice.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition I am tabling is about Bill S-204, a bill that has now passed the Senate and is currently before the House.

Routine Proceedings

It is a bill that would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ in a case where there had not been consent. It also creates a mechanism by which a person could be made inadmissible to Canada if they were involved in forced organ harvesting and trafficking. This bill has now passed the Senate unanimously twice. It passed in the House once before unanimously, in the same form, in the previous Parliament.

Petitioners are hoping Bill S-204, which is the same as Bill S-240 from the previous Parliament, will be passed in this Parliament with the support of all members.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the third petition highlights the ongoing genocide of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China. It calls on the Government of Canada to recognize that genocide and take appropriate steps and responses, including reforming supply chain legislation and imposing Magnitsky sanctions on those involved in these horrific actions.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the fourth and final petition highlights the human rights situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. I have been hearing from petitioners and many groups who are very concerned about the human rights situation in various parts of Ethiopia, but especially in the Tigray region.

The petitioners are calling for greater involvement and engagement by the Government of Canada, including pushing for an end to violence, protection of civilians, humanitarian access, effective international independent investigations of war crimes and gross violations of human rights, and election monitoring.

Petitioners, in particular, note the need for engagement with the Ethiopian, as well as the Eritrean, governments because the Eritrean army has had a presence in Tigray.

I commend all these petitions to the consideration of members.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to table this petition initiated by constituents in Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

The petitioners are deeply concerned about protecting British Columbia's endangered old-growth forests from logging. Recently, threatened screech owls on the species at risk list were discovered in these forests, but it is clear the B.C. NDP government does not give a hoot.

Routine Proceedings

Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the government to work with the province and first nations to immediately halt logging of endangered old-growth ecosystems, fund the long-term protection of old-growth ecosystems as a priority for Canada's climate action plan and reconciliation with indigenous peoples, support value-added forestry initiatives, in partnership with first nations, to ensure Canada's forestry industry is sustainable and based on the harvesting of second-growth forests, ban the export of raw logs and maximize resource use for local jobs, and ban the use of whole trees for wood pellet biofuel production.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to table this petition, which states old-growth forests provide immeasurable benefits including carbon sequestration, biodiversity, culture, recreation, education, food and more. The last unprotected, intact old-growth valley on southern Vancouver Island, Fairy Creek, is slated for logging, along with the upper Walbran Valley and other remaining packets of old growth.

The undersigned citizens and residents of Canada call upon the Government of Canada to work with the provinces and first nations to immediately halt logging of endangered old-growth ecosystems, fund the long-term protection of old-growth ecosystems as a priority for Canada's climate action plan and reconciliation with indigenous peoples, support value-added forestry initiatives, in partnership with first nations, to ensure Canada's forestry industry is sustainable and based on the harvesting of second- and third-growth forests, ban the export of raw logs and maximize resource use for local jobs, and ban the use of whole trees for wood pellet biofuel production.

• (1620)

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have the honour of presenting e-petition 3296. As members may know, it was recently revealed that several hate groups, anti-LGBT groups and at least 45 anti-choice groups received Canada emergency wage subsidy funding. Previously, the government has stated that public funds of the government should not be directed to organizations that support discrimination or groups that are anti-choice.

The petitioners are asking that the Government of Canada change the criteria for future subsidies to exclude anti-choice and hate groups, and revoke previously given funds to those anti-choice groups and hate groups.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by hundreds of Canadians calling on the House of Commons to grant full legal protection to the youngest Canadians: preborn children.

The petitioners note that Parliament's most basic duty is to protect innocent human life, yet Canada lacks laws to protect the human rights of all Canadians, regardless of their stage of development. The petitioners highlight that scientific evidence puts it beyond doubt that each new human life has an identifiable biological beginning. They are asking parliamentarians to recognize this fact and move to grant legal protections to our youngest Canadians.

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.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 589, 591, 593 and 595.

[Text]

Question No. 589—**Ms. Rachel Blaney:**

With regard to the survey that examines the income and characteristics of survivors of veterans married after the age of 60, currently being conducted by Veterans Affairs Canada in collaboration with Statistics Canada, as detailed in the government's response to Q-84 on September 30, 2020: (a) on what date did the survey start; (b) what is the total number of veterans that are expected to be surveyed; (c) how many veterans have been surveyed to date; (d) what are the questions on the survey; (e) who is responsible for providing the list of names of potential survey participants; (f) what method is used to select the veterans who participate in the survey; and (g) what is the expected date when the survey will be finished?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a data integration project based on records retrieved from administrative data. The population of interest for this project is living survivors who married or entered a common-law relationship with a veteran on or after the veteran's 60th birthday. The objective of the study is to estimate the size of the population of interest and provide its socio-economic portrait.

In response to (a), the project was initiated in October 2019.

In response to (b), the total number of veterans who receive a pension from the Canadian Armed Forces was included in the analysis, approximately 150,000.

In response to (c), the target reaches all veterans who receive a pension from the Canadian Armed Forces. The records were retrieved from administrative data.

In response to (d), there are no survey questions as this analysis was based on administrative records, which provide information on both Canadian Armed Forces employment history and veteran pension. The economic outcomes are retrieved for the total of the estimated population.

Routine Proceedings

In response to (e), the target population of the study was found through administrative records provided by the Department of National Defence and Public Services and Procurement Canada. Data presented in these administrative records will strictly adhere to Statistics Canada privacy and confidentiality guidelines as prescribed under the Statistics Act. Outputs from the study remain subject to the confidentiality provisions of the Statistics Act. Disclosure control rules will be applied in order to safeguard the privacy of individual Canadians' personal information.

In response to (f), the method used to estimate the population at study is based on two criteria: whether the married or common-law spouse of the veteran was still living and whether they entered a union with the veteran on or after the veteran's 60th birthday. The eligibility was determined on administrative record information.

In response to (g), the initial analysis was provided to Veterans Affairs Canada in January 2021. The results of the study are expected to be available in the first quarter of 2022.

Question No. 591—Mr. Kenny Chiu:

With regard to the decision of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to ban the flash freezing or tubbing of prawns at sea: (a) prior to this decision, for how long has the practice of flash freezing or tubbing of prawns at sea been allowed; (b) on what date was this decision made; (c) who in the DFO made the decision; (d) on what date was the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard informed of this decision; (e) what are the details, including findings of any scientific research that led to this decision; (f) did the DFO conduct an economic impact assessment or engage in consultations before making this decision, and, (i) if so, what were the findings, (ii) if not, why not; (g) when will this decision come into effect; (h) what are the specific details regarding the current consultation and advisory period related to this decision, including timelines and targets for industry consultation; and (i) what is the government's response to concerns that this decision will lead to a higher percentage of British Columbia spot prawns being exported as opposed to consumed domestically, as well as higher expenses for fishermen and higher prices for Canadian consumers?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Fisheries and Oceans Canada understands how important the Pacific prawn fishery is to British Columbia's economy and culture. That is why we are making sure that tubbing can continue and harvesters will be able to sell their catch to Canadians to enjoy. This season, we have confirmed our support for an interim protocol that was developed by the industry, which will help prawn harvesters ensure that their catch continues to be sustainable and will be available for sale. We will continue to take a cautious approach to fisheries management, one that prioritizes the conservation and sustainability of the stocks while also supporting this important industry.

In response to (a), the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, DFO, has not banned the flash-freezing or tubbing of prawns at sea. The practice of flash-freezing prawns whole and individually finger-packed at sea has occurred since the 1990s and remains the predominant product type since the mid-1990s. Tubbing prawn tails at sea in frozen sea water has occurred for a number of years but has not been prevalent, and has grown in recent years. The industry estimates that about 10% of the total prawn catch is tubbed. Prawns are also delivered live.

In response to (b), the requirement to pack prawns in a way such that the size can readily be determined is not a new or recent decision, nor has DFO recently changed its interpretation of the regulations. Any person who catches a fish while commercial fishing

must have it packaged in a way that allows for the species, number, weight, and size to be readily determined. This regulation has been in place since 1993 and is essential for DFO to verify harvesters' catches and properly manage fisheries, particularly in situations where size restrictions apply.

DFO has been actively working with the commercial prawn industry on market traceability for packaging and labelling of prawns frozen at sea. Among the objectives of this project is to limit access to markets for illegal products, and for packaging to be done in a manner that will meet all existing federal and provincial regulations. Over the course of this work, DFO identified our concerns about packaging spot prawn tails in frozen sea water, also known as "tubbing", in late January 2021.

DFO's concerns with onboard packaging of prawn tails in tubs of frozen sea water are that this packaging does not enable the determination of the size of prawn tails in the tub, which is a requirement outlined in subsection 36(2) of the fishery general regulations, 1993. Size limits are an important component in managing conservation and the sustainability of the spot prawn. It is important that all packaging at sea allows for size limits to be readily determined by a fishery officer.

In response to (c), over the course of the market traceability work, DFO Pacific region fisheries management and conservation and protection staff identified DFO's concerns to industry representatives about packaging spot prawn tails in frozen sea water.

In response to (d), as described in earlier responses, there was no decision made to ban freezing or tubbing of prawns at sea. The minister and her office were made aware of industry concerns about the prospect that tubbing may not meet regulatory requirements through industry outreach to her office and briefings from DFO officials in early March.

In response to (e), size limits were first introduced in 1988 based on scientific research published in 1985. Size limits are an important component in managing the sustainability of the prawn fishery and are based also on recommendations from industry. A size limit allows prawns to grow, reach sexual maturity, and mate prior to being harvested. It also allows for increased growth prior to harvest. Harvesting prawns at a larger size increases the weight and value, price paid per pound, improving economic return.

In response to (f), an analysis was conducted in 1985 estimating the increased dollar value and price to harvest prawns at a larger age and size. Size limits are an important component in managing the sustainability of the prawn fishery and are based also on recommendations from industry.

Routine Proceedings

In response to (g), as described in earlier responses, there was no decision made to ban freezing or tubbing of prawns at sea. As a result of DFO's collaboration with industry, the Pacific Prawn Fishermen's Association, which represents commercial prawn fishery licence-holders, has developed a protocol that provides guidance to harvesters on steps they can take this year to help them comply with the regulations that require them to keep their catch readily available for inspection by fishery officers, including catch frozen in tubs. DFO supports its use as an interim approach for 2021. The commercial fishery is scheduled to open May 14, 2021 and usually closes by end of June. DFO will continue to engage with industry over the coming year to determine a longer-term solution.

In response to (h), DFO officials have been meeting with commercial prawn fishery representatives on this issue over the past several months. DFO recently convened a working group with fishing industry representatives to explore options for addressing the tubbing issue for 2021. The protocol is a result of this work. DFO will continue to work with industry to transition to packaging practices or other measures that will allow size limits to be readily determined over the coming year.

In response to (i), no negative impacts are expected for export or domestic markets. DFO does not anticipate higher expenses for fishermen or higher prices for Canadian consumers. DFO is aware of the importance of tubbing to some harvesters. A protocol has been developed to provide guidance to harvesters on steps they can take this year to help them comply with the regulations that require them to keep their catch readily available for inspection by fishery officers, including catch frozen in tubs. DFO conservation and protection will apply discretion in its enforcement approach for the 2021 fishing season, recognizing the effort industry has made to establish the protocol and the challenges industry faces this year, while the development of different packaging practices or other measures is completed over the coming year.

Question No. 593—Ms. Laurel Collins:

With regard to the granting of essential purpose permits under the Ozone-depleting Substances and Halocarbon Alternatives Regulations: (a) for each permit granted, (i) to what entity was the permit granted, (ii) for what product was the permit granted, (iii) on what date was the permit issued, (iv) what is the permit's expiration date, (v) on what grounds did it meet the standard of necessity for the health and safety or the good functioning of society, encompassing its cultural and intellectual aspects, and being without technically or economically feasible alternatives that are acceptable from the standpoint of environment and health; and (b) in cases where the Department of Environment and Climate Change was made aware at any point during or after the permitting process of technically or economically feasible alternatives acceptable from the standpoint of environment and health to any product for which an essential purpose permit was granted, what steps has the department taken to revise or cancel the applicable permit?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part a), please refer to the following weblink for the information requested: www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/canadian-environmental-protection-act-registry/permits/authorizations-ozone-depleting-substances/companies-essential-purpose-permits-foam.html

With regard to part b), the ozone-depleting substances and halocarbon alternatives regulations implement Canada's obligations under the Montreal Protocol by controlling the import, export and manufacturing of ozone-depleting substances, ODS, and climate-

warming hydrofluorocarbons, HFCs. The regulations will help reduce Canada's annual consumption of HFCs by 85% by 2036, making a significant contribution in Canada's fight against climate change.

The objective of the essential purpose permit provision is to provide flexibility for a limited period of time in recognition of the challenges that some companies may face in producing or acquiring compliant products by the deadlines established in the regulations. Any person subject to the regulations may apply for an essential purpose permit at any time. In order to get such a permit, the criteria set out in section 66 of the regulations must be met.

The essential purpose permits provide a temporary exemption to the prohibitions. They can have a maximum duration of 36 months, and they include reporting and other obligations.

Essential purpose permit applications are evaluated by carefully assessing the sector and the specific circumstances of the applicant against the criteria in section 66 of the regulations. In assessing applications, ECCC expects applicants to demonstrate that efforts are being made to find an alternative, including mitigation measures to reduce the environmental impact if possible.

These essential purpose permits do not affect Canada's ability to meet its international obligations under the protocol or to achieve its HFC phase-down target. In fact, in both 2019 and 2020, Canada exceeded its HFC reduction obligations. The Montreal Protocol controls the production, import and export of bulk HFCs. The protocol does not cover the manufacture or importation of products that contain HFCs. The essential purpose permits only apply to regulated products that are not included in the Montreal Protocol. As such, these product prohibitions go beyond Canada's obligations established under the protocol.

Question No. 595—Mr. Paul Manly:

With regard to the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights: (a) when is the statutory review of the act by a committee of Parliament expected to begin; (b) why has the said review been delayed beyond the required five years; (c) does the government plan to adopt any of the 15 recommendations of the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime's November 2020 Progress Report on the act, and, if so, which recommendations; and (d) has the Department of Justice assessed the outcomes of the act to date, and, if so, what are its findings?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, section 2.1 of former Bill C-32, an act to enact the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights and to amend certain acts, S.C. 2015, c. 13, provides that a committee of Parliament is to be designated or established for the purpose of reviewing the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, CVBR. The launch of this review is, therefore, the independent responsibility of Parliament.

The Government of Canada appreciates the importance of reviewing and assessing existing legal, policy and programmatic responses to increase access to justice for victims of crime in Canada. In support of these efforts, the government appreciates the contributions of the federal ombudsman for victims of crime, including the recommendations included in its November 2020 progress report. These recommendations are currently being reviewed by federal officials, including at the Department of Justice.

The Department of Justice recognizes that implementing the CVBR takes many forms and involves all levels of government and agencies that have responsibility in the criminal justice system. Since the CVBR came into force, federal, provincial and territorial governments have been advancing legislative, programmatic and policy initiatives to support its full implementation.

A wide range of activities and investments have been made through the federal victims strategy in support of the CVBR, such as training for criminal justice professionals on victims' rights, public legal education and awareness raising for victims to inform them about the rights they have in the criminal justice system, increasing access to critical services and supports for victims and survivors and their families, and increasing access to the information they need to help them through the criminal and corrections systems. At the same time, funding for new tools, such as testimonial aids and restitution programs, has been made available to help victims participate meaningfully and safely in the criminal justice system and have their voice heard. A formal evaluation of the federal victims strategy and the impact of those investments is forthcoming.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

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.): Madam Speaker, furthermore, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 592, 594 and to Starred Question No. 590 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 590—**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:**

With regard to the one-time tax-free payment to seniors as part of the COVID-19 pandemic: how many eligible seniors (i) in Canada, (ii) in Quebec, were unable to access their benefit because their Guaranteed Income Supplement applications were processed by the Canada Revenue Agency after September 11, 2020?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 592—**Mr. Damien C. Kurek:**

With regard to correctional facilities under the purview of the Correctional Service of Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic, since March 1, 2020, broken down by month, institution and the security level of the institution: (a) what was the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 contracted by (i) inmates, (ii) staff; (b) how many (i) inmates, (ii) staff, have died from COVID-19; (c) how many (i) inmates, (ii) staff, have died from suicide; (d) what methods were used to count or determine the number of COVID-19 cases in institution; (e) which department or government agency is responsible for developing measures used to stop the spread of COVID-19 and its variants in correctional facilities; (f) what measures were instated to ensure personal protective equipment distribution to (i) guards, (ii) inmates, (iii) visitors; (g) since the pandemic began, what specific health guidelines have been put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19 by or to (i) guards, (ii) inmates, (iii) visitors, and on what date was each measure put into place; and (h) for each guideline in (g), which advisory body or regional health authority recommended the guideline?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 594—**Ms. Laurel Collins:**

With regard to federal funding in the constituency of Victoria, between October 21, 2019, and March 31, 2021: (a) what applications for funding have been received, including for each (i) the name of the organization, (ii) the department, (iii) the program and sub-program under which applicants have requested funding, (iv) the date of the application, (v) the amount applied for, (vi) whether the funding was approved or not, (vii) the total amount of funding, if the funding was approved; (b) what funds, grants, loans, and loan guarantees has the government issued through its various departments and agencies that did not require a direct application from the applicant, including for each the (i) name of the organization, (ii) department, (iii) program and sub-program under which applicants have received funding, (iv) total amount of funding, if the funding was approved; and (c) what projects have been funded by organizations tasked with subgranting government funds (e.g. Community Foundations of Canada), including for each the (i) name of the organization, (ii) department, (iii) program and sub-program under which applicants have received funding, (iv) total amount of funding, if the funding was approved?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 41 minutes.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2021, NO. 1**

The House resumed from May 25 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.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Saskatoon—University has three minutes and 45 seconds remaining for questions and comments.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have before us a very important piece of legislation. It is legislation that continues what the government started over 12 months ago, which is to be there for Canadians in a very real and tangible way during this pandemic and going forward.

I am wondering if my friend could just provide his thoughts on why it is so important that we continue to provide support to individuals, and businesses in particular, so we can be in a better position to even build back better.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member brings up the supports for business, and there is not a business owner who I have talked to in the last few months who is not concerned about the future. They are concerned about what the government is doing, or not doing, on a growth agenda to actually get the the economy growing again and get people back to work. That is what people are looking for, and that is what those people are most let down by in this budget. It does not have a road map to get Canada growing again.

It has been a disappointment to the people of Saskatoon—University and the individuals who are looking for hope. After two years of waiting for the budget, I would think there would be something in there to get the economy back on its feet, and there is nothing. That is a disappointment to me and to many of the other residents in Saskatoon—University. They are disappointed with the government.

• (1625)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the fact that the increase to old age security will apply only to seniors aged 75 and over and will not take effect until 2022, when a need is already being felt right now. I would like to know what he thinks about this harmful decision to create two classes of seniors.

[English]

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, what the Liberals have done is insulting. They drew the line at 75 for no reason. The HUMA committee, which I serve on, talked to the Minister of Seniors, and she had no good answer for why that year was chosen as the

cut-off for seniors, who have suffered so much during this pandemic. They are looking for their second doses, and they are just not getting them from the federal government.

Liberals do not realize how many seniors' lives have been changed because of the lack of doses in our country, especially the lack of second doses. I think of all the seniors who, for the last year and a half, have sacrificed their freedom and their ability to see friends and family. They are being let down by the government, which refuses to get those second doses into our country and into arms.

Seniors watching the hockey games may have seen some of the highlights in the States, and they have arenas full of people. Then when they watched the Habs and the Leafs last night, there was no one in the stands. It is a stark reminder to Canadians how much the government, with its lack of action on the procurement of vaccines, has let down seniors and individuals across the country.

We are months away from getting what the states have received so far in vaccines. What will get us through this will be getting the second doses into people's arms, but it is not happening fast enough under the Liberal government.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): 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 Edmonton Strathcona, International Trade; the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Ethics; the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Human Rights.

[English]

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I live in Mississauga and I proudly represent my constituents of Mississauga East—Cooksville. I know how hard they work to provide for their families; protect their health and provide a better education for their kids, which we know are the keys to a better future; and to take care of their aging parents and grandparents. In short, they work to build and to dream. That is what Mississauga East—Cooksville is all about, and in turn, that is what the Canadian dream is from coast to coast to coast.

That is why, when a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic such as COVID-19 shook the very foundations of our health care, and social and economic systems, our government stepped up and ensured that we would do everything we could to help protect Canadians. As the Prime Minister often says, we have Canadians' backs, meaning we will be there for Canadians every step of the way to support them and to help them weather this storm. The actions we have taken have helped Canadians stay safe and buffer the worst economic impacts.

Government Orders

This third wave has hit hard, with further public health restrictions and regional lockdowns leading to many Canadians facing unemployment or reduced hours this last couple of months. As we work to finish the fight against COVID-19, we will continue to support Canadians through programs such as the Canada recovery benefit, a more flexible EI program and the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which continue to be lifelines for so many Canadians.

That is why we announced through budget 2021 that we will be maintaining flexible access to EI benefits for another year until the fall of 2022, fulfilling our campaign promise to extend EI sickness benefits from 15 to 26 weeks, extending the Canada recovery benefit by an additional 12 weeks until September 25, and expanding the Canada workers benefit to support low-wage workers.

These are historic investments that address the most pressing issues exacerbated by COVID-19, which are to put people first, create jobs, grow the middle class, set businesses back on a track, and ensure a healthier, greener and more prosperous Canada.

I would like to commend the Minister of Finance because Bill C-30 brings us to the next stage. It is a recovery plan for jobs, growth and resilience, the Government of Canada's plan to finish the fight against COVID-19 and ensure a robust economic recovery that brings all Canadians along. The COVID-19 recession is the steepest and fastest economic contraction since the Great Depression. It has disproportionately affected low-wage workers, young people, women, and racialized Canadians.

The pandemic has laid bare long-standing inequities in our economy. Budget 2021 is an inclusive plan that takes action to break down barriers to full economic participation for all Canadians. It would establish a \$15 federal minimum wage.

For businesses, it has been a two-speed recession, with some finding ways to prosper and grow, but many businesses, especially small businesses, fighting to survive. Budget 2021 is a plan to bridge Canadians and Canadian businesses through the crisis and toward a robust recovery. It proposes to extend business and income support measures through to the fall and to make investments to create jobs and help businesses across the economy come roaring back. Budget 2021 is a plan that puts the government on track to meet its commitment to create one million jobs by the end of the year.

Budget 2021 is a historic investment to address the specific wounds of the COVID-19 recession by putting people first, creating jobs, growing the middle class, setting businesses on track for that long-term growth, and ensuring that Canada's future will be healthier, more equitable, greener and more prosperous.

The Government of Canada's top priority remains protecting Canadians' health and safety, particularly during this third, aggressive wave of the virus and its variants. Vaccine rollout is under way across Canada, with federal government support in every province and territory.

In my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville, over 60% of adults have received their first vaccine, and this past weekend we began to inoculate kids 12 and over. I accompanied my 15-year-old twin boys, Alexander and Sebastien, to get their first shot through

Trillium Health Partners Mississauga Hospital mass vaccination site this weekend.

● (1630)

I want to thank all the frontline staff, volunteers and emergency services for making the experience a friendly, efficient safe and secure one. We could see how proud, joyful, hopeful and, I have to say, patriotic people felt, that they were doing their part to safeguard themselves, their family members, their community and their country by getting vaccinated and helping shield us from this horrible virus. 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.

During last week's constituency week, I had the opportunity to meet with Mississauga and Peel Region's leadership team of elected officials, management and stakeholders to discuss long-term care and the continuum of care with a focus on our seniors and vulnerable populations. The COVID-19 pandemic has strained our long-term care facilities across the country and in my community of Mississauga East—Cooksville like never before. I want to thank the Minister of Finance for the well-deserved measures to strengthen long-term care and supportive care.

Many seniors have faced economic challenges as they take on extra costs to stay safe and protect their health. This 2021 budget proposes to provide \$90 million to Employment and Social Development Canada, a government department responsible for social programs, to launch the age well at home initiative. This initiative would assist community-based organizations to provide practical support that helps low-income and otherwise vulnerable seniors to age in place, such as matching seniors with volunteers who can help them with meal preparation, home maintenance, daily errands, yardwork and transportation. This initiative would also target regional and national projects to help expand services that have already demonstrated results helping seniors stay in their homes. Funding would be provided over a three-year period starting in 2021-22. I am pleased to say that many non-profits and charitable organizations working with seniors across the country stand to benefit from this measure.

Government Orders

In addition, the 2021 budget proposes to build on work conducted by the Health Standards Organization and Canadian Standards Association in launching a process to develop national standards focused on improving the quality of life of seniors in long-term care homes. This budget would provide \$3 billion over five years to Health Canada to support provinces and territories, ensuring standards for long-term care are applied and permanent changes are made; and, \$41.3 million over six years and \$7.7 million ongoing, starting in 2021-22, for Statistics Canada to improve data infrastructure and data collection on supportive care, primary care and pharmaceuticals.

• (1635)

We made a campaign commitment promising to increase old age security, OAS, benefits for seniors aged 75 and older. Many seniors are living longer and they are relying on monthly benefits to afford retirement. These funds would be delivered in two steps. The 2021 budget would support seniors by providing a one-time payment this August of \$500 and increase regular OAS payments for pensioners 75 and over by 10% on an ongoing basis as of July next year. This would increase the benefits for approximately 3.3 million seniors, providing additional benefits of \$766 for full pensioners in the first year and indexed to inflation going forward. This would give seniors more financial security later in life, particularly at the time when they face increased care expenses. In total, the two measures represent \$12 billion over five years for our seniors in additional financial support, beginning in 2021-22; and at least \$3 billion per year ongoing, to be delivered by Employment and Social Development Canada.

Budget 2021 invests in Canada's biomanufacturing and life sciences sector to rebuild domestic vaccine manufacturing capacity. It has a plan to put in place national standards for long-term care and mental health services.

Budget 2021 makes a generational investment to build a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. This is a plan to drive economic growth, increase women's participation in the workforce and offer each child in Canada the best start in life. Budget 2021 would invest almost \$30 billion over the next five years and provide permanent ongoing funding, working with provincial and territorial and indigenous partners to support quality not-for-profit child care, ensuring the needs of early childhood educators are at the heart of the system. The goal is to reach \$10 per day on average by—

• (1640)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have the opportunity to pursue through questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the member for his passion and I invite him to use the first 10 seconds of his response to finish his speech.

Then I would like to ask him about a very serious concern that my constituents are raising with me over and over again, and that is

inflation. The cost of groceries is going up. The cost of lumber is going up. The cost of housing is now out of reach for many millions and millions of Canadians. What in the budget will address this significant economic issue that my constituents keep bringing up maybe because I do not see anything?

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Madam Speaker, I cannot thank the hon. member enough for allowing me to conclude. What I want to say to every member in the House of Commons is that this is about helping protect Canadians' health, supporting our workers and businesses and giving assistance to those who have been hardest hit by this pandemic. Supporting this budget and Bill C-30 is what will really help Canada build back better.

As the member heard, it is very comprehensive. It is about taking care of our most vulnerable, assisting our businesses so they can bridge this pandemic and this difficult time. It is about helping our students and our seniors. This is the time to invest in Canadians. We know Canadians work hard and we are going to continue to invest in Canadians so that we will create those million jobs and build back better.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He talked about a number of things, including help for seniors. At the moment, groups that support seniors are unanimous on this issue, as are members of Parliament. It was in the news again today.

How can he justify his party's choice to leave a whole group of seniors out in the cold? These seniors are sounding the alarm. They say they need help too. Caregivers under 75 have needs too.

How can he justify his party standing alone on an issue as crucial as helping all seniors starting at age 65?

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the opportunity to thank our seniors. Our seniors have built our country, so through their hard work, through their sweat and tears they have built this magnificent country we have here in Canada.

That is why, since we formed government in 2015, we have worked with seniors and supported seniors. We increased the GIS at that time. We have brought more supports to the community for seniors. I am proud of the commitment we made to increasing the OAS for seniors aged 75 and over, when expenses do get higher as people get older be it for medications and other needs; that is the right direction. Our government will always have the backs of our seniors.

Government Orders

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have known the hon. member for a number of years now as he was my seatmate prior to the pandemic. As a result of that, I know that during his time as a member of provincial parliament in Ontario and certainly since 2015 in federal politics, he has been a champion for seniors' issues.

We heard him speak passionately about provisions in the budget that will assist seniors, but I wonder if he could expand on that specifically on the issue of long-term care and what it means to his constituents in Mississauga.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member and great friend for giving me the opportunity to speak to something that I am very passionate about.

When it comes to long-term care, we saw through this pandemic the tragedy in our long-term care homes, particularly here in Mississauga, but also in London and right across our province and across our country. We saw seniors not treated to the standards to which we believe Canadians should be treated, to have the dignity and respect. We have come forward with \$3 billion to be able to assist and work with our partners, the provinces and the municipalities to be able to provide the level of care that we deem should be a standard and is vitally important. All Canadians feel the same way. It broke our hearts to see how seniors were treated in long-term care homes.

• (1645)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-30, the Liberal government's budget implementation bill.

It took almost two years for the Liberals to get around to presenting a budget, the longest period in Canadian history without a budget. For decades there had never been a gap of more than two years between budgets, until the current Liberal government. Despite COVID-19, all other G7 countries produced budgets last year, so too did our provinces and territories, yet for two years, Canadians expecting the Liberal government to lay out its priorities in an open and transparent fashion were left waiting.

The fact we are here today debating this bill is positive, but presenting a budget is one of the bare minimums expected of any government. Now that we have this budget, it has been something of a letdown. One would think that after two years with time to prepare the Liberals would knock it out of the park, but that is not what happened.

As I listened to debate on this bill and reviewed the contents in my role on the Standing Committee on Finance, I have been struck more by what is absent from the budget than what is included. I noticed the Liberals are doing the bare minimum of what is expected of them and then expecting accolades in return.

As Canadians continue to face challenges as a result of COVID-19 and the restrictions imposed upon governments in response to COVID-19, Conservatives have been clear that those struggling need support. When the government forces someone to close down their business or prevents customers from shopping at their store, the government has a duty to support them through that situation. When the government forces people to stay home and

prevents them from earning an income, the government has a duty to support them through that situation. Everyone in this House gets that and I think they all support it.

Measures to that effect included in Bill C-30 are important, but they are the bare minimum the government can do for Canadians during this time. A serious budget would do something more. It would include a road map to help Canadians move beyond this endless cycle of restrictions and lockdowns. It would include a data-driven plan to safely reopen the economy.

As we have heard time and time again from witnesses at the finance committee, a plan would help many small businesses, many hard-hit industries, looking for some certainty to help them plan for the future. Workers employed in sectors like tourism and hospitality, the aviation industry or our border communities depend on cross-border travel. They deserve to know when their lives will return to normal.

As Canadian families struggle to recover from a tough year, budget 2021 offers little encouragement. Instead, the Liberals are asking Canadians to accept the bare minimum. Besides a safe plan for reopening, this budget was a missed opportunity to address the need to support Canada's economic recovery and growth. After living with COVID-19 in Canada for more than a year, how can the government still be spinning its tires?

Upon reviewing this budget, many economists have lamented the troubling reality that this budget is more about short-term benefit than positioning our economy for long-term success. I know the Liberals like to look good, but I would argue that doing good, not just looking good, is what Canadians want and expect from their government.

For example, former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney said, "What we're seeing in some other jurisdictions is that the focus is more squarely on the growth." Another former Bank of Canada governor, David Dodge, noted "a lack of growth-focused initiatives in the budget."

Robert Asselin, a former top economic adviser to the Liberal government described the new spending as "unfocused and unimaginative." He also wrote, "it was clear for some time that the government's decision to spend more than \$100 billion in so-called short-term stimulus was a political solution in search of an economic problem."

Former clerk of the Privy Council, Kevin Lynch, said the budget "misses an urgent opportunity to rebuild our longer-term growth post-pandemic." He also said, "Despite the extraordinary emphasis on stimulus, there is little focus and few measures to rebuild Canada's longer-term growth."

Government Orders

These comments, taken together, point to a real problem. If one's house is on fire, one wants and expects the fire department to come to one's aid. When it is the only house on fire, the resources are best directed toward that home. However, if the fire department showed up and sprayed a little water on that home then moved on to spray some water on the neighbour's place then turned around and sprayed the houses across the street, one would seriously question their approach.

It matters where the flow of water is directed, yet this seems to be the approach taken with this budget. There is no focus, no intentionality in terms of directing resources where they are actually required so Canada can move beyond the economic harms inflicted throughout COVID and thrive once again. Without doing the hard work of determining where federal tax dollars can be most impactful, the Liberals are asking Canadians to accept their bare minimum effort.

● (1650)

As Canada continues to grapple with COVID-19, one of the most important tasks of the government was to provide increased sustainable funding to the provinces for the provision of health care. This request was made by the provinces and supported by organizations like the Canadian Medical Association.

The CMA stated:

As provinces and territories continue to struggle with the ever-increasing cost of providing care, the federal government must follow through on its own promise to work with premiers on revisiting the Canada Health Transfer. Without this collaboration, our healthcare system, which has been put through the ultimate stress test, will struggle to recover.

Perhaps now more than ever Canadians recognize the importance of ensuring our health care system is sustainable. Unfortunately, the Liberal budget does not. It touches on mental health and long-term care, but does not take the biggest and strongest step in the right direction by responding to the requests made by the province. Again, it does the bare minimum.

Another big concern is that the Liberals continue an avoidance of implementing a meaningful fiscal anchor to guide levels of public spending. In their budget document, there is only one reference, which states:

The government is committed to unwinding COVID-related deficits and reducing the federal debt as a share of the economy over the medium-term.

This is extremely vague. This is not a fiscal anchor; it is aspirational. At best, it is a wish list. There is not a hard stop to be found in the budget and no specific benchmarks that have been clearly established as fiscal anchors. At best, we could call them perhaps a guardrail.

Economist Jack Mintz wrote:

This is a pretty weak fiscal anchor. It perpetuates deficit financing forever. It is also easily violated every time the economy slips into a recession, such as our recent one. As debt ratchets up as a share of the economy, the rule permits bigger and bigger federal deficits over time.

I like the definition of a fiscal anchor offered by the Business Council of Canada. It notes, “notional ceilings or caps to the levels of public spending, deficits, and debt that governments are prepared to reach in their fiscal policy.” Its definition identifies the purpose of a fiscal anchor as well as:

1 Retaining the confidence of lenders and global markets...

2 Establishing a positive investment climate for businesses;

3 Providing a measure of fiscal discipline inside government...and

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

These are the types of fiscal anchors the Liberals should have been striving for, yet, once again, they are offering Canadians the bare minimum in an attempt to be transparent and accountable but without actually committing to a real metric.

To try and showcase the budget as something more than a bare minimum budget, the Liberals announced big plans for child care. The government could have taken the time to better understand the unique needs of parents and families, but instead of doing the hard work, it is pushing a one-size-fits-all Ottawa-knows-best approach to child care in Canada.

The Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario has highlighted the consequences of this proposal: uncertainty for families, limited access, job losses at existing day cares and the closure of many women-owned small businesses.

Andrea Hannen told the finance committee, “We shouldn't have systems that require families to mold themselves to the system. The system should evolve to allow families to be in the driver's seat.”

The committee also heard from Andrea Mrozek, a mother and child care researcher. When I asked her about the Liberal child care plan, she said, “It's not an equitable way...of helping families who address their child care need in many diverse ways.”

By pursuing a plan that perhaps is good for press for the Liberal government, it leaves many Canadians behind. The Liberals yet again having shown that this budget is only about doing the bare minimum. Canadian families need more than the bare minimum. They need a budget that helps those struggling through COVID-19 today and sets them up to succeed tomorrow. They need a budget that does not just spend for the sake of spending, but rather makes targeted investments that will generate tangible results for all Canadians. They need a budget that sets real goals for ensuring Canada's long-term fiscal sustainability, a budget that supports families in making best choices for themselves. Sadly, this bare minimum budget does not cut it.

● (1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to know what he thinks of the idea of creating a Canadian securities regulator that would be based in Toronto, as proposed in the bill, especially given that Quebec has had its own securities regulator, the Autorité des marchés financiers, for a long time, and it is working extremely well.

Does my colleague believe that the existing entities should be respected and maintained and that the federal government, which as usual thinks it has all the answers, should not be allowed to encroach yet again?

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, unfortunately I do not have an answer for that specific question, but putting in the proper regulations and oversight for the things he mentioned is a good idea, and they could be done.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I first want to acknowledge what is a statement of fact: We know that Canadian women have suffered greatly during this pandemic, and part of that reason is because of a lack of access to child care.

I was very concerned to hear the member decry the historic commitment to child care, which is something that we in the NDP have been pushing for, as have many Canadian women.

How can women get back into the workforce and do the work they need to do to regain their standing without child care?

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski's question is a good one and a valid one.

We heard from many witnesses at committee. They talked about the \$10 day care and early learning education program that has been presented in the budget. The overwhelming response from those folks was that this program would not be accessible to all women across Canada.

There are many types of day care and child care set ups that women and parents right across Canada are employing through the use of friends, neighbours and licenced day cares. A \$10-a-day government-knows-best subsidized day care system will not provide parents the choice they require, including women in the workplace.

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.): Madam Speaker, a headline in the Winnipeg Free Press today reads, "Manitoba is less than two weeks away from vaccinating 70 per cent of its eligible population against the novel coronavirus in a final push to bend the COVID-19 curve of Canada's hot spot."

From day one, the Government of Canada has been there in very tangible ways, through the creation of the CERB program, with over nine million Canadians having direct increases to disposal income; and numerous government supports for small businesses. Now we see some light at the end of the tunnel. Also, Manitobans saw the flash of the Winnipeg Jets sweeping the series 4-0 against Edmonton, which made a lot of us feel good.

I wonder if my colleague from Manitoba could provide his thoughts on some better things we could be conveying to Manitobans.

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, I want to compliment the member for Winnipeg North on his recognition of our Winnipeg Jets having ousted the Oilers in four straight games, led by Mark

Government Orders

Scheifele and Blake Wheeler. Of course, we are looking forward to continued success. We are looking forward to a Canadian team from the centre of Canada, which is in my riding, holding the Stanley Cup.

What should we be telling Canadians? When COVID-19 hit, the government needed to act quickly, and it did. As Conservatives, we supported what the government did. In fact, when it came to the Canada employment wage subsidy, initially the government rolled out a 10% wage employment subsidy to employers that were experiencing a decline in sales. We, as Conservatives, proposed to increase that to 75% so the folks who were hurting could really benefit.

We joined together with the other parties in the House to come to the aid of the folks who wanted it. Unfortunately, this budget falls way short of providing additional support.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was thinking today about how I should approach the budget implementation bill.

I have a particular fondness for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. I like it when he says we are trying to pick a fight. I was wondering how to interpret that, and I was reminded of a name my father used to call me when I was a teenager.

My father was the king of neologisms. He was a guy who could invent concepts and words. When I was young, he would tell me that I was "contrarious". I do not know if that came from the word "contrary" or "contrarian", but he told me that "contrarious" means someone who scratches their backside when their head is itchy. That is just his turn of phrase. I do not mean to be offensive. That, according to my father, is what it means to be "contrarious". I think that someone who is "contrarious" is someone who goes against what makes sense. It is true that in my teenage years, I frequently did things that did not make sense and defied my father out of stubbornness.

Now when I hear this government telling us that we are trying to pick a fight, I often think that they are using the same contrarian rhetoric. I am not saying that the government has an itchy head and is scratching the wrong spot. That is not what I am saying. I am simply saying that perhaps some of the government's actions are counterproductive.

In my view, there are four aspects of Bill C-30 that clearly demonstrate that the government's actions are counterproductive.

The first aspect is old age security. My office has never received as many complaints as it has about the government's proposal to give \$500 to people aged 75 and over.

Government Orders

While my father used to use the analogy that our heads are itchy but we are scratching our backsides, I would say that seniors are fired up, and that is the truth. I have never received so many complaints, both online and by email. This is unfair. It creates two classes of seniors. We have made our position clear, but we did not even need to, since that is how it looks on the ground.

The seniors receiving the payment are unhappy. Seniors aged 75 and over who have a spouse under 75 who will not be receiving it are unhappy, and they are vocal about it. Some of the emails I received even got quite abusive, blaming me as if it had been my decision. I am getting this type of criticism. It is understandable in the context of the pandemic that there are tensions and people who are unhappy. As we know, seniors were the ones who were overlooked during the pandemic.

The Bloc Québécois made a proposal, masterfully presented by the member for Shefford, that I think was rational and reasonable. Why not increase old age security by \$110 a month and increase the guaranteed income supplement by \$70 for a couple and \$50 for a single person? To me, this is a desirable and reasonable position.

I said earlier that the government is acting unreasonably. In my opinion, it is not picking a fight to say that. I am saying that, having listened to the people on the ground, the seniors in my riding, I believe that a desirable and reasonable position would be to increase old age security by \$110 and the guaranteed income supplement by \$50 or by \$70 for a couple.

Health transfers are another aspect of Bill C-30 that I find unreasonable. To me, this perfectly encapsulates what is not working in federalism. I clearly remember two instances of what we call Canadian-style neo-liberalism that took place in the Canadian federation after the 1995 referendum, in 1996-97 and 1997-98. The government cut transfer payments by \$2 billion each fiscal year. It totally dismantled Quebec's health system.

There was a report, the Séguin report, which was issued not by a sovereignist, but by a federalist. This report demonstrated what we call the fiscal imbalance. No one ever came out and said that it was conjured up and contrived by the interests of people who had a different political opinion from the sovereignists. No one ever came out and said that, but I think it is a proven fact.

Then there was a slightly better agreement on health transfers with the Conservatives, thanks to a bit of a push from our party, it must be said.

• (1705)

Then, under the Harper government, we were back to meagre health care funding. Year after year, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that if nothing changed with respect to health transfers, provincial deficits would grow while the federal government ended up swimming in surpluses. That is according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, not me. It is in the 2013 report.

What is in Bill C-30? Certainly not the 35% the provinces want. The government is signalling that transfers will come with strings attached. That is what we saw for senior care. That seems to be the government's intention. I think this indicates something unreasonable that nobody wants to see.

Another fairly important aspect of Bill C-30 that made me raise my eyebrows when I read it is the extension of various programs, such as the wage subsidy. My thought was that, if the government were interested in fixing a mistake, it could simply change the wage subsidy to make it off-limits to political parties, but there is nothing about that in Bill C-30.

It is no secret that we will likely be in campaign mode soon. Some political parties will be campaigning using money from the wage subsidy. We are still waiting for our Conservative friends to pay back this money. They at least admitted that it may not have been ethical and may not have been the right thing to do. The Liberal Party and our colleagues in the NDP, however, seem quite comfortable with their decision to claim the wage subsidy.

The government could propose a worthwhile amendment to fix that. At the very least, an amendment would send the message that members of the House of Commons do not create programs that benefit them personally. That is all I will say.

The infamous green recovery is another thing that I think is unreasonable and counterproductive. I will never understand what the government is trying to do with this green recovery. There is virtually no mention of it in Bill C-30.

The only information we have gotten about the green recovery so far is an announcement about the electrification of transportation.

Allow me to back up a little. I am sure this figure is shocking, but the government is talking about a \$17.6-billion investment in the green recovery.

Do members know how much the Trans Mountain pipeline cost? It cost \$17.1 billion, and that was just one project. Overall, the pipeline costs as much as the green recovery.

That is an image that really hits home, for anyone who is serious about the environment. When it comes to the green recovery, what we have been hearing about is the electrification of transportation. That bothers me a bit because Ontario is going to make off with most of the money associated with that, yet it is the only province that is no longer offering a rebate for purchasing an electric vehicle. That is ironic, but let us leave that aside.

The other thing that really bothers me is that the government announced its intention to get into hydrogen production. There are three types of hydrogen. In committee, the government told us that it would prefer to develop the hydrogen market without making a distinction. Anyone who is familiar with the energy sector would tell us that the worst idea out there right now is grey hydrogen. There is no way that making hydrogen out of oil and gas is environmentally friendly. It is anything but.

Government Orders

Lastly, I want to talk about the forestry industry. There is nothing in Bill C-30 about the much-talked-about \$55 million that was announced for the investments in forest industry transformation program, or IFIT. Why is it not in there? I do not know. Fifty-five million dollars is nothing. It is peanuts compared to the support that was announced for the oil and gas industry. There is nothing about that in Bill C-30.

I do not have much time left, but, in closing, I want to tell my friend, the leader of the government, that I am not trying to pick a fight, but when my head is itchy, I scratch it, and when my backside is itchy, I scratch that. It is important to be consistent.

• (1710)

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Jonquiere for his speech.

In his speech, he highlighted the Bloc Qu b cois's work on two very important files, seniors and health transfers. He also spoke about the green recovery. We both want to represent the interests of Quebec.

I think that support for the forestry industry is another area that he is very invested in.

I would like him to tell us more about how this sector could be part of the green recovery.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, what a fantastic opportunity. My party commissioned a study on maximizing the potential of the forestry industry in Quebec. We are talking about 16,000 jobs over a 10-year period.

The forestry industry is probably the sector that is best positioned to fight climate change and rising greenhouse gases. As everyone knows, the forest is a carbon sink. Unfortunately, the federal government hardly ever funds the forestry industry.

In Quebec alone, this sector represents \$20 billion in economic spinoffs per year, yet the federal government only supports this sector to the tune of 0.03%. That is tragic compared to the oil and gas industry.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his wonderful speech.

Given the dramatic increase in debt, is the member not concerned that the Liberal government will cut transfers to the provinces, as happened in the 1990s under the Chr tien government?

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, my colleague is quite right to be concerned.

When we return to the House after the next election campaign, we will probably come back to the idea of a balanced budget. That is what usually happens.

I do not want to displease my colleague, but governments, whether Liberal or Conservative, sadly have this unfortunate habit of balancing their budgets on the backs of the provinces.

That is when transfer payments get cut. That is what happened in the 1990s, but the Harper government did the same thing from 2013

onwards when it cut transfer payments. We have to expect this and be very vigilant about it.

[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.): Madam Speaker, one thing we committed to in the last federal election was to increase OAS by 10% for seniors over 75. That commitment was made during the election, and in this budget we see a fulfillment of it.

Would the member not agree that in supporting our seniors, the government's response in fulfilling the commitment to seniors over 75 is a positive thing, especially when we factor in the other increases and one-time payments that we have given to all seniors aged 65 and over?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I challenge the parliamentary secretary to say that to the seniors in my riding who saw the \$500 for those 75 and up as a direct affront and a vote-grabbing ploy.

If he is interested and would like an answer, I can forward the emails and Facebook messages I received. I am certain that my colleagues would be very pleased to do the same. He would have enough reading material for probably the next two or three weeks.

• (1715)

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is a special place for Quebec in this budget, but there are not necessarily the same ramifications for Alberta. I am wondering if the member thinks that all provinces should be treated equally.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mend s): The member for Jonquiere has just enough time for a brief answer.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, my colleague said there is a special place for Quebec, but not Alberta.

If you look at the federal funding for the oil and gas industry and the funding for the forestry industry—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mend s): I am going to have to encourage the hon. members to have a discussion somewhere else.

[English]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Government Orders

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to rise today from the territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation, and to serve the communities of Nanaimo—Ladysmith in the territories of the Snaw-naw-as, St'z'uminus and Lyackson First Nations.

The budget is over 700 pages long and the budget implementation act is over 300 pages long, so there is a lot of ground to cover in a short speech. I have picked some of the key positive and negative aspects to highlight.

A national child care system is a program the Green Party has been calling for for decades. This program is needed more urgently than ever, as we begin to address the heavy impact the pandemic has had on working mothers. The Province of Quebec has been providing low-cost child care for the past two decades, and researchers have studied what has been successful there and what has not. I am encouraged to see the government supporting the not-for-profit model. We must not allow the quality of child care or the quality of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to cut the member off, but we have issues with sound and interpretation.

It is now working. Please proceed.

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, the budget makes some positive steps toward addressing the affordable housing and homelessness crisis in Canada. Unfortunately, it is not enough to make up for decades of neglect by the federal government. Housing is a human right, recognized in international law and affirmed in the national housing strategy. Much more needs to be done to ensure that right is respected. Weak regulations have allowed our housing market to be used by the global ultrawealthy for tax evasion and money laundering. These activities have driven up the cost of housing to unsustainable levels and it continues to climb. Where does this end?

We should be looking at regulations to protect Canada's residential real estate market. Many countries have regulations that restrict foreign buyers. I have heard both Conservatives and Liberals talk about how much they love foreign direct investment. When people earning median incomes can no longer afford to own or rent a home without spending 50% or more of their income, is foreign direct investment in housing benefiting Canadians? Housing prices in Canada have gone up an average of 30% in the past year. We have barely begun to see the fallout of that.

The investment in Canada's nature legacy is a very welcome addition, especially the funding directed to indigenous protected and conserved areas, or IPCAs. Reconnecting indigenous people back to their traditional lands is key to reconciliation. A sixth mass extinction is happening right now. Species are disappearing at a rapid rate, and we are losing important and endangered ecosystems around the planet. The endangered big tree old-growth ecosystems on Vancouver Island are a perfect example of where the funding from Canada's nature legacy should be spent. Indigenous protected and conserved areas would put land under the control and authority of local first nations. This ensures long-term economic development built on harvesting second-growth forests and creating value-added forest products, while preserving old growth for eco-tourism and traditional practices.

Low-income seniors in my riding have been asking for additional pandemic relief and for a permanent increase in the old age security. The budget promises that old age security will increase in 2022, a year from now, but only for seniors over the age of 75. This is creating two classes of seniors: those 75 and up and those under 75. This is going to force more seniors to continue working in jobs that young people could be filling.

It is positive that the government is moving toward national standards for long-term care, but bolder action needs to be taken. The pandemic has exposed glaring deficiencies in some provinces that allowed for the warehousing of seniors in for-profit homes. Serious action should be taken against private for-profit long-term care homes that used pandemic relief funding to give executives and shareholders a bonus instead of fixing deficiencies.

The government has made a good start with additional support for students during the pandemic, with interest relief and an increase in student grants, but it is time to take bold action to bring Canada fully into the knowledge-based economy. It is time to follow the lead of northern European countries and make post-secondary education in this country tuition-free.

The Green Party has long been calling for improvements to our health care system, with an increase of health transfers and a system that recognizes provincial demographic differences. There is an incremental move toward universal pharmacare, but we need bolder steps to ensure Canadians have access to the medicine they need. We have been calling for universal pharmacare, universal dental care, universal mental health services, wellness care and a patient-centred focus on health and well-being to keep people out of the sickness care system, because we know that all of these things will save money in the long run and keep Canadians healthier.

Small businesses are going to have a more difficult recovery than large multinational companies that have been able to ride out the storm with big box stores and online sales. Small and medium-sized enterprises are the lifeblood of the economy. They hire the vast majority of private sector workers. Special consideration needs to be given to ensure that the hundreds of thousands of small and medium-sized businesses across this country are able to recover. The wage subsidy ends in September. Many businesses in my riding need help well beyond September.

Government Orders

This is Tourism Week. The budget commitments to the tourism industry are not enough. Tourism's contribution to the economy is underestimated. Tourism employs more people than oil and gas in Canada, and \$500 million is not adequate to meet the needs of tourism operators across the country, especially for those who will not be in full operation again until at least 2022.

• (1720)

I hear from constituents like Shelley and Dave, who own and operate CruisePlus, a company that books tours in Canada and around the world. When the pandemic hit, they and their team worked hard to get Canadians home and cancel bookings. They have struggled to stay afloat during the pandemic. They have lost well-trained, loyal employees and are concerned about the end of the wage subsidy. They will lose support before they are expecting to be able to restart their business in a serious way.

The plan to lower the Canada recovery benefit from the current \$500 a week to \$300 a week by July needs to be re-examined. Workers are still struggling and may not be able to find enough work to compensate for that reduction.

The pandemic has demonstrated the need to improve our social safety net with a guaranteed livable income. We are going to see additional shocks to our economy with automation, artificial intelligence and climate change. A guaranteed livable income can help ensure that no one falls through the cracks as we navigate these new realities.

How will we pay for all these things? During the peak of the pandemic, more than 5.5 million Canadian workers lost their jobs or were working half of their normal hours. More than half of Canadians are within \$200 of not being able to cover their monthly bills. At the same time, Canada's 48 richest billionaires increased their wealth by \$78 billion and now have almost a quarter of a trillion dollars among them. We now know that some large corporations used taxpayer-funded relief programs to pay their shareholders and executives huge bonuses. That is disgusting.

Canada needs an increase in the progressive tax rate at the higher income brackets. We also need a wealth tax and an inheritance tax for the ultrawealthy. It is time to close tax loopholes that allow them to offshore their wealth and avoid paying taxes. It is time to tax the Internet giants that extract billions from our economy. Big banks and credit card companies have been raking in profits through increased user fees and interest rates they charge to consumers and businesses, and payday lenders are trapping low-income people into predatory loans with terms designed to keep them in endless cycles of debt. This is unacceptable. How have we let income inequality reach this point? All of these things could have been dealt with in this budget.

Over and over again during this debate, I have heard the Conservatives call on the government to spend less. They caution about deficits and increasing debt. I agree with them in at least one area: We need to end all taxpayer handouts to the fossil fuel industry. Real climate action requires that we cut all funding to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project, cut all subsidies to fracking companies and put them on notice that their climate-destroying practice will be banned within the year, and make the costs of industrial cleanup a non-dischargeable debt so we can stop subsidiz-

ing the cleanup of abandoned wells. The fossil fuel industry is a sunset industry. It is time to stop propping it up and invest those billions in a just transition to a renewable energy economy.

While there are a number of things that are positive in this budget, it falls short of dealing with the challenges of our time. We are in a climate emergency and we have growing inequality. Canada can and must do better for people and the planet. I will continue to work toward that goal.

• (1725)

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.): Madam Speaker, within the budget there is a historic commitment for the development of a national child care program. Whether it is coming from the Prime Minister, the ministers or just different caucuses, the push in recognizing the true value of expanding child care in Canada will assist the economy and assist many others who would have been disengaged or maybe not had the same opportunity to get engaged into our economy. I wonder if my colleague could provide his thoughts in regard to the true value of extending child care for more people.

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, having a universal child care program is well beyond its time. The Liberals have been promising this since their "Red Book" in 1993. I hope that we pull through with this and actually make it happen, because I have heard from constituents that they want this, and Canadians across Canada have been asking for a universal child care program for a long time. We have seen it work in Quebec. We know we can make it work in the rest of the provinces by working with them on this issue.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, the private sector has a very important part in bringing us out of this pandemic. It will create jobs and economic opportunities, and corporations will even pay dividends, many to seniors to help them go forward.

However, the member does not seem to think that the private sector has any role. Does the member believe there is any value in the private sector, as I do?

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, it would seem that the hon. member has missed a good piece of my speech where I talked about small and medium-sized businesses across this country employing a vast number of Canadians and how important that is to our economy.

Government Orders

Small and medium-sized businesses are very important to my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith. That is why I was asking for extensions to the wage subsidy, to make sure that we protect our small and medium-sized enterprises. During this pandemic, the big box stores and the multinationals have been able to weather the storm by keeping their big box stores open and by doing online sales.

We need to protect our small and medium-sized businesses. I am absolutely onside with that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He raised several very pertinent elements: support for housing; forestry, an area in which we could have invested; seniors who are being left behind; and the knowledge economy. That is all great. He also rightly pointed out that the wage subsidy was sometimes improperly used to pay bonuses. If that is true, I completely agree with him that the situation needs to be rectified.

I would like his comments on that. In my opinion, the use of the wage subsidy by political parties in the House is a misappropriation of funds. Should these political parties repay this money, which belongs to taxpayers?

• (1730)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, the wage subsidy was put in place to ensure that employers were able to keep staff on. Companies and political parties need to be able to justify taking the wage subsidy. We have seen it being abused by large corporations, and that is a problem.

At the very beginning of the pandemic, we said that we should have specific rules to ensure that there was no pandemic profiteering and misuse of public funds during this pandemic. Those warnings were not heeded. We have seen the misuse of funds, and that is a serious problem.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, this week we had the International Energy Agency coming out and saying that we do not need any new oil developments. We have had the Canada Energy Regulator saying that we do not need Keystone XL and that we do not need the Trans Mountain pipeline. Could the hon. member comment on the fact that we are still subsidizing oil companies to the tune of \$18 billion and only investing \$15 billion into climate action?

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, we absolutely need to end subsidies for the oil and gas industry, and that includes provincial subsidies for the fracking industry, which has had \$6 billion for LNG Canada to export fracked gas from this country. That is going to be a stranded asset. It is going to be wasted taxpayer dollars, the same way that Trans Mountain—

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

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to begin my speech by addressing some of the things that we heard from the Green Party member just before this. He was talking about stranded assets. The eastern part of Canada

could be significantly stranded if Line 5 gets shut down, and that is the reality.

He was talking about oil and gas being a sunset industry. That may be true, but that sunset is not likely to happen until several hundred years from now. We are still seeing an increase in demand for oil production around the world. Even if one believes all the projections, that increase in demand, not a reduction in demand, will continue for the next 30 years at a minimum.

What better place to get those hydrocarbons from than Canada? We have some of the most ethically produced oil on the face of the planet, with some of the lowest-carbon-intensity oil, right here in Canada. Never mind the fact that we are importing hydrocarbons from around the world to continue to supply Canada. That alone seems to be ridiculous, in my opinion. We are an energy-rich country. We have endless amounts of natural resources in this country, yet we rely on other countries to supply our energy.

In the case of Line 5, we are relying on another country to keep the licensing going for that particular pipeline. As far as I know, right now that pipeline is operating illegally. The most recent Line 5 news is that the easement through the State of Michigan has been revoked, but the pipeline continues to operate. We are hanging in limbo as we go forward.

I am speaking to Bill C-30, which is the budget implementation act. It has been fascinating to listen to all of the discussion around this particular budget. We hear repeatedly from folks about the subsidization of the oil and gas industry. I was just discussing with one of the Bloc members how the government subsidizes oil and gas, but does not subsidize the forestry industry. I have not seen any direct subsidies to the oil and gas industry, with the exception of buying a pipeline.

The Trans Mountain pipeline was being built by private industry. Due to the actions of the government, the pipeline was no longer to be built. The government subsequently bought that project. If that is what the Bloc member meant by subsidizing oil and gas, I get it. I do not think we need to be publicly funding pipelines either. Pipelines have been built successfully in this country for generations by private industry, and I would assume that would continue.

The Bloc member was commenting about the forestry industry in Quebec. In Northern Alberta, the forestry industry is a big contributor to jobs and the economy. Oil and gas are a shiny spot in our economy, but Alberta's economy is diversified. Where I come from, we do the three Fs: forestry, farming and fracking. Those are the big job creators in my area, and they are basically what support all of the population in the area. I am always interested in the challenges we see.

One aspect of this budget implementation act is the removal of interest on the apprenticeship loans that have been given out. I think that is a noble cause. I am the product of one of the apprenticeship programs in Alberta. I was one of the first to go through the rapid apprenticeship program when it was introduced back in 2003. I got my automotive ticket from Northern Alberta Institute of Technology.

The apprenticeship programs we have developed in Alberta are world-renowned and recognized. There is also the good work of NAIT, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. I went through there in classes full of apprentices.

• (1735)

Many of my friends have been apprentices. I got my journeyman's ticket back in 2007, so I know about the life of an apprentice. The beauty of apprenticeship programs is that people typically get to work while they are getting their training. Believe me, all of the apprentices I know are tradesmen. They are proud of what they do. They work with their hands. They would all very much appreciate having jobs right now, rather than having the interest on their loans waived. While I appreciate that in this particular bill, I do not see a lot in this bill that will get these people back to work.

I call Line 5 the magic pipeline because it has changed the Liberal rhetoric on pipelines dramatically. The Liberals are now starting to sound like Conservatives: Pipelines are the safest way to move petroleum products. If we did not have this pipeline there would be 8,000 rail cars and 15,000 tanker trucks on the road.

There is one way to get all of these apprentices back to work, and that is to start building some of the pipeline projects that had been proposed and were ready to be built back in 2015. One, in particular, runs parallel to Line 5 and is called energy east. That pipeline was ready to be built back in 2015 when I was first elected. The Liberals kiboshed that project, but we do not see anything. We do not see a repeal of Bill C-69: the "no more pipelines" bill. That would have been something they could have put in the budget to promote the development of our natural resources, promote jobs and promote private industry spending its own capital to get folks back to work and get us back to the lifestyle we were used to before COVID.

This seems like a prime opportunity to get us all back to work. It would ensure that we would have apprentices across the country making paycheques and being able to pay the interest on their student loans by going back to work. They could be raising their families, making money and doing all of the things that they do. I do not see a lot of those kinds of initiatives in this particular bill.

One thing that I saw in the budget was around the home renovation tax credit. I was hopeful we would get some details on it in this bill, but they are not evident. It was an initiative that the Conservatives undertook during the last great recession. We rapidly passed the home renovation tax credit, which allowed people to update their windows, insulation and other kinds of things. It could also be thought of as a green initiative. It was in the budget. We were talking about a particular \$5,000 tax credit on a \$40,000 loan. We do not see details of that in this particular bill, so I am disappointed about that.

Lastly, I want to talk a little about equalization. This bill touches on equalization, and on what is called the federal-provincial transfer act. One of the things that Albertans have been requesting for a number of years is the removal of the cap on that financial stabilization program. It is currently capped at \$60. The Liberals have moved that cap to \$166. That is a movement in the right direction, but there still is no logic as to why there is a cap on the equalization stabilization program.

Government Orders

Why is there a cap? If a province is suffering under duress and having less revenue than it had in the past, the stabilization program is there to maintain funding for programs while we go through a dip in revenue. Nobody can explain the logic for why there is a cap on that. We see that the government has acknowledged that maybe the cap is too low and it is going to raise the cap to \$166, but the Liberals do not provide us with any logic whatsoever as to why there needs to be a cap on that program. If government revenues in a particular province are suffering in a major depression, the stabilization program is supposed to balance that out and ease the pain of that. Why would it have a cap on it? There has been no logic whatsoever provided for that. I am also quite frustrated by that.

I see that my time is up. I am always grateful to represent the people of Peace River—Westlock.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I believe I heard my colleague say that there have been no investments in the oil sector, or none that he was aware of. I would like to remind him that \$27.3 billion will be invested in that sector in 2021, which represents an increase of nearly \$3 billion over last year.

These investments cover a decline in indirect fees such as municipal taxes in Alberta or electricity costs in British Columbia and Saskatchewan. Again, \$27.3 billion is being invested in 2021 in this energy source that we firmly want to divest from as soon as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned that we all want to shed this. I am not that particular about trying to end the oil patch at this point. It provides jobs for thousands of people in my area, it has brought prosperity to this country and it has contributed over \$600 billion to the national coffers over the last decade. Why would we kneecap ourselves? While the rest of the world is looking for hydrocarbons, why would we not be the country to produce them?

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.): Madam Speaker, there is a bit of a divide within the Conservative caucus, it seems. There are those who believe that the government should be spending a lot more money and then there are those who believe that the government has spent too much money. Those who say we should be spending more talk about health care transfers and spending additional money to support businesses and so forth. Those who want cuts talk about the deficit.

Government Orders

Which side of the divide is the member on? Does he believe the government needs to continue to support and invest in Canadians or would he like to see cuts by the government?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, it is a matter of priorities. I do not think there is the dichotomy that the member is referencing. We can be concerned about the debt and deficit and we can also be supportive of particular programs. There is no dichotomy in that.

What Conservatives are frustrated with is the government patting itself on the back. If there is a particular problem, it just says it spent this amount of money on that problem. In many cases, we see that the amount of money it has spent on a particular problem has made the problem worse, not better. We are saying if the government is going to spend a lot of money, let us see some results from it. The most striking example of this before COVID, in particular, was when there were border security issues and the government kept saying it was spending a certain amount of money on it, way more than Conservatives ever spent on it. What is interesting is that when Conservatives were in power—

• (1745)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to allow for more questions.

The hon. member for Provencher.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals talk a great game when it comes to building back and building back better, but the budget does not even include a plan to build. The member has very clearly articulated how the Liberals could have focused a little more on the trades and had something in the budget to encourage folks to get educated and trained in the trades. Could the member expand on how that is lacking in this budget?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, the crux of my speech was waiving interest on apprenticeship loans due to COVID. For those paying interest on apprenticeship loans, the interest would be waived for a certain period of time. While I commend that, if people are not working, having the interest deferred while not getting jobs means they are still in the same trouble. I do not see anything in the budget or the budget implementation act, Bill C-30, which we are discussing today, that would get Canada building things again or get our natural resource development kick-started.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the Liberal budget and raise concerns on several fronts. When I was elected in 2019, and in the years prior during the first mandate of the Liberal government, we saw deficit after deficit with no clear plan for balancing the budget. The grand plan for the budget to balance itself was failing. Now here we are a year and a half since the last election, and the \$20-billion deficits we were concerned about then seem like a drop in the bucket compared with the enormous budget we are debating today. For years, the Conservatives warned the government about spending the cupboards bare when times were good, and now we are facing the repercussions of that.

The pandemic was unavoidable. No matter which party was in power, there would have been large costs associated with COVID. However, this brings to mind the famous saying that life is 10%

what happens to us and 90% how we respond to the challenges thrown our way.

I will take some of my time today to reflect on the failures of the Liberal government and the ways it was too slow to act, which cost Canadians dearly.

First, it was early January 2020 when the Conservatives raised concerns about COVID-19 and called upon the government to take action at our borders. It was not until late March, when numerous COVID cases had already entered Canada, that the government took action. This delay in action would cost us big time. As opposed to a proactive response to the pandemic, what we had was a reactive one.

Second, the government failed to implement and utilize widespread rapid testing. Widespread rapid testing would have allowed more businesses to stay open, as there could have been better testing and tracing. Instead, for the past year, businesses have been teetering on the edge between not being allowed to stay open at all or being allowed to open under strict rules.

Canadians are now 15 months into this climate of uncertainty, with the Liberals only making things worse by not providing them with a clear plan to reopen our economy. I was deeply disappointed when the government voted against our opposition day motion to provide Canadians with certainty and establish a clear plan to reopen our economy.

I believe \$354 billion is a staggering number. That is how much debt the government has added to Canada's debt load for 2020-21 alone, bringing the total amount of debt added by the Liberals since 2015 greater than that of all other governments combined. Let us break that number down. The largest purchase that most Canadians will make in their lives is the purchase of a home. Currently, with rapid inflation in the housing market, the average Canadian home is worth \$716,000. This means the homes Canadians spend the better part of their lives paying for could be purchased nearly 500,000 times over in this year's federal budget.

When I think about the deficits we are accumulating, what concerns me most is the fiscal mess we are leaving behind for future generations to deal with. The interest on our debt is forecast to be \$30 billion per year by 2026, and that is with low interest rates. To put that in perspective, this budget commits \$30 billion to child care over the next five years. In the same time frame, we could spend that amount five times over simply just servicing our debt. Therefore, it is extremely important that we return to a balanced budget as soon as possible, so that we are not further increasing what we are paying in interest payments and can instead put money toward helping Canadians get ahead.

A few months ago, I stood in the House and spoke to Bill C-14 and to my concerns with raising our debt ceiling to \$1.8 trillion, an increase of \$663 billion. My colleague, the member for Abbotsford, compared this to asking for a line of credit from taxpayers but not saying where that money will be spent. Now, in this budget, we finally have some answers as to where this money will be spent and where it will not be.

• (1750)

Alberta's oil and gas industry has once again been forgotten by the Liberals. In the 725 pages of this budget, the words “oil and gas” are mentioned only once in relation to the wage subsidy. While the wage subsidy has helped the sector through COVID, it is not what this sector needs to prosper, and the temporary wage subsidy does not address the root issue of red tape and government roadblocks. When our oil and gas industry does well, Canada does well, and as the most ethical oil producer in the world, we should be creating more economic opportunities for oil and gas by getting pipelines built and supporting our world-class technology and our emerging industry in carbon sequestration. This budget leaves behind the oil and gas industry and all the economic prosperity that comes along with it.

The Conservatives know that spending is required to recover our economy. We had a strong recovery plan after the 2008 financial crisis. We made targeted investments, got Canada's finances back on track and returned to a balanced budget by 2015. However, make no mistake: This budget is not the same thing. It does nothing to secure long-term prosperity for Canadians. Instead, it presents a plan for a reimagined Canadian economy, as the Prime Minister put it. It is a plan that dabbles in risky economic ideas such as abandoning our oil and gas and natural resource industries, leaving our economy in a precarious position. This is not stimulus spending focused on creating jobs, but spending on the Liberals' partisan priorities.

When I talk about targeted support being needed, an area that comes to mind where this budget has a shortfall is tourism. COVID-19 has decimated the tourism industry in Canada, with many businesses on the brink, permanently closing or coming out of the pandemic with large debts. There is no doubt that the programs currently in place are helpful. However, I worry the \$500 million allocated to tourism recovery is not enough, especially when the Liberals continuously fail to provide us with a plan to reopen our economy.

Canada's tourism industry has a similar GDP to that of the oil and gas industry, and while at least tourism, unlike oil and gas, is getting some money through this budget, \$500 million is not adequate when I look at all the tourism businesses from coast to coast that need support. It is extremely important that we fully recover the tourism industry, especially in communities that rely on the industry as a significant part of their economy, such as the municipality of Jasper in my riding. Approximately 48% of the municipality's GDP was related to the tourism industry.

Another area of the budget that stuck out to me was the unfair and unjustified old age security increase for seniors over 75, as there was nothing for seniors aged 65 to 75, who have also been struggling throughout the pandemic. Statistics Canada recently reported that inflation has surpassed the Bank of Canada's 2% target and is now reaching 3.4%. Policies like the Liberal carbon tax and money printing have driven this inflation, and old age security payments must reflect that. Perhaps when we get to questions after my speech, a Liberal member can explain why they believe 65- to 75-year-olds are immune to inflation. It is far too often that seniors are emailing my office and saying they feel let down by the government's failures to support programs.

Government Orders

To conclude my remarks today, I would like to reiterate that I cannot support this budget because of the staggering deficit and the fact that the new spending in this budget is ideologically driven and completely abandons our oil and gas industry. This long-anticipated budget is a major letdown for western Canadians.

I look forward to questions from my colleagues.

• (1755)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have heard the Conservatives talk a lot about the amount of debt that has been taken on during the pandemic, but I would argue that it has been a requirement to take care of Canadians throughout this very difficult time.

What I find perplexing about this is the fact that the Conservatives voted for those pandemic measures and all of the spending worth hundreds of billions of dollars, quite often through unanimous consent motions. It would have taken just one of them to say no and it would not have passed. It would have triggered a whole series of events to have these bills go through the committee stage and be properly vetted. During that time, the member could have pointed out his concerns, but he did not. He voted in favour of them.

Can the member explain to the House why he voted in favour of those unanimous consent motions to spend the money if he is going to be critical of it now?

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that if the member had actually been paying attention to my speech, he would have noticed that I said it did not matter which political party was in power at the time; there would have been huge amounts of spending. Obviously, he must have missed that section. The money had to be spent at that time.

My concerns are about the late response by the Liberals toward COVID. They did not address the issues quickly enough by closing our borders. That was one of the issues I brought forward.

To conclude, I feel the Conservatives supported Canadians throughout this COVID situation, and if the Liberal member did not quite understand that in my speech, I apologize for his—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I liked my colleague's intervention on old age pensions.

In 1975, the old age security pension represented 20% of the average industrial wage. Today, it only covers about 13%. By the time young people turn 65, it is said that their pension will be worth 8%.

Government Orders

What does the member think of our proposal to increase the pension for all seniors starting at age 65?

What does he think of increasing it to \$110 over three years so that they can regain some of the purchasing power they have lost?

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. As my colleague will recall, when a motion was put forward in the House, the majority of MPs voted in favour of the increase, as he said, for our seniors, who built this country. We need to support them in their time of need, and without increasing their pensions, I do not see how they are going to survive as we proceed forward. I definitely agree with him. I voted in favour of that, as did the majority of the House, but the Liberals did not. That is one thing I do support.

• (1800)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that in his former life, my colleague was the mayor in one of his communities. As the mayor, he would have been seized with the concept that every annual budget should at least have a plan in it. Of course, the Liberal budget no longer appears to be annual; it seems more like a biennial event.

Is there any semblance of a plan in this budget that my colleague can detect?

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Speaker, when I was mayor, as the member for Provencher mentioned, I knew that we could not run deficits as a municipality. We had to have a proper plan in place on what we were going to address and how we were going to see our future grow.

That is one thing that was missed in this budget. I was hoping with much anticipation, like many other MPs, that it was going to be a great budget that would show how we were going to progress into the future, how we were going to open up our economy and how we were going to create jobs. I keep saying the word “how”. It is a shame that we do not see how this is all going to be done. That is the challenge with this budget, and one of the many issues I have with it.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-30, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 19, 2021.

As always, I rise to represent the good citizens of the North Okanagan—Shuswap. They have been doing their part during this pandemic, but have seen this government let them down.

In previous budget debates and examining the Liberal deficits in the range of \$18 billion to \$20 billion, I had stated how these deficits created a public debt amounting to about \$500 for every living Canadian. That is \$500 for every person in Canada, whether they have the means to repay it or not. For the fewer than 50% of Canadians who are in the workforce and able to repay debt, their share was exponentially more than \$500 per person on average.

Throughout this pandemic crisis, I have supported emergency spending, which was necessary to help individuals and small businesses get through the layoffs and business shutdowns caused by

the restrictions required to prevent the spread of the virus. Members from all parties, and indeed all Canadians, have invested varying levels of trust in this government to spend where necessary to protect Canadians, to end the pandemic and to help Canadians and employers who required assistance along the way. In more than one way, Canadians had no choice but to trust this government to spend money and deliver a pandemic response.

How has this government treated the trust of those who depend on it? Well, scandals have emerged and proven the self-evident truths that this government has reportedly failed to focus and deliver the investments required to secure the future of all Canadians. Crisis spending was and is clearly still required, but without a plan, spending without controls never delivers the outcomes that are needed.

One outcome of the government's spending that we can all bank on is the additional \$343 billion in national debt that the government has already added, which works out to \$9,270 for every Canadian, whether they are able to repay it or not. That means, once again, that those in the workforce who are potentially able to pay down debt have been handed another tax bill of \$20,000 each by this government. What is worse is that the government still has no clear plan for getting Canadians back to work to start paying down the debt of the 2016 to 2020 deficits, and now this new added debt.

I have reviewed the budget and searched for the priorities identified to me by the good people of North Okanagan—Shuswap; the priorities that I have consistently relayed to this government on behalf of my constituents. Unfortunately, in budget 2021, this government has failed to recognize some vitally important needs.

Affordability is something weighing on the minds of many Canadians and, once again, this government has failed to recognize the reality in this budget. Seniors on fixed incomes see the cost of groceries and everyday living growing faster than their pensions. With no way of increasing their incomes, seniors are already worried that the future increases in taxes to pay for this government's spending will leave them with fewer dollars for daily living.

Young families see the cost of their first home growing faster than their income, and they need a plan to make home ownership more affordable. As the inflation rate has hit 3.4%, the highest level in a decade, these young families can only fault this Liberal government, with its policies of flippantly printing and spending money, for their inability to keep up with rising costs.

• (1805)

On infrastructure, over the years I have advocated on behalf of municipalities and first nations in need of infrastructure programs to help grow their communities and secure the future of their residents and members. The one-time investment of \$2.2 billion to address infrastructure priorities in municipalities and first nations communities through the federal gas tax fund is not the long-term commitment the communities are looking for. When major infrastructure projects often take years to implement, a one-time injection is somewhat like the Prime Minister's promise of a one-shot summer. There is no plan to follow through.

On investments in aquatic invasive species, AIS, I have heard from numerous conservation organizations, municipalities, first nations and regional districts that are all justly concerned about the persistent threat of aquatic invasive species to wildlife, ecologies and economies in the North Okanagan—Shuswap.

In 2019, the Prime Minister directed the fisheries minister to make new investments in the fight against invasive species. Nearly a year and a half later, British Columbians are still waiting for the government to finally provide some new resources to protect our waters from invasive species.

Having served with the fisheries minister for years on the fisheries committee, the minister knows that the introduction of Zebra and Quagga mussels to B.C. waters would devastate our ecosystem and local economies, yet she persists in withholding the new investment the Prime Minister mandated her to make.

More needs to be done and Canadians deserve better. Throughout the pandemic, I have heard from hundreds of constituents doing their best to contend with the challenges they face. One common thread that I see in the input and requests I have received is that Canadians need a plan to help them secure their future, a long-term national recovery plan. Canadians want a plan that will secure their jobs. Businesses have been contacting me saying they are unable to fill shifts because of disincentives for people to go back to work.

That is why the Conservatives put forward a back-to-work bonus plan to help Canadians transition back to work, while gradually reducing the need for government benefits. Canadians want a plan that will secure accountability. Constituents have contacted me tired of the breaches of ethics by the Prime Minister, his cabinet and caucus. That is why Conservatives adopted the policy put forward by one of my constituents to strengthen legislation around accountability and transparency.

Constituents want a plan that will secure mental health. We all know someone who has been impacted by mental illness and been unable to access the support they need. Canadians need a plan that recognizes mental health is health.

Canadians also want a plan that will secure the country. Early in the pandemic, we learned that Canada was not prepared and that stockpiles of PPE had been shipped to China by the government. Canadians need a plan that ensures we are prepared for the next threat to our security, whatever threat that may be.

Canadians want a plan that will secure our economy, rather than borrowing and printing more money and driving up inflation. Cana-

Private Members' Business

dians need a plan that provides stimulus measures that are targeted and time limited to avoid creating a structural deficit.

These are the differences between the Liberal government's budget and the implementation act, and our Conservative plan to secure our future.

When I hear of seniors' drop-in organizations that have been forced to close because they spent their last dollars paying utility bills and got no help from the government to remain solvent so they could be there when restrictions are lifted again, I see a government that has failed its citizens. When I hear from businesses that could be growing except they cannot find workers to fill shifts, I see a government that has failed. When I hear from first nations, municipalities and community organizations that the government is not providing the protective measures mandated by the minister, I see a government that has failed.

Canadians deserve better and I look forward to working with the good people of the North Okanagan—Shuswap in our pursuit of the plans and resources needed to secure the future and the future of all Canadians.

• (1810)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap will have five minutes for questions and comments when the House next returns to debate on the motion.

It being 6:11 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR DIABETES ACT

The House resumed from May 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-237, An Act to establish a national framework for diabetes, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are here this evening to discuss Bill C-237, otherwise known as an act to establish a national framework for diabetes.

The purpose of this legislation is to promote and improve access to diabetes prevention and treatment. It is sponsored by my colleague from Brampton South and is going into the third stage, in other words, third reading.

Private Members' Business

To summarize Bill C-237, it seeks to explain what diabetes and prediabetes are; identify the training, education and guidance needs of health care and other professionals related to the prevention and treatment of diabetes; promote research and improve data collection in order to enhance the knowledge and information sharing required to conduct research; and ensure that the Canada Revenue Agency is administering the disability tax credit fairly so that it can help as many persons with diabetes as possible.

The legislation gives the government one year to develop the policy framework, and within five years the government must evaluate its effectiveness and revise it, of course, if necessary.

It should be noted that since 2016 Health Canada's Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control has been managing the diabetes strategy. This plan is very general and contains more policy statements than meaningful measures.

Key aspects are essentially the same as the previous plan. That is why countless organizations are calling for a national plan or framework.

The Bloc Québécois is in favour of developing a national framework for diabetes. To oppose it in light of the medical catastrophe that this chronic disease represents would be just wrong.

However, it is imperative that this framework be developed with the demands of Quebec and the provinces in mind and, again, that the division of powers be respected.

In a way, health is a competitive jurisdiction since it involves some overlap between the provincial and federal governments. In the area of health, Quebec must have maximum authority and control. That is what we want and that is what we will have.

The federal government does have a role to play in prevention, and that includes working to stop the rampant obesity rates in this country. Obesity significantly increases a person's chance of becoming diabetic. Although Quebec is doing well compared to the other Canadian provinces and many major countries in the world, one in four Quebecers is obese and will be obese in the coming years.

Diabetes Canada, the most influential diabetes organization in Canada, does not operate in Quebec. Instead, Quebec is fortunate to have Diabetes Québec, which provides information and support to its members and contributes to research. In 1994, the organization even founded Entraide diabétique du Québec, a separate organization that collects donations to help people with diabetes.

There are three main types of diabetes: type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes and gestational diabetes. In all three types, the disease is characterized by chronic hyperglycemia, or high blood sugar, which means that the person's glucose levels are too high.

Insulin abnormalities mean that sugar does not enter the body's cells to provide energy, but remains in the bloodstream anyway. This condition, which is lethal if left untreated, has a strong impact on susceptibility to cardiovascular disease, blindness and kidney failure, among others. Obviously, this type of disease can lead to limb amputations due to the factors listed previously.

• (1815)

With 442 million adults affected worldwide, diabetes truly is a global scourge, and Quebec is not spared. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, one in 10 Quebecers has diabetes or pre-diabetes. The financial burden of diabetes is naturally staggering. According to Quebec's public health department, we are talking about \$3 billion a year.

The good news is that almost 90% of type 2 diabetes cases can be prevented or even cured by adopting healthy lifestyle habits. This is why it is imperative to take preventive action by educating people about healthy lifestyle habits, including good nutrition and exercise.

However, we would be deluding ourselves if we thought that the ball is entirely in our court. The sugar lobbies are obviously working hard to slow down, dilute or nip in the bud any form of legislation that might seek to reduce refined sugars.

Legislating for a tax on products containing refined sugar, honest labelling or a restriction on the advertising of these products would prove to be a difficult but necessary task.

Conversely, we must also point out that the diabetes epidemic is a boon for pharmaceutical companies. In 2016, global profits from sales of insulin reached almost \$50 billion. It is extremely difficult to conduct an effective prevention campaign when going up against powerful pharmaceutical companies, which boast that they can help people with diabetes live a normal life, even though that may be stretching the truth.

While waiting to win this battle, it is vital that we continue and even redouble our efforts to provide adequate services. Medical research is making great strides, but it is not enough. We also know which communities are the most vulnerable to diabetes. In Quebec and Canada, it is first nations. The rate of diabetes in these communities is five times greater than that in Quebec and Canada.

To address this problem, Health Canada has invested approximately \$50 million per year since 1989, mainly through the aboriginal diabetes initiative. Organizations are tasked with working with indigenous peoples to reduce health inequalities. At this time, much more still has to be done, and the federal government will have to invest far more than \$50 million a year to reverse the current trend. That, however, is a debate for another day.

It was exactly 100 years ago in Ontario, in the magnificent country of Canada, that insulin was discovered by a team of medical researchers. For their work, Frederick Banting and John Macleod were awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine two years later, in 1923.

As a pioneer in diabetes research and its treatment, Canada must have a clear and ambitious national framework. Nevertheless, the Bloc Québécois's support is contingent on the federal government respecting input from the provinces and Quebec and on the division of powers, which is what the Bloc Québécois wants. We will vote in favour of the bill as is because it does meet all the necessary criteria so far. Bill C-237 does not promise to eradicate the scourge of diabetes within the next few years, but it is a very acceptable solution even so.

Before I wrap up, I want to highlight the work of an organization in my riding, the Association du diabète Laval, Laurentides, which has been working tirelessly since 1984 to educate people about diabetes and share knowledge through presentations and workshops.

• (1820)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank hospitals and clinics in my riding and the rest of Quebec for the work they do every day to fight diabetes.

I applaud the medical professionals responsible for diagnosing and supporting patients with diabetes and improving their quality of life.

Lastly, I want to thank the researchers—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Unfortunately, the member's time is up.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak to this bill to establish a national framework for diabetes.

Currently, more than six million Canadians are living with diabetes and the health and financial costs associated with it. Today, many Canadians living with diabetes are unable to afford the medications, devices and supplies they need. We also know there are even larger costs related to non-adherence that can lead to avoidable complications and sometimes even worse.

This is especially true for too many families that I represent in London—Fanshawe. I have heard from folks who struggle with being able to put food on the table and to keep up with the rising costs of housing and with the large and rising costs of medication. They are often faced with an impossible choice.

One person I spoke to talked about paying their bills every month, and called it creative financing: the bills they skip this month they pay the next month; what medications can they choose to stretch or which prescriptions must they leave unfilled. Sadly, these choices can lead to poor health outcomes and hardship. They also have to live with the choices that federal and provincial governments make that too often overlook them and cause them a lifetime of greater suffering.

I cannot imagine a family in Canada that has not been impacted by diabetes. Mine certainly has. My grandfather lived with diabetes, but he was fortunate to have a unionized job. He was a steelworker and his union ensured that he had benefits and drug cover-

age. However, for far too many Canadians, a well-paying job with benefits is not a reality.

We have also seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic how the massive downturn in the economy has come with the shutdown of workplaces, and this can lead to many people losing those benefits and often at a time when they need them the most.

The New Democrats believe the federal government must support the development and implementation of a new national diabetes strategy based on the Diabetes 360° framework that was developed in 2018 by Diabetes Canada and dozens of other stakeholder groups. The government should also facilitate the creation of type 1 diabetes and indigenous-specific strategic approaches, the latter to be led and owned by indigenous communities.

The Government of Canada must support indigenous-led programs. Indigenous communities are asking for services and research, the prioritization of food sovereignty, access to culturally appropriate care and treatment options, traditional healers and medicines. They are also asking for any assistance to raise awareness about gestational diabetes and the increase in diabetes among young indigenous women.

In addition, the New Democrats believe that there is an urgent need for a universal public pharmacare plan that would ensure all Canadians living with diabetes would have access to the medications they need, when they need them. This must include coverage for diabetes devices and supplies such as test strips, syringes, insulin pumps and continuous glucose monitors. There have been incredible technological advancements that help people living with diabetes monitor their insulin levels through apps on their cellphones, but these are expensive and out of reach for too many Canadians.

Canada has no formal national strategy to address diabetes, one of the most significant health care crises of our time according to Diabetes Canada. Although the World Health Organization recommends every country have a national diabetes strategy, Canada's previous strategy fizzled away in 2013, followed by a scathing report on its underperformance by the auditor general.

Depending on where people live in Canada, what other private insurance they have and what their treatment protocol is for their diabetes, it can cost a patient out of pocket up to \$15,000 a year to live with diabetes, and that is unacceptable. However, other provincial governments are providing leadership on this front.

Private Members' Business

For example, the current B.C. NDP government expanded its pharmacare coverage for diabetics aged 25 and older to use insulin pumps instead of relying on daily injections to stabilize their condition. Under the former Nova Scotia NDP government, the province extended coverage for the cost of insulin pumps and supplies for eligible youth aged to 18, and supplies for people 19 to 25 with type 1 diabetes who used an insulin pump. Under the former NDP government in Manitoba, the province brought in a program to cover the cost of pumps for youth. These were all positive steps made by current and former NDP governments across Canada.

I wish I could say that we are seeing similar positive steps in my home province of Ontario. Earlier this month, the Ontario Conservative government voted down NDP MPP Taras Natyshak's Bill 272 that called on the government to add continuous glucose monitoring and flash monitoring devices to Ontario's assistive devices program for Ontarians diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. This bill would have made life easier and more affordable, removing financial barriers to technology that would make it easier to manage diabetes and would remove the need for the frequent finger pricks. It is said that the provincial Conservative government could not have seen the merits in passing it.

● (1825)

There is an estimated one in three Ontarians living with diabetes or pre-diabetes, approximately 4.3 million people. People in Ontario and across Canada need to see a government that will support them and, of course, the principles outlined in the Canada Health Act, which are clear about universal health coverage. It is clear that we need a national framework to bring expanded coverage for Canadians, no matter the government, no matter the province and no matter the postal code.

Any national framework needs to be backed up with a national universal pharmacare plan. A recent report from the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions found that 57% of Canadians with diabetes reported failing to adhere to their prescribed therapies due to affordability issues related to medications, devices and supplies.

The Liberals say the right things when it comes to pharmacare, but when it comes time to act, they put the profits of big pharmaceutical and insurance companies ahead of what Canadian families need. The Liberals have been promising pharmacare for 23 years, but Canadians are still facing sky-high prescription costs that make it hard to make ends meet. Right now, millions of families cannot afford to take the medications they need because they have no drug coverage. The number of uninsured people forced to skip their medications is growing, and with the COVID-19 pandemic, most people work on contract or are self-employed or have jobs that do not come with health benefits or have no job at all. As well, too many seniors are putting their health at risk because they do not have that drug coverage and they cannot afford to pay out of pocket for their medications.

Bulk buying of pharmaceuticals undercuts inflated prescription costs set by private companies and would let us lower costs dramatically by negotiating prices as an entire country. We could save \$4.2 billion and use that money to give better health coverage to all Canadians. A national framework for diabetes combined with a national universal pharmacare plan would have a direct impact on

families across Canada and families in my riding of London—Fanshawe.

The lack of dedicated support or action to tackle the diabetes epidemic means that every 24 hours more than 20 Canadians die of diabetes-related complications, 14 have a lower limb amputated, 480 more are diagnosed with the disease, and the health care system spends \$75 million treating patients with the disease. It does not have to be this way, but we need a government that has the political will and courage to get it done.

It would be a missed opportunity on the eve of the 100th anniversary of the discovery of insulin in Canada if we fail to ensure that every Canadian living with diabetes can afford access to insulin. Of course, as a proud Londoner, it would be a failed opportunity if I did not mention this anniversary as well. In 1921, Dr. Frederick Banting, Charles Best, James Collip and their supervisor, John Macleod discovered insulin. This discovery revolutionized the treatment of diabetes worldwide and remains among the most celebrated medical discoveries in Canadian history.

Yet today, many Canadians living with type 1 or type 2 diabetes are unable to afford the medications, devices and supplies they need. I cannot imagine this is the outcome that Banting, Best and Collip wanted or imagined when they were awarded the American patents for insulin, which they sold to the University of Toronto for \$1 each.

Located in London, Ontario is the house of Sir Frederick Banting.

Under the stewardship of Diabetes Canada, Banting House National Historic Site of Canada creates public awareness and understanding of the national historic significance of Sir Frederick Banting and preserves the commemorative integrity of Banting House, the birthplace of insulin, for the benefit of the people of Canada.

Many Canadians still fight for the dream that we do not profit off each other's illness, that we grow as people and as a society, that we take care of each other. It can be disheartening to see a government continue to be heavily lobbied by large pharmaceutical companies and, even more so, that it seems to listen. That is why New Democrats support the creation of a national framework for diabetes, and we will not stop fighting for a national universal pharmacare plan.

Tommy Douglas, the father of medicare, did not intend to limit it to hospitals and doctors alone. The coverage of drugs and other services, like dental care, ear and eye care, and long-term care, was to follow. That is why I will conclude my speech tonight with a quote from Tommy Douglas: "Courage, my friends; 'tis not too late to build a better world."

Private Members' Business

• (1830)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to this private member's bill, which has been brought forward by the member for Brampton South. I want to congratulate her on taking her private member's opportunity to bring forward a bill or motion and put it to such a meaningful and important cause.

I used to sit very close to the member for Brampton South in the House, and I know her passion for health care and making sure that the most vulnerable in our communities, especially as related to health, are taken care of. In the last session of Parliament, on a number of occasions while sitting next to each other, she talked to me about the need for something to be done nationally on diabetes. In this Parliament's lottery, she was very lucky to have her spot near the top of the list and had an opportunity to do something. To see this bill brought forward by the member for Brampton South is truly rewarding, because I now that she is doing something that she is extremely passionate about. Indeed, she has been a leader in bringing members from different parties in this House together to talk about diabetes and the strategy that the federal government should take.

When we talk about a disease that affects over three million Canadians, I must admit that I was kind of surprised to learn that we did not already have a strategy of some form in place as it relates to making sure that we have a coordinated effort across the country in fighting diabetes. As indicated by a number of people in this House in the previous hour of debate on this bill, it is something that affects so many Canadians and their quality of life.

In many instances, diabetes is a preventable disease. Of the roughly 200,000 Canadians newly diagnosed with diabetes, approximately 90% is the preventable type 2. When we think of the growth in the aging Canadian population, the number of Canadians expected to live with diabetes obviously grows as well. Putting in measures to make sure that we have a national strategy as it relates to educating health care professionals on how to prevent and treat diabetes is critical, probably more important than at any time previously in fighting this particular disease, with the exception, of course, as mentioned by the previous speaker from the NDP, of the invention of insulin.

I am so glad to see so much support throughout the House from various parties, and it appears as if the bill might pass unanimously. It is telling of how this Parliament can come together and work together here in this place, but also show the desire to work with our counterparts at the provincial, territorial and municipal levels to make sure that all Canadians throughout Canada can have a meaningful framework in place so they are taken care of in the event they get diabetes and, in fact, to help prevent that from being the case.

It is very rewarding and I am very proud to be part of a government that has brought forward many initiatives on health care throughout the various budgets that have been presented since 2015. I would note that, in budget 2021, there is \$25 million over a five-year period, starting in 2021, specifically for Health Canada for additional investments in research on diabetes, specifically ju-

venile diabetes, surveillance and prevention, and to work towards developing a national framework on diabetes.

This private member's bill dovetails nicely with what this government is already in the course of doing in terms of making sure that we continue to advance the research, prevention and education around diabetes. Indeed, Bill C-237 will be developed in consultation with provinces and territories, indigenous groups and other stakeholders to help support improved access to prevention and treatment and better health outcomes for all Canadians.

• (1835)

One of the various elements that have been brought forward is the \$25 million over five years, which I mentioned, but in budget 2021 there is also a proposal for \$10 million over five years for the Public Health Agency of Canada for a new diabetes challenge prize. Specifically, this initiative would help surface novel approaches to diabetes prevention and promote the development and testing of new interventions to reduce the risks associated with type 2 diabetes.

As has been illustrated by both the government approach and members of this House, including the member who brought forward this bill and members from other parties who have been speaking in favour of it, this is something this Parliament really does see as an opportunity to seize on this issue and to advance the objectives of Parliament and those health objectives for the benefit of all Canadians. I am very proud to be supporting this. Knowing we can have such a great impact on the lives of so many Canadians is something deeply meaningful to all members of this House.

I will conclude with where I started, which is that I am very encouraged to see this member use her opportunity through this private member's bill to bring forward something that will have a meaningful, large impact on a number of Canadians throughout this country. Indeed, if the national strategy is developed in the right way and brought forward in a way that really helps prevent people from getting diabetes, the value of her impact will be immeasurable, because down the road many people may end up not getting type 2 diabetes in particular because of the prevention measures that would be put in place here.

This member knows a lot about this topic. As I indicated before, she was very passionate about it and spoke very passionately about it. I know that before coming into Parliament she was in the health profession specifically. I always like to see examples of people who come to this House with previous knowledge outside of government and its workings, people who have a specific passion, perhaps from a former profession, and bring it here and apply it to policy. What could be more rewarding than working in a profession and then bringing it to the seat of democracy for our nation and putting that knowledge into actual, practical use and turning it into legislation, as it appears this member will be doing through this bill, given the fact that all parties have indicated they are going to be supporting it?

I will not use up any more time, but I am very much looking forward to adopting this and having a vote on it at the end of this hour of debate, and moving on with this strategy so we can see the national framework be developed for all Canadians.

Private Members' Business

• (1840)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all of the speakers tonight because I think they have brought so much warmth to this discussion. The fact is that diabetes, as all speakers have said, is something that is preventable in 90% of cases. I think this is a great time to all join together and talk about this.

I am so glad it is you in the chair, Mr. Speaker, because I can share with you the types of phrases that are used in my house, or my mom and dad's house, every day. Any time I walk into my parents' house I hear, "Karen, your father's sugar is high. Ask your dad how many cookies he ate today. Your father's sugar was at 15 and he is miserable." This is all I hear: "Your father's sugar is high" and "Karen, are you watching your sugar?" These are my parents. They love me.

I am from a family where many of my elderly relatives have been challenged with diabetes. That is why I am so happy to speak on this bill today, Bill C-237, a national framework for diabetes act, which is focused on prevention and treatment. According to Diabetes Canada, there are 11 million Canadians living with diabetes or prediabetes. These are really important things, so we have to understand the three different types of diabetes there are and what we can do as well.

I am going to start off with the least simple one, which is type 1 diabetes, and then I will talk about what many of us have discussed, which is type 2 diabetes.

Type 1 is an autoimmune condition where the immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys the beta cells in the pancreas that produce insulin. The damage is permanent. If we look at who is going to have these issues, we recognize that type 1 diabetes mostly impacts people before the age of 35, though it can develop later on in life as well.

It is one of those things that people are born with, or there is something determining that they will end up with type 1 diabetes, whether genetics or whatever it may be. There is no solution to what is causing these issues. These are things I think many families are very concerned with because having a child who has diabetes is life altering. This is something I look at as a mom.

The research being done through our juvenile diabetes associations and all of those groups is really important because of the impact type 1 diabetes has, especially on our youth. I am sure everybody in this House has probably seen a young person on a field playing soccer, baseball, or whatever it may be, with a pump on their side.

The first time I saw that was probably about 15 years ago. A young girl came to my house to visit with the kids and she had her own insulin pump. It is incredible to think of this very active child and of her parents knowing she is on the soccer field and there is a chance of her passing out or having issues at any time. This national strategy is important because it would help all families.

We understand this form of diabetes is an autoimmune disease where the body is not able to create insulin, so we have to ensure we have the technology and the advancements to make sure that person has a whole life. I am talking about these young children.

Earlier in my career, I had some people come in from the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, the JDRF.

It was great when they came in because they were talking about some of these little pieces they were wearing on their hips that showed how many carbohydrates they had in their diet, what proteins and all of these things. Having a framework and funding is so important because this is a disease we can do more about.

Type 2 diabetes is something that we talk about most often, and 90% of diabetes cases are type 2. This has more to do with insulin resistance, where the insulin hormone is not used efficiently. That takes me back to first year university biology, when we talked about the impacts on the kidneys if the pancreas is not working, which can have a very negative effect on a person's life.

We will talk more about that because I think, when talking about type 2 diabetes, we can really pinpoint what we can do. There truly is a path to limit and reduce the number of people who are living with diabetes. There is prevention, and that is why I think this is a really important strategy as well.

Gestational diabetes is an issue that pregnant women have when insulin-blocking hormones occur, and we see many women going through their last weeks of pregnancy with diabetes. In many cases, it goes away quickly and they will be fine, but there are some cases we have to be concerned with.

• (1845)

Diabetes, as I indicated, has been an important part of my life. I think of my family members who have lived with it. I remember back in the mid-1970s when my grandmother came to live with us because she had to have her leg amputated due to diabetes. Of the common issues there are with diabetes, amputation seems to be very common, especially when we are talking about 45 years ago. It is incredible to see how things have changed in the last 45 years. We are not seeing as many amputations. We are seeing that proper care and maintenance that needs to be done.

With someone who has type 2 diabetes, we have to be worried about heart and stroke issues, nerve damage, and the eyes and retinopathy. There are many factors that we use to control and manage these things. That is why I think that with type 2 diabetes, we really need to look at a national strategy.

This plan would be very useful in seeing how can we have a national strategy that really takes some of the best practices from our provinces and territories. We can work together, ensure that the research is being done and see how we can assist by funding. We can assist the provinces and territories in recognizing that we are a partner here. We are not the main game holder, but we can enhance people's lives.

Private Members' Business

In some of the key factors of managing and controlling, we need to look at nutrition and fitness, including meal planning, healthy eating, exercise and activity, and weight management. To drill down into this more specifically, I pulled out a report from 2012 done by the Government of Ontario focusing on some of the key recommendations. Many of the diabetes factors and many of the things we can move forward on are truly common sense things.

For instance, we can reduce obesity. We know that being overweight is a key factor to diabetes. What can we do? How can we ensure that somebody is going to increasing their physical fitness and activity? We know that with insulin, when someone is exercising, it is more controlled. Over those two or three hours of exercising, one's glucose tolerance actually starts to change with those activities. People should be aware of this.

We know that overall the physical exercise someone does will give them better health, including for their heart. We need to make sure that we are maintaining healthy weights. That is something I will be very honest about. I am not sure what I would be at a healthy weight. We know that, especially women. We can look at stress as another factor that can lead to this. Right now people are sitting at home due to stress, due to COVID and doing different routines.

We know a lot of people have packed on what some people call the "COVID 15", or the "frosh 15", if one went to university back in the nineties. A lot of people have gained a lot of extra weight. What are some things that we can do to ensure people are going to be healthy again? We know that maintaining a healthy meal plan and making sure we are eating proper foods are other ways of doing so, by having a healthy diet. Another thing is not to smoke. We know that with diabetes, smoking is something that can cause great complications.

I heard my colleague from the Bloc indicate this also, and I am very proud, being from Elgin—Middlesex—London, that we have a statue honouring Sir Frederick Banting who, in 1923, along with John James Rickard Macleod, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine. They codiscovered insulin. This is the type of great work that we need to do. This was over a century ago. This is what we need to do. This is what makes our country better.

I really like the direction we are going in. I recognize that members from the government have talked about all the funding they have given and what they are doing for this. I just hope they stay on target, stay focused and get it done right. We know a lot of times that sometimes we may put money into it, but we are not sure if it is being spent properly. Are we focusing on what the provinces and territories need? How can we do that? I hope we do get it right.

To the member who put this forward, I do have great respect for her. I know she was one of the persons putting a motion forward so that we studied this in HESA. It is really important that we are doing that as well. I hope that we get this right.

This is something that we can do together. This is something that we should be proud of, if we come up with a strategy that works. I wish everyone the best on this going forward to make sure it gets to committee and we can look at it as thoroughly as possible.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I, too, am pleased to speak to Bill C-237 on a national framework for diabetes, which was introduced by the member for Brampton South.

I think it is worth pointing out that we are talking about a bill and not a national strategy, even though we have had a lot of discussions about this in the past. The advantage of a bill is that the legal framework makes it possible to ensure better enforcement and better follow-up.

The bill states that the government has one year to establish the strategic framework and that it must assess the effectiveness of this national strategy five years after the report is tabled. That means that the bill already sets out a schedule and includes it in a legal framework, which is a positive step forward.

I am saying that because I am referring to the work that the Standing Committee on Health did after second reading and because my colleague from Montcalm asked the sponsor of Bill C-237, the member for Brampton South, some questions about the difference between what is happening now with the legal framework and the discussions that took place in the past with regard to national strategies. There have been discussions since 2005, and there have been debates about Diabetes 360° since 2018, so we wanted to know why we now need a legislative framework for all of this.

We were told that having a legislative framework is ultimately a good thing. It ensures that these intentions are not just wishful thinking and that there is follow-through.

Ms. Hanson of Diabetes Canada was asked about Diabetes 360°, the strategy that was recommended three times in a row and is also included in budget 2021. She was asked if the government had backed the strategy with funding. She answered that it had not yet done so.

After conducting a study on a national strategy, the Standing Committee on Health issued its recommendations. We tried to determine if these recommendations had been implemented by the government. It was not clear.

Thanks to the work of members, we now have a legislative framework and we can expect, or at least hope for, further outcomes and concrete action to fight diabetes.

I want to talk about Bill C-237 sponsored by the member for Brampton South by quoting from subclause 2(2) and speaking about the concerns that the bill addresses. Paragraph 2(2)(a) states that the national framework must include measures to "explain what diabetes and prediabetes are". It is important to know this and, as MPs, the bill informs us.

Private Members' Business

I would like to provide some statistics. Diabetes affects 11 million Canadians. Diabetes Quebec estimates that in Quebec alone, roughly 880,000 people have diabetes, and a quarter of a million do not even realize it. They are living with diabetes without knowing it.

Every day, about 20 Canadians die of complications from diabetes. Diabetes is responsible for roughly 25% of heart operations, 40% of kidney failure, and 50% of non-traumatic limb amputations, even today.

For Canadians with diabetes, the risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19 is twice as high, and the risk of dying is three times higher than normal. It is often harder to treat people with diabetes for viral infections because of the blood sugar fluctuations this can cause.

This is also about the people affected by diabetes. One in five adolescents with type 1 diabetes also suffers from depression, which is twice as high as the average. This affects people differently than the illness itself. Diabetes is also the primary cause of blindness in adults under 65. Diabetes has a major impact.

Paragraph 2(2)(b) of the bill states that there must be measures to “identify the training, education and guidance needs of health care and other professionals related to the prevention and treatment of diabetes, including clinical practice guidelines”.

The Bloc Québécois position on this is that Bill C-237 must not have an impact on Quebec's jurisdictions. However, we are not against virtue, and I will refer to the principle of the bill, which states that everything must be done in collaboration with the other levels of government, but also with the different stakeholders on the ground.

We hope that this means there will be a better distribution of tasks related not only to diabetes prevention and research, but also to caring for individuals with diabetes.

• (1855)

Paragraph 2(2)(c) of Bill C-237 states that the bill aims to “promote research and improve data collection on diabetes prevention and treatment”. Just today, we adopted Motion No. 38, which calls for the creation of a standing committee on science and research. We expect that this issue will be of interest to the committee and that it can look into diabetes.

Data collection can be done through the Public Health Agency of Canada, which is a federal entity. It is important to do it because Ms. Hanso of Diabetes Canada mentioned in committee that currently, in Canada, it is difficult to say how many of the people who have been diagnosed with diabetes have type 1 and how many have type 2. Apparently that is not yet clear.

Prevention is especially important, because over 50% of cases of type 2 diabetes are preventable. The importance of prevention in this context is vital.

Paragraph 2(2)(d) of Bill C-237 requires measures to “promote information and knowledge sharing in relation to diabetes prevention and treatment”. In terms of prevention, some things fall specifically under federal jurisdiction, like the labelling of less healthy,

sugary products. That is part of disease prevention, and it falls under federal jurisdiction.

As I mentioned earlier, regarding the importance of coordination, that has to be done with the provincial governments or health officials, indigenous groups and other stakeholders, to be sure to avoid any duplication in the services offered and in terms of responsibilities. We have to make sure no one falls through the proverbial cracks.

Paragraph 2(2)(e) of Bill C-237 requires measures to “take into consideration any existing diabetes prevention and treatment frameworks, strategies and best practices, including those that focus on addressing health inequalities”. It is worth taking a moment to discuss the situation of indigenous people. For various reasons, in some communities, the prevalence of type 2 diabetes is four to five times higher than in the general population.

Investments have been made in the past to try to correct this situation, but we can expect a national framework to be more effective, particularly in three areas. In terms of prevention, we must ensure that awareness campaigns on healthy living are conducted in the communities. We also need better screening to ensure that residents of indigenous communities who have diabetes without realizing it can receive treatment quickly and avoid complications. It is also important to ensure that the treatments adhere to the guidelines and that a consistent approach is taken in order to reduce mortality and comorbidity, since this is a matter that may fall under federal jurisdiction.

Paragraph 2(2)(f) of Bill C-237 reads as follows:

ensure that the Canada Revenue Agency is administering the disability tax credit fairly and that the credit, in order to achieve its purposes, is designed to help as many persons with diabetes as possible.

As we know, the expenses associated with diabetes are very high. It can cost people with diabetes more than \$1,500 per year. It has been reported that 30% of Canadians with diabetes cannot follow prescribed treatments because of the cost. These aspects speak to the relevance of Bill C-237.

Bills like this remind us that it is important for members to work together. It is nice to see something other than what happens during question period, to remind us that we can achieve a great deal when we work together. It also gives us the opportunity to learn more about one another. For instance, I learned that the member for Brampton South is a trained cardiology technologist and worked in health care for 18 years. I saw how much she cares about this issue.

In closing, I want to emphasize the wonderful collaboration we have seen on this issue with a quotation from my colleague from Repentigny, who is a member of the all-party diabetes caucus. She often says this in another context, but I think it really applies here: “If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together”.

I hope that we will be able to go a lot further to tackle diabetes, for we will have done it by working together as parliamentarians.

● (1900)

[English]

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak in support of my bill today. I want to start by thanking my colleague for Beaches—East York who generously gave up his slot so we could complete debate on this bill.

I also want to thank everyone who supported my private member's bill, Bill C-237, an act to establish a national framework for diabetes in Canada, and all members who contributed to the debate on this bill.

I would especially like to thank the organizations that have helped to support the bill: Diabetes Canada, JDRF, Diabetes Action Canada, the CNIB and many more organizations. I would like to thank researchers, like Dr. Peter Senior from the University of Alberta and Dr. Karen Cross from St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, not just for supporting the bill but for the hard work they do fighting diabetes that will some day lead to a cure.

Locally, I would like to thank people like Mayor Brown and the Brampton Council, Mayor Crombie of Mississauga, our Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Lawrence Loh, and the CEO of William Osler Health System, Dr. Naveed Mohammad. They know how important this issue is in our community and across Canada.

I know that when we pass the bill and send it to the Senate it will have just as much support there. I give thanks for the support of senators Marie-Françoise Mégie, Nancy Hartling, Patricia Bovey and many others. With a national framework for diabetes we can introduce a nation-wide effort to prevent, treat and finally end diabetes. If we pass this framework, it will help millions of Canadians living with pre-diabetes or diabetes.

A national framework for diabetes must identify the training, education and best practices of health care and other professionals who treat diabetes. It must improve data collection and promote information and knowledge-sharing in relation to diabetes prevention and treatment. It must take into consideration any existing frameworks, especially those that focus on addressing health inequalities. Finally, it must fund and promote research that will one day lead to a cure.

Last week, I met with Laura from Ottawa west, Nepean. She is a 23-year-old who has been living with diabetes type I since she was seven years old. She spoke about how there were early signs. Her teachers and parents did not immediately recognize it for what it was. This is why we need to improve education and awareness so that everyone can recognize the early signs and get treated accordingly.

Adjournment Proceedings

I also met with Dr. Cathy Felderhof from Cape Breton Island, who told me about the challenges of providing care for rural indigenous people and how diabetes interacts with mental health and other social factors of health. It is so important that experts like her and doctors who treat a variety of patients in the regions across Canada are brought together to help develop this strategy.

Indigenous populations face many factors, including socio-economic factors, that contribute to high rates of diabetes and create barriers to accessing proper treatment. In my city of Brampton, one in six community members has diabetes or pre-diabetes. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the challenges faced by people living with diabetes who are at an increased risk of developing severe symptoms. Economic insecurity, lack of physical activity and struggles with mental health during this pandemic have all had a negative impact on those living with diabetes.

Treating diabetes is expected to cost the health care system in Canada almost \$40 billion by 2028. This projected cost is concerning and it could be reduced if we pass Bill C-237 into law. A national framework for diabetes would provide guidelines to address diabetes and invest in prevention and education about the disease and in data collection. With this framework, we can see valuable input from stakeholders such as Diabetes Canada, JDRF and programs such as Diabetes 360°. This year, we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the discovery of insulin at the University of Toronto by Sir Frederick Banting and his colleagues. Canada gave insulin to the world. It is time for Canada to once again lead the way in the fight against diabetes.

● (1905)

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, the question is on the motion. If any member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division, that the motion be adopted on division or that the motion be carried, I would invite them to rise and indicate so to the Chair.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, I would ask for a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to order made on January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 2 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.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[English]*

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my deep concern with the Liberal government's failure to support the request by South Africa and India to temporarily waive intellectual property rights through the TRIPS waiver. By failing to support the TRIPS waiver, and by failing to ensure that all people and all countries can get vaccines to their populations as quickly and efficiently as possible, the government is putting Canada on the wrong side of history. This is not where Canadians want or deserve to be.

The decision to not support the waiver is ethically bankrupt. It will potentially cause the deaths of hundreds of thousands, or possibly millions, more people. It is indefensible, but more importantly it is also not very smart. We have heard so many times before, and I cannot reiterate with enough emphasis, that none of us is safe until all of us are safe. Until people around the world are vaccinated, until this virus is contained and eradicated and until variants stop evolving, we will not recover from this pandemic. We may believe that it is over, but if we fail to act globally, this virus will evolve and we will find ourselves in a second pandemic in which vaccinated Canadians are not protected. It would be a second pandemic that could have been prevented.

Why is the government willing to watch more people die? Why is the government willing to see our global economy crumble once again? Is this the price we are being asked to pay to protect big pharmaceutical companies? We should keep in mind that these companies, which use massive amounts of public dollars to develop, test and produce vaccines, are making billions of dollars in profit this year. These companies using public dollars, our money, are profiting off of the pandemic. They are looking for more and the government is obliging. Why choose big pharma over lives? Why choose big pharma over our future? This is not what Canadians want from their government.

The United States has said that it will support the waiver. Over 100 countries around the world have supported the waiver. There are 280 European parliamentarians who support the waiver. Members of the minister's own party, Liberal members of Parliament, have called upon the government to support the waiver. Even Pope Francis is urging Canada and all countries to support the waiver. Pope Francis recognizes that selfish politics, such as those shown by the Liberal government, are another variant of the COVID-19 virus. He said, "Another variant is when we put the laws of the market or of intellectual property over the...health of humanity."

The TRIPS waiver is not the only step we need to take to ensure vaccines are available as quickly and as widely as possible, but it is a vital step. It is a tool in the very limited tool box that humanity has right now to fight this virus, and frankly we need to use every single tool that we have at our disposal. The situation is urgent and the repercussions are catastrophic if we fail to act.

I am speaking from the heart. I am using every means I have to convince the government that it is not too late to do the right thing. It should stop dithering, stop deflecting and stop avoiding the issue by saying it is studying it and thinking about options. It should stop the ridiculous wait-and-see approach that insults the intelligence of

Canadians and fails to recognize the urgency of the pandemic. It should do the right thing, support the TRIPS waiver and help the world combat COVID-19 before it claims even more victims.

● (1910)

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that important question. I am also concerned about that issue.

Our government has been committed to those efforts since the beginning of the pandemic. As a country and as a government, we are a strong supporter of equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines around the world. We are working with our international partners right now. As my colleague is well aware, this is not a decision that can be made by Canada alone. We are working with other countries to eliminate all of the potential barriers to vaccine access, including intellectual property, supply chain constraints and the export restrictions we are seeing around the world.

Through the leadership of our Ottawa Group, we are promoting the trade and health initiative to the WTO to eliminate barriers, and we are determined to find solutions that will expedite the production and equitable distribution of vaccines.

[English]

I would like to state very clearly for the record that the member opposite is absolutely right that none of us are safe until everyone is safe. However, she is wrong to characterize our government's position in the way that she has.

Canada has been working since the very beginning with all of the players around the table at the WTO to find a solution to this issue. Canada is not in a position by itself to grant a waiver. We need to find consensus. In fact, the WTO is a consensus-based organization, so coming out one way or another without having all member states in agreement does not serve any purpose.

What we need to do is look at a text, which is the process we are engaging in now. I am sure the member is following the situation closely and understands that so far the waiver proponents have not proposed anything in writing. We are working toward this and are pushing all of the players around the table to come up with texts so that we can negotiate and move this forward.

Our government certainly recognizes, just as the member opposite does, that the pandemic is not over anywhere until it is over everywhere. We are committed to finding solutions. We are also committed to finding an agreement that accelerates global vaccine production, but one that does not negatively impact public health here in Canada or anywhere around the world.

We need to discuss IP protection proposals for a waiver that will allow particular COVID-19 vaccines to be available to developing countries. However, we also need to work with all members on some of the other barriers to accessing COVID-19 vaccines. We know what those are, and many of them are related to supply chain constraints.

Canada is actively engaged in the work of the trade and health initiative at the WTO. It aims to strengthen global supply chains and support the delivery of essential medicines and medical supplies, including vaccines, all over the world. Canada has also encouraged the director general of the WTO to enhance its efforts to ensure that the WTO plays a role in finding a global solution to this issue and in accelerating the production and distribution of affordable, safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines.

I will end by saying that Canada remains a strong advocate for equitable access to vaccines. We remain one of the very important players around the table, encouraging us all to find a text that we can agree. We want to make sure that vaccines are available right across the world.

I will point to our leadership as a country. For example, consider our contributions to the access to COVID-19 tools, or ACT, accelerator, and of course our contributions financially to the COVAX facility. To date—

• (1915)

The Deputy Speaker: We will have to leave it there for the moment. The hon. parliamentary secretary will have an extra minute at the end, but we will go back to the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona for her rebuttal.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, experts tell us that 30% more people will die if we do not act. Experts tell us that the cost of the extended pandemic could top \$4 trillion if we do not act. The government will have to bear the burden of history remembering what its decision was. For the Liberals to say that they have not been able to make a decision, that they cannot make a decision, is irresponsible and incorrect.

I am going to ask the member one more time. Will Canada add its name to the hundreds of countries that have already supported the TRIPS waiver, yes or no? Will the minister and will the member support the TRIPS waiver? It is really easy; it is yes or no.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, at the risk of complicating something the member opposite feels is very easy, I invite her to consider that we do not decide things unilaterally at the WTO and we need to agree upon a text as a member of the WTO, and as a leader at the WTO, in order to move forward.

I am not exactly sure what text the member opposite is asking Canada to agree to. I would like to see it, I would like to read it as a lawyer and I would like to understand it before putting our country's name to it.

I think it is important that we move forward. I absolutely agree with the member opposite that we need to be a constructive player in this discussion. However, I would encourage her not to minimize the importance of the debate and the complexity of the matter that is before the government and all governments at the moment.

Adjournment Proceedings

We will absolutely continue to support a robust, multi-faceted and global effort to ensure equitable access to vaccines right across the world, but we will do so responsibly.

[*Translation*]

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve good governance, an ethical and transparent government that works on building public confidence in government institutions instead of undermining them through scandals and constant ethical violations.

Scandals have been erupting in Ottawa since the day the Liberals formed government. The Liberals have spent all of their efforts on covering up their corruption instead of working to protect the future of Canadians. During this pandemic, when Canadians were relying on their government to put their needs first, the government shut down Parliament to line the pockets of Liberal elites.

In order to ensure that Ottawa assumes its responsibilities, the Conservatives will propose new anti-corruption legislation to restore Canadians' trust in their public institutions. The Conservatives will give Canadians the transparent and ethical government they deserve.

• (1920)

[*English*]

What we have seen with the Liberals over the past six years is an absence of accountability and an unwillingness to stop the insider dealings. We have seen the government block accountability measures that the House has called on it to take, including when witnesses were ordered to appear at committee. Instead, ministers told committees that they instructed the witnesses not to appear and that they believe in ministerial accountability. The House gave a provision in its order to the government that it could produce the staff witnesses or the Prime Minister could appear. He could have done so to exercise ministerial accountability, if in fact the government was genuine in its assertion about the reason staff could not appear at committee.

Adjournment Proceedings

As we have seen in the last several months, and even since the pandemic began, any time tough questions are asked, committees devolve into filibusters put on by the Liberals. It happened not just at the ethics committee, but at the finance committee, the national defence committee and the procedure and House affairs committee, to name a few. When the House issues an order for witnesses to appear at committee and the government instructs staff members to defy an order of this place, it speaks to the trickle-down lack of accountability and ethics that we have seen with the government. That is why we have, in the Prime Minister, someone who has been twice found guilty of breaking the Conflict of Interest Act and found himself under investigation one additional time, and why multiple ministers have been found guilty of breaking the ethics laws of this place.

Canadians deserve better, and here is my question for the parliamentary secretary: Why does the government believe that the rules do not apply to it?

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, that is not the case. My friend and I have had this discussion on several occasions, and sometimes one has to agree to disagree. Ever since the 2015 federal election, and even before, the Conservative Party has been personally attacking the Prime Minister, and nothing has changed. I think our Prime Minister has done an admirable job in resisting the personal attacks, and he continues to remain focused on Canadians and the pandemic.

This government, day in and day out, seven days a week, has been there to support Canadians during the pandemic. We have seen that in the establishment of programs. We went from nothing to programs that have directly helped more than nine million Canadians. The member talked about how we prorogued a session. When was the last time the House actually sat during the summer-time? The answer is more than 30 years ago.

For the first time in the House of Commons, opposition members were provided the opportunity to ask thousands of questions over the summer. Many of their questions were about issues of ethics. Accusations were flowing. Every rock had to be turned over. The member said that we have been putting money in the pockets of Liberals, but let me remind my friend that billions of dollars were spent and many pockets of Conservative business owners received that money. I suspect that even some Bloc and New Democratic people who owned businesses received money. Seriously, there is no credibility in trying to make it look as if the government is corrupt, none whatsoever.

The Conservative Party, a number of months ago, lost its focus. Ever since the new leader has taken over the reins of power within the Conservative Party, along with his leadership team, the Conservatives are more focused on being a disruptive force inside the legislative chamber than they are on serving the best interests of Canadians. We see that when the Conservative Party chooses to amplify the issue of corruption when corruption is not there. A good example of that is the recent announcement from the Ethics Commissioner that the Prime Minister was not in a conflict with regard to the WE Charity.

As an opposition party, the Conservatives can do whatever they like. However, I will tell Canadians that every member of the Liberal caucus, with the leadership of the Prime Minister, will continue to be focused on Canadians in every region of this country. We are committed to building back better, and the budget we just presented is an excellent illustration of that. I am very proud of the way this government has been accountable—

• (1925)

The Deputy Speaker: We will have to leave it there. I think the hon. parliamentary secretary was coming to the end of his thoughts anyway.

Let us go to the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, we will stop talking about Liberals who break elections laws and break ethics laws when the Liberals stop breaking the law. We do not need to turn over any rocks. We just need to read the reports: the “Morneau II Report”, reports from the Commissioner of Canada Elections, the “Trudeau II Report” or “The Trudeau Report”. Let us hearken back to “clamscam” or any of a number of issues that have happened with ministers and parliamentary secretaries of the government. The opposition can walk and chew gum at the same time. The government can only do one thing, and that is filibuster, prorogue and try to hide from its scandals.

We have been able to support Canadians during the pandemic. That is why Parliament sat during the summer. However, the government still prorogued it.

Canadians deserve accountable, ethical governance, and they are not getting it from the Prime Minister. However, it is never too late to do the right thing and turn over a new leaf. Is the parliamentary secretary ready to do the right thing and turn over a new leaf for Canadians today?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, let me give a very personal example. In the last federal election, and I have been a candidate now for 10 elections or more, I made a mistake for the very first time when I boosted a post from Facebook. I was not the only candidate to do this. A number of candidates also did it, but I have to take responsibility.

Technically we are not supposed to advertise on election day, and when I boosted it, I never thought of it was advertising, but I should have known better, especially having been a candidate in 10 elections. I am very sorry that I made that innocent mistake. We were car waving, I stood up and made a post, and I should not have done that.

I paid the penalty. I am very sorry it happened and I can guarantee it will not happen in the future.

Listening to what the member says, I am really not that bad of a person. It was not intentional. I am hoping the member will understand that.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question today is about the Uighur genocide.

Before I get to the specifics of that, I would like to acknowledge the importance of this week as it pertains to concerns about the situation in China. This week has been designated as a week of prayer for the church in China and the peoples of China by Cardinal Bo, who is the Catholic cardinal in Burma and serves as the president to the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.

Following his call for this week to be a week of prayer for the situation of Christians and other communities in China, churches and others from around the world have taken up this call. Christians from various backgrounds and denominations are using this week as an opportunity to speak, advocate and pray about the escalating persecution of China's Christian community as well as the human rights abuses and other challenges facing all the communities in the People's Republic of China.

Sadly, criticism of China's human rights record is often portrayed as somehow being anti-China, but this call to prayer for China taken up by so many from around the world demonstrates goodwill toward China and good wishes for its people, and the hope China's leaders will one day be a force for the advancement of justice and human freedom.

I am pleased to join my voice to that of Cardinal Bo, Pope Francis and many others in Canada and around the world who are marking this important week to express my concern about the persecution of Christians in China and in particular as well to note the cases of Bishop Vincent Guo Xijin, Bishop James Su Zhimin, Bishop Augustine Cui Tai, Father Lu Genjun, Pastor Wang Yi and Pastor John Cao.

We have seen the horrific persecution of all faith communities in China, and tonight I am following up on a question asked about the genocide of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China. As best I can understand, the government's position on this is that further investigation is required to determine whether these crimes constitute genocide and if the government of China should allow a fact-finding mission on the ground.

I would put it to the government that there has never been in human history a case where a government, in the act of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide, has willingly permitted international monitoring or investigation while those crimes were going on.

In the case of the Rohingya genocide, the government was willing, eventually, to recognize the reality of that genocide even without an on-the-ground fact-finding mission being permitted. The recognition in that case was made as a result of testimony of survivors and satellite footage, and that is the kind of evidence we also have in this case.

In fact, the evidence in the case of the Uighur genocide is, if anything, clearer and more conclusive than the evidence that existed in the case of the Rohingya genocide. Of course, the Chinese state is more powerful than the Burmese state, but the government should not choose to invent new higher evidentiary thresholds simply because it is afraid to hold powerful states to account.

If we are to take at face value the government's claim to not have yet rendered a decision based on the evidence, then we also have to recognize a majority of the government's caucus has disagreed with

Adjournment Proceedings

the Prime Minister and his cabinet in their conclusion that there is not sufficient evidence here. In any event, the government should explain the nature of the investigation it is pursuing with respect to the Uighur genocide and when it expects this investigation to be concluded.

In the meantime, one concrete thing we can do short of recognizing this genocide is to fix Canada's failing supply chain legislation. Canadians from across the political spectrum want to see meaningful reforms to prevent slave labour from feeding our supply chains. Emancipation is sadly still a distant dream in certain parts of the world, including in Xinjiang, and we need to do our part to bring that dream closer.

Despite announcing a new policy in this area, no imports have been blocked or apprehended. This new policy therefore is clearly not working. We need to pass legislation modelled on the bipartisan Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act of the U.S., which introduces a presumption that slave labour is involved in products imported from places where high levels of slave labour exist.

Again, back to the main question, could the government explain the nature of the investigation it is pursuing with respect to the Uighur genocide and when it expects that investigation to be concluded? When will the government finally render a decision on whether it believes events in Xinjiang or East Turkestan constitute genocide and trigger Canada's obligations under the genocide convention?

● (1930)

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for bringing up the week of prayer that Cardinal Bo has instituted with respect to China. I think it is very important for Canadians to be aware of that.

I would also note that in March we had a day of prayer across Canada for Hong Kong, to which parliamentarians were invited. I believe I was alone in that prayer evening. I was really touched by Canadians across the country who raised their prayers for the people of Hong Kong. Other issues were raised as well with respect to human rights in China. These are important human rights cases.

I want to acknowledge the work of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights on this issue and others as well as the testimonials that have been received from civil society, which have been considered by parliamentarians. I also acknowledge, as the member did, the recent motion carried by hon. members of the House. The government welcomes parliamentarians working together and debating this critical issue.

Adjournment Proceedings

We all agree that the actions by Chinese authorities in the Xinjiang Uighur autonomous region cannot be ignored and must be attended to. There is evidence of a sustained and systemic campaign of repression in Xinjiang by the Chinese government. We have testimonials from survivors and we have leaked government documents from credible reports of mass arbitrary detention, repressive surveillance, forced labour, forced sterilization, sexual violence, torture and other mistreatment affecting Uighurs and other ethnic minorities. This is not an exhaustive list of the violations which continue to come to light.

As we have repeatedly said, we remain deeply disturbed by troubling reports of these human rights violations in Xinjiang. Canada also takes allegations of genocide and crimes against humanity very seriously. We take them seriously enough to do due diligence and work with international partners, and work to ensure that we call things as they are in ways that will be helpful and in ways which will engage our partners and not stand alone.

The Chinese government continues to deny any possibility of human rights violations against the Uighur people. It rejects any accountability for wrongdoing and actively seeks to discredit victims and those who speak out, and we address that regularly. It is the utmost priority for this government to safeguard and protect the rules-based international order, which includes the protection and promotion of human rights around the world.

Canada has repeatedly called for an investigation so that impartial experts can observe and report on the situation first-hand. We have a responsibility to work with others in the international community. We do not stand alone. We are stronger and better when we work with the international community.

Whether a first-hand visit by experts is possible or not, as the member argues, we must ensure that such allegations are investigated by independent experts who can review available information, including first-hand accounts whenever possible. We have been clear in our view that human rights violations are occurring against Uighurs and more rigorous and comprehensive investigation evaluation should occur in co-operation with allies, and we continue in that vein.

I want to underscore what the Government of Canada has already done.

On January 12, we adopted a comprehensive approach to the human rights situation in Xinjiang, including measures against forced labour.

On March 22, through coordination with the U.K. and the U.S. and solidarity with the UN, there were new sanctions against four officials and one entity for participation in human rights violations in Xinjiang. We raise concerns regularly alongside our partners at the UN, including at the UN Human Rights Council at the UN General Assembly.

On May 12, Canada co-sponsored a virtual event at the UN in New York alongside 15 countries to raise awareness about the human rights situation in Xinjiang.

It seems to have escaped the minds of the opposition that Canada continues to provide leadership in this, and we will continue to do

it. We will continue to work with others to defend fundamental human rights and freedoms and call upon China to uphold its international obligations, and we will do it well.

● (1935)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing that I did not hear, in the midst of what the parliamentary secretary said, a response to my question about the nature of this investigation that the government is pursuing and when it expects it to be concluded.

I would appreciate hearing from the parliamentary secretary if the government is pushing for an investigation or is undertaking an investigation with respect to the use of the term “genocide”, and the government's obligations under the genocide convention. When can we expect the government to come back to Parliament and say that it has done the investigation and here are the conclusions?

I will note as well that the parliamentary secretary spoke about multilaterally and not going it alone. We have consecutive U.S. administrations as well as various Parliaments that have recognized this as a genocide. In addition to the Canadian Parliament, now the Dutch Parliament, the British Parliament and the Lithuania Parliament and others are taking steps as well. We have numerous human rights experts, such as his former Liberal colleague, the human rights hero, Irwin Cotler. Many legal briefs have been submitted. Independent experts have spoken, and many of our allies and partners have spoken as well.

The parliamentary secretary's government may not yet be satisfied with the conclusions. I just ask this again. When will the government's investigation of this matter be concluded? When can we expect it to report back with whatever—

● (1940)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct in saying that there are Parliaments, close to half a dozen of them, including this one, that have recognized this genocide. However, he is asking what the government response is. He is not asking what the parliamentary response is.

I believe the member does know the difference between a government and a Parliament. He knows the difference in the responsibilities of a government and the rights and authorities of a Parliament. They are different. They are different in kind. They are different in quality. They are different in the bar that is necessary for action. That is clear. In the member's statements, he recognizes this. It is fundamentally different.

Our government takes allegations of genocide and crimes against humanity very seriously. It takes the wisdom of this Parliament very seriously. It takes the wisdom of other Parliaments very seriously as well as the evidence from survivors, human rights experts, including Mr. Cotler and others. We take it very seriously and then we act responsibly as a government, as the people of Canada would expect a government to act. I am proud of that. We will continue to do it. We will continue to uphold our international obligations and stand for human rights.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn, and the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole for the purpose of considering all votes under Department of Finance in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

FINANCE—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2021-22

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Finance in the main estimates, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair)

The Chair: Tonight's debate is a general one on all votes under the Department of Finance. The first round will begin with the official opposition, followed by the government, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party. After that, we will follow the usual proportional rotation.

[Translation]

Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 25, within each 15-minute period, each party may allocate time to one or more of its members for speeches or for questions and answers.

In the case of speeches, members of the party to which the period is allocated may speak one after the other, but the time allocated for speeches must not exceed 10 minutes. The Chair requests that each member who speaks indicate how that time will be used.

The order also specifies that when the time is used for questions and answers, the length of the minister's response should approximately reflect the time taken by the question. In addition, the Chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent.

[English]

I also wish to indicate that in committee of the whole, comments should be addressed to the Chair as they are customarily in the House. I ask for everyone's co-operation in upholding all the established standards of decorum, parliamentary language and behaviour.

We will now begin tonight's session.

The House in committee of the whole, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), consideration in committee of the whole of all votes un-

Business of Supply

der Department of Finance in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Chair, I welcome the Minister of Finance to this committee of the whole. I will get right into it just by saying this, I will not be giving a speech. I will be asking questions of the minister.

The minister has just tabled the biggest spending budget in Canadian history. Many have questioned the sustainability of the massive financial burden that future generations will be burdened with.

Minister, when will Canada's budget return to balance?

● (1945)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, let me start by quoting someone I respect very much, the former governor of the Bank of Canada, who was appointed by the member's own prime minister, Mr. Stephen Poloz. He pointed out, in testimony to the finance committee last week, that:

A credible fiscal plan in which the level of government debt relative to national income stops rising and debt service costs are manageable meets the...technical—standard of sustainability. I draw your attention to the table on page 328 of the budget, which shows that these criteria are met—

The Chair: We will go back to the hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, when will Canada's budget return to balance?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me point to another very credible assessor of Canada's finances, and that is S and P, the rating agency, which recently reaffirmed our AAA rating.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, with respect, she did not answer my question, twice.

Does the government have any plan to return to balance at any time in the future?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as the member for Abbotsford knows very well, our budget presents a credible and sustainable plan with the debt-to-GDP ratio falling to 49.2% in fiscal year 2025-26, and the deficit falling to 1.1% in that year.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, no plan to return to balance. I will assume there is no future in Canada under a Liberal government that would lead us to a balanced budget.

In her recent budget, the minister claimed that this was a growth budget. What specific structural investments, beyond regulated day care, has the minister made to enhance productivity within our economy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I welcome that question, because it allows me to underscore for Canadians that this budget is a significant and serious investment in long-term growth for Canada.

Business of Supply

It is an investment in social infrastructure and, for sure, child care and early learning is an important part of that. It also invests in the green transition. It invests in housing. It invests in transit. It invests in small and medium-sized businesses and innovation.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, with respect, this is not a growth budget. In fact, numerous experts, including the minister's friend, Robert Asselin, David Dodge and the Parliamentary Budget Officer have all suggested this budget does nothing to position Canada for long-term growth.

Does the minister agree with them?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the member opposite if he agrees with his own prime minister's chosen governor of the Bank of Canada. He spoke, in his testimony to the finance committee, about the value of policies that increase investment, either directly, such as in infrastructure, such as in social infrastructure like child care, and such as in investments to vastly increase investments in carbon capture, for example, which is investment on the green line.

Does the member—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, on a point of order. I am sorry to interrupt my colleague from Abbotsford, but I find I have to do this at each of the committees of the whole. I wish to remind the Chair and colleagues across the way that the time for answers has to be the same as the time for questions. I have recorded five questions and five answers, and all five answers have been considerably over the time given for the question. I would ask that you enforce this, and that members across the way recognize and respect that.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, on a point of order. Although it is true, I believe that the rule is that it has to be roughly the same amount of time. It does not have to be exactly the same amount of time. When a question is asked that is a second long, it might require three or four seconds to answer it.

The Chair: I thank hon. members for being attentive to the exchanges in the committee of the whole this evening.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, on a point of order. I am hoping that this point of order will not come out of the time of my hon. colleague.

The Chair: The committee of the whole has up to four hours, so there is a time limit.

On this point, the hon. member for Edmonton West is not incorrect, but neither is the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands in this case. The Chair will be attentive to trying to make the time equitable. Of course, chair occupants have to take into consideration the vagaries of making sure that exchange works in debate and from time to time, there will be slight differences. We will do our best to make sure that we adhere to that approach and I thank hon. members and the minister for their participation in this.

We will go back to the hon. member for Abbotsford.

● (1950)

Hon. Ed Fast: Just to recap, Mr. Chair, I asked the minister when we would return to balanced budgets and she had no answer. I asked her about productivity investments in this budget and she could not answer that question.

I am going to ask her about the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Her government made the decision to join and make an investment in this China-led bank, the AIIB. How much of Canadian taxpayers' money has the government invested in that bank so far?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am sorry, but I am afraid I cannot allow the unsubstantiated assertions with which the member opposite began his question to stand. The fact is that this budget invests substantially in increasing Canada's long-term growth potential. It does that through significant investments in labour force participation, with early learning and child care, with the Canada workers benefit. It does it through direct investments in fiscal infrastructure, like transit and housing.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, the experts disagree with her, but I am going to ask her this question again. How much more money does the minister plan to spend on the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and how much has she spent so far?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Again, Mr. Chair, I cannot allow that unfounded assertion to stand. Let me just say I consider Stephen Poloz to be an outstanding expert and I also have a lot of time for the people at Standard & Poor's who reaffirmed Canada's AAA credit rating and put the outlook as stable.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, I asked a very simple question. How much has the Liberal government spent on the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and how much does it intend to spend in the future?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I do welcome that question and that is because, particularly as a former foreign minister, I absolutely believe that human rights considerations need to factor into all of Canada's decisions around the world. Let me say that, in particular, when it comes to China, I believe that for our government and, I would say, for all members of this House, the arbitrary detention of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor can never be far from our minds.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, I did not ask a question about the two Michaels and I did not ask a question about human rights, but since she raised the issue, this China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank does not apply a rigorous environmental, human rights or gender-based lens to its investments. Is the minister aware of that?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I actually believe the member did ask a question about Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor and that is because I do not think our country can take any decision about our relationship with China without considering the arbitrary detention of those two brave Canadians.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, could the minister please at least answer the simple question: How much has the Liberal government contributed to that bank so far?

Business of Supply

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I do welcome this focus because, as I said, in all of our relations with China, we need to take these arbitrary detentions into account. In fact, at a meeting of the G7 finance ministers, I raised that issue and I am pleased to say there was strong support around the table.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, how much has the government paid into the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, I think it is important for us to look at all of our relationships with China through the prism of human rights and always take—

The Chair: The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast: Respectfully, Mr. Chair, this is disgraceful. It is a simple question. We are talking about the estimates, we are talking about the budget and she cannot tell us how much money the government has paid into the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Come on, Minister, please answer the question.

The Chair: I am going to remind the hon. member to direct his speech to the Chair, and we will stay on that track.

The hon. minister.

• (1955)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I do think if people want to speak about graceful or disgraceful behaviour, we have to be careful to follow the rules.

I think it is absolutely correct and legitimate, when it comes to talking about our entire relationship with China, to take into account issues of human rights and, in particular, the arbitrary detention of these two brave Canadians, and I certainly do.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, the estimates show that her government has already contributed \$50 million of taxpayers' money to this bank. She is planning on contributing another \$49 million.

Now, did the minister and her government make the return of the two Michaels a condition for investing taxpayers' dollars in this China-led bank?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, I think that we need to look very carefully, when we think about all aspects of our relationship with China and put as a priority the detention of these two brave Canadians, and we need to ensure we have the support of our allies in doing that.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, I will take that as a “no”.

Is the minister aware that this China-led bank is the biggest multilateral funder of dirty coal projects in southeast Asia?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me say how delighted I am to learn that the member opposite is concerned about the environment, and let me say I hope that he and his party will support the price on carbon our government has introduced.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, did the government conduct a gender-based analysis of this China-led investment, especially in light of the horrific treatment of Uighur women in western China?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I think it is very appropriate to raise the issue of the Uighurs, which was discussed just ahead of this meeting of the committee of the whole, and as I said at the

beginning of this conversation, I absolutely believe that the appalling treatment of the Uighurs, the situation in Hong Kong and, first and foremost, the detention of two brave Canadians needs to be—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, I will take that as a “no” that the government did not conduct a gender-based analysis of this China-led investment.

I am just flabbergasted that a government that has put a singular focus on intersectionality would not find it puzzling that this taxpayer investment in a China-led bank did not have a gender-based lens applied to it.

How can that be?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me welcome the enthusiasm of the member opposite for a gender-based lens and for intersectionality, and let me offer to the member opposite and all members of his party a briefing on our government's approach to gender-based analysis in the budget process.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, how many Canadians have been employed on projects funded by the AIIB so far?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, and it would be interesting to hear the view of the member opposite, I am very glad to hear his enthusiasm for a gender-based analysis, and that is something that maybe we should all be talking about a little more.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, that was not my question. I asked how many Canadians have been employed on projects that have been funded by the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Surely she would know; she is the finance minister of Canada.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am indeed the finance minister, and I am aware of that. Let me simply say that when it comes to our relationship with China, I actually agree with some of the intent of the questions the member has been asking, and I do think we need to take into account particularly the appalling treatment of the Uighurs.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, she agrees with the intent of the question, but will not answer the question, so here is another one.

How many Canadian businesses have benefited from the investment the Liberal government has made into the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am glad to hear finally a question about Canadian businesses, because it gives me a chance to remind all Canadians that more than 870,000 Canadian businesses have benefited from a program of our government, the CEBA loans.

Business of Supply

• (2000)

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, that was not the question, so I will ask another one.

Has the government done a value-for-money analysis on its so-called investment in the AIIB?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me say what value for money is. Value for money is the government's investments in supporting Canadian businesses and Canadian workers. Our wage subsidy program alone has supported more than 5.3 million jobs—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, does the government have any analysis of how its investment in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank promotes Canada's national interest, including our commitment to a clean environment, human rights and gender equality?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me say how delighted I am to hear the Conservatives supporting gender rights and a clean environment. I really hope we will see them supporting this budget, which is a feminist budget and makes unprecedented investments in a green transition.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, I will just make one statement. This has been the most disappointing session of Parliament I have ever been involved in. I have asked the minister numerous questions. She has not answered one. There is no transparency and no specificity. The least she could have done is say that she does not know the answer to these questions but she would get back to me. She did not even have the courtesy of doing that. I am profoundly disappointed. I know the minister is better than that. I have great respect for her, but for her to fail to answer any of the questions I have put to her, including the fate of the two Michaels and the conditions that have been imposed on the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank investments by the current Liberal government, I find that to be—

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I too have great respect for the member opposite. I was his critic when he was trade minister.

Let me say what I am disappointed by. I am disappointed by this faux concern for clean investment and a gender-based budget analysis. I am really disappointed by an unwillingness to tell Canadians the truth about our budget, which is that it makes unprecedented and essential investments in Canada's long-term growth.

The Deputy Chair: Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of Finance.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, we have done everything necessary to protect the lives and the livelihoods of Canadians, to help our businesses weather the storm and to position Canada for a robust, resilient and sustainable recovery.

As certain regions in Canada start to reopen, we must remember that we are not done fighting the virus. Our determination to win this fight and provide Canadians the support they need is stronger than ever.

[*English*]

This year's budget, which I tabled on April 19 and which Bill C-30 would enact, meets the three fundamental challenges facing Canadians right now.

First, we must defeat COVID. That means buying vaccines and supporting provincial and territorial health care systems. It means enforcing quarantine rules and it means providing Canadians and Canadian businesses with the help they need to get through lockdowns and to fully recover when COVID is defeated. COVID will be defeated. Vaccines are available to Canadians in ever-growing quantities, and they are working. More than 60% of adult Canadians have received their first dose of the vaccine. Canadians are doing their part and getting vaccinated. My thanks go to team Canada. Together we can do this.

Second, we must punch our way out of this COVID recession. That means making sure that hard-hit businesses can rebound, start growing and start hiring again. It also means helping the people who have been the hardest hit by this recession: women, young people, racialized Canadians, low-wage workers and small businesses. We are doing just that. When fully enacted, this budget will create nearly 500,000 new training and work opportunities for Canadians.

Our third major challenge is to create long-term economic growth and to build a more resilient Canada, a country that is better, more fair, more prosperous and more innovative. That is why we intend to invest ambitiously in the green transition and the new jobs that come with it, in digital transformation and innovation, and in infrastructure like housing, transit and the trade corridors that we need as a dynamic, growing country.

• (2005)

[*Translation*]

The COVID-19 pandemic has put enormous pressure on our health care systems. That is why, in Bill C-30, we propose to provide \$4 billion through the Canada health transfer to help the provinces and territories ease the immediate pressure on their health care systems.

Additional funds for health care will help pay for the many different procedures that had to be delayed because of the pandemic. This will help build the resilience of our health care systems. That is what Canadians deserve and need.

Business of Supply

[English]

A full recovery from COVID requires a new, long-term investment in social infrastructure. That means providing early learning and child care, student grants and income top-ups, so that the middle class can flourish and more Canadians can join the middle class. We know that without child care, parents, usually mothers, cannot work outside the home. That is more painfully clear now than ever. We intend to invest \$30 billion over five years, reaching \$9.2 billion annually, to provide high-quality, affordable and accessible early learning and child care across Canada. Our goal is an average cost of \$10 a day across the country within five years.

[Translation]

In making this commitment, I thank Quebec's feminists, who have led the way for the rest of Canada. I am very grateful to them.

[English]

To minimize economic scarring and to power a robust recovery, we must bridge Canadian businesses through to the end of this crisis. The wage subsidy, rent subsidy and lockdown support had been set to expire next month. This budget extends these measures through to September 25, 2021.

[Translation]

In order to help those who still cannot work, we will maintain flexible access to employment insurance for another year, until fall 2022. Furthermore, to support Canadians who are not covered by employment insurance, the Canada recovery benefit will be extended by 12 weeks.

We are also proposing a four-week extension of the Canada recovery caregiving benefit, which would bring it to a maximum of 42 weeks at \$500 a week. Similarly, the employment insurance sickness benefit period will be increased from 15 weeks to 26 weeks. These measures provide tangible and measurable assistance to the people who need help now.

[English]

As we build a resilient recovery, it is critically important that we help low-wage workers. They work harder than anyone else, for lower pay. They work on the front lines, and COVID has revealed to us all that the work they do is truly essential. We intend to expand the Canada workers benefit, extending income top-ups to about one million more workers and lifting nearly 100,000 Canadians out of poverty. We also propose to introduce a \$15-an-hour federal minimum wage.

Young Canadians must be at the heart of our recovery, not just to help them bounce back from the COVID recession, but because their future success is critical to our success as a country. We intend to make college and university more accessible and affordable. We will create job openings in skilled trades and high tech, and we will double the Canada student grant for two more years, while extending the waiver of interest on federal student and apprentice loans to March 2023. This will mean lower costs for the approximately 1.5 million Canadians who are working to repay their student loans. Our budget will also make an important change so that nobody earning \$40,000 per year or less will need to make payments on

student loans, and the cap on monthly student loan payments will be reduced from 20% of household income to 10%.

• (2010)

[Translation]

We all know that no one has been hit harder by this health crisis over the past 14 months than seniors. The truth is that many seniors were relying on monthly benefits to make ends meet even before the pandemic.

We are therefore proposing a one-time payment of \$500 in August 2021 for old age security pensioners who will be 75 or older in June 2022.

Furthermore, this budget provides for an additional 10% increase in old age security benefits for seniors aged 75 and over, as of July 2021. This will increase the benefits that some 3.3 million seniors are receiving and comes at a time when many are living longer and depleting their savings.

[English]

Small businesses have been hit very hard during COVID. We must create the conditions for them to recover and start growing again. This budget offers the Canada recovery hiring program to support business hiring. We will also invest up to \$4 billion to help up to 160,000 small and medium-sized businesses buy and adopt the technologies they need.

In closing, allow me to directly address the opposition. Bill C-30, the budget implementation act, is the first major step in delivering jobs, growth and recovery. Vaccines are here, and Canadians want to get back to work. It is time for all of us to get back to work in the House as well.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would like to begin by thanking the minister. Budget 2021 is a transformational document that will allow us to continue the fight against COVID-19, help us punch out of this pandemic recession and, importantly, ensure that everyone gets to benefit from the growth that we expect to see on the back end of this pandemic.

The pandemic, quite obviously, has not impacted everyone the same. If I can be blunt, there are a lot of people who look like I do who have fared better than many Canadians. Indigenous Canadians, Black Canadians and women have suffered disproportionately when it comes to the financial impact COVID-19 has had on their lives and careers.

The minister spent a portion of her speech focused on the importance of Canada's first early learning and child care strategy and that will be the focus of my comments and question.

Business of Supply

From my perspective, there is both a moral and an economic imperative that justify a game-changing investment in excess of \$30 billion in this child care and early childhood education strategy. It is clear to me that women more often than men choose to stay home at the beginning of their career to provide care for young children. The economic equation that a lot of families consider understandably justifies their decision to have one spouse stay home in a two-parent household when they look at the cost of care.

I have friends who are spending \$4,000 a month for just two kids in child care in some Canadian cities. It may not be that expensive at home, but when a lot of people in my community are looking at whether they can afford the cost of care, they are choosing not to work even though they may want to.

From my perspective, the opportunity to provide care will give more families the choice to work should they want to. It would help more women fill gaps that exist in the labour market, which will boost productivity. However, importantly, there are solutions to business problems and scientific developments that may be locked in the mind of someone who is choosing to stay home because they cannot afford the cost of care, and we are all losing out.

Does the minister see the economic case that would allow this investment to pay for itself? Also, does she believe that having a gender-balanced cabinet and a task force on women in the economy, made up of women from Canada, actually helped influence the arrival of this important and game-changing decision?

• (2015)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the parliamentary secretary's question was very well-informed. I think it will surprise no one in this House that I agree with him very strongly.

For more than 50 years, since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women urgently urged the Canadian government to set about building a universal system of early learning and child care, early learning and child care has been a feminist cause across Canada. What I believe is different today is that there is a wide appreciation in our country, and indeed around the world, that a system of early learning and child care is also an essential economic strategy for driving growth.

In fact, today we are lucky to have the deputy minister of finance, Michael Sabia, with us. Deputy Minister Sabia and his team have calculated that, once we build a universal system of early learning and child care across Canada, that will drive economic growth more powerfully than any policy Canada has implemented since NAFTA, and it will increase growth by more than 1.2%.

[*Translation*]

In closing, I would like to once again salute the women and feminists of Quebec, who have shown the rest of Canada what can and must be done.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Chair, I would appreciate it if you allowed the minister to finish answering my questions about division 8 of part 4 of Bill C-30.

This division enacts the new retail payment activities act, which establishes an oversight framework for retail payment activities. Changes in the banking and financial services sector mean that fi-

nancial technology companies, or fintech, which include GAFAs, now occupy markets traditionally reserved for financial institutions. Obviously, protecting clients and consumers as well as the banking and financial system as a whole is crucial.

My first round of questions is about unauthorized transactions and parties' responsibility. The proposed legislation would protect clients from unauthorized use and errors in electronic funds transfers. The new legislation appears to cover this issue in subclause 17(1) under operational risk management and incident response.

What does the management framework include?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I thank the member for his question and for his work. He truly is an expert economist and always delves into the most complex aspects of the budget and of the work we do here.

As always, he asked a technical and important question. My quick answer is that we will work with all of the provinces and territories on this important issue. I would also like to tell my colleague that I really appreciate this specific and important question and that my team would be happy to set up a briefing to give him more details than what I can get into this evening in the House.

However, I do want to give him an answer. The Bank of Canada will be responsible for ensuring that payment service providers comply with the framework and it will maintain a registry of regulated payment service providers.

The proposed legislation would require payment service providers to establish a risk management framework to identify and mitigate risks. The requirements of the proposed framework would be based on international best practices. These requirements would be set out in the regulations, and may include, for example, reliability objectives; specific policies regarding physical security or information technology security to manage cyber risk; and continuity plans.

I have a lot more to say, but I will cede the floor to the member for Joliette. If he would like, I could get back to what I was saying after he speaks.

• (2020)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for her answer, and I want to ask another question on the same topic.

In relation to the minister's answer, paragraph 101(1)(a) of the proposed new law gives the governor in council regulatory power respecting risk management and incident response frameworks. Are we to understand that the minimum requirements will be set out later in the regulations, as the minister seems to be saying? If so, why?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I want to point out that the requirements will be set out in the regulations.

Knowing that it is important for the Bloc Québécois, I would also like to add that the federal government conducted extensive consultations with the provinces and territories when preparing this bill. The proposed new law takes into account the fact that the federal government and the provincial and territorial governments have complementary objectives and powers with regard to business risk management and safeguarding funds.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, again, I thank the minister for her answer.

Here is my last question for this round. It is on the same subject. As it now stands, the bill suggests that the minimum protection provided to a consumer could vary depending on the provider.

What kind of latitude do payment service providers have in that regard? Should that protection not be set out in the legislation rather than in the regulations?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, once again, I thank the member for his question.

I want to point out that consultations, especially with the provinces and territories, will be very important in ironing out the details, such as the ones the member asked about in his questions.

Discussions with the provinces and territories revolve around business practices for payment service providers. Federal public servants, under the leadership of Mr. Michael Sabia, will continue to work closely with the provinces and territories on issues related to business practices like disclosure, accountability and dispute settlement mechanisms, and will review options regarding consumer protection, which is of great interest to my colleague across the way. All these discussions will take place in a way that respects provincial, territorial and federal jurisdictions.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, my second round of questions is about asymmetry in client and consumer protection.

We know that, in the case of an unauthorized use of electronic funds transfer, such as a credit card, a debit card, a prepaid payment product such as a prepaid card, or even an online or virtual payment, a bank client's maximum liability under subsection 627.33(1) of the Bank Act and section 5 of the Canadian Code of Practice for Consumer Debit Card Services is \$50.

Aside from the requirement to notify, which is also in the bill before us, this requirement is more detailed and rigorous in other acts and regulations, such as the Bank Act. There are also other protective mechanisms, such as the grace period for the minimum payment on a credit card balance, the prohibition of overlimit fees and assurance that prepaid products will not expire, to name just a few here.

Business of Supply

Another consideration is the bank's obligation to behave responsibly. These standards are laid out for bank clients in the Bank Act but not in Bill C-30.

Although the level of protection for the end user has not yet been determined, can the minister confirm at this point that a user doing business with a fintech company, not a bank, will not be held liable for the unauthorized use of an electronic funds transfer?

● (2025)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, that is an important question. The member opposite has highlighted exactly what our work and our consultations should be all about, specifically the consumer's position.

We must always ensure that consumers will be protected if they use a traditional bank or other mechanism. That is why we really need to pay attention to all the details of these regulations. That is why we will hold consultations to lay out the legislation in detail.

My team and I will be more than happy to listen to specific suggestions from the member opposite.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for that answer.

As we have heard from both sides, in its current form, the proposed legislation on retail payment activities would provide end-users with less protection than is offered to a bank's customers.

This asymmetrical legal protection creates an inequity between a fintech company's customers and a bank's customers, although I understand that that is not the minister's goal.

Could this asymmetry be mitigated through regulatory powers, for example? I believe that is what the minister just suggested.

Can the minister assure us that she will balance out this asymmetrical protection through regulation?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I can assure the hon. member that our government and all members of the House are committed to consumer protection. We understand the need to create space for new technologies in the Canadian economy, but we must also ensure that consumers are always protected. That really is our goal, and I think that goal is shared by all members of the House.

I would be quite happy to continue discussing this with the member, to listen to and understand his ideas on how to ensure that consumers will always be protected, even in the 21st century.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for that answer.

Business of Supply

Can I get her comments on the broader issue of privacy, consumer consent to access their bank accounts, where required, and consent to initiate an order to pay, as well as the possibility of having the bill cover cryptocurrency?

This is my last question.

● (2030)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, it may be his last question, but it is a very complicated question that covers multiple subjects.

I will start with the last part of his question, that is cryptocurrencies. In my view, this is an important issue that must be addressed. We must have a conversation about this with our international partners and allies. In the G7, for example, finance ministers and central bank governors have already begun discussing this at their meetings. I agree with the member that we need to do this.

In my opinion, we must do two things at the same time. We must ensure that Canada's economy is ready to embrace these new technologies. Canada has fantastic technologists, scientists and researchers. We also need to have some ground rules that make it possible to innovate and use new technologies.

However, with regard to the financial sector, we must ensure that we encourage the use of new technologies while continuing to protect consumers and their rights, privacy and personal information. To be frank, it is going to be difficult, but I am convinced that we can do it.

To conclude, I would like to point out that this must be done in close collaboration with our international allies, including the European Union. That is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Chair, I would also like to use my time to ask questions and listen to the minister's replies. I thank her for being here this evening.

[*English*]

In every previous crisis that Canada has lived through, there have been strict laws against profiteering and there has been a sense that we are all in this together. That has not happened this time with the government. Canada's billionaires have increased their wealth by an astounding \$80 billion during the pandemic. Other countries have experienced this and have put into place measures such as a wealth tax. A wealth tax is supported by over 80% of Canadians, as the minister well knows.

My first question is very simple. Why does the government refuse to put into place a wealth tax as we go through this pandemic?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, let me also congratulate you on the tech support you just offered.

Let me say to the member opposite that I really believe, strongly, that we are all in it together. I share his conviction that everyone needs to pay their fair share. We have introduced measures in this budget to ensure that is the case. That is why we have introduced a luxury tax. That is why we have introduced a digital services tax. That is why we have introduced a tax on vacant property owned by

non-resident, non-Canadian owners, and that is why we have introduced the most aggressive measures to fight tax evasion and tax avoidance that have ever been introduced by a Canadian government.

● (2035)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Chair, the Liberals' so-called luxury tax is an utter smokescreen. As the Parliamentary Budget Officer has offered, it is one cent on the dollar of what a wealth tax would bring in.

Here is the contrast. At the same time as there is a refusal to bring in a wealth tax, hundreds of thousands of Canadians who currently depend on the Canada response benefit will see that benefit slashed in just a few weeks. In the middle of the third wave those benefits will be slashed from \$500 to \$300 a week. The question is how these people will put food on the table. How will they keep roofs over their heads? Particularly as we see record homelessness, why would the government slash the benefit?

The NDP is proposing tomorrow an amendment that would ensure that benefit is maintained at \$500. Will the finance minister support that NDP amendment?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as the member opposite knows, our government strongly agrees with him that the first priority during the fight against COVID has been to support Canadians and Canadian workers. I am so pleased that 5.9 million Canadians have been supported through the CERB, 1.95 million Canadians have been supported through the CRB and 5.3 million Canadian jobs have been supported through the wage subsidy, including 621,000 jobs in the member's province of B.C. As the member opposite also knows very well, his province of B.C. and other provinces across the country are making great strides in the fight against COVID. They are opening up the country. They have put forward clear and strong plans, and our programs have to adapt accordingly.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Chair, as we well know, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has also evaluated that a modest pandemic profits tax would bring in about \$8 billion. This is the kind of thing we did in the Second World War when we were all in this together.

We know that this would make a difference. The minister has refused to answer my question about the CRB being slashed. There are two other measures from the NDP that the government can support. First, in the budget the government has acknowledged the chronic and desperate poverty that so many Canadian seniors live under and has proposed to raise the OAS by 10%, but only for Canadians over the age of 75. Canadians from 65 to 75, who are the bulk of Canadian seniors, do not have access to that. Canadian seniors organizations have reacted. They are asking the government to change that situation, and the NDP again has proposed an amendment that would ensure that the OAS increase goes to all Canadian seniors. The government has also refused to extend the moratorium on student debt payments.

Business of Supply

The question is very simple. The government is refusing to make sure that a pandemic profits tax, a wealth tax, is in place so that we have the wherewithal to make these important adjustments.

Will the government support ensuring that all seniors have access to the OAS increase, and will it put in place a moratorium on student debt payments?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I am very pleased that in the budget we were able to keep our campaign commitment to raise the OAS for seniors 75 and older by 10%. We appreciate, as I think do all members of the House, that as a person gets older, their needs are greater, their savings may be running out and their ability to work diminishes. I am very pleased that for Canadians 75 and older we are able to offer this additional support.

The member points out something else, though, which is so important to me, to our government and I believe to all Canadians. In addition to supporting seniors in our budget, we need to invest in young Canadians. This pandemic has hit our youth hard and they have sacrificed for us. They have sacrificed to preserve the lives and health of their parents and grandparents. That is why I am so pleased that this budget makes an unprecedented \$5.7 billion investment in young Canadians. That investment will double the Canada student grant for two additional years, it will extend the moratorium on federal interest and it will mean that 450,000 low-income student borrowers will have access to more generous repayment assistance.

• (2040)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Chair, let the record show that the finance minister is not inclined to provide any supports to seniors between the ages of 65 and 75 and will continue the discrimination that was in the budget. As well, the finance minister is refusing to put in place a moratorium on student debt payments that so many student organizations across the country have called for. These are not answers that Canadians will support at all.

The minister said earlier that the government was taking action against tax havens. The very simple fact is, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer pointed out in 2019, that Canada loses over \$25 billion every year in tax revenues that flee to overseas tax havens. There has not been a successful prosecution by the government of any Canadian or any Canadian company tied to the Bahamas papers, the paradise papers or the Panama papers. Thousands of Canadians are using these loopholes to avoid paying taxes.

CRA employees went to the finance committee last summer and said that they did not have the tools to take action against this tax evasion. They have asked for legislation that the government has not provided. My simple question is this: Where is the legislation that even CRA employees are calling for so that we can finally start to take action against overseas tax havens?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I actually agree with the member opposite that it is essential for us to take action against tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance schemes.

The member opposite began his round of questions by asserting something I disagree with. He said we are really not in this together. Here I part ways with him, because I think we really are in it together. However, to be in it together, it is essential for us all to

pay our fair share and for Canadians to know everyone is paying their fair share. That is why I am so proud of the extensive measures in this budget to close loopholes, to make popular tax avoidance schemes no longer permitted, to provide significant additional resources to the CRA to go after illegal tax evasion and unprecedented measures to shine a light on beneficial ownership schemes.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Chair, I will continue on the theme of a free ride for the ultrarich. The federal government, within four days of the pandemic hitting, as the finance minister well knows, offered an unprecedented \$750 billion in liquidity supports to the banking industry. That was within just a few days. The profits so far, and we will see further profits announced this week, have been over \$50 billion for Canada's big banks. Why were there no requirements in the banking industry at all for Canada's big banks to access these massive amounts of liquidity supports?

In the last few weeks, we have seen Canada's big banks sharply increase their fees mainly on lower-income Canadians. Why has the government not used the tools that it has to crack down on those gouging practices and these fees that are hitting Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said, I actually agree with the member opposite about a lot. He has a very sincere and many years' worth of commitment to supporting working people in Canada, and I strongly share that commitment. That is why one of the budget measures that are most important to me personally is the Canada workers benefit.

However, I part ways with the member opposite when it comes to what seems to me embedded in his question, which is a lack of concern about the stability of the financial sector in a once-in-a-generation economic crisis. When COVID first hit Canada and the world, we were plunged into the greatest depression since the Great Depression. The government and the Bank of Canada and OSFI acted with urgency to maintain the stability of our financial sector. That was the right thing to do.

• (2045)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Chair, we are far more concerned about the stability of regular Canadian families, seniors, students, people who have been hard hit by this pandemic. As we see the government cutting back on supports, they will be the most impacted.

Let us look at people with disabilities. The banks got \$750 billion in liquidity supports within four days. People with disabilities get a three-year consultation with absolutely nothing in the budget. This is a contrast that all Canadians can see.

Business of Supply

I wrote to the finance minister on January 5 to ask her to release the amounts that large corporations have used from the Canada emergency wage subsidy when they laid off workers and paid dividends or paid big executive bonuses. How much was misused in this way? When are the companies going to pay that misused money back?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, there are a lot of questions there, so let me go through them quickly.

I know the member opposite sincerely cares about workers, seniors and students. So do I, and I know that a collapse of the financial sector would hurt each one of those groups. That is why, in a once-in-a-generation crisis, the government, the Bank of Canada and OSFI acted as they ought to do and as they needed to do.

Let me point out that when it comes to disabilities, the budget includes important measures to provide additional support to students with serious but temporary disabilities. I am really glad that it is there.

When it comes to the wage subsidy, the most important thing for us to bear in mind is that it has supported 5.3 million jobs across the country.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Chair, we are seeing that the ultrarich are getting a free ride with the government, and yet Canadians are suffering incredibly. Of course, the fact that people with disabilities are getting no supports except a three-year consultation while Canada's big banks got an unprecedented \$750 billion in liquidity supports within days of the pandemic hitting, that contrast is clear to all Canadians to see.

Why does the government put banks and billionaires before regular people?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, briefly, it is simply not correct to overlook the very significant support that Canadian students with disabilities are getting in this budget. That is going to transform lives, and I am glad that it will.

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am pleased to contribute to this debate. Our government is working hard to improve the quality of life of all Canadians.

[Translation]

As members know, part of my mandate is to work with the whole of the federal government to better incorporate quality of life measurements into government decision-making and budgeting. This important work began before the COVID-19 pandemic started disrupting our lives, prompting many Canadians to reflect on what they value most.

The pandemic has affected many dimensions of Canadians' quality of life, from health impacts and job losses to mental health and social isolation. It has also shone a light on the long-standing inequalities that Canadians continue to face, such as the gender imbalance in caregiving responsibilities, systemic racism, and the gaps in Canada's social safety net.

It is clearer than ever that traditional economic indicators such as gross domestic product alone cannot measure Canadians' overall well-being. Recognizing the importance of factors beyond GDP

does not imply a reduced focus on investing in a strong economy or prudent fiscal management. In fact, these investments are critical to achieving and sustaining a better quality of life.

● (2050)

[English]

Increasing Canada's GDP through productivity growth, labour market participation and investment is crucial for raising Canada's national standard of living now and into the future. However, our government strongly believes that the quality of life of all Canadians should be a key component of policy-making and budget decisions.

Quite frankly, Canadians agree. A study commissioned by the government last summer found that while one in two Canadians feels that stronger growth in Canada's GDP is important to day-to-day life, nearly three-quarters of respondents felt that it is important to move past solely considering traditional economic measurements, such as levels of economic growth, and also consider other factors like health, safety and the environment when we make decisions.

The recent budget that our government tabled on April 19 reflects this belief. It is as much about finishing the fight against COVID and jump-starting our economy as it is about investing in measures that will increase the quality of life for Canadians, initiatives such as child care, mental health support, protecting the environment, affordable housing and public infrastructure. Through the development of a quality-of-life framework, introduced as part of our recent budget, our government is putting Canadians' quality of life at the centre of our policy and investment decisions.

[Translation]

Budget 2021 uses our quality of life framework, which is based on evidence about the factors that matter most to Canadians: economic prosperity, health, environment, social cohesion and good governance. This will give us a way to measure progress beyond simply relying on GDP growth.

Economic growth and prosperity are still critical to us. They sustain Canadians' standard of living. However, we need a broader understanding of what constitutes progress, one that encourages us to think about the big picture and consider the distribution of outcomes across the population and the long-term sustainability of outcomes. Our work has been guided by conversations with experts, stakeholders, and nations that are advanced in their thinking about well-being, and by feedback from Canadians themselves. The result was a made-in-Canada approach.

Business of Supply

By using a broader suite of indicators and measuring factors such as mental health, environmental impacts, employment, social trust and post-secondary education, our government will be able to better measure and assess the impact of key measures on Canadians' quality of life. This includes looking at the distribution of outcomes, opportunities across demographics and in places, and whether today's prosperity could potentially undermine tomorrow's living standards.

This integrated approach can serve as a major benchmark, like a north star for our government's policy development and budgeting, articulating priorities based on what matters most for Canadians' quality of life and underpinning how we monitor progress in building back better after the pandemic.

[English]

Our government has already started using the framework to consider how each proposal for our recent budget could affect these various dimensions and indicators, in order to help us achieve the right mix of measures to ensure a strong, inclusive and sustainable recovery.

Take, for example, our government's historic commitment to establish a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. The pandemic has emphasized that it is not just a social issue, but an urgent economic one as well. It is a cornerstone of our jobs and growth plan, and it would provide jobs for workers, the majority of whom are women, while enabling parents to reach their full economic potential and creating a generation of engaged and well-prepared young learners.

As the members of this House would agree, while this measure would advance GDP growth, measuring its impact in terms of GDP growth alone would surely understate the benefits of this investment. As someone who literally had to start a day care in my basement because I had no other options as an entrepreneur and small business owner, I can tell members how transformative this would be for so many people with families.

• (2055)

[Translation]

We also considered systemic racism, which can have devastating consequences on the well-being of Canadians.

New support measures should have positive impacts on a wide range of areas that are important for quality of life, including discrimination and unfair treatment, self-reported mental health, skills development and its effect on job opportunities, and a sense of belonging to the community.

Those were a few examples of how the framework helped guide decision-making in this budget. I am proud to say that members can pick any measure from our recent budget and check annex 4 to see what impact it is expected to have on quality of life. It sets out the indicators that the government will use to measure the success of these initiatives and how well they support Canadians' quality of life.

[English]

Our government understands that key to the success of this framework is enhancing the data we collect and improving our

measurement of program outcomes, in order to be able to better incorporate quality-of-life measurements into decision-making and budgeting in the future. Evidence-based decision-making is foundational to good governance and to Canadians' trust in their institutions.

To help us get there, our recent budget announced proposed investments of \$13.8 million over five years and \$2.2 million ongoing to enable Statistics Canada to improve quality-of-life measurements and address key data gaps while bringing together key economic, social and environmental datasets into a user-friendly format that would better support decision-making and budgeting.

[Translation]

What is more, the budget proposed over \$285 million in funding over five years and over \$40 million ongoing to collect better disaggregated data that will enable the government, researchers and others to better understand the experiences of people in Canada and environmental changes.

I am proud of the work that we have accomplished to date in developing and implementing the quality of life framework. All of the framework's indicators will continue to be refined so that the framework stays relevant in an ever-changing landscape.

I believe that the detailed analysis presented in budget 2021 and the projected impacts and advantages of each investment proposed by the government speak for themselves.

[English]

Ensuring gender equality, diversity and the quality of life of Canadians is at the centre of decision-making, and it is fundamental to creating a thriving and successful country that reflects Canadian values and achieves potential. Whenever a Canadian has the opportunity to succeed and benefit, the well-being and quality of life of all Canadians will flourish.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, if it is our collective hope as parliamentarians to not only see GDP growth but to actually enhance the quality of life for the Canadians who live in our communities, in my view, it is essential that we become more effective at measuring the things that matter. To me, it is important that we understand there is value in a forest before we cut it down, that the time we spend at home is every bit as valuable as the time we spend at work and that the people in our lives are every bit as important and certainly more important than the money in our bank accounts.

On the issue of quality-of-life indicators, I want to acknowledge the leadership of a group in my province of Nova Scotia, Engage Nova Scotia, and the head of that organization, Danny Graham, in particular, for his groundbreaking work on establishing quality-of-life indicators.

Business of Supply

To illustrate the importance of this point, when people call my constituency office, they are not calling about Canada's GDP growth the month prior. They are calling about whether they have access to mental health services and whether they can manage to put food on the table for their families. Though they might be watching the monthly job statistics in the abstract, they are very concerned whether they and their kids have an opportunity to find a job in the community where they grew up.

In this recent federal budget, we have taken a major step to implement indicators where we can track the impact that the measures are going to have on the quality of our constituents' lives and not only on the macroeconomic indicators we traditionally rely on, like unemployment rates or GDP. Certainly, those traditional economic indicators are extremely important.

Could the minister highlight some of the investments made in budget 2021 as a result of these indicators and what are the next steps to implement a quality-of-life framework to ensure that, going forward, governments make decisions based on how they will improve the quality of life for Canadians rather than simply GDP?

• (2100)

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary, especially for his engagement with this file and his hard work. He and I have spoken often about the quality-of-life framework and the need to move beyond GDP to fully measure economic growth.

[*Translation*]

As Canadians, we know that we are going through an incredibly tough time. This pandemic has made it abundantly clear that our country's GDP and the amount of money in our bank accounts at the end of each month are not the only indicators of our quality of life.

Our ability to thrive is related to our health, our safety, adequate housing, good jobs, the opportunity to be active outdoors, access to clean drinking water, education, recreation, social ties and many other factors.

We are also aware that the pandemic has put a strain on all those aspects of our lives.

[*English*]

With this in mind, through budget 2021, we have brought forward Canada's first-ever quality-of-life framework, and it is located in annex 4. The framework was developed after consultations with experts and stakeholders, as my hon. colleague mentioned, Engage Nova Scotia being one of them, with international engagement and with input from Canadians.

[*Translation*]

We know the framework is a living document, and we continue to consult our indigenous partners, the provinces and territories and other important stakeholders. The framework will evolve as we gather more data thanks to budget 2021's recent investments in Statistics Canada.

[*English*]

It is evergreen, as we continue to consult with indigenous partners, provinces and territories and other important stakeholders. We will be using a broad suite of indicators and our government will be able to better measure and evaluate the impacts of key initiatives on Canadians' quality of life. This is a made-in-Canada approach that highlights Canada as a global leader.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Nearly 700,000 students will receive the Canada student loan this year, and the program administers about \$24 billion of student loans. This year, the program is in fact projected to grow about 32%. To administer this massive program, the Liberal government signed an eight-year contract with a private software company called Finastra, which gets money for each loan user.

Could the minister provide the total fee paid by her government to Finastra for operating the student loan program last year and the projected fee for this year?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am delighted the member opposite is drawing attention to student loans, because support for students is one of our government's priorities. This budget commits \$5.7 billion to Canadian students. That includes doubling the Canada student grant for two more years. It includes extending the moratorium on federal interest and ensuring that 450,000 low-income student borrowers will have access to more generous repayment assistance.

I trust the member opposite supports that.

• (2105)

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, the minister unfortunately did not answer my question of how much the private company that administers the student loan was paid. Again, it manages \$24 billion of student loans.

We do know that in 2017 and 2018 Finastra was paid over \$77 million to run the student loan program. In fact, the taxpayer paid the company over \$410 million over a five-year period to administer the program.

We also know that Finastra most recently had nearly \$2 billion in revenues, and its customers include 90 of the top 100 banks globally. Therefore, in sum, Finastra is very successful and making a lot of money.

My question is this. Why did Finastra receive the wage subsidy from the Canadian taxpayer and how much did it receive?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I struggle to understand the sincere intent behind the member's question. Is she implying that somehow we should not be making student loans available to young Canadians? If that is her implication, I could not more strongly disagree. Student loans are essential to our young people. They are an essential investment in our future.

Business of Supply

I am so proud that this budget strengthens the student loan program and that, thanks to this budget, young Canadians earning less than \$40,000 do not have to start repaying their student loans.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, I am not sure why the minister would be proud of providing a billionaire company with the wage subsidy when it is making a lot of money. That is my question.

Ultimately, I would like to know this as well. Robert Smith, the CEO of Vista Equity Partners, which owns Finastra, the parent company, recently paid \$139 million in tax fines to the American government, which is among the largest tax fraud scandal in American history. The Canadian taxpayer has subsidized one of his companies. Was the minister aware of this?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, again, I would like to probe a bit the intent behind the member's question. She has been asking about the wage subsidy. That is a program that has supported 5.3 million Canadian jobs. In her native province of Manitoba, it has supported 175,000 jobs alone.

Our priority is Canadian students and Canadian workers, and we will do whatever it takes to support them.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, the minister keeps quoting that stat, but quite honestly, it sounds like some of these companies could have saved these jobs on their own and had billions of dollars to spare.

The finance minister wrote a book about guys like Mr. Smith, where she argued the super-rich became rich because they were at the right place at the right time. Maybe she is right. A billionaire American tax cheat got richer off students and Canadian taxpayers during the pandemic as a result of the Liberal government's poorly designed wage subsidy program in this regard. Now Canadians with federal student loans will know that every time they make a payment, an American tax cheat will get richer. I guess that is okay by the Minister of Finance's standards. I am not sure, but it sounds like it is.

Ultimately, we know Finastra is worth billions, yet it received the wage subsidy. We know that 32 companies that went bankrupt before the pandemic was declared took millions from the wage subsidy, some of which no longer had any employees at all. Some of the best performing Canadian hedge funds also received the wage subsidy despite making hundreds of millions of dollars of profits last year.

Will the finance minister commit to ensuring no more profitable billionaire companies receive the taxpayer-funded wage subsidy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, what I will commit to is an important measure in Bill C-30 and I hope the member opposite will support. This measure applies to publicly listed corporations that received the wage subsidy for any qualifying period after June 5. These corporations would be required to pay the amount by which the remuneration of their top executives in 2021 exceeded their remuneration in 2019 up to the amount of wage subsidy received for active employees for this period. That is an important measure and I look forward to support from the other side of the House for it.

• (2110)

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, the Conservatives and Canadians supported pandemic relief efforts and programs, because they were sold to us as supports for Canadian families and Canadian businesses that were deeply hurt or at the risk of closing due to government shutdowns. They were not designed, at least from our perspective and what we were told, for profitable billionaire companies.

At the same time, the federal deficit is the largest in Canadian history, over \$354 billion, and now we are slowly beginning to learn and uncover the mountain of financial mismanagement by the Liberal government. Canadians really will be the ones on the hook to pay for it, whether through high taxes or reduced public services or both. Try as they may to explain away the Liberal government's disrespect or disregard, I am not quite sure what it is, for Canadian taxpayers and fiscal responsibility generally, Canadians are growing tired of the Liberal government's mismanagement and uncertainty.

The Conservatives successfully led us through the last economic recession and we can do it again. It is time for a responsible Conservative government that will secure Canada's future—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister for a brief answer. There is 30 seconds left.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, to answer a collection of flaccid talking points is a bit tough, but let me simply point out that it took a full decade before labour force participation in Canada recovered to its previous levels after the 2008-09 recession. We are not going to repeat that mistake. We are going to support Canadians, we are going to support Canadian workers, and Canada is going to come roaring back.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Chair, the finance minister has acknowledged that Canada's housing affordability crisis is fundamentally tied to increasing supply, yet the budget breezed past this critical issue.

Housing hopelessness is top of mind for Canadians. Why is the government failing to act?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I absolutely see housing as a key economic issue for our country. It is an issue for the federal government, it is an issue for provinces and it is an issue for municipalities. In fact, the member is a B.C. MP, and I had a great conversation with Kennedy Stewart, the mayor of Vancouver, just last week about this.

We have done a lot of work, and we need to keep on working on this essential issue.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, nobody can deny in Canada that the cost of housing has increased substantially since the pandemic began. What would the minister advise a young family trying to enter the market today?

Business of Supply

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the government is here to support that young family. We are working hard with provinces and municipalities to build more homes for young Canadian families. For a young family, early learning and child care is going to help it a lot.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, we know that Canada's economic recovery from COVID-19 must include infrastructure investment. Groups like the Canadian Home Builders' Association have long been calling for the government to open its eyes and recognize housing as a critical component of Canadian infrastructure.

However, the PBO and the Auditor General have found that the Liberals cannot account for their infrastructure spending. Is the reason there is no action on supply because Liberals screwed up on infrastructure?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I have a lot of respect for the member opposite, but there is a factual error in his question.

There has been significant emphasis on housing in our government's policies for years and in this budget: \$70 billion in the national housing strategy; the rapid housing initiative was a billion, the budget adds \$1.5 billion additional dollars; \$300 million in the—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, the minister should speak with those on the ground.

This morning, I spoke with Burnaby's mayor, the chair of the Metro Vancouver housing committee. His city has nine shovel-ready sites, six for the national housing co-investment fund and three for the rapid housing initiative, none of which received funding for construction despite Burnaby being the third most unaffordable place to live in our country.

Why did the government ignore this low-hanging fruit? Are the programs simply this ineffective or does it simply have no plan to secure Canada's housing future?

• (2115)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, let me encourage the member opposite to vote for the budget, because there is another \$1.5 billion in it for the rapid housing initiative. I agree that it is a great program, and that is why we believe in expanding it.

Just last week, I spoke to the mayors of Vancouver, Halifax, Toronto and Montreal specifically about housing. They told me they love the rapid housing initiative, so let us get the budget bill passed and get them more money for this great program.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, how many units has the national housing strategy built?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the national housing strategy is an unprecedentedly fast program that has moved more people out of homelessness into housing.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, how many units has the national housing strategy built?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I am going to quote something that Kennedy Stewart said to me, which I found very

moving. He said he felt that thanks to the rapid housing initiative, formerly homeless people in Vancouver now have a place to—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, the mayor of Burnaby stated that if the intent of the government is to slow supply, then it should rely on the national housing strategy. Again, how many units has the national housing strategy built? It is a simple question.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said a moment ago, the national housing strategy will build up to 125,000 affordable units. However, I want to talk about another program that is particularly relevant as we are recovering from the pandemic. That is the \$300-million—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, budget 2021 showcases how the government continues to turn a blind eye to money laundering. Why is the government failing to act and deliver on money laundering?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I am going to quickly finish talking about the \$300 million for the rental construction financing initiative. This will convert empty office space that has appeared in our downtowns into affordable housing. It is a great program and a reason to support the budget.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, I will ask the minister for a straight answer. How many units has the national housing strategy built since it was implemented?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we are hopscotching each other, but I owe the member an answer on money laundering. This budget takes unprecedentedly strong action against tax evasion and aggressive tax—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, when will the minister commit to introducing legislation that amends the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act to implement the much-needed recommendations from reputable academics and commissions from across Canada, particularly in my province?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, on money laundering, let me point to one of the measures that I think is important in the budget: the measure on beneficial ownership. It brings transparency to this area. Many activists in the area of transparency have been directly in touch with me to say—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, when will the new registry be tabled in Parliament?

Business of Supply

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the new registry needs, as a first step, all of us to vote for the budget, so let us do that.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, despite several years of assurances by the federal government that it is committed to the creation of an urban indigenous housing strategy, the budget excluded it. Why?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the budget makes unprecedented investments in reconciliation with the indigenous people in Canada, with \$18 billion over five—

Mr. Brad Vis: I disagree with you.

The Deputy Chair: I want to remind the member that it is not polite to interrupt and jump in while the minister or somebody else has the floor. This was also dealt with during question period today with another member.

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Chair, I am sorry. I think that might have been a delay.

• (2120)

The Deputy Chair: I appreciate the hon. member for saying that, but I would have preferred an apology instead, as it was not a delay when the hon. minister had the floor.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am thankful for the opportunity to stand today to participate in this committee of the whole debate and, most importantly, for the opportunity to highlight our government's proposed investments, which will help us deliver and build back a better, fairer and more prosperous future by investing in Canada's green transition and more green jobs. Today I will speak for eight to nine minutes, and then I have some questions for the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance.

As outlined in budget 2021, job growth means green growth. It is about leaving behind a healthy planet with clean water and clean air for our children and their children. It is about addressing the current climate crisis, and it is about securing jobs today and creating the careers of the future. Our recent budget sets out a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 36% from 2005 levels by 2030 and puts us on a path to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. It proposes funding to achieve our 25% land and marine conservation targets by 2025. Since the release of budget 2021, the Prime Minister has announced that Canada will increase its emissions reduction target by 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030.

By making targeted investments in transformational technologies, we can ensure that Canada benefits from the next wave of global investment and growth. Investing now in areas such as clean fuels and carbon capture will foster well-paying, middle-class jobs now and for many years to come. Canada can and will foster jobs and sustainable growth by building on what we already do so well. The resource and manufacturing sectors that are Canada's traditional economic pillars, including energy, mining, agriculture, forestry, steel, aluminum, automobiles and aerospace, will be the foundation for our plans to continue toward a more sustainable and green economy.

That is why we proposed a historic investment of \$5 billion over seven years in the net-zero accelerator on top of the \$3 billion we already committed in December for this program. This funding will help even more companies invest to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions while growing their businesses, and will help build and secure Canada's clean industrial advantage by decarbonizing large emitters, transforming key sectors and accelerating the adoption of clean technologies across the economy that are needed to meet our goal of net zero by 2050. This investment will help cut our pollution, spur clean technology innovations, attract major investments, create middle-class jobs and foster the development of key supply chains to ensure that Canadian industries and workers can use their low-carbon advantage to compete and win.

Tackling climate change and achieving net-zero emissions also require Canadians and Canadian industries to reduce the release of harmful greenhouse gases into the atmosphere in every way possible. Carbon capture, use and storage, also known as CCUS, is an important tool for reducing emissions in sectors that emit the most. This tool uses cutting-edge technologies to capture carbon dioxide emissions from fuel combustion and industrial processes, or directly from the air. The captured carbon can then be stored deep underground or used to create new, innovative products. CCUS is the only technology currently available that can produce negative emissions.

Budget 2021 proposes to introduce an investment tax credit for capital invested in these projects, with the goal of reducing CO2 emissions by at least 15 megatonnes annually. We also know that investments are needed to support research and development activities that will lead to technological breakthroughs, reduce costs and ensure that Canada remains at the forefront of the global market for oil.

That is why budget 2021 proposes to provide \$319 million in funding to Natural Resources Canada to support research and development activities in carbon capture, use and storage technologies to improve their commercial viability. Together, these proposed actions related to the CCUS will help Canada achieve our carbon reduction emissions goals and position Canada as a leader in the provision of cleaner energy and innovative new technologies around the world.

Business of Supply

• (2125)

Canadians are well aware that climate action starts at home, and home energy retrofits can have a big impact on emissions reductions. Whether people replace drafty windows, improve insulation to keep their houses warm in the winter and cool in the summer or install heat pumps, retrofits will help Canadians make their homes more energy efficient and can also help to better protect their homes from climate risks. These retrofits also make our homes more comfortable, reduce our energy bills and create good middle-class jobs, especially for skilled workers and tradespeople. They can also help spur clean growth by developing an industry for energy efficient retrofits, including the development of a Canadian supply chain for high-efficiency home renovation products.

The 2020 fall economic statement put forward a program to provide Canadians with one million free energy audits and up to 700,000 grants, valued at up to \$5,000 each, to complete energy efficient retrofits for home improvements. To further help homeowners, budget 2021 proposes to provide \$4.4 billion to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to help homeowners complete home retrofits through interest-free loans worth up to \$40,000. Loans would be available to homeowners and landlords who undertake retrofits identified through an authorized EnerGuide energy assessment.

In combination with the grants announced in the fall economic statement, this would help eligible participants afford deeper, more costly retrofits that have the biggest impact in reducing a home's environmental footprint and energy bills. The program will also include a dedicated stream of funding to support low-income homeowners and rental properties serving low-income renters, including co-operatives and not-for-profit-owned housing. The program would be available this summer, and it is estimated that more than 200,000 households would benefit from this opportunity.

Finally, before I conclude, I would like to touch on zero-emissions technology. As more countries commit to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, the demand for zero-emissions technology will only grow. With a highly educated and motivated workforce, Canada is well positioned to use this as an opportunity to create sustainable jobs for Canadians and continue toward a more sustainable economy.

Strengthening our manufacturing sector and creating good, well-paying jobs is key to growing a resilient, competitive middle class. That is why budget 2021 proposes a 50% reduction in the general corporate and small business income tax rates for businesses that manufacture zero-emissions technologies.

In conclusion, our government knows that we are at a pivotal moment. Just as the inventions of the steam engine and personal computer triggered transformative economic shifts, today the global economy is quickly turning green, and it is only the beginning of the sustainable future that our planet needs. It is essential for the prosperity of both current and future generations of Canadians for Canada to be at the forefront of this great transformation. Our government knows the importance of making sustainable decisions, and we will do whatever it takes to provide a greener future for all Canadians.

I will now turn to my questions for the minister.

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis remains a significant concern for all Canadians from coast to coast. Last year we announced the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act with a goal of net-zero emissions by the year 2050. We know that investors are putting their money into just about anything that has the word “green” attached to it, and the act will help achieve net-zero emissions. However, we must ensure that it is not a barrier to investment and is a strategic plan for competitiveness.

While some members of the House continue to debate whether climate change is real and whether we should take official positions on it, our government has a real plan to address climate change. I would therefore like to ask the minister to explain why it is important to adopt a climate lens and how it will impact the lives of Canadians in our fight to end rapid climate change. Specifically, I would like her to reference the \$1.4-billion project proposed in the budget to respond to climate-related disasters.

• (2130)

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his hard work in this domain.

Climate change is real. Our government has brought forward a serious plan that cuts pollution while creating jobs, middle-class growth and economic opportunity for everyone.

As my colleague said, COVID-19 has shown us that Canadians have what it takes to come together, mobilize and take action in the face of this crisis. The climate crisis is just as great a challenge. Budget 2021 builds upon the historic investments we have been making since 2015, more than \$100 billion to build a cleaner, healthier economy with more good jobs for Canadians.

We have proposed \$5 billion over five years for the net-zero accelerator to support and secure Canada's clean industrial advantage by investing in decarbonizing large emitters, transforming the economy and key sectors, and accelerating the adoption of clean technology across the economy. These funds will spur Canada's shift to innovate net-zero technologies and attract the large-scale investments needed to meet our goal of net-zero by 2050. It will also help Canadian firms grow and create the jobs of our low-carbon future.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, I want to turn briefly to the COVID-19 pandemic and the continued work that this government has been doing over the last year, but, more importantly, recognizing the work of the frontline workers who have literally put their lives at risk every day to protect Canadians and fight toward ending this public health crisis.

Last year, our government acted quickly to meet the needs of Canadians at a time when they needed it the most by rolling out programs with record speed. Since December, the government has continued to ramp up our vaccine rollout so that more Canadians will have access to vaccines, should they choose to get one. Obviously, we encourage all Canadians to do their part in fighting COVID-19.

Could the minister speak to Canada's COVID-19 immunization plan and how budget 2021 will ensure that all Canadians have access to vaccines?

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, I thank my hon. colleague from Kingston and the Islands for raising this important question.

This has been an historic year for Canadians, and we have already administered a first dose of vaccine to just over 60% of Canadian adults. We continue to rank in the top three countries in the G20 for the number of doses administered. As the Prime Minister said yesterday, everyone who wants to be vaccinated will get their first dose by June 30.

The pandemic is the most serious global public health crisis we have ever faced. As my colleague said, we have seen the resilience of Canadians who have continued to make sacrifices for the greater good of our community. We are committed to supporting all Canadians during the recovery. That is why we have—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands for one last question.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, I will go back to the topic of our economy, its growth and, in particular, fostering greener spaces and ensuring cleaner air for both current and future generations of Canadians.

Last year, we announced a healthy environment and a healthy economy, our plan to combat the climate crisis and to help us get there. To fulfill that goal of net-zero carbon by the year 2050, we must continue to build a more sustainable approach that expands investments in clean energy technologies and accelerate growth to the forest-based bioeconomy.

Could the minister explain briefly how budget 2021 aims to promote green, sustainable economic growth in Canada while working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and how these steps will lead to a greener future and new job opportunities for all Canadians?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, our government knows the importance of green economic growth, and we have a serious plan that addresses climate change and supports our environment while promoting the growth of our economy. Budget 2021 proposes an investment of \$5 billion toward a green bond framework to provide investors with information on opportunities to finance Canada's work to fight climate change and protect the environment through green bonds.

• (2135)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Chair, I will share my time with the member for Mégantic—L'Érable, and I will use my portion of the time to ask a series of questions.

Business of Supply

Some new small businesses that were at the pre-revenue stage prior to the pandemic have been systematically excluded from the government's programs. This has been widely acknowledged, including by officials.

Do these estimates fix that problem, which has been faced by new businesses that were established right at the beginning of the pandemic?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I have had exchanges with the member opposite about this issue.

When we created the emergency relief programs, our immediate objective was to support the businesses that were up and running that had no choice but to try to keep going when the pandemic hit. We absolutely understand the particular situation faced either by businesses that have been created since the pandemic or businesses that were on the verge of launching when the pandemic started.

I will finish in my next answer. I realize my time has run out.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, I only need a yes or no to the question. Do the estimates contain any provision for relief for new small businesses, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, Bill C-30 and the budget contain a huge amount of support for all Canadian small businesses. I will start with the digital adoption program, which is going to be a huge productivity boost. There is also talk about the tax incentive—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, can the minister say if there is anything for businesses that have been excluded from the relief program so far? That is what I would like to know, if the minister can answer that question, please.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the question was asking if there are measures to support new businesses. In fact, in the budget, there are so many measures to support all small businesses across the country. I spoke about the digital adoption scheme. I would like to talk about an essential tax measure that will encourage businesses to invest in themselves.

I will finish discussion of that—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, for a small business that does not meet the criteria of the wage subsidy or rent subsidy, is there anything that will allow these businesses to survive and pay their immediate bills?

Business of Supply

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I will just finish by talking about this tax measure because I think it is one of the most productivity-enhancing measures in the budget.

For the next three years, businesses will be able to count, as a tax expense, up to \$1.5 million of investment in themselves in each of those three years. All Canadian businesses can do that.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, I understand that businesses that spent all of their savings building a plant, restaurant or a store, and had a grand opening date in March, still do not receive eligibility for the rent subsidy or the wage subsidy.

Will they be eligible for the new hire subsidy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I think it absolutely makes sense that businesses that were already up and running, and that had no choice but to continue, have been the priority of our government's support measures. I think that is absolutely right.

I absolutely agree with the member opposite that we need to have continued support for all Canadian businesses into the recovery, and this budget makes unprecedented investments in small businesses that will do exactly that.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, the estimates include \$81.5 million for Mitacs to administer a small business internship program. That is included in these estimates.

How was Mitacs chosen?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, Mitacs is a very reputable, long-standing Canadian government program that has done tremendous work in supporting innovation in the Canadian economy.

• (2140)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, I certainly do not disagree, but that was not my question. I asked how it was chosen.

Maybe specifically, was there an open bid process, or by what specific criteria was Mitacs chosen?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, some measures in the budget, such as the continued support of Mitacs, are continuations of and further investments in existing highly successful programs. I think that is the right approach to take, particularly in this urgent moment when we all need to devote our attention to the recovery. That is the approach we have been taking here, to take a program that is already working and to double down on it.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, she could just answer the question, which was on whether there was an open bid process. This was announced as a new program, so this was not a continuation of an existing government program.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said, this is a tried, tested and well-known Canadian program. It is absolutely right in this budget, when we need to invest in innovation, to use systems that work.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, that is still not an answer.

Here is a new question. Typically a lender will require a business that owns property to have a separate company hold the land, particularly if there is a mortgage involved. The lender will insist on

that. This creates a problem and makes it impossible for these businesses to qualify for the rent subsidy.

Has that problem, which has been well identified, been addressed or changed as part of these estimates or the BIA?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the rent subsidy is one of the big success stories of our government's efforts to support Canadian businesses throughout the pandemic.

I will remind the member of how many businesses have been supported through that program. There are 182,000 businesses across the country that have benefited from the rent subsidy.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Chair, it is a good thing the opposition was there to get them to make the changes that were necessary to actually create a successful program.

However, the minister still did not answer the question. Has the government fixed the problem under which a business cannot access the rent subsidy if they have their business separated into an operating and a holding company, which is required in any commercial financing?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I have a lot of respect for the member opposite, especially late at night, but he has to get his lines straight.

Either he can claim credit for the rent subsidy and say it is great, or he can criticize it. He cannot have it both ways.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Chair, did the Minister of Finance personally approve abandoning sick people for one year by deferring until July 2022 the increase in EI sickness benefits to 26 weeks?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, one of the elements of the budget is that EI sickness benefits will increase from the current 15 weeks to 26 weeks. That is a good thing.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, did the minister vote against the *Émilie Sansfaçon* bill this afternoon?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, yes, I voted with all my colleagues this afternoon.

• (2145)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, she voted against the bill.

Can the minister tell us what is the average duration of treatment for someone who has breast or colon cancer?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I will speak about my personal experience.

Business of Supply

My mother died of cancer and, during the pandemic, my father had cancer. He is all right now.

I have personal experience with cancer, and that is why I supported increasing EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, my heart goes out to the minister.

Treatment for breast or colon cancer lasts 37 weeks. Why does the minister oppose 52 weeks of EI sickness benefits?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I think it is excellent that our government chose to increase EI benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks and—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, did the minister personally approve abandoning people between the ages of 65 and 75 in the last budget?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I would like to add something about the EI sickness benefits. The Conservatives need to pick a lane. On one hand the member asks questions about the debt, on the other he asks questions on the lack of programs. He has to—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, did the minister personally approve abandoning people between the ages of 65 and 75?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I am proud that our government kept its promise and increased the old age security pension for people 75 and up. That was one of our campaign promises.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, why are people between the ages of 65 and 75 being excluded from federal government assistance programs in the latest budget?

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Chair, I rise on a point of order, as the English translation is not working.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Interpretation is working now.

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, why did the minister personally support abandoning people between the ages of 65 and 75 in the last budget?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the interpretation problems may be related to the fact that it is hard for the interpreters to follow us. I thank them for their work.

No one has been abandoned in our budget.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, does the minister believe that pensioners under 75 have fewer expenses and more means than those who are older?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I believe and I know that people who are 75 and up are older, so it makes sense that they would have greater needs.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, that is like saying it is light out in the daytime.

Can the minister tell us what the inflation rate is right now in Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, that is correct, it is exactly like saying it is light out in the daytime, and that is why our program is clear and correct.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, can the minister tell us what the inflation rate is right now in Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, if the member has questions about inflation and interest rates, I want to assure him that we have a prudent program to manage the country's debt.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, I would just like to point out that the minister is taking twice as much time to answer as I do to ask a question.

What is the Bank of Canada's inflation target?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I greatly respect the independence of the Bank of Canada, which made an important announcement last week.

I do not wish to make a comment.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, can the minister tell us what the inflation rate is right now in Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I would like to add a comment to the previous question. The Conservatives may think it a good thing to question the independence of the Bank of Canada, but that is not our position.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, could the minister, who does not know that inflation is at 3.4% in Canada and that the Bank of Canada's inflation target is 2%, tell us whether she agrees that inflation is costing Canadians a lot of money?

• (2150)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, if the member has questions or concerns about inflation and debt, I think it is important to explain to him that our government has a prudent debt management strategy. The government—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, why did the minister personally approve a higher cost of living for all Canadians by ignoring the fact that the cost of almost everything is going up? That is making the lives of Canadians more and more difficult.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, it is important to explain to Canadians that the federal government's share of long-term bond issuance increased to about 29% in 2020. We are now proposing to increase that to 40%—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Business of Supply

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, did the minister personally approve the Prime Minister's decision not to increase health transfers to the provinces?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, if the member thinks it is important to support the provincial and territorial health care systems, then he must support our Bill C-30, which includes \$4 billion for the health care systems of the provinces and territories.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, would it be correct to say that population aging, particularly in Quebec, will send health care costs skyrocketing in the coming years?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, once again, if the member thinks that supporting the health care system is important, the budget also earmarks \$1 billion to support vaccination campaigns in the provinces and territories. That is one more reason to support the budget.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, did the minister attach conditions to the increase in health care funding?

Did the Minister of Finance herself agree not to compensate supply-managed producers for the Canada-United States-Mexico free trade agreement in her budget?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the budget contains a lot of support measures for farmers across the country. This support was necessary, and we have provided it.

[*English*]

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am pleased to be able to speak to the committee of the whole about the actions of the government. I will be speaking for approximately eight minutes and will be following with a couple of questions, hopefully, for the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance.

Budget 2021 is a historic document. It is the first budget tabled by a female Minister of Finance. It is also a document that sets an ambitious path for this country for the years to come, while healing the economic wounds of the past year. We cannot go back and alter the destruction the pandemic has wrought on our lives and on our economies, but we can do our best to ensure a better future by laying down the foundations for a resilient and inclusive recovery. I would like to outline the measures that budget 2021 would enact to create jobs and particularly help low-wage workers.

The burden that COVID-19 has placed on low-wage workers cannot be overstated, and the past year has shown how much everyone relies on the important work that many of these workers do. It is a sad reality that the worst economic impacts of the pandemic have been suffered by those who could least afford it. Low-wage workers have been up to six times more likely to suffer layoffs than higher-income Canadians. Many of these workers are young people, new Canadians, visible minorities and women. Many Canadians are struggling to get by while supporting families through part-time, temporary and low-wage jobs.

To support low-wage workers in the federally regulated private sector, budget 2021 proposes to introduce legislation that will establish a federal minimum wage of \$15 per hour, rising with inflation. This would directly benefit more than 26,000 workers. To support low-wage workers who have been most negatively affected by

the pandemic and make our workforce stronger, budget 2021 proposes to expand the Canada workers benefit to support about one million additional Canadians in low-wage jobs, helping them return to work and increasing benefits for Canada's most vulnerable populations. This important measure would raise the income level at which the benefit starts being reduced for single individuals without children and for families.

• (2155)

[*Translation*]

As we all know, the Canada emergency wage subsidy was one measure that kept businesses afloat during the crisis and enabled them to keep paying their employees when revenues took a nosedive. The program has helped more than 5.3 million Canadians keep their jobs. It is set to expire in June 2021, but if we want to bridge Canadians through the rest of the crisis, continued support is needed.

To give workers and employers certainty and stability over the coming months, budget 2021 proposes to extend the wage subsidy until September 25, 2021. Extending this support means that millions of jobs will continue to be protected.

The budget also puts forward a new program, the Canada recovery hiring program, which would provide an alternative support for businesses affected by the pandemic to help them hire more workers as the economy reopens.

The government also plans to take action to help the workforce grow and meet demand by helping employers train and reskill workers.

To help Canadians gain skills for good jobs in growing sectors, budget 2021 proposes to invest \$960 million over three years for a new sectoral workforce solutions program. This funding would help design and deliver training that is relevant to the needs of businesses, especially small and medium-sized businesses, and to their employees. This investment will help connect 90,000 Canadians with the training they need to access good jobs in sectors where employers are looking for skilled workers.

This measure will also help diversify sectors by ensuring that 40% of supported workers are from under-represented groups, including women, persons with disabilities and indigenous people.

Business of Supply

[English]

Some 45% of Canadians lack the literacy, numeracy and digital skills that are increasingly necessary to succeed in jobs in the knowledge economy. Budget 2021 proposes to invest \$298 million over three years in a new skills for success program that would help Canadians improve their skills. This program would enable approximately 90,000 Canadians to improve their literacy and essential skills to better prepare for, get and keep a job, and adapt and succeed at work.

When the economy reopens many people will return to their previous jobs, but for some, changes in the economy will mean they will need to find new jobs. To address this need and help Canadians find new jobs as quickly and easily as possible, workers need to be able to rapidly adapt and upgrade their transferable skills for newer industries. Budget 2021 proposes to provide \$250 million over three years for an initiative to scale up proven industry-led third party delivered approaches to upskill and redeploy workers to meet the needs of growing industries. This initiative will help approximately 15,500 Canadians connect with new work opportunities.

Finally, I would like to add a thought about personal support workers. These individuals perform jobs that are mentally and physically exhausting, but they often do not enjoy the same job protections, compensation and benefits as many of their peers in the health care sector. To follow through on a commitment made in the fall economic statement 2020, budget 2021 proposes to provide funding of \$27.6 million over three years for My65+, a group tax-free savings account offered by Service Employees International Union Healthcare. The funding for this portable savings tool will support incentives for worker participation.

[Translation]

The government's economic recovery plan must address the unique challenges of the pandemic recession and must include all Canadians. If we are to have a full and fair recovery, Canada needs all workers to rejoin the workforce and to make sure they earn a decent living so as to generate economic growth and raise the standard of living and quality of life for everyone.

Even before the pandemic, housing costs were rising and were a serious concern for a lot of young Canadians who wanted to buy their first home, including many from my riding.

In 2017, the federal government responded to these concerns by introducing Canada's first-ever national housing strategy to improve the affordability, availability and quality of housing in Canada. It is a vital first step. My constituents have continued to express concerns about the rising cost of housing. Now more than ever, they are counting on our government to do something.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the housing crisis, particularly affecting the most vulnerable Canadians. Unfortunately, this includes women living in dangerous conditions. Members may remember that the House recently held a take-note debate to discuss the disturbing trend of violence against women.

Because of the threat of COVID-19, many people are unable to get into shelters, which further increases the problems faced by

homeless Canadians. Budget 2021 aims to continue tackling the housing crisis by investing in new and existing projects.

Can the minister explain how important funding for housing projects is to Canadians and why it is so essential that the federal government take marginalized communities into consideration in its plans?

• (2200)

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Vimy for this crucial question.

The high cost of housing across the country is affecting almost every Canadian. That is exactly why we are taking action on several fronts to alleviate the pressure on low- and modest-income Canadians. For this reason, budget 2021 will invest \$2.5 billion and reallocate \$1.3 billion in existing funding to speed up the construction, repair or support of 35,000 affordable housing units.

This will also help families, young people, low-income Canadians, people experiencing homelessness, and women and children fleeing violence find a safe and affordable place to call home.

Of this investment, \$1.5 billion will be allocated to the rapid housing initiative to build units over the next 12 months. It is important to note that at least 25% of these funds are allocated to and reserved for women-focused housing projects. This investment will add more than 4,500 units to the affordable housing market, building on the 4,700 units we created as part of the \$1-billion investment included in the fall economic update.

My hon. colleague also mentioned the importance of helping women fleeing violence. I want to note that budget 2021 provides \$315.4 million over seven years, starting in 2021-22, through the Canada housing benefit to increase direct financial assistance for low-income women and children fleeing violence to help with their rent payments.

These measures are in addition to our work to advance a national action plan to end gender-based violence and the budget 2021 proposal to invest \$200 billion over two years, starting in 2021-22, to support organizations fighting gender-based violence.

The first-ever national housing strategy guides our government's approach to housing because everyone deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. We will continue this important work that we have just started.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Madam Chair, the elderly are some of the most vulnerable members of our population in Canada, and the pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated some of the issues that currently exist with respect to long-term care facilities.

To complement the work by the Health Standards Organization and the Canadian Standards Association to establish national standards for long-term care, budget 2021 proposes a series of investments to support long-term care in all provinces and territories. It considers the importance of culturally appropriate palliative care and steps to support seniors so that they can live independently for as long as possible, recognizing the importance and benefits of seniors living in the comfort of their own homes and allowing them to continue to be close to their communities.

Can the minister speak about some of the efforts that will be made through this budget to keep seniors safe in Canada and ensure that they are receiving the highest quality of care?

• (2205)

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, COVID-19 has highlighted many of the concerns facing our elderly population, and our government is committed to enhancing our current long-term care system and establishing national standards that meet and exceed the needs. That is why we have allocated \$3 billion to support provinces and territories in ensuring that they are meeting long-term care standards and that the necessary changes are being made.

To continue to support seniors during COVID, we propose an increase in old age security for seniors aged 75 and up and will provide a one-time payment of \$500 to these seniors to help them pay their bills. We also understand the importance of living at home for many of our seniors and propose an investment of \$90 million towards the launch of our “age well at home” initiative to provide seniors with the support needed to ensure that they can live in the comfort of their own homes for as long as possible.

I will conclude by saying that we have also proposed an investment of \$41.3 million to improve our data infrastructure and collection on supportive care, primary care and pharmaceuticals so that we can gather the data needed to continue to monitor the challenges and support future investments. We know that seniors are among the most—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Edmonton West, and I will be spending my time questioning the minister.

The minister has described budget 2021 as a growth budget, and I want to begin with the oil and gas sector, which is quite important for my riding. This is a sector across the country that has lost hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of foreign investment. What is the funding end for measures of growth for this sector in these estimates?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I agree with the member opposite that the energy sector is a vital part of the Canadian economy, and I would remind all members of this House of the very ef-

fective orphan wells program, which our government put in place with strong support from the provinces. In terms of this budget, one measure that I think is really worth highlighting is the tax incentive on carbon capture, utilization and storage.

I see, Madam Chair, that you are rising, but I will be happy to talk about this some more in further questions.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Chair, I will expand it to the natural resources sector, because I did not see a lot in this budget for that, and it is 17% of our GDP. What are the measures and funding to spur growth in that sector?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I just want to say a couple of things about carbon capture, utilization and storage, because this is so important for our energy sector. It is important for the planet. This new tax incentive, for which we are launching a 90-day consultation, is going to really help Canada and the Canadian energy sector make the green transition and make the leap into a clean and green economy. It is an important measure, and I am glad it is there.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Chair, I did not hear any funding for any growth in the natural resources sector, which is 17% of our GDP.

Let us turn, then, to agriculture, which is 8% of our GDP. Can the minister talk about the funding and growth supports for agriculture?

• (2210)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, actually, I was talking about natural resources.

Let me just talk about one other aspect of natural resources where I see tremendous potential for Canada, and that is in heavy earths and the critical minerals and metals for electric batteries. There is a huge opportunity here for Canadian leadership, and this budget makes big investments in electric cars, in batteries and in that whole value chain.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Chair, I would just point out to the minister that electric batteries are not the agriculture sector of Canada, which was my question.

Let us turn, then, to something that interests me as the chair of status of women, where we have been studying unpaid work and obviously looking at the child care issue. I see there is a pledge of \$30 billion over five years, but it is contingent on the provinces matching that funding. What happens if the provinces cannot pay their half? Does that just become another broken election-year promise? What is the plan?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I have to say to the member opposite that I have a real interest in agriculture, too.

Business of Supply

This budget makes tremendous investments in agriculture. Let me talk about the clean fuel standard, which is going to be transformative for Canadian canola producers. I spoke recently with Kyle Jeworski of Viterra, and he told me about the investment in canola crushing they are working on, which will be tremendous for our canola producers. Likewise, our investments in the green transformation for farmers will be very important for the sector. Let me just mention wild salmon, another natural resource.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Chair, that was a great answer for the child care question, not.

Let us move along, then. One of the files that I have has to do with the election. I noticed there was a section 91 change. This was something that came before the courts. Members will remember that in the previous session the government brought forward legislation to make it an offence to say false things about a candidate or public member, and the courts ruled that a violation of freedom of speech. Instead of respecting the courts' decision, now it has been put into a budget bill.

I did not see a line item that specifically had to do with that. Was it just that it was put into an omnibus bill with a phrase that says it applies to an election in the next six months, which I assume means the government intends to call an election in the next six months, or is there money in the estimates that I missed?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, there is just so much good stuff in the budget, and I do want to touch on all the issues that the member opposite is raising.

She talked about early learning and child care, and I am delighted she raised that issue. This is one of the key investments this budget proposes. This will drive long-term growth for the Canadian economy and provide a huge amount of relief to Canadian families.

The member asked about the role of provinces and territories. Of course, this needs to be a shared effort. We are already working with provinces and territories on this. I have to say that I believe there is going to be real enthusiasm, because everyone understands this is what Canada needs for jobs and growth.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Chair, I am very concerned about the amount of debt the government has racked up, \$460 billion before budget 2021, which brought in another \$101 billion. If we look at the debt of \$30,000 that this has added to every Canadian, and I did the math, that is \$250 a month, every month for the next 10 years, assuming no interest. That is for everyone: men, their wives, their children, every Canadian.

I do not see a plan to eliminate the debt. Could the minister comment on what that plan is?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the plan is jobs and economic growth.

Let me tell the House about some other people who did the math and came up with an AAA grade for Canada. That is the economists at S&P. Their job is to determine the creditworthiness of borrowers, of countries, and when they looked at our budget, they saw that the numbers, including the growth supportive measures, add up. They reaffirmed Canada's AAA rating, the highest rating possible. Let me remind members that Canada continues to have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7.

• (2215)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be using my time for questions.

Through you to the minister, what was the discount rate used in the assessment of the financial support for Air Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, this gives me an opportunity to thank my deputy minister, Michael Sabia, who played a key role in our work with Air Canada.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, the minister does not have an answer.

How does the government determine the merits of spending taxpayer dollars without knowing what the planned return is?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, our agreement with Air Canada is a tough and excellent agreement that guarantees a great deal for Canadians. The Government of Canada—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, what income does a person have to have in Canada to be considered one of the 1%?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I just need to say a few more things about the Air Canada deal. Our government [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] so we have an upside, and there are strict limits on executive compensation.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, as the minister will not answer, I will tell her that it is about \$300,000. The government has amended the Income Tax Act to allow Canadians earning up to \$308,000 to get the tax-free child benefit top-up.

How many Liberal ministers would be eligible for that tax-free gift under the changes they made?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the Canada child benefit top-up, which has been lamentably delayed by the filibustering tactics of the Conservatives, is going to provide crucial support to Canadian families as we get through these last weeks and months of COVID.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, I will answer for the minister: all 37.

Business of Supply

How many of these top-percentile income earners received this tax-free Liberal bonus for the child benefit under their changes to bring it up to \$308,000 earned?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, let me just point out again that it is the members on the opposite side of the House, in particular the Conservatives, who have delayed this essential support coming to Canadian families. They—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, I will answer for her: Two hundred and sixty-five thousand wealthy Canadians got the extra money.

Who in the House said this just on Monday: “The Canada child benefit puts more money in pockets of Canadians by not sending cheques to millionaire families”?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the Canada child benefit is a program that has lifted millions of Canadian children out of poverty. It is such an effective program that it is being used as a model in the United States—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, I will answer for the finance minister: It was the Prime Minister who said that.

How much was paid out in taxpayer dollars to the top 1%, tax free, by the current government?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, let me just underscore how important the Canada child benefit was before COVID as a program to lift Canadian children out of poverty, and this top-up in the fall economic statement is essential for Canadian families. Thank goodness it is—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, I will happily answer for the minister again: it was \$88 million.

The federal government only offered the City of Edmonton \$17 million for supportive housing. Does the minister think \$88 million for the top 1% is more important than housing for the homeless in Edmonton?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I hazard to guess that I speak more with the municipal leadership of Edmonton than do the members on the opposite side of the House, and I am very proud of the innovative programs Edmonton has put in place to tackle homelessness.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, I think I can say, for the City of Edmonton, that it would rather see some of that \$88 million the current government paid to the top 1% earners than the paltry \$17 million the government decided was a priority.

Does the minister know how much Elon Musk is worth?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I would really challenge whether the municipal government of Edmonton feels the member opposite speaks for the elected representatives at the municipal level of the City of Edmonton.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, I can assure Canadians and the people of Edmonton that the minister does not speak for them,

nor does she hold them in high regard if she is offering more money to the wealthy 1% than to Edmonton homeless people.

To answer the question, Elon Musk is worth about \$175 billion.

Taxpayers, under the current government, have given Elon Musk \$100 million in subsidies to the wealthy to buy Tesla cars. Does the minister believe that is of bigger importance than perhaps housing the homeless in Edmonton?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I would like to just salute Edmonton for its innovative and, I would say, Canada-leading programs on people experiencing homelessness. I am pleased, although somewhat surprised, to see the new-found concern for homelessness on the Conservative benches. I would encourage the Conservatives to vote for the budget, which includes \$1.5 billion for the rapid housing initiative.

• (2220)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, I am surprised that the government, which is constantly talking about sending cheques to millionaires, places a higher priority on sending cheques to millionaires and billionaires than on helping the City of Edmonton house the homeless.

The ultra-exclusive Royal Ottawa Golf Club received \$1 million in the wage subsidy program into the 2020 year, with a surplus 19 times more than it reported in 2019. Can the minister justify this taxpayers' handout?

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The member for Thérèse-De Blainville on a point of order.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Chair, we have been without French interpretation for a few minutes now.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Now that the problem has been resolved, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the interpreters. They must be tired as well.

[English]

Let me say I welcome the rather surprising conversion of the Conservatives to really caring about homelessness. Why do you guys not put your vote where your questions are, support the budget—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I would remind the hon. minister that I do not vote in this instance.

The hon. member.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, I will forgive the finance minister for answering the wrong question because of the delay. I was asking about the minister justifying a handout to an exclusive golf club.

Business of Supply

The President of the Treasury Board was not able to confirm that the \$100 billion wage subsidy program went through the required regular Treasury Board scrutiny. Is this the reason why billions were paid out to wealthy hedge fund managers and super profitable multinationals: so they could pay out executive bonuses and dividends on the taxpayer dime?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the rapid housing initiative is \$1.5 billion. Vote for it in the budget. I would urge all members to vote for it in the budget. It is a great way to end homelessness.

Okay, on the wage subsidy—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Chair, good Lord, this is embarrassing: \$100 billion did not go through the Treasury Board process for approval. Now we see the government paying out wealthy hedge fund managers, and the minister makes a joke about it.

Other G7 countries had wage subsidy provisions to protect taxpayers. Why did the government not put protections on the wage subsidy through the required Treasury Board approval process to protect taxpayers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the wage subsidy supported 5.3 million jobs across the country, and 674,000 in Alberta alone.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am very pleased to be taking part in today's discussion.

As everyone knows, the COVID-19 pandemic has created immense costs for all Canadians and brought about the deepest and fastest recession worldwide since the Great Depression.

In Canada, more than three million Canadians have lost their jobs, and another 2.5 million have had their hours significantly reduced. This represents roughly 30% of the pre-pandemic workforce.

Furthermore, Canada's gross domestic product, or real GDP, dropped by 13% from the first half of 2020. As a result of the pandemic, economic activity in Canada declined about three times as much as in the 2008-09 recession, in a much shorter time.

Our government is committed to doing everything in its power to protect the health of Canadians and the Canadian economy during this extremely serious crisis. So far, we are living up to that commitment.

• (2225)

[English]

Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan has proved absolutely fundamental in bringing Canadians and businesses through these COVID-19 shock waves and stabilizing the economy. We delivered job protection through the Canada emergency wage subsidy, liquidity support to businesses through programs like the Canada emergency business account and income support to individuals through the Canada emergency response benefit and other recovery benefits.

Canada undertook what has been among the largest and most quickly implemented fiscal responses in the G7, at over 23% of GDP with budget 2021 investments included. While these fiscal costs have been high, we must bear in mind that these decisions were necessary to ensure the safety and health of all Canadians. Analysis by the International Monetary Fund, the IMF, confirms that in the absence of these direct support measures, Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio would not have been much different from what it is today.

The takeaway from this is clear. A failure to support Canadians and businesses would not only have left Canadians alone when they needed our help the most, but would have resulted in almost as large a debt burden, greater human misery and greater long-term economic scarring. The actions we have taken were effective and appropriate. Our support has helped keep food on the tables of millions of families and has staved off a flood of bankruptcies, kept the businesses we depend on going, and preserved our capacity to make a strong recovery. As the IMF has confirmed, our economic response plan was a cost-effective investment to avert what would have been a catastrophic economic collapse.

As a result, the Canadian economy is positioned for a strong recovery and is already showing signs of strength, with Canada's GDP rising by 10% annualized in the fourth quarter of 2020. Economists have significantly revised their forecasts for recovery upward since the fall economic statement. Following a record decline in real GDP in 2020, it is expected to grow by 5.8% in 2021 and by an additional 4% in 2022. The projected level of real GDP by the end of 2022 is almost 2% higher than projected in the fall economic statement.

[Translation]

In addition, real GDP is expected to return to its pre-pandemic level this fiscal year, about six months earlier than previously expected.

As everyone knows, we originally projected a deficit of up to \$381.6 billion for 2020-21. However, thanks to a strong economic recovery aided by the remarkable resilience and ingenuity of Canadians across the country, we have spent less than we provisioned for. We are now estimating a deficit of \$354.2 billion for the current fiscal year, significantly below our previous forecast.

The investments in jobs and growth in budget 2021 will help put the deficit on a downward trajectory. As noted in the budget, the debt-to-GDP ratio should fall to 49.2% by 2025-26, and the deficit will be only 1.1% of GDP.

Business of Supply

[English]

We are seeing these positive results because of the investments we have made toward the recovery of our economy, which will enable us to repay our COVID debt. That is why budget 2021 proposed game-changing investments in housing, early learning and child care, students, small businesses, innovation, public transit, broadband and the transition to a cleaner and greener economy.

These investments will permanently bolster Canada's capacity for economic growth. We know that Canada is a country with tremendous human and natural resources to drive growth, and this budget will fuel that. These are investments in our future and they will pay great dividends.

The current low interest rate environment means that we can make growth-enhancing investments that will continue to raise our GDP growth and strengthen our ability to pay down the COVID debt in the future. These investments are not only an investment in our economy, they are also an investment in the lives and futures of Canadians across the country.

We will continue to focus on Canadians who have been most affected and ensure that our recovery includes specific measures to continue to support them as needed. We will create jobs by investing in the infrastructure that supports our communities and the social and economic well-being of Canadians. We will support clean growth and a more prosperous future for Canadians by investing in world-leading research and innovation.

• (2230)

[Translation]

We will give skilled workers the opportunity to connect with businesses. Furthermore, we will help hard-hit businesses invest in new technologies and hire more workers, so that they can move forward and jump-start Canada's economic recovery, as we get it back up and running.

As I have shown today, these investments are responsible and sustainable. They move Canada forward on the premise that finishing our fight against COVID-19 goes beyond simply defeating the virus. It is about healing the economic wounds left by the COVID recession. It is also about securing Canada's long-term economic growth outlook, and budget 2021 sets us on that path. It sets the stage for our victory over this pandemic and a more prosperous future for all.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today. I now have a question for the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity. I am a proud Franco-Ontarian, and our minority language communities and two official languages are very important to me. They make me who I am.

It is clear to me that our government is committed to celebrating and promoting both official languages and that it recognizes the important role our two official languages play in the lives, traditions and culture of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

We know that education in French plays an essential role in shaping and promoting a bilingual country. Education in French must be available to all Canadians. Recent events have shown that our government must play a leadership role, certainly in my region.

Children in minority language communities everywhere, from Moncton to Victoria, including in my hometown, have participated in programs such as French immersion and the explore program, and these communities can speak to how beneficial these programs are, not only for post-secondary studies and access to the job market, but in many other ways. These programs help make our communities more diverse and contribute to preserving our linguistic history.

Our government also recognizes the value of post-secondary studies in the minority language and the importance of protecting the French language and supporting official language minority communities across the country.

Can the minister tell us why it is important to take these actions to promote Canada's two official languages?

What measures are set out in the budget to achieve that?

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would like to thank the member for Sudbury for that important question.

Our government is committed to promoting both official languages, and it recognizes the role that they play for Canadians across the country. We allocated a total of \$8.7 million to modernize the Official Languages Act and ensure that it better serves our country's linguistic duality.

As my colleague pointed out, French-language education is the key to having bilingual citizens. Our investment of \$180.4 million to improve French immersion and French as a second language programs in our schools and post-secondary institutions will guarantee that our students receive a high-quality education in French.

We also know how important it is for students living in linguistic minority communities to receive an education in their mother tongue. That is why we allocated \$121.3 million to make high-quality post-secondary education in the language of the minority available across the country, from Vancouver to Edmonton, Sudbury, Ottawa and even Moncton.

What is more, budget 2021 proposes an investment of \$81.8 million to support the construction and renovation of educational and community spaces that serve official language minority communities. These measures are essential to promoting linguistic duality across the country, supporting official language minority communities and diversifying our economy.

• (2235)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Chair, that is clear. Those are historic investments.

I thank the minister and her team for the attention they gave us when we were making these important points.

[*English*]

I would like to also ask the minister another question with respect to tourism.

The tourism industry is important in northern Ontario and certainly across Canada. It has been one of the sectors that has been impacted greatly by the pandemic. Many local tourism businesses have shut down and stopped providing services from coast to coast to coast to do their part in keeping Canadians safe.

In 2019, tourism accounted for 1.8 million direct and indirect jobs throughout our country. The government recognizes that the impacts of the pandemic will continue to be felt by these businesses throughout the recovery process. In response, the government has created a plan to best support the tourism industry through initiatives like the tourism relief fund and other investments to promote Canada on the international stage once international travel is permitted, allowing us to once again open our borders to international visitors on a larger scale so they can experience the many things our great country has to offer.

Could the minister briefly explain why the tourism relief fund and other measures taken, such as those supporting safe air travel, are crucial for tourism businesses and local economies?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Chair, our government knows the tourism industry has been one of the most impacted sectors of our economy and we are committed to supporting its recovery. That is why we have extended the Canada emergency wage and rent subsidies to continue to support employees in the tourism sector. The Canada emergency wage subsidy has already helped more than 5.3 million Canadians to keep their jobs, and the Canada emergency rent subsidy and lockdown support has supported more than 154,000 organizations.

Budget 2021 also proposes to invest \$500 million toward the tourism relief fund to support local tourism businesses in their recovery process and position them for future growth. My colleague from northern Ontario pushed that really hard with FedNor, ensuring it had the appropriate investments to support tourism in northern Ontario.

We will also allocate \$400 million through Canadian Heritage and regional development agencies to support major and local festivals and other events to attract tourists to our beautiful country.

We know the importance of tourism in our economy and we plan to dedicate \$100 million to Destination Canada to support marketing campaigns to encourage both Canadians and international visitors to travel our great country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Chair, I do not have any other questions, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank the ministers who are in the House. I myself do not have the honour of being in the House in person.

Business of Supply

With regard to the investment in FedNor or making FedNor an independent agency, I would say that economic development is very important for our regions.

[*English*]

Rural Canada and economic development is crucial, and we have been advocating for a while now to have FedNor as an independent agency. In budget 2021, it has come to fruition, and that is because of teamwork and certainly the advocacy that was done. I know this will go a long way in northern Ontario to have these projects brought in by northern Ontarians, discussed in northern Ontario and make them become a reality.

We realize the importance of having boots on the ground, ears on the ground and decision-makers on the ground. I am thrilled by this investment and want to thank the minister for that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Chair, I will use my time to ask the Minister of Finance some questions and listen to her responses.

The budget provides for more than \$150 billion in investments. Before the budget was tabled, Quebec had just one demand: an increase in federal health transfers that would cover 35% of expenses. There are sound reasons for this, in light of the health, social and economic crisis we have been facing for many months as a result of the pandemic. The government rejected Quebec's one demand.

How did the government respond? It responded by investing in national long-term care standards and interfering in home support programs, which is not what Quebec asked for. In fact, quite the opposite.

Why did the minister not respond, with this budget, to the very important demand for increased federal health transfers?

● (2240)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank the member for her question.

I completely agree that this is an economic and health crisis. That is why the federal government was there to support the provinces and territories on health care and will continue to be.

With Bill C-10, we hope to provide an additional \$4 billion for health care, to help the provinces and territories deal with the immediate pressure on their health care systems, in particular to help them clear health care system backlogs caused by the pandemic. We know that this assistance is urgent, and that is why I hope all members will support Bill C-30.

Furthermore, the bill would provide \$1 billion for the vaccine rollout. I hope that all members will agree that the provinces need this money. They need this assistance.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Chair, I would like to make a brief comment.

Business of Supply

I believe that Quebec and the provinces need predictability, and the provinces need to be able to fully support their own health jurisdictions. The provinces do not need paternalistic measures that would tell them what to do or interfere in their jurisdictions.

I will now talk about the old age security pension. In Canada, the retirement age was brought back down from 67 to 65, and the government is pleased with itself for doing that. Every Canadian is entitled to the old age security pension starting at 65, whether they worked or not. It is a universal social program. Everyone can count on that pension as of age 65.

The government is saying that in its budget, it is honouring its commitment to increase the old age security pension by 10% starting at age 75, but it is compromising the universality of old age security. The government is telling people who get old age security at 65 that they will have to wait 10 years to get an increase that they should really be getting at 65, considering seniors have the same needs at 65 as they do at 75.

Why did the government discriminate against seniors aged 65 to 74, a 10-year period during which these people are very vulnerable and would be entitled to the old age security pension?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I thank the member for her question.

Our government is grateful for the contribution that seniors made and continue to make in our communities. We have taken measures to fight poverty, including among seniors. I am very proud to assure members that our policies are yielding positive results.

Today, 25% fewer seniors are living in poverty than when we took office in 2015. That result is directly linked to the good work done by our government, particularly in restoring OAS eligibility to 65 years and increasing support to the most vulnerable single seniors.

Bill C-30 also proposes to increase old age security by 10% for people aged 75 and older, which will help lift a large number of seniors out of poverty.

• (2245)

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Chair, poverty and vulnerability affect people of all ages, and that is why a social program was introduced to provide an old age security pension. For many women and many people, it is their sole source of pension income. I understand from the reply that this discrimination will remain, which is a first and sets a precedent.

With respect to employment insurance, members will recall all the measures implemented to support nine million workers who found themselves unemployed overnight. Emergency measures had to be put in place because the EI system was not fulfilling its role, as the former governor of the Bank of Canada, who is highly respected, told the Standing Committee on Finance. The President of the Treasury Board himself admitted last spring that the reform of the system had been delayed too long for it to meet the challenge.

In the last Parliament, the Liberal government pledged to reform the EI program. This budget, however, only extends the temporary measures until September 2021, and adds an eligibility criterion that is welcome because it is reasonable, but only for a period of

one year. As the witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Finance stated, there are many gaps and the pandemic is not over.

Can you assure us that if you keep this temporary framework for a year, you will be open to the idea of fixing the remaining gaps to properly protect workers affected by the pandemic? I am thinking of the seasonal industries and the tourism sector, whose workers need support now not tomorrow, and who are currently being ignored.

Would the minister and her government be open to improving what is currently in Bill C-30?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her question. I, too, would like to know what you are going to do with all those programs. I am kidding.

With regard to our employment insurance program, I generally agree with the Bloc Québécois member, and I think that all Canadians agree with us. The pandemic has shown that there are Canadians who are not covered by our programs. Our worker support system was designed for another economy and for another time. However, the economy has changed and our system needs to change too.

I want to thank all members of the House for supporting the government when it had to very quickly create new programs to support Canadians in a time of crisis. That is a good thing that we did together. I am pleased that Bill C-30 extends those emergency measures until the end of September and extends the more flexible EI requirements for another year.

That being said, I agree with the member that there is still work to be done and that we need to do it together. If there is another question, then I would like to talk about the Canada workers benefit, which is also important in this area.

• (2250)

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Chair, I have another question, but I would like to make a comment first.

The Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion said something rather disturbing recently. She said it would take seven years to reform the EI program because the computer system could not support it.

In another life, I used to say that sometimes you have to make what is politically desirable technically possible. It is politically desirable to reform the employment insurance system, which leaves workers in seasonal industries, women and young people out in the cold. If we want this to be just temporary, we have to improve these temporary measures, at least.

Business of Supply

My last question is about EI sickness benefits.

The Prime Minister met with Émilie Sansfaçon at the beginning of this Parliament and he committed to recognizing her claim because of her situation. In another time not so long ago, when the Liberal Party was in opposition, he supported a bill that called for exactly the same thing as the Bloc Québécois is calling for today, that is, to increase sickness benefits to 50 weeks, in the interest of fairness to workers who pay into EI.

Why is the government going only halfway and leaving more than 60% of workers to fend for themselves?

Why did the government not unanimously support increasing sickness benefits to 50 weeks, when it had the opportunity to do so today?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I thank the Bloc Québécois member for that important question.

I agree with her that extending EI sickness benefits from 15 to 25 weeks is one of the most important measures in the budget. That is one of the big things Bill C-30 will do. It will be life-changing for many Canadians. Fifteen weeks of sickness benefits is not enough; 26 weeks is much more.

We talked about the disadvantaged, the poor and the employment insurance system. I want to stress the importance of the Canada workers benefit. This measure will help Canadians who are working but are still poor. It will lift 100,000 working Canadians out of poverty.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is an absolute pleasure for me to participate in this committee of the whole debate and speak this evening to budget 2021. I will be focusing most of my remarks on how our budget has a number of measures to help small businesses and, in turn, how this is good for our recovery and economic growth moving forward. Among many things in budget 2021, there is a plan to make investments in Canada's businesses so they can hire and train workers, who will, as a result, have more money to spend, spurring our recovery and growing an economy with more opportunities for everyone.

Let us start at the beginning. An essential part of Canada's fight against COVID-19 has been the unprecedented federal support for Canadians and Canadian businesses. This support has helped millions of families in the depths of this crisis. One in four Canadians was receiving federal COVID income support. The Canada emergency wage subsidy, currently set to expire in June 2021, has helped more than 5.3 million Canadians keep their jobs and has provided more than \$79 billion in support to the Canadian economy.

To continue to support Canadians through the rest of this crisis, and to give workers and employers certainty and stability over the coming months, Bill C-30, the budget implementation act that is currently before the House, proposes to extend the wage subsidy until September 25, 2021. It also proposes to gradually decrease the subsidy rate, beginning on July 4, 2021, to ensure an orderly phase-out of the program as vaccinations are received and as the economy

reopens. Extending the support will mean that millions of jobs will continue to be protected.

The wage subsidy has been an absolute lifeline for so many businesses in my riding of Davenport, from many of the artistic and cultural organizations, such as the House of Anansi, an iconic Canadian publishing house, to businesses such as Teixeira Accounting Firm, one of the many small businesses that serve the local community.

Another key support for our small businesses has been the Canada emergency rent subsidy and the lockdown top-up support that has helped more than 180,000 organizations pay their rent, mortgage interest and other expenses. The rent subsidy provides eligible organizations with direct and easy-to-access rental support. An important aspect of this support is that it is accessible directly to tenants and landlords. This program is also scheduled to end in June 2021, but to help Canadians weather the remainder of this crisis until the recovery, they need continued support. As in the case of the wage subsidy, budget 2021 proposes to extend the subsidy for the rent and the lockdown supports until September 25, 2021. It also proposes to gradually reduce the rate of the subsidy for the rent to ensure the program's orderly phase-out as vaccines continue to be rolled out and the economy reopens.

Again, these emergency supports have been tremendous lifelines to many businesses in my riding of Davenport, from hair salons to small theatres to many of the restaurants across my riding, among many other types of organizations and businesses. There is no way they could have survived without these supports. I know they are so grateful for this ongoing support, although I will say they are so excited at the prospect of opening up sometime soon.

Let us move on to speak to supports contained in Bill C-30 that would assist small businesses succeed moving forward. They are some of the new programs we are proposing.

To provide further support to our small businesses, Bill C-30 proposes the new Canada recovery hiring program for eligible employers who continue to experience qualifying declines in revenues, relative to before the pandemic, and who need help with restarting. This proposed program would provide an alternate support for businesses affected by the pandemic to help them hire more workers as the economy reopens. The proposed program is designed so that the rates for both the wage subsidy and the hiring program will slowly decrease over time, creating a strong incentive for employers to begin hiring as soon as possible to maximize their benefit.

Business of Supply

For businesses that have been hardest hit by the pandemic, hiring the workers they need to grow is a cost they may worry about taking on. The government wants these businesses to recover and grow by hiring more people, so that workers are at the forefront of our recovery. The proposed Canada recovery hiring benefit would offset a portion of the extra costs employers take on as they reopen, either by increasing wages or hours worked or by hiring more staff. This support would only be available for active employees and would be offered from June 6 to November 20, 2021. The aim is to make it as easy as possible for businesses to hire new workers as the economy reopens.

● (2255)

It is obvious that Canadian businesses must adopt new technologies and go digital to meet the needs of their customers and remain competitive. The pandemic has precipitated the digital transformation of the economy as businesses, workers and consumers increasingly do business online. To spur recovery, jobs and growth, the federal government is launching Canada's digital adoption program, which will create thousands of jobs for young Canadians in addition to helping up to 160,000 small and medium-sized businesses adopt new digital technologies.

This program will offer two components of support to businesses. Eligible shopping street businesses will receive micro grants to help offset the costs of the digital switchover and gain digital trainer support from a network of 20,000 well-trained young Canadians. Some companies will need more comprehensive support to adopt these new technologies. A second component will therefore be offered to businesses located outside the shopping streets, such as small food manufacturing and processing businesses. Support provided to these companies will focus on expert technology planning consultants and the financial options required to implement these technologies. These measures will match more businesses with customers seeking what they have to offer and ensure their continued success.

One of the inspirations for this new program is the digital main street, a program providing grants and services to Ontario businesses to help them digitize. Our federal government helped fund an expansion of this program in June of last year, which helped countless businesses in my riding adapt to the pandemic by going online.

The chair of Little Portugal on Dundas BIA went before the finance committee last week. In the chair's opening remarks to the committee, she let us know that the BIA had been at the forefront of adoption of the digital main street program and it was helped, in large part, by having a Portuguese speaker on its digital service squad. They have indicated the importance of making our new digital adoption program accessible to main street businesses, some of whom may be slow to adopt new technologies, including language barriers, but they have stressed how vital this program is in helping businesses recover from the pandemic and adapt for the future, improving their chances of long-term sustainable success.

Finally, I want to speak in the final minutes of my remarks this evening on budget 2021 about investments in immigration. As we know, Canada is the destination of global talent. With our declining birth rate and increasing retirement rate, Canada's future economic success depends on good immigration policy moving forward and a

modern, efficient immigration system to meet the needs of incoming applicants and new Canadians.

As part of budget 2021, the government is proposing \$428 million to develop and deliver an enterprise-wide digital platform that will replace the current legacy case management system. What this means is that Canada's immigration system will see an improved application process and support for applicants. We understand that this type of investment is needed to ensure immigration levels in Canada remain well supported.

When Stephen Poloz, former governor of the Bank of Canada, testified recently before the finance committee, he made a very important point. He said that immigration was Canada's most important economic growth engine, just as it was in the 1950s and 1960s. Therefore, anything we can do to make that process more efficient will be a good investment in Canada's future growth. It is important we recognize that the money we put into our immigration system is an investment, not a cost. It will pay huge dividends in economic growth for the future.

Budget 2021 invests in a more prosperous future for us all as we move past and come out of this pandemic. We are meeting this challenge head on and we are laser-focused on growth and the economy.

● (2300)

[*Translation*]

A sustainable recovery program must focus on the challenges and opportunities ahead in the coming years and decades. It must be guided by a growth strategy based on the unique competitive advantages of the Canadian economy and ensure that Canada is positioned to address the needs of the century to come.

● (2305)

[*English*]

I now have a couple of questions for the Associate Minister of Finance, and my first question is on mental health.

Business of Supply

For over a year, Canadians have been forced to adapt their lives to a new normal to keep their communities safe. Many students have switched to attending classes online, and everyone misses having in-person interactions with their loved ones, peers and colleagues. Last year, 40% of all Canadians, and 60% of Canadians with pre-existing mental health conditions, reported that their mental health had worsened. Many of my constituents have shared how these changes and finance-related stress have caused them to feel severe burnout and fatigue due to the stress of this global pandemic.

We realize that this pandemic has taken a great toll on the mental health of Canadians, and that is why the government launched the Wellness Together Canada portal last April. This portal supports the mental health of Canadians by providing live support, treatment and reliable information on mental health and well-being.

Can the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance speak to the measures that will be implemented through budget 2021 to support Canadians who are struggling with their mental health?

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, COVID has certainly exposed the mental health struggles that Canadians faced even before the pandemic, and the impacts of COVID on our interactions with our friends, families and coworkers have taken a toll on the mental health of many Canadians. That is why our government has a plan to support the mental health and well-being of Canadians.

This past year has been particularly difficult for certain groups, including indigenous people, Black and racialized Canadians, front-line workers, health care workers, youths and seniors. We know that the pandemic has affected these groups in different ways, and that is why we plan to invest \$100 million toward supporting projects for innovative mental health interventions for these groups.

Budget 2021 also proposes an investment of \$45 million toward the development of national mental health service standards, which would ensure that Canadians receive the high-quality services that they need and deserve. In combination with this initiative, our government aims to invest \$62 million toward the Wellness Together Canada portal to provide Canadians with the tools and resources that are essential in supporting their mental health.

[Translation]

We understand that some mental health concerns have arisen from COVID-19, including trauma support for Canadians at greater risk of suffering COVID-19-related trauma.

We know that Canadians need our support and we are taking these concerns very seriously.

[English]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Chair, in my riding of Davenport many businesses have been hit hard by the pandemic, and small businesses have been faced with even more significant declines in revenue over the past year. They have continued to demonstrate extreme resilience in their adaptation to changing public health guidelines. A number of local businesses in my riding have adapted by offering curbside pickup and launching online stores, such as Three Fates, the TuckShop and the Dufferin Grove Farmers' Market, and

many residents continue to get the necessities they need through these online businesses.

I know that ministers have spent a lot of time building programs that will help small and medium-sized businesses ongoing. Can the Associate Minister of Finance please speak about the importance of small businesses in our community, and how our budget aims to continue to support them through the recovery process?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, I thank my hon. colleague for Davenport not only for her important question, but also for raising many of those investments that we have in budget 2021 in her speech. I will talk about more of them.

We propose improving the Canada small business financing program by providing \$560 million, which will support approximately 2,900 additional small businesses. It also outlines the new Canada recovery hiring program, which will provide subsidies to eligible employers to support them in hiring new staff during the recovery process.

Additionally, budget 2021 proposes an investment of up to \$80 million toward the Community Futures Canada network and regional development agencies to support an extended application deadline for the regional relief and recovery fund and indigenous business initiative.

As well, we have seen first-hand over the past year the impact of technology on small businesses, and that is why we have allocated \$2.6 billion to it.

• (2310)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Edmonton Centre and asking questions to the minister.

What will happen first, putting a rover on the moon or first nations getting clean drinking water?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to inform the member opposite that this budget invests \$18 billion in supporting indigenous people in Canada and reconciliation.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, is it the rover first or clean drinking water?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I do not think that clean drinking water is a joking matter. I am pleased that we are investing \$18 billion to support indigenous people in Canada.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, we will try a different line.

Business of Supply

By what date will fully vaccinated travellers be exempted from the hotel quarantine program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I thought, and there have been times when the questions from the Conservatives have suggested, that they believe we need strong border measures. I hope they still think that way. I certainly do and so does our government.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, WestJet has stated that it seeks restart measures from the federal government, not liquidity. By what date will fully vaccinated travellers be exempt from quarantine?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am delighted the deputy minister is here, because he is working very hard with WestJet, perhaps not as we speak, but every day.

When it comes to travel, we listen to the advice of our public health authorities, and our priority is keeping Canadians safe.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, by what date will fully vaccinated travellers be exempted from at-home quarantine?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am afraid the Conservatives need to pick a lane. Do they believe in strong border measures to protect the health and safety of Canadians, or do they believe in something else? They should be clear.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, as the government now owns 7% of Air Canada, has the minister asked for advice on how she should conduct herself in the review of aviation files?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, we are very clear and careful about all of the Government of Canada's holdings. The Air Canada deal provides an important upside to Canadians. That was important to our government, and rightly so.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, by what date will fully vaccinated travellers be exempted from the hotel quarantine program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, again, if the Conservatives believe that Canada needs weaker border measures now, when we are still fighting a tough third wave, they should just come out and say so.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, by what date will the minister speak out on allegations that her cabinet colleague knew about harassment allegations against General Vance but did nothing?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me be very clear. Every woman in Canada, very much, including the brave women who serve our country in uniform, has the right to work free of harassment and fear.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, thousands of western Canadian aviation workers want to know by what date fully vaccinated travellers will be exempt from quarantine.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I really think the Conservatives owe Canadians a straight answer. Do they believe now is the time to relax the border measures, which I believe are keeping Canadians safe?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, by what date will the minister speak out on the Liberal Party green-lighting the member for Kitchener South—Hespeler as a candidate, with knowledge of substantiated harassment allegations?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me be very clear. Every person in Canada deserves to be free of sexual harassment. Our government takes all allegations very seriously.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, by what date will the minister speak out on allegations that her cabinet colleague knew about harassment allegations against General Vance but did nothing?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I have been very clear and our government has been very clear on the Canadian Armed Forces. All Canadian women, particularly perhaps Canadian women in uniform, deserve a workplace free of harassment.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, how does the minister feel about serving in a cabinet and knowing that a colleague knew about harassment allegations but did nothing?

● (2315)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am very proud to serve in this cabinet, and it is a tremendous privilege to be supporting Canadians in this once-in-a-generation national crisis.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, are you proud to serve with the current Minister of National Defence?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am proud to serve in a government that is working hard to support our amazing country in a very challenging time. When it comes to the Minister of National Defence, I worked closely with him as the foreign minister, and it was a privilege to work with him.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, what amount of Canadian air travel revenue and jobs has shifted to American border airports like Buffalo's because of the hotel quarantine program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, again, the Conservatives owe it to Canadians to be clear and direct and to pick a lane. If they are seriously suggesting that our border measures should be weakened today, they need to come right out and say so.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, will the minister support any requests from the Alberta provincial government to reinstate the Alberta border pilot program?

Business of Supply

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am always happy to talk to my colleagues in provinces and territories across the country, very much including Alberta. I had a great conversation with the Alberta finance minister on Friday evening.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, by what date will fully vaccinated travellers be exempted from the hotel quarantine program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am hearing a lot of questions from the member opposite about weakening and softening our border measures, which are there to protect Canadians. If that is what the Conservatives seriously stand for, they should come right out and say it to Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Chair, by what date will fully vaccinated travellers be exempted from the hotel quarantine program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, is today's policy of the federal Conservatives to call for weakening of our border measures? I think that may be news to some Conservative premiers.

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be asking questions of the finance minister.

Canada is ranked 17th in innovation. What number will Canada be ranked after the end of this fiscal year?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, our government is making strong investments in innovation in this budget. Perhaps the member opposite would like to say whose ranking he is referring to.

Mr. James Cumming: What target will you set for a ranking for innovation in the next fiscal year?

The Chair: I would ask the hon. member to direct the questions to the Chair.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, it would probably be good to cite a source, but let me assure all members of the House and all Canadians that we absolutely believe innovation is an important engine in growth. That is why we are investing in it.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, what are the new job growth numbers expected with the additional investment in the supercluster fund?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me give some job growth numbers. Our budget will create 500,000 work experience and work placement opportunities, and our budget means that there will be one million new jobs created in Canada by the end of the year.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, how many jobs are going to be created by the additional investment in the supercluster fund specifically?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the member seems to be interested in numbers this evening, so I am going to talk about a few that I think are really important to Canadians. The first is for jobs. As of April, we have recovered 2.5 million jobs of the three million lost at the peak of the pandemic, which is eight in 10.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, there is no specific answer. Could the minister provide the specific number of jobs that will be recovered in the oil and gas sector in this next fiscal year?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am going to provide some other important numbers to Canadians. Let us talk now about GDP. In the fourth quarter, GDP grew by nearly 10%. In the first quarter it was 6.5%, which is higher than the U.S.'s growth.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, that did not answer the question. What can we expect for recoveries in the oil and gas sector? Albertans want to know.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I want to say a couple of things about the energy sector. I am very, very pleased to see the strong embrace by the energy sector, particularly in Alberta, of targets for net zero by 2050. Our CCUS tax incentive is going to help them get there.

• (2320)

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, let us try another sector. How much of the \$100 billion going toward infrastructure is targeted toward value-added in the ag sector?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me start by congratulating Canadian farmers. Commodities are doing very well right now, and Canadian farmers, whose productivity and hard work is contributing very much to Canada's strong economic performance right—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, I asked a very specific question. What part of the infrastructure funding will be toward value-added in the ag sector?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, there is so much support for agriculture in this budget it is hard to know where to start. As I mentioned, the clean fuel standard is going to be great for canola producers across the country. The incentives for green agriculture will be transformative. There is great support for wine producers.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, what is the expected export growth rate for the natural resource sector in the next fiscal?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, exports and strong commodity prices are an important part of Canada's economic strength right now. Let me just remind people that GDP grew by 10% in Q4 and 6.5% in Q1. That is—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, what is the expected growth rate for the natural resource sector in exports? It is a critical component of this economy.

Business of Supply

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I agree, and let me just take an opportunity to talk about a text conversation I have been having this evening with Mark Little, the CEO of Suncor. It has just updated its strategy to get to net zero by 2050, and that includes reducing emissions by 10 megatonnes by 2030.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, that is still no answer.

What percentage of the \$100-billion investment in infrastructure spending is targeted specifically toward productivity and trade growth?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our budget is strongly focused on productivity and economic growth. That is something members of the Standing Committee on Finance heard from Stephen Poloz in his testimony at committee last week.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, is a target not important in this area?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Yes, Mr. Chair, targets are definitely important, and let me talk about probably the target that is the most important to Canadians, which is the one million jobs promised in the throne speech. This budget will create them by the end of the—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, I think Canadians want to know where the one million jobs are, so that would be a target.

Can the minister tell me how many of those jobs will be in the natural resource sector?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, what I am going to do is talk about some of the things our government has done to support Canadians. How about this number: 876,000 businesses across the country have been supported by a CEBA loan.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, what relief programs are newly incorporated businesses eligible for?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, here is another number that might interest the member opposite: 182,000 businesses across the country benefited from the rent subsidy and emergency lockdown—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, what specific programs are newly incorporated businesses eligible for?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, one of the most important elements in the budget is investments in small businesses. There is the digital adoption program that is going to help drive a surge in productivity, and the tax credit for up to \$1.5 million a year.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, I take it that is none.

Can the minister tell me what specific measures were taken to lower input costs and taxes to SMEs?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, that is actually precisely the opposite of what I said. When it comes to small and medium-sized businesses, this budget makes a historic, unprecedented investment. One of the most important elements is the tax expensing of \$1.5 million for three years.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Chair, on what date can I tell my grandchildren the government will finally balance a budget?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, if the member opposite is concerned about his grandchildren, as I am sure he is, and all of us care very much about our children and grandchildren, what I hope he will tell them is that this government is investing in the future. It is investing in jobs and growth. It is investing precisely in those grandchildren.

● (2325)

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. Chair, I would like to pick up on the last point the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance made in regard to our grandchildren. I am very proud of my grandchildren, and I do think of the future and the direction that we are going.

One of the things we can all feel very good about is that during the pandemic, and even pre-pandemic, we have had a government that was very concerned about the future of Canada, so our grandchildren would be in a better environment. I could go back all the way to the first budget, where we saw all forms of support for Canada's middle class, to the challenging times of the pandemic, where we continue to support Canadians in a very real way. Our government has supported, through the middle class, a healthier economy that continues to build and perform quite well in comparison to other jurisdictions. This is because of the investments we have made.

I feel very good about the future of Canada because we have had very strong stewardship of our economy through both of our ministers of finance, the strong leadership of our Prime Minister, and a caucus that works day in and day out to ensure that we get things right. When we know we need to improve, we strive to make those improvements.

Having said that, I want to provide my comments for 10 minutes, leaving four or five minutes for questions and comments with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance.

Let me start by saying that in Manitoba, in reading the Winnipeg Free Press today, there is good reason to have hope. I will read from an article about the first dose being given to 60% of adult Manitobans. It says, "Manitoba is less than two weeks away from vaccinating 70% of its eligible population against the novel coronavirus in a final push to bend the COVID-19 curve of Canada's hot spot."

Business of Supply

It has been difficult over the last little while, as this third wave has had a significant impact in the province that I love and care so dearly about. I know that people are genuinely concerned. Upon reflection, one of the things I think about is how the province and the people have come together. We have seen our health care workers in particular, and so many others, recognize the need to serve. They have stepped up to the plate once again.

Our ICUs are packed. We have to have people go out of province. We understand how important it is that the population continues to play that supportive role. We see that through physical distancing and respecting the need for restrictions. When I reflect on it, I go all the way back to day one, over a year ago, when the Prime Minister said that we needed to focus our attention on the pandemic, and on fighting and battling this pandemic.

He told Canadians back then that we would be there for Canadians, for real people and our businesses. If we review the things that have taken place, there are many indications showing how we have been able to get to the point we are at today. I do not have any problem whatsoever in looking beyond our borders and feeling good in terms of where Canada is today. I attribute our success to date to that team Canada approach.

• (2330)

The federal government did not do this on its own. There was very much a coming together of different levels of government. We saw provincial governments, municipal governments, non-profit organizations and private businesses all come together, recognizing that we needed to work together in order to overcome this world pandemic and the damage that it was causing.

From the very beginning we saw a government that understood in a very real way that we had to be there. Being there meant a program, coming from nowhere, that we know as CERB, which served over nine million Canadians. Our population is 37.5 million people. Think about what it would have taken and about the fine work of our civil servants and all those involved in making that program a reality. It put disposable income in the pockets of Canadians when Canadians needed it, when they were concerned about how they were going to pay their mortgages and their bills. Bills do not stop coming in even when someone does not have an ability to generate income because of the pandemic.

Imagine the number of businesses that would not be here today if the government, working with others as a team, had not developed programs that have become the pillars of the federal government throughout the pandemic. I am thinking of the emergency business account, emergency commercial rent program and lockdown support. I loved the wage subsidy program. That program saved tens of thousands of jobs. It kept people working during the pandemic. Not only was it good for individual Canadians, but it was also good for businesses. There was the business recovery benefit, recovery sickness benefit and recovery caregiver benefit. Those were the pillars that were there to ensure that the federal government had the backs of Canadians. That was so very important. By doing that, we are in a far greater position to be able to build back better.

We look at the budget implementation bill and the budget, which we heard about from the Minister of Finance. It is an incredible, progressive budget that supports Canada's middle class and those

aspiring to be a part of it in a very real and tangible way. We can look at what it is doing for child care. We can look at the budget's potential of getting more people engaged and the contribution that that engagement is going to have on Canada's future growth. We have recognized the value of long-term care and standards. We have learned a great deal from the pandemic and we can take advantage of what we have learned and build upon it. That is what this budget is doing.

Canada has hope today because we have a government that recognizes the value of working as a team with other levels of government, with Canadians. We have a government that recognizes the value of bringing forward a budget, which is going to make a difference. That takes me to my first question for the parliamentary secretary to the minister of finance. Reflecting on the budget implementation bill and how it is a continuation of allowing us to build back better, so that we will have a stronger and healthier future for the next generation and today's generation, could he provide his thoughts on why this bill is so critically important at this time to continue to be there in a real, tangible way for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast?

• (2335)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would ask the hon. member to bear with me, as we are now at about 12:35 in the morning on the east coast, and it has been an engaging debate every step of the way.

In response to the member's question, when I think first about the impact of this budget, I cannot ignore that we continue to be in a public health emergency. COVID-19 has thrust a lockdown on my home province of Nova Scotia most recently and people need support.

It makes me think back to the early days of the initial shutdown nearly a year and a half ago and the phone calls that were coming in to constituency offices like mine right across Canada. People were worried about putting food on the table. Business owners were worried about keeping their lights on and their doors open. Workers wanted to be kept on payroll so they knew a cheque would be coming in and they would also have access to their benefits.

We stepped up in a way that I was very proud of, with programs like CERB, helping more than nine million Canadian workers; the wage subsidy, keeping over \$5 million on the payroll; and the emergency business account, helping businesses keep the lights on. Many of these benefits are extended in the budget implementation act that was been tabled recently. We know that we need to continue supporting folks until this emergency is over. Thankfully, due to the expedited vaccine rollout, it looks like that may come sooner rather than later.

Business of Supply

As we punch out of this pandemic recession through investments that will help businesses grow, help them innovate, help with extraordinary job placements and with hiring incentives, it is essential that the growth the private-sector forecasts are suggesting will arise does not benefit the wealthy few but extends to everyone.

Are you trying to get my attention, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: It is just a mistake. It is a little glitch at our end. The parliamentary secretary can continue, please.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Chair, I was just trying to make the point that as we experience growth on the back end of this pandemic, it is essential that we try to build growth in a way that works for everyone. We know this pandemic has hit women and young people harder than others. We know this pandemic has disproportionately impacted Black Canadians, indigenous Canadians and folks from different walks of life.

As we seek to go forward, investments like the new national child care and early childhood education strategy will ensure more women can take part in the workforce. Historic investments in excess of \$5.7 billion will support young Canadians and reduce barriers of access to education, so we will not only create cost savings in the short term for them but set them up for long-term success.

The hon. member bookended his remarks with the idea of intergenerational fairness. The previous speakers had an exchange on the same issue in the context of making the kinds of investments now that, yes, may be expensive but will set us up for long-term success.

We cannot have a conversation about intergenerational fairness without discussing the real impact that climate change is having on people today and the disproportionate impact that young people should expect to live with if we continue on the path we are on.

I am extraordinarily proud of some of the investments we have made over the past number of years, the recent commitment to legislate targets in Canadian law and the investments included in this budget that will spur innovation in clean technology, provide tax incentives for people who manufacture zero-emissions technology and inspire us to adopt clean electricity more rapidly. We have investments to help deep home energy retrofits that will put people to work, reduce our emissions and reduce the cost of electricity.

When it comes to intergenerational fairness, members know as well as I do that we need to take action today to mitigate the worst consequences of climate change, so my daughter's generation has a world where she can live and work as she sees fit.

The Chair: At this point, we would only have about two minutes remaining in the time provided. However, in that there were some technical delays in the course of this evening's debate, we will extend that by about five minutes. In total, we will allow seven minutes. I think the next two speakers may decide to split that time, but let us go to the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni and see what his direction is.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

• (2340)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Chair, could you clarify how much time we will have?

The Chair: There will be about three and a half minutes for each member if you split the seven minutes, or seven minutes for one member.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver East.

We know that the tourism sector is struggling. It is going to be the last sector to recover. The hospitality industry is the hardest-hit sector. The sector needs the government to commit to extending the wage subsidy and the rent assistance program into next spring. They are not going to see international travel this summer. It is very unlikely, and there will be very little on the domestic travel end.

Will the minister guarantee she will extend those programs into next spring?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, let me start by congratulating the hon. member and all the people of B.C. for the announced plan for reopening and for the successful efforts of B.C. in pushing back the third wave of the coronavirus.

When it comes to tourism, we are very aware that this sector is particularly challenged. That is why the budget includes a billion dollars of additional support for tourism. That includes \$400 million to support major and local festivals, \$100 million to Destination Canada and \$500 million to the tourism relief fund.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, the sector needs a commitment to an extension.

A constituent of mine, Christina Brach, is a shiatsu therapist. She was collecting the Canada emergency recovery benefit, and she was part of the clawback. The government informed her that it wanted its money back. She had to go and remortgage her house. The government then said she would be able to get her money.

In fact, the website states, "Some qualifying self-employed individuals whose net self-employment income was less than \$5,000 may have already voluntarily repaid the CERB. The CRA and Service Canada will return any repaid amounts to impacted individuals." Additional details were to come in the following weeks, but this was February 9.

That was four months ago. She remortgaged her house to pay that back. She stayed at home, took care of her kids, closed her business and did her part in terms of taking on COVID-19. When will the minister fix this and repay Christina, and others like her?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am really pleased that our government has been able to support 8.9 million Canadians through the CERB and another 1.95 million Canadians through CRB.

Business of Supply

The member spoke about this specific constituent as being a parent with children. If those children are under six years old, the good news is, thanks to the fall economic statement finally being passed by this House, that member should be getting \$1,200 per child under six to provide some further support because we know families need it.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, independent travel advisers are concerned. They know that the Canada recovery benefit is going to be cut at the end of September. They are not going to see money for months. Of the people working in this sector, 85% are women. They need help into next spring.

Will the minister extend that program for the hardest-hit sectors, such as tourism, festivals and events, and for the people working in that sector? Also, when will she pay back people like Christina? She never answered that question.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, there are lots of questions in there. I will go through them quickly.

On the independent travel advisers, let me remind the member opposite that there is a billion dollars in the budget specifically for tourism. The hiring credit will be very helpful for the tourism sector and all-season businesses. It is designed to provide them with particular support. I will also point out that the way we have structured the voucher refund program takes into account the needs of travel advisers as expressed to us.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Chair, PNE, the 110-year-old institution in Vancouver East, employs more than 4,000 part-time and seasonal workers at its peak. Its local economic impact is over \$200 million each year. Unlike other large fairs, it is unable to receive the wage subsidy. I already brought this up to the minister's attention last year, but nothing has been done to date.

Will the minister fix this so the PNE can access the wage subsidy? Will the federal government give the PNE a special grant, perhaps similar to that of the one that was given to Granville Island \$16.7 million, so it can survive the pandemic?

• (2345)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will remind the member of the specific support that is being directed to the tourism sector. There is \$1 billion, including \$400 million for major and local festivals and a \$500-million tourism relief fund.

I also urge the member to be in touch with the RDA. B.C. has now its own RDA, and in some special circumstances, the RDAs are the best places to go for support.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, I will follow up directly with the minister about the wage subsidy for the PNE, then, and move on to another issue.

Nearly 20,000 people died from the overdose crisis between January 2016 and September 2020, and in B.C. alone over 17,000 people died from an overdose in 2020, the deadliest year yet. To save lives, many advocates, including Moms Stop the Harm and Dr. Bonnie Henry, have called for the federal government to declare the opioid crisis a national health emergency and to decriminalize personal drug possession. Will the government do that?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the government definitely supports a harm reduction approach to the opioid crisis. I would like to really salute the important work being done in B.C. on this issue. The budget invests \$116 million to support community substance use and addiction treatment, and that is on top of \$66 million in the fall economic statement.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, I wish the minister would actually answer the question. I asked a specific question about whether the government would decriminalize personal use so that we can save lives.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, our government absolutely agrees with the member opposite that opioid-related deaths are a real tragedy in Canada. That is why we are investing significantly to support work in this space and to save lives. We absolutely believe in a harm reduction approach.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, the government should decriminalize, then.

The City of Vancouver has submitted an application to the federal government in support of having Vancouver's Chinatown designated a UNESCO world heritage site. Will the federal government support the city's effort and help revitalize Chinatown?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am delighted to get a question about Vancouver's Chinatown. As part of my post-budget virtual tour, I had conversations with some of the great entrepreneurs in Vancouver's Chinatown. They told me about an innovative program they have to ensure that Chinatown businesses in Vancouver are aware of all the business support programs. I have part of Toronto's Chinatown in my riding, and I am working hard at the constituency level to try to use some of the innovative techniques pioneered in Vancouver's Chinatown to share the news with businesses in my riding.

Business of Supply

The Chair: That brings this evening's debate to a close.

It being 11:47 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), all votes are deemed reported. The committee will rise and I will now leave the chair.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:49 p.m.)

Questions Passed as Orders for Returns

Mr. Lamoureux 7389

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**Budget Implementation Act, 2021, No. 1**

Bill C-30. Second reading 7390
 Mr. Lamoureux 7390
 Mr. Tochor 7390
 Mr. Perron 7390
 Mr. Fonseca 7390
 Mr. Lawrence 7392
 Ms. Larouche 7392
 Mr. Fragiskatos 7393
 Mr. Falk (Provencher) 7393
 Mr. Perron 7394
 Ms. Ashton 7395
 Mr. Lamoureux 7395
 Mr. Simard 7395
 Ms. Larouche 7397
 Mr. Lawrence 7397
 Mr. Lamoureux 7397
 Mr. Viersen 7397
 Mr. Manly 7398
 Mr. Lamoureux 7399
 Mr. Lawrence 7399
 Mr. Perron 7400
 Mr. Cannings 7400
 Mr. Viersen 7400
 Mr. Desilets 7401
 Mr. Lamoureux 7401
 Mr. Falk (Provencher) 7402
 Mr. Soroka 7402
 Mr. Gerretsen 7403
 Mr. Beaulieu 7403
 Mr. Falk (Provencher) 7404
 Mr. Arnold 7404

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**National Framework for Diabetes Act**

Bill C-237. Third reading 7405
 Mr. Desilets 7405
 Ms. Mathysen 7407
 Mr. Gerretsen 7409
 Mrs. Vecchio 7410
 Ms. Normandin 7411
 Ms. Sidhu (Brampton South) 7413
 Division on motion deferred 7413

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**International Trade**

Ms. McPherson 7414
 Ms. Bendayan 7414

Ethics

Mr. Barrett 7415
 Mr. Lamoureux 7416

Human Rights

Mr. Genuis 7416
 Mr. Oliphant 7417

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**Business of Supply****Finance—Main Estimates, 2021-22**

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Finance in the main estimates, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair) 7419
 The Chair 7419
 Mr. Fast 7419
 Ms. Freeland 7419
 Ms. Freeland 7422
 Mr. Fraser 7423
 Mr. Ste-Marie 7424
 Mr. Julian 7426
 Mrs. Fortier 7428
 Mr. Fraser 7429
 Ms. Dancho 7430
 Ms. Freeland 7430
 Mr. Vis 7431
 Mr. Gerretsen 7433
 Mrs. Fortier 7434
 Mr. Kelly 7435
 Ms. Freeland 7435
 Mr. Berthold 7436
 Ms. Freeland 7436
 Ms. Koutrakis 7438
 Mrs. Fortier 7439
 Ms. Gladu 7440
 Ms. Freeland 7440
 Mr. McCauley 7441
 Ms. Freeland 7441
 Mr. Lefebvre 7443
 Mrs. Fortier 7444
 Ms. Chabot 7445
 Ms. Freeland 7445
 Ms. Dzerowicz 7447
 Mrs. Fortier 7449
 Ms. Rempel Garner 7449
 Ms. Freeland 7449
 Mr. Cumming 7451
 Ms. Freeland 7451
 Mr. Lamoureux 7452
 Mr. Fraser 7453
 Mr. Johns 7454
 Ms. Freeland 7454
 Ms. Kwan 7455
 Ms. Freeland 7455

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