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Thursday, May 27, 2021

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 27, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A), 2021-22

His Excellency, Right Hon. Richard Wagner, the Administrator of the Government of Canada transmits to the House of Commons the supplementary estimates (A) of sums required to defray expenses of the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, and in accordance with section 54 of the Constitution Act, 1867, recommends those estimates to the House of Commons.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also have the honour to table, in both official languages, the supplementary estimates (A), 2021-22.

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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 19 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

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APOLOGY FOR THE INTERNMENT OF ITALIAN CANADIANS DURING WORLD WAR II

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the summer of 1940, the police arrived at a wedding on Dante Street in Montreal. They were there for one of the guests, Giuseppe Visocchi.

The officers who took him away told his family that they just had to speak with him and that he would be able to come right back. He did not. Within weeks, he was at a prisoner of war camp in Petawawa, wearing a uniform marking him as an internee, with a

target on the back and the number 770. It would be another two years until Giuseppe came home.

[*Translation*]

Those were two years where his seven children needed their father, two years where his wife did not know how she was going to feed them and keep a roof over their heads, two years while this single mother had to survive without money and without being able to ask for help from family members because they were afraid of reprisals.

[*English*]

This is not the story of just one man or just one family. During the Second World War, 31,000 Italian Canadians were labelled enemy aliens, and then fingerprinted, scrutinized and forced to report to local registrars once a month. Just over 600 men were arrested and sent to internment camps, and four women were detained and sent to jail.

They were business owners, workers and doctors, they were fathers, daughters and friends. When the authorities came to their door, when they were detained, there were no formal charges, no ability to defend themselves in an open and fair trial, no chance to present or rebut evidence. Yet, still, they were taken away to Petawawa or to Fredericton, to Kananaskis or to Kingston.

Once they arrived at the camp, there was no length of sentence. Sometimes the internment lasted a few months; sometimes it lasted years, but the impacts lasted a lifetime.

[*Translation*]

These are stories that have gone untold for far too long, stories that have been silenced by shame and fear. This is injustice that has laid heavy on far too many generations.

[*English*]

When on June 10, 1940, this House of Commons declared war on Mussolini's Fascist regime in Italy, Canada did not also have to declare war on Italian Canadians. To stand up to the Italian regime that had sided with Nazi Germany, that was right, but to scapegoat law-abiding Italian citizens, that was wrong.

[*Translation*]

While some Canadians were being told to pull together for the war effort, while some people were being reminded to do their part, others were being treated like the enemy even though they had committed no crime.

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The policy of internment was wrong. It went against the values we had gone to war to defend. It went against the values that Italian Canadians would have enlisted to protect, despite the fact that members of their family had been interned in these camps. It went against the values that made our country strong, such as fairness, due process and equality in the justice system, all of which would later be enshrined in our charter.

The way that Italian Canadians were treated by the government was unacceptable and caused real harm, not only to the men and women who were interned and to their families, but to the generations that have lived with this legacy of discrimination. It is time to make amends.

● (1010)

[English]

Mr. Speaker, *Signor Presidente*, I rise in this House today to issue an official apology on behalf of the Government of Canada for the internment of Italian Canadians during the Second World War.

To the men and women who were taken to prisoner of war camps or jail without charge, people who are no longer with us to hear this apology, to the tens of thousands of innocent Italian Canadians who were labelled enemy aliens, to the children and grandchildren who have carried a past generation's shame and hurt and to their community, a community that has given so much to our country, we are sorry.

[Member spoke in Italian]

[Translation]

To all those who were affected by this chapter of our history, we are sorry. Their families and their communities did not deserve this injustice. Despite everything, despite that dark time, they continue to look to the future.

[English]

I have heard your stories. We have heard your stories how, once your parent or grandparent was released, they worked hard to give back to their country despite how its government had treated them.

Every thriving business these men and women rebuilt, or local charity they started, was a testament to their commitment to Canada. Everyone who became a service member in the Canadian Armed Forces or a representative in government was an example of their dedication to their fellow citizens.

What better way to show that the injustice done to them had been a mistake. What better way to prove that they loved the country they had chosen to call home. It would have been so easy to turn their backs on Canada. Instead, they put their backs into building it. That is their legacy and it is a legacy that lives on today.

To everyone who has had the courage to speak up about this painful chapter in our history, to people like Anita, who told me about how her father never stopped loving this country, or Zita and her daughter, who spoke about their family's resilience, you honour your father or grandfather with the kind of person he taught you to be.

[Translation]

Thanks to the members of my own caucus who worked tirelessly to ensure that justice is done for the Italian-Canadian community, and to the organizations across the country who worked hard to help make this moment a reality, we are now on a better track.

To all Italian Canadians who enrich our communities, from St. John's to Vancouver, from Montreal to the Far North, you remind us that diversity will always be our strength.

Courage, resilience and the unshakeable conviction that we are stronger together: these are some of the values that have always been embodied by Italian Canadians.

[English]

When, almost 80 years ago, Giuseppe came back to his family from the POW camp, he worked hard to build a better life. He bought a house, saw his kids grow up, and taught them to be good, upstanding citizens who loved their country. Courage, resilience and an unshakable belief that we are stronger together was the path he chose and that is the path we must continue to choose today.

[Member spoke in Italian]

[English]

Internees and their families showed the way: integrity, solidarity, faith and loyalty to Canada. For this, our country is ever grateful.

● (1015)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 1940, Anthony Danesi was 23 years old when the RCMP, under orders from the government in Ottawa, arrested him and his brother at their home in Toronto. The officers took them away without charge and they were interned in a camp in Petawawa. These are his words that describe the terror his family felt some 80 years ago:

My mother at the time was over 60 years old and when she heard they were taking us away, she fainted on the floor from the shock. We were told "do not touch her, leave her there"... We had to leave our home with the RCMP and a vision of my mother in a heap on the floor...even a dog would have been treated better...

On Christmas Day, my father passed away [but] we were not allowed to come home to pay our respects or go to his funeral.... I spent, along with my brother, two years and 12 days [interned] seeing my mother and sister only once. God only knows how they managed. We were released and sent home to try and pick up our lives and to try and clear the debts which had accumulated.

Hundreds of Italian Canadian families during World War II were forced to try to pick up their lives and recover from a trauma that had been inflicted upon them by their government.

[Translation]

On June 10, 1940, the Government of Canada, under the leadership of Prime Minister Mackenzie King, declared that tens of thousands of Canadians of Italian origin were enemy aliens. The federal government then ordered hundreds of these Canadians to be put in internment camps.

These people were arrested and denied a trial. They were denied the fundamental rights to which they were entitled under Canadian law. Thousands were put under investigation and were fingerprinted. Many were intimidated and harassed.

[*English*]

They were viewed with suspicion by their government and treated like second-class citizens, often only because of their surname or pride in their heritage. The impacts of this gross mistreatment would last for decades and pass through generations.

As leader of the official opposition on this solemn day, I want to use my time to talk about just a few of the families Canadians need to remember today.

Take, for example, the Giustini family from Ontario. Giuseppe Giustini's daughter, Lynda, witnessed her father being taken away in handcuffs from the grocery store he owned and operated in Timmins, Ontario. Giuseppe Giustini lost his liberty and dignity because he was known for helping new immigrants from Italy arriving in Timmins with a job at his store or helping them find a job in the mines of northern Ontario. He would get them settled and send some of their hard-earned savings back to their family in Italy.

Today, we celebrate and present awards to charitable Canadians like Giuseppe. Today, we would consider him a pillar of the community for helping people succeed in their new country, but in 1940, our country stripped the Giustini family of a husband and a father.

The trauma was something his daughter, Lynda, remembered for the rest of her life. She passed along this difficult family story to her children, and I know that her son, Joe, Giuseppe's grandson, is watching from his home in Barrie, Ontario today. I hope his family finds some comfort in this recognition today of the suffering caused to his family.

William Casanova was just nine years old when he witnessed the arrest of his father, Erminio Casanova, at their home in Windsor, Ontario. After almost two years of internment, Erminio was released but tragically died only a few months later. William wrote that his family had lost their dignity, their pride and their financial security. His mother suffered mental trauma from his father's internment and was institutionalized for nearly 15 years. This is another example of a family broken.

• (1020)

[*Translation*]

The consequences of being labelled an enemy alien by one's own country were soul-destroying for these families and deeply wounded Italian Canadian communities. Some families changed their name to hide their shame about what happened. Some moved to another province. Some even left Canada, hoping to leave behind the scars of internment.

[*English*]

I want to thank Dr. Annamarie Castrilli for sharing with me some of the letters from internees and their families so that my remarks could lend a voice to citizens who were failed long ago.

Routine Proceedings

[*Translation*]

In 1990, these letters and memories were collected by the National Congress of Italian-Canadians, the NCIC, for the purpose of educating Canadians about this dark chapter in our history. That same year, the NCIC and other Italian-Canadian cultural organizations hosted an event with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in Toronto. Hundreds of people, including a number of victims who were still alive at the time, attended the event.

[*English*]

What former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney said this day, over 30 years ago now, is worth repeating in this chapter today:

What happened to many Italian Canadians is deeply offensive to the simple notion of respect for human dignity and the presumption of innocence. The brutal injustice was inflicted arbitrarily, not only on individuals suspected of being security risks but also on individuals whose only crime was being of Italian origin.... It was often, in the simplest of terms, an act of prejudice—organized and carried out under law, but prejudice nonetheless....

This kind of behaviour was not then, is not now, and never will be acceptable in a civilized nation that purports to respect the rule of law. On behalf of the government and people of Canada, I offer a full and unqualified apology for the wrongs done to our fellow Canadians of Italian origin during World War II.

[*Translation*]

I wish members of the Italian-Canadian community could have been with us today, but unfortunately, the COVID-19 public health restrictions made that impossible.

[*English*]

Whether it was the apology from then Prime Minister Mulroney at an event hosted by the Italian-Canadian community in 1990 or the one delivered today in our House of Commons, both are equally important. They acknowledge the pain caused to thousands of Canadians by their own government. We cannot heal the trauma inflicted upon the Danesi family. We cannot help a young Lynda Giustini or William Casanova forget the terror of watching their fathers being taken away from them in their family store or in their home.

• (1025)

[*Translation*]

What we can do today is apologize to their descendants. We must recognize the profound impact these events had on their families. We must show them that we will never forget this sad chapter in our history or its impact on people's lives.

[*English*]

We must also remember that from our earliest history, millions have come to Canada for a better life and have contributed to the building of our great country. Sir Wilfrid Laurier perhaps put it best:

We do not want nor wish that any individual should forget the land of his origin. Let them look to the past, but let them still more look to the future. Let them look to the land of their ancestors, but let them look also to the land of their children. Let them become Canadians...and give their heart, their soul, their energy and all their power to Canada.

Routine Proceedings

For over a century, Italian Canadians have indeed given their big hearts, their tireless energy and their labour to Canada.

[*Translation*]

Italian Canadians have always looked ahead to the future. They have helped shape our history, even in the face of discrimination and adversity. This makes their contribution to our country even more powerful.

[*English*]

I know from speaking about the 1990 apology with then Prime Minister Mulroney and former Senator Consiglio Di Nino that the Italian Canadian community wanted to celebrate its contributions in equal measure to preserving the history of the internment, discrimination and hardship. At the time, Prime Minister Mulroney urged his audience to look at the impressive Toronto skyline after they left the event that day. "Just look at it", he said. "The first generation of Italian immigrants to Canada built those buildings. The second generation owns them." That, my friends and colleagues, is the Canada we are all, regardless of party, trying to build, foster and advance today.

[*Translation*]

Today we are writing a new chapter in Canada's history, a chapter that does not correct the injustices of the past, but helps us look ahead to the future.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, it is good to see an Italian Canadian in the chair.

On behalf of my colleagues in the House, and of Conservative Party members from across this great country, many Italian Canadians among them, I want to add our name and the opposition's name to the apology delivered by the Prime Minister today.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in its short history, Canada has committed a number of reprehensible acts.

Just think of first nations and Inuit peoples, who have experienced and continue to experience discrimination, while many communities still do not have access to clean drinking water. Think of the Chinese community, whose members were unfairly taxed upon arrival in Canada and who worked on the railroad in deplorable conditions. Think of Ontario's Regulation 17 to assimilate Franco-Ontarians, and other similar laws passed in other provinces. Think of the Japanese community, whose members were interned during the Second World War.

Another community that was a victim of abuse by Canada is the Italian-Canadian community. It truly deserves an apology from the federal government. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I join my colleagues in condemning the treatment of the Italian-Canadian community from 1940 to 1945.

At that time, Canada had invoked the War Measures Act, which made it possible for the government to intern and discriminate against many Canadians, without a warrant and with the sole justification that they came from a country with which Canada was at war. The government quickly implemented a series of discriminato-

ry measures against its own citizens. That is what happened to Italian Canadians after Canada declared war on Italy on June 10, 1940.

Overnight, 31,000 Italian Canadians were officially designated as enemy aliens just because they came from Italy. Some of these people had been living in Canada for decades. They were fully integrated into society. They nevertheless became enemies in the eyes of Canada.

This enemy alien label came with a series of discriminatory measures against these people who, in fact, had committed no crime. Under these measures, anyone born in Italy was required to register with the authorities and report to them monthly, among other restrictions, which prevented them from moving around freely in Canada. The government could even enter their homes, search the premises and seize their property.

At a time when Canada had a severe labour shortage to contribute to the war effort at the factories, Italian Canadians were living in extreme poverty, often unable to find a simple job.

Boycotts of businesses owned by Italian Canadians were not uncommon. The government also seized property and ordered the closure of Italian associations. More than 600 Italian Canadians were sent to jail between 1940 and 1945. In Montreal alone, 200 men were interned. These men were imprisoned because they were believed to be sympathizers of Mussolini's fascist regime. Sometimes that was the case.

The Mussolini regime did indeed use the diaspora to promote its own interests and many Italian nationals, like many other Canadians, were enticed by fascism. Many interned Italian Canadians had no connection to the Mussolini regime; their internment was discriminatory and unfounded.

If the internment of men was unfair, imagine what their loved ones went through. The stories we heard from families were horrifying. Women, who were often living in poverty, were suddenly left alone with several children, no income and no government assistance. Children died of malnutrition, to the complete indifference of authorities. Some women even had to take on three jobs to put food on the table for their children. Families went months without news of their loved ones in internment camps.

All of these stories show just how the Government of Canada's policies left lasting scars on an entire community. We cannot remain indifferent to the discrimination experienced by Italian Canadians.

Today, the government is apologizing to this community, after more than 80 years. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois I want to express our appreciation for the significant contribution that Quebec's Italian community has made to Quebec society. Speaking out against their unfair treatment by the government is an essential step to recognizing their contribution to our society.

Routine Proceedings

• (1030)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House today to mark an historic occasion. This apology will give Italian-Canadian families the justice they have been waiting for and that they deserve.

This was indeed a dark chapter in Canadian history, but not the only one. The internment of Italian Canadians is a dark chapter that has haunted families and left a stain on our country's history for decades.

• (1035)

[*English*]

On June 10, 1940, Italy declared war on Canada. That very evening, former prime minister Mackenzie King announced that he had ordered the internment of hundreds of Italian Canadians identified by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as enemy aliens.

An estimated 600 Italian Canadians were interned in camps by the federal government. The majority of those interned were from areas with the highest concentration of Italian Canadians at the time, such as Montreal, Toronto and communities across Ontario. There were also some cases documented in western Canada.

Camps were situated in Ontario, New Brunswick and Alberta. Internment was up to three years, and the average interned person was held for almost 16 months. People interned were doctors, lawyers, carpenters, bakers, contractors, priests and loved ones.

The RCMP arrested Italian Canadians without due process, put them on trains and sent them to internment camps. Canada declared them enemies of the state for no reason other than being who they were: Italian Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Parents were often separated from their children. Innocent people sent to internment camps were forced to leave their families, who then had to fend for themselves. Women were forced to look for work to support their large families. Italian-Canadian children were pulled out of school because they too were considered enemies of the state.

[*English*]

This injustice tore families apart. The pain, degradation and anxiety these families had to endure did not have to happen. The federal government went even further. It froze bank accounts and forced Italian Canadians to subsist on as little as \$12 a month. Many Italian families were forced to sell their homes, businesses and family heirlooms.

It was a system purposely designed to keep people out of their rightful place in society. There was no reason outside of prejudice to suspect those interned posed any threat whatsoever to Canada or Canadians. Many of them were First World War veterans who had fought for their adopted country.

Like the internment of Japanese Canadians, Ukrainian Canadians, German Canadians and so many others, the forced registration and internment of Italian Canadians is a dark chapter of our history. We can imagine the pain of learning a loved one had been sent to an internment camp for no reason, and we can imagine the fear and

confusion a family would go through not knowing where the police had taken a loved one.

While an apology is long overdue, restitution can only be accomplished with compensation for the Italian-Canadian families who were impacted and who Canada wronged. Canada has one of the largest Italian diasporas in the world. Despite the internment, and the many other challenges and barriers faced by Italian Canadians, the community went on to make significant contributions to our country and continues to do so.

[*Translation*]

I recognize that many of the people who should be hearing today's apology, those who were sent to internment camps by the Canadian government, are no longer with us. I hope that today's apology will bring some comfort and some closure to their descendants.

[*English*]

I urge everyone in this House to recommit to never letting this type of injustice ever happen again. Since its foundation, Canada has committed injustices against the first people of this land, against those who fled wars seeking refuge, and against those who came here simply to build a better life.

Canada must act to right these wrongs of the past so we can build a fairer and more just future for all. Let us make sure that all our work in the House of Commons is always invested in building a more fair and more just society for all.

• (1040)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am seeking unanimous consent to be allowed to participate in this historic apology on behalf of the Green Party.

The Speaker: Does the member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank all my colleagues for giving me the honour of sharing the sentiments of the leaders of the other parties, as the government offers this important, historic apology to the Italians who were interned and to everyone in the Italian-Canadian community who was affected by this injustice.

[*English*]

It is obviously never too late to apologize, and I thank my hon. colleagues, the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the New Democratic party.

Routine Proceedings

I was particularly touched by the words of our colleague from Laurentides—Labelle in her speech. She focused on how much this affected the mothers and children who were left behind and the notion of a Canadian child dying from malnutrition while his or her father was wrongly imprisoned for years. All during a war the father did not participate in, so there was no threat to Canada.

This apology is a long time coming for the many who were directly affected, but in turn, are no longer with us. Their children and grandchildren have been long awaiting this apology.

The leader of the official opposition made the point that in 1990 the former prime minister Brian Mulroney made a full apology. However, as was relayed, it was insufficient in that it was not made in the House of Commons. It was certainly a comprehensive, full apology, but it did not have the gravitas the apology today will have.

Another former prime minister attempted to make this right. In 2005, former prime minister Paul Martin put forward a plan for an apology, with funds set aside for reparation and to mark the contributions that Italian Canadians had made, but an election intervened. That specific apology and funds were never designated to their intended recipients, the Italian community of Canada, who had been so wrongly abused through the course of the Second World War.

Finally, we had a private member's bill from the former member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel Massimo Pacetti. He put forward a private member's bill in 2009 to finally have an apology in this House.

Today, thanks to our Prime Minister, and I do thank him, this is the appropriate apology for the Italian-Canadian communities and individuals, particularly those who were actually interned, their children and their grandchildren. It is the appropriate apology for all of those affected by this grievous wrong.

The assumption was that Italian Canadians were Fascists. It is very clear that was not the case. People were arrested, taken from their families and did not see them for years.

In our daily press, some historians are now questioning whether we should be careful not to apologize too fully. I reject that because, if people held ideas, if they were persuaded at some point that maybe one or two people may have been part of Fascist organizations, then those people were denied due process. They were thrown in jail. They were not allowed to see their families. This was a wrong.

Most of the people arrested, from the historical records I can find, had nothing whatsoever to do with any political movement. They were loyal Canadians, so let the apology be full. Let it be made clear that the people at that time, Canadians and the prime minister who made this decision, made a mistake, just as we made a mistake when we decided to intern thousands of Japanese Canadians, and as we did when we decided that LGBTQ Canadians could not have a job in the government. There have been many apologies in this place.

There have been so many apologies in this place, but that does not in any way dilute the importance of the apologies to the families of Salvatore Vistarchi and Nicola Doganieri, whose grandson

rose through the ranks of the RCMP not knowing his grandfather had been interned.

There is the very touching story of Guido Nincheri, one of Canada's leading artists. If we search the records of his life through our universal source of information these days, Wikipedia, his internment is not mentioned because his achievements as an artist were so extraordinary. It is a small footnote that his family had to fight to get him out of jail because of the wrong assumptions made about what he believed politically.

What we hold in our minds, what we think and care about does not criminalize us, not since the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I note with gratitude that our Speaker is the first Italian Canadian to hold the role of Speaker. I note our Minister of Justice, whose name I will not use, is another proud Italian Canadian.

I thank all those in the government who have finally made this apology complete. I thank the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Québécois for making it very clear that all of us appreciate what the Italian-Canadian community does for this country day to day, and that we apologize from the bottom of our hearts as best we can in 2021 for the wrongs of 1940.

* * *

• (1045)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-299, An Act to amend the Telecommunications Act (access to transparent and accurate broadband services information).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to table this legislation.

Canadians know how important access to high-quality Internet service is. Unfortunately, they also know that for too many Canadians access to high-speed Internet is out of reach.

For years, Canadians have found themselves purchasing Internet services at sky-high prices, only to realize that the quality and the speed they expected to receive is nowhere near what they actually receive. This bill would require Internet companies to provide Canadians with a reliable and comparable indicator of the speeds they can realistically expect.

Rural Canadians, and seniors in particular, have felt cheated and misled by large Internet service providers. It is time to provide them with the transparency they deserve.

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

[Translation]

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-300, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (books by Canadian authors).

He said: Mr. Speaker, today, it is an honour and privilege for me to have been chosen and to have the opportunity to introduce a private member's bill for the second time.

I am sure people will remember that my first bill sought to equip all emergency vehicles across the country with defibrillators. It was unanimously passed by all members of the House.

Today, I am back again with a new bill that I hope will have the same success so that all Canadian book authors—including digital book authors, because this is the digital age—who write and share their passion and knowledge with us will be able to sell those books without charging GST. That would make our authors more competitive and help them sell more books, since Canadians could buy more books with the money they save.

This is an initiative that will help culture and Canadian book authors. I hope that I will have the support of my colleagues from across the country as this bill moves through the legislative process so that we can help the cultural and artistic communities in Canada and Quebec, of course.

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

* * *

● (1050)

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS ACT

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-301, An Act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act and the Canada Health Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill I am introducing today would protect the provinces, and in particular Quebec, against the greatest threat to their autonomy, which I refer to as the so-called federal spending power.

Everyone knows that Ottawa transfers money to the provinces and makes sure to tell them what to do with that money. The federal government treats the provinces as subcontractors and forces them to implement its own priorities in areas that are exclusive provincial jurisdictions.

This is what my bill would address. As it stands right now, the bill would exempt Quebec from the federal standards set out in the Canada Health Act, including the upcoming long-term care standards, and would also amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act.

Quebec and the provinces who wish to participate will be able to withdraw, with full compensation, from federal programs that infringe on their jurisdictions. They will then be able to recover their autonomy in jurisdictions that are meant to be under their responsibility. There is a consensus on this in Quebec. All parties agree.

At its core, this bill is designed to put an end to paternalistic lecturing and predatory federalism.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-302, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (pornographic material).

He said: Mr. Speaker, on December 4, 2020, a New York Times article by Nicholas Kristof, entitled “The Children of Pornhub”, shook the world.

This bill hopes to address that issue by requiring that the age and consent of the individuals depicted in videos be verified before these videos are put up. At the ethics committee, we heard from Serena Fleites, a 14-year-old girl who had her image shared on Pornhub. She has spent years trying to get that image taken down.

This bill, the stop Internet sexual exploitation bill, the SISE act as I call it, would hope to address that by introducing two pieces to the Criminal Code: first, that the creation of pornographic material for a commercial purpose be required to prove that the age and the consent of the individuals depicted in it would be verified; second, that the distribution of pornographic material for commercial purposes would have the age and consent verified; and, if the consent had been revoked, it would no longer be shared.

We hope the situation faced by Serena Fleites will never again happen in Canada. As we see, some of these platforms are based in Canada.

It is my privilege to introduce the SISE act today.

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

* * *

● (1055)

PETITIONS

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. 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 forest from logging. As of today, 128 people have been arrested protecting these forests in Fairy Creek, Caycuse, upper Walbran and Edinburgh Mountain.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners call 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 people; support value-added forestry initiatives in partnership with first nations to ensure Canada's forest industry is sustainable; based on the harvesting of second and third-growth forests, ban the export of raw logs and maximize resource uses for local jobs; and ban the use of whole trees for wood pellet biofuel production.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am presenting two petitions in the House today.

The first petition is with respect to the genocide of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China. The petitioners note various reports and new reports have come out since the petition was signed and certified, demonstrating very clearly that Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China face an ongoing genocide. The evidence is clear. This Parliament and other parliaments around the world as well as two U.S. administrations have now spoken on this matter.

The petitioners want to see the government finally do what it has thus far been unwilling to do, and that is to recognize this genocide and take appropriate action in response to it. The actions we need include the imposition of Magnitsky sanctions against all those involved in this horrific situation and reforms to Canada's lagging supply chain legislation to ensure that products made by Uighur slave labour do not end up in the Canadian supply chains.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on Bill S-204, a bill that would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without consent. The bill has passed the Senate unanimously and is now before the House. I note that it is identical to Bill S-240 and it is in the same form that the bill was in when it passed the House unanimously in the last Parliament.

The bill has now, in the same form, though, in different Parliaments, passed both Houses unanimously. The petitioners hope to see this Parliament finally be the one to actually get the bill into law.

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I rise virtually today in the House to present a very critical petition. It is timely and many of my constituents are deeply concerned.

The petition was initiated by constituents within the riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith. It relates to the situation that is critical for old-growth forests in British Columbia. Of the intact old growth of this province, only 2.7% remains. The petitioners point out three-quarters of that is slated for logging.

Although the normal assumption is that forestry is provincial, the petitioners have identified those critical areas where the federal government has a role in protecting old growth for its critical role in stabilizing climate and its potential for value-added jobs, as well

as its role for engagement with first nations communities and for the importance of protecting biodiversity.

The petitioners call on the government to ban the export of raw logs; to work with the province and first nations; to halt the logging where we have seen many arrests at Fairy Creek, the upper Walbran. These areas are in critical danger.

• (1100)

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition of Vancouver Islanders. They cite that COVID-19 has resulted in a crisis for small business owners and that during the pandemic, revenues have been catastrophically impacted as a result of closures, capacity limits and social restrictions, and operating costs have spiked. They also cite that the Canada emergency wage subsidy, the emergency rent subsidy and emergency business account and highly affected sectors credit availability program have played a critical role in saving some jobs and many businesses. However, many businesses remain ineligible due only to the timing of their businesses and their projects.

The petitioners call on the government to adjust the eligibility of these programs to include both new and newly expanded businesses that can demonstrate their projects were non-reversible at the onset of the pandemic; that it implement alternate methods for determining the wage subsidy and commercial rent assistance program for these businesses; and back pay to March 15, 2020, both the wage subsidy and the rent program to these businesses based on the alternate rate.

* * *

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, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I wish to inform the House that, because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by 41 minutes.

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

The House resumed from May 26 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.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, as I speak to Bill C-30, I want to begin with the Prime Minister's mandate letter to the new Minister of Finance. The Prime Minister, in his mandate letter, instructed the new minister to avoid creating new permanent spending. In other words, he instructed her to not create any additional structural debt, yet the flagship of this budget is a national day care program that does just that.

When the Minister of Finance finally presented the budget, she indicated that the government's national day care program was going to save the day. It was to be the key element in restoring our economy post-COVID by giving every mother the child care they needed at an affordable rate to enable them to return to or get real, paying jobs. The impression made was that every woman's innate desire to be engaged in the workforce, coupled with the national day care program, would enable, empower and enlighten the female portion of our population to do their part to create a healthier GDP for Canada.

It deeply troubles me when the minister for the status of women stands in the House and expresses her dismay that women still carry the burden of raising children in our society. In question period, the previous minister of immigration indicated that we needed to increase our immigration numbers because we have an aging demographic. When evidence suggests that perhaps we could encourage Canadians to have more children, the immigration minister's response was to pause and say that we have an aging demographic.

On May 18, the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario stated that the Liberals' child care plan would result in uncertainty, limited access, the loss of jobs and the closure of many small businesses owned by women. The association also indicated that the Prime Minister knows that this Ottawa-knows-best government approach to child care takes away choice and would ensure that only publicly funded operators would survive, leaving behind small businesses, women and families.

Choice in child care is a high priority for many mothers and fathers, including the option of having family or friends care for their children, or participating in a co-operative. That is an excellent option in my hometown, where many people work at the potash mine and appreciate giving oversight to the care their children receive while they are at work. Under the current government's plan, there is no room for choice. It appears all working parents would be required to use a national government-run child care system as their only option to qualify for federal child care funding while participating in the workforce. Canada's Conservatives believe parents, not the government, know what is best for their children, and parents should have the choice in determining who will care for their children within their communities.

Once COVID no longer fills our news channels 24-7, and families unlearn all the apprehension, confusion and ever-changing recommendations and get back to normal life by working, playing, going to school and, yes, arranging child care, the Liberals' plan would add even more adversity and struggle for Canada's mothers, their children and women entrepreneurs. Why would that be? The Liberals' plan to kick-start our economy with a national day care program assumes partnership in their plan by the provinces. The finance minister claims the funding for the program would become a 50-50 arrangement with the provinces by 2025-26, with a federal minimum commitment of \$9.2 billion per year in ongoing investments in child care, including indigenous early learning and child care. To support this vision, budget 2021 proposes new investments totalling up to \$30 billion over the next five years, or approximately \$5 billion per year, and \$8.3 billion going forward for early learning and child care and indigenous early learning and child care.

The PBO was quick to note that the provinces are at their limit right now and have no capability to buy into such a program. They do not have access to a printing press. Many of their economies were suffering extensively before COVID due to the same Liberal government creating such economic uncertainty that international and domestic investments were already packing up and leaving. A warning, from our national defence, of an ensuing pandemic was ignored. In a matter of weeks, families were thrown into complete chaos as employment declined, schools closed and child care that was previously available became very limited. The question is this: How feasible is the Liberal government's plan, based on its financial commitment as outlined in the 2021 budget?

Cardus is a highly respected independent think tank located here in Ottawa that has spent over 20 years studying the institutions, communities, beliefs, leaders and intricacies of civil society that collectively compose the social architecture of our common life. Its research focuses on education, family, health, religious freedom, social cities, work in economics and spirited citizenship.

● (1105)

In response to the announcement of a national day care initiative, Cardus recently released a report entitled, "Look Before You Leap: The Real Costs and Complexities of National Daycare". The report studies the actual cost of providing the national day care system proposed by the government by comparing the policies advocated by proponents with the costs of delivering those policies.

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The government claims that, by the end of the five-year time frame offered on child care in this budget, it would be contributing half of the child care costs for the provinces and territories, which would administer the programs. Cardus, on the other hand, finds the real annual and ongoing costs of national day care to be \$36.3 billion. Since federal costs are fixed at \$8.3 billion ongoing, this means that the provinces would need to cover the federal funding shortfall. Here are a few examples. The cost to Alberta would be \$3.5 billion annually, to Manitoba \$984 million, to Ontario \$9.5 billion and to New Brunswick \$336 million annually.

In her testimony to the finance committee, Andrea Mrozek, senior fellow of the Cardus family, commented that every morning she works taking care of her two-year-old and every afternoon she works for Cardus. She stated:

The federal government thinks that only one of these activities is worthy of federal support....[For] those whose primary concern is increasing GDP, only the waged work contributes, but child care is the care of a child, no matter who does it, and for the majority [of parents] there is little to gain and much to lose from plans for national day care.

Andrea has researched child care for 15 years and co-authored the report I mentioned previously. She went on to say:

Our detailed cost assessment phases in spaces for 70% of children under six, over five years, and includes staff, capital, training and maintenance costs. All of our assumptions are based on the work of advocates for national day care; however, there are several things they would desire that we were not able to include, making our estimates low.

Our low-quality and low-cost estimate rings in at \$17 billion annually. The more reasonable estimate rings in at \$36.3 billion annually.

She highlighted three concerns. Her first point was that the funding levels are woefully inadequate for a high-quality, universal program. This level of funding guarantees only low-quality care, inaccessible care or both. This program would not deliver what it promises.

Her second point was that because it funds only licensed not-for-profit care, most parents would experience a loss of care options, increased child care costs or both.

She then spoke to the per-family funding amounts that could be provided, and noted that this was money allocated to children, instead of to spaces. If the allocated federal funding of \$9.2 billion annually was given to parents instead of to spaces, it would truly help with the difficulty of the high cost of child care. The per-child annual amount for children under six would be almost \$4,000 annually. If the real costs of national day care were given to parents for each child under six, the per-child amount would be nearly \$14,000 annually. She entered her testimony and stated that:

...with the idea that a family's unpaid time with their child or children is not work, not valuable, or offers no "return." I think this is a short-sighted, technocratic approach to child care that fails to address Canadian families' wishes and needs. There are fortunately better and more equitable and more efficient ways to meet those needs, and simultaneously respect Canadian diversity.

I appreciate and support early childhood education and day care programs for those who want them and for those who are vulnerable. Single and low-income parents who need or want to work deserve to have quality day care spaces designed and available specifically for them, if that is the child care they choose. However, it is also true that for one parent, or a combination of both parents, raising their children during their early childhood years is a high call-

ing and deserves recognition as a significant investment in our economy. Stay-at-home parents who choose to earn less during those youngest formative years, and parents who work from home or choose to work part time while taking care of their children, are investing directly in our most valuable and important resource: the next generation of Canadians. The first five years of a child's life is a crucial time for teaching personal beliefs, values and a sense of worth within the family unit, which is a foundational building block of a healthy society.

• (1110)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I totally agree with the member that many parents choose to stay at home because that is their preference, and I think it is an incredible calling when someone specifically makes a decision to stay at home with their children, but the reality is that there are a lot of people out there who are doing it for economic reasons. They are doing it because it is more beneficial economically to stay home with their children than to put them in day care: At the end of the day, their income is quite often not much further ahead or is even behind if they have to put their children into day care.

Would the member not agree that when people want to pursue those opportunities in the labour force, or pursue entrepreneurial opportunities, they should have the resources to do that?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, I certainly am one of those individuals who would have loved to be a stay-at-home mom, but I did not have that opportunity. I needed to work. I know a lot of women are in those circumstances when their children are young.

That being said, the point I am making is that this is not the most efficient way to provide child care to Canadians, nor is it the preferred way for the vast majority to receive child care support. They want the opportunity to have choice, which I appreciated and wanted when I was raising my children.

My concern is that this funding is targeted specifically to one type of child care, when really what we should be doing is providing spaces for those who are in circumstances that need that support and want it, but also providing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, the one thing that the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois agree on is that health transfers are not to be found in this budget. Unfortunately, the Liberals are demonstrating once again that they are incapable of hearing or listening to the premiers of Quebec and the provinces.

The Conservatives are telling us that health transfers must be increased, but they are not saying by how much. They tell us every time that they cannot pull an amount out of thin air, as that would be too easy. However, the premiers of Quebec and the provinces have agreed on an amount.

To date, I have not received an answer to my question because the Conservatives are vague and answer like politicians. I will ask my question again: Does my colleague believe that the Quebec premier and the provincial premiers are off the mark when they give an actual amount?

• (1115)
[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, I certainly value my premier and the deep-dive work that he has been responsible for throughout the circumstances we have found ourselves in with COVID, much of which I strongly place on the shoulders of the government. Canadians have had to deal with this issue, when really it was the fault of the government right from the beginning in the way that it handled COVID.

That being said, I certainly respect the fact that the government also fails to recognize a lot of jurisdiction of the provinces and tends to try to rule with a heavy hand rather than to collaborate.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, the government promised a 50% reduction in the average cost of child care by the end of 2022 and an average cost of \$10 a day by 2025 and 2026. As we know, there is tremendous variation regionally and from city to city, so averages do not ensure affordability for all. We know the cost of living varies across the country. The government also did not explicitly tie the federal funding to national standards, which is something that has been called for by child care advocates throughout the country.

Does my hon. colleague believe that we need to put in place national standards and ensure affordable universal child care for all throughout the country?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): A very short answer from the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question, however if she did listen to my speech, my concern is the fact that this is not realistic. It has been put out there in a very rushed way, and does not respond to the needs of all Canadians. I do not agree that a national day care program—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada's balance sheet is in trouble. There is no sugar-coating it. We are \$1.1 trillion in debt, and counting. That is more than \$33,000 for every Canadian. This year alone, the government is set to spend more than \$22 billion on interest payments to service that debt, which is estimated to balloon to \$40 billion per year with this budget debt added in.

We are in this hole in large part because of the pandemic, but the Liberals' overspending long before COVID-19 is why we are looking at the sea of red ink before us today. They left the cupboards bare. By next year, the Prime Minister will have added more debt

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since 2015 than all other prime ministers who came before, combined. Sadly, the budget has yet to balance itself, and Conservatives have always known that this magical thinking was not the approach of a serious government that cares about the work and the hours that go into Canadians paying their taxes every year.

Putting aside how we got here, my hope for this budget, the first tabled by the government in over two years, was a plan for steady growth, lasting job creation and a more prosperous future for all Canadians. I also hoped it would lay out a clear vision of economic recovery and prosperity, attainable goals that leave no Canadian behind.

What we have before us is not that. No, instead, we get risky and unproven economic schemes, a 700-plus page document with no road map to reopen Canada's economy, and more than \$100 billion in new spending on Liberal partisan priorities disguised as stimulus. The very definition of economic stimulus is spending that facilitates economic activity and growth. There is a difference between stimulus spending and just, well, spending, but the government does not seem to appreciate that difference.

Let us consider just a couple of examples from the so-called stimulus fund. There are \$13 billion on pandemic supports. My Conservative colleagues and I have voted for these programs from the outset. Many Canadians faced with unprecedented realities and public health restrictions need the help right now. I will say more on this later, but that is not stimulus.

There is \$8.9 billion on the Canada workers benefit, a refundable tax credit for Canadians who make less than the threshold. Again, this is not stimulus. Members should not just take my word for it. The independent, non-partisan Parliamentary Budget Officer said that only \$69 billion of this new spending billed as stimulus is really that, stimulus.

Whatever one wants to call it, the sheer amount of all this new spending is simply not necessary. In fact, the Parliamentary Budget Officer noted that "the size and timing of the planned fiscal stimulus may be mis-calibrated". Other experts agree. One might hear \$100 billion and think, "Great, that is a lot of money. Surely it will kick-start the economy", but the truth is that government spending does not equal growth.

Between 2010 and 2013, under the more fiscally responsible Conservative government, growth averaged 2.8% annually. We can compare that to the Liberals' first four years in power, when spending rose sharply and average growth was down to 2.2% per year and was grinding down.

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What I really do not understand is how, with over \$100 billion in new spending, the Liberals' budget still does nothing for the long-awaited and much-needed infrastructure projects in the Lower Mainland of my home province of B.C., major projects like the George Massey tunnel replacement and the SkyTrain expansion from Surrey out to Langley, or even smaller projects like reinforcement of the White Rock Pier, damaged almost three years ago now.

Does the government not want to help us in B.C.? Maybe it is waiting for another shipment of steel from China like the one used on the Pattullo Bridge before it commits, instead of using beautiful, high-quality Canadian steel. Much-needed infrastructure projects like this would not only create jobs overnight and stimulate the economy but also make a lasting impact on the ability to transport people, goods and services stretching from the U.S. border through several communities up to Deltaport, the international airport, Vancouver, the north shore and beyond, all key to lasting growth and prosperity.

A federal budget is supposed to be a plan for the people, for the people of Canada, our neighbours and our constituents. What do I mean by "no Canadian left behind"? What about the commuter who needs the SkyTrain to get from Langley to Surrey so she can get on another train to get to her job in Vancouver?

● (1120)

Why does she live in Langley or further east? It is because there is no way she can afford to live in Vancouver or Richmond or Delta or Surrey or perhaps White Rock. This budget does nothing to help her own her own home. Instead of encouraging home ownership and helping Canadians experience the achievement and pride in owning their own home, it has recently been made harder to qualify for financing, which negatively affects homebuyers and sellers, realtors, builders, developers, construction crews, contractors, building material suppliers and more.

How about the families in B.C. and across the country that continue to be affected by substance abuse? In B.C., there have been more deaths resulting from overdose than from COVID-19 in the last year. This budget does not do enough to address the opioid epidemic. Where is the comprehensive, recovery-oriented substance abuse plan?

How about the 988 suicide prevention hotline? More than five months ago, this House unanimously passed a motion put forward by my Conservative colleague, the member for Caribou—Prince George, to implement this critical three-digit resource. There is no funding for that.

How about the natural resource workers? A friend of mine recently spoke to a greeter at Walmart in Alberta who used to be an energy sector engineer but is now working a minimum-wage job to demonstrate the dignity of work to his children and put food on the table. What about him? Why is this Canadian being left behind?

What about the travel agencies across the country? About 83% are owned by women, who not only have had their incomes devastated, but have had their commissions pulled back when cruises and trips were forced to cancel. Why are these Canadians left behind?

At a \$100-billion price tag, one might have thought we would see increased health transfers to the provinces, given the stress our medical system has undergone in the past 15 months and repeated calls for this from the provinces. It is not included.

Of course, budgets should not just be about spending. They should provide a clear plan for the future of our economy and how we are going to get there. This, amidst a pandemic, must include a plan for a data-driven, safe reopening. Conservatives put forward a motion on this in March, but it was voted down.

Every time I meet with small business owners in my riding over Zoom, businesses like Kin Thai in Surrey or Uli's in White Rock, they have the same question: What metrics will be used to evaluate the situation and eventually allow them to reopen to full capacity? When will it be back to business as usual? Even with expanded patio space, they need to make investments just to reopen. They deal in perishables. Businesses need to plan for the future. They need to order inventory and schedule staff. They want reasonable notice, and they want to get back to doing the work they love.

Before politics, I was self-employed in the practice of law, an entirely different business, but anyone who runs a business can appreciate the need to plan three months, six months, nine months out. The government is not giving businesses the certainty they so desperately need right now. Even if the plan had to be adjusted, given unforeseen circumstances, the government should at least set out what Canada can expect and what yardsticks will be used to adjust.

When I speak to owners of new businesses, they have an additional question: Why not us?

To be very clear, my Conservative colleagues and I have supported programs to help Canadians make ends meet during the pandemic from day one. In fact, we have often pointed out ways to improve programs, as we did with the rent subsidy, insisting the funds be paid to tenants, not landlords. I, for one, am glad the government listened.

Another area for improvement that this budget completely ignores is the ability for newer businesses, opened within the last two years, to qualify for the same supports as their peers that have been open longer. I have spoken to the ministers about this and I have written to them. We need to help them out. The investments to start these businesses were made long before the pandemic and their life savings can literally be on the line.

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There are some things I like in this long budget. I am pleased to see the regional development agency for B.C. I think that is important, as long as the funds are allocated in the right places throughout the province.

Canadians waited a long time for this budget, 763 days, to be exact, the longest-ever gap between federal budgets. Unfortunately, it was not worth the wait. Too many Canadians have been left behind. They need to secure their future.

• (1125)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at the beginning of the member's speech, she spoke about the amount of debt that has been taken on in order to help Canadians through this pandemic, and she referenced the amount of debt that would be taken on under this Prime Minister specifically. I am curious if she is aware that she has voted for all of that debt over the last two years in the House and, often through unanimous consent motions, agreed to that spending.

Is she aware that she is just as responsible for that debt being taken on as the other 337 members of Parliament?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, that is a very interesting question from the member across the way.

I said in my speech, if the member was listening, that in fact Conservatives did vote for supports and help for Canadians throughout the pandemic. We have been very supportive of the need to help people who are in unprecedented times and unprecedented want. However, I also pointed out that the reckless spending by the government before we even knew about a pandemic left us in a very precarious position, and now the debt has run away from us. With this new budget, there is nothing here to show us a plan to get our house in order.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, like the member for South Surrey—White Rock, we support a number of things in this budget, including the \$15 minimum wage.

However, we are concerned about young people, who have been dramatically affected by this pandemic, particularly students. We have called for the elimination of federal student debt of up to \$20,000 and a moratorium on and elimination of interest on student loan debt. Do the member and her party support such measures to make it more possible for young people not to be affected for their whole lives by the consequence of this pandemic on their futures?

• (1130)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, one thing that is very concerning to me is that there is not enough in this budget for youth, or for seniors, for that matter.

Being a mother of four children who have all pursued university education, two of whom had to do it all through Zoom in lockdown, with student loans, which I myself took out, I have a great deal of sympathy for them, and also because they are coming out into a very uncertain job market.

This is why I say that we need watermarks, benchmarks, so that Canadians of all ages, particularly youth, who want to figure out

where they are going, when and how, can have a much clearer idea of how that can be accomplished.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from the next-door riding of South Surrey—White Rock for mentioning a very important infrastructure project, the SkyTrain extension into my riding of Langley.

I wonder if the member would comment on the important interplay between transit, particularly transit-oriented residential development, and tackling the housing affordability crisis in the Lower Mainland.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, there is little doubt that my colleague and I know about the lack of affordability in B.C., particularly in the Lower Mainland. It is a very expensive place to live, a very beautiful place.

What we need in order to encourage growth, development and home ownership is better transportation south of the Fraser River. We need to be able to get people from community to community, to their jobs or to whatever it is they need to travel for. We need easy access for goods and services, as I mentioned in my speech, not just within the communities but up the highway to Deltaport, to the international airport, to Vancouver and beyond. This infrastructure is vital to us, and we do not understand why it is not being given the attention it deserves.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad to finally have an opportunity to speak on the federal budget. It has been long overdue, as the first one presented to this Parliament.

While we are looking at what the budget offers to Canadians, as well as the late timing, it is important for all of us to remember that the theme of the Liberal government is that the key to happiness is low expectations. It is also worth reminding the Liberal government that if it is going to keep people waiting or ask for an extension on a deadline, it had better make sure the final product is worth the wait by making it impressive.

However, it was not worth the wait. The large number of pages only makes it a bigger disappointment. It was disappointing that the Liberal government, unlike the provinces, did not even bother to present one at all for the last year. Speaking of the provinces, if the federal government really wanted to prioritize a pandemic response, we should have expected it to focus on the requested increase of health transfers. Whatever happened to those?

Apparently, for the Liberal government, giving fuller consideration to the future of Canadians, their grandchildren and their children's future was not worth the effort. Canadians were also not shown basic respect for their rights, time, money or trouble during the past year. What might be the worst part of the government's disregard is that it really shows up in this budget.

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Today, I want to focus on where the lack of leadership is taking us as a country. In particular, I want to speak of the rural-urban divide. Especially at the federal level, we should always be trying to promote national unity in the face of any number of divisions. Regional differences have always been a source of tension and they continue to come up. It is getting more common, again, to hear and talk about the idea of western alienation, for example, as having the potential of turning into separatism.

As a western Canadian MP, I definitely believe that this is a growing social problem that needs to be addressed for the benefit of all Canadians. Sadly, we have already reached a point where it is obvious that the Liberal government does not care for western Canada. It is hardly a surprise to anybody, and with this budget, the Liberals are not even trying to pretend much more either.

While saying this, I also think we would be missing another essential part of the larger issue if we do not consider the problems common to rural Canada, regardless of region. The rural-urban divide in Canada is one of the greatest divides experienced today, whether it is in the Prairies, the Atlantic, Ontario, the north, B.C. or Quebec.

Before getting into some of the details of how the Liberal budget will affect real Canadians or, more accurately, how it will leave them behind, we can get a general sense of the Liberal government's stated priorities from its own words. The nice thing about having a budget in front of us right now is that, for better or worse, it forces the Liberals to clarify on the record where they choose to place their priorities. Even though they have avoided and delayed this important measure of accountability and transparency, we now have a better idea of what they say they care about and what they apparently do not care about.

The word "environment" is mentioned 234 times in this document. The phrase "natural resources" is mentioned only 19 times. From those 19 times, I will point out some examples, and it becomes quickly apparent that the Liberals use the phrase "natural resources" in relation to anything but energy workers, especially those in the oil and gas industries.

There is \$22.3 million for Natural Resources Canada to create an atomic workers recognition program, and \$63.8 million over three years to create new flood maps for high-risk areas. To bring it even closer to home, these energy workers are mentioned once, one time, in the 724-page document. It is not even in the context of seriously proposing anything close to a full solution for this hard-hit sector of the economy. That single mention is in the context of how climate action could present opportunities for them.

Years before COVID first arrived in Canada, and even more during a restricted economy during the last year, thousands and thousands of these workers lost their jobs. Without any support and political certainty, many more Canadians will be joining them soon. This industry and these workers will comprise a large chunk of our nation's workforce and an even larger share of the national GDP. Again, they are mentioned once in 724 pages.

During the last six years of Liberal government, energy workers have come to understand that when they are mentioned as part of new climate opportunities, it actually means that they are going to

lose their job. Meanwhile, all the talk about creating futuristic jobs with big spending provides no real certainty without any detailed practical planning.

What about pipelines? There is a reference to a pipeline of innovation, a pipeline of vaccines and a pipeline of talent, but there is not a single mention of energy pipelines. This is unaddressed in a year when nearly half of Ontario and Quebec's energy supply from Enbridge Line 5 is in danger of getting stopped by the Governor of Michigan. Western workers and investors are living with the fact that the dream project of Keystone XL is cancelled and fading away.

With Keystone XL, it is especially shameful because of who some of those investors are. It is very different from big corporations dreaming of profits. These are the dreams of real people. I especially feel the need to bring up the dreams of the Nekaneet First Nation and their Chief Alvin Francis, whose company owns a part share in Keystone XL. They were planning on using the profits to help the people of his community. When I met with him during the winter, before the cancellation of the project, he laid out quite clearly the plans for economic development and jobs beyond working on the pipeline.

● (1135)

These opportunities will no longer be happening thanks to the lack of effort of the current government.

The reality of indigenous participation is too often ignored. It is a reconciliation issue and we need to think of it that way. In my riding, which has an abundance of natural gas, there are mineral rights owned by first nations from across the province of Saskatchewan that are at risk of losing their biggest source of income because of the anti-energy policies of the Prime Minister, income that will not be replaced, income that lifted entire communities out of poverty. They do not have the luxury of waiting for the government to figure out an energy transition over 10 years or more, pushing it along without a plan. To these indigenous communities and all Canadians in all of Canada's energy sector, the silence is deafening.

The Liberal government has some stated priorities, but its record can easily lead anyone to question if it will deliver on what it says it is going to do. People who live in rural Canada, as my constituents and I do, are used to hearing a lot of empty promises, if we are lucky enough to hear anything from it at all.

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Most recently, we have had to wait for it to begin rolling out the universal broadband fund, UBF. It has increased the UBF to \$2.75 billion, up from last year's announcement of \$1 billion, but the deadlines for the first billion dollars have been continually shifting, with almost nothing to show for it. Municipalities in my riding have been waiting for help to get broadband rolled out to their communities or even just increasing the amount of broadband available and are still waiting without so much as a peep from the government. Listing huge dollar amounts does not mean these problems will be solved. It also does not mean the Liberals will get around to finishing the job any time soon.

I have to say the more time I work in Parliament the more it becomes obvious how much Ottawa needs to regain more of a rural perspective. The best example for this debate might be the environment. If the Liberals want to mention the environment 234 times, they can go right ahead. Yes, let us protect and conserve the environment in every way. The economy can grow at the same time if we do it the right way, and we can all agree here on that, but do members know who already sets the bar high for doing this? It is rural Canadians, the people who work the land, enjoy it for sport and live out in the country surrounded by its beauty. They care about the environment. After all, farmers, ranchers, fishermen, energy workers and others live off the land. They do it the best, acting as if their way of life depends on it, quite simply, because it does.

However, they are not seeing a responsible approach to these issues; instead, they see a government that is more interested in pursuing out-of-touch radical ideas and pet projects. The Liberal government could learn a lot from rural people if it would start listening to them and their concerns. The Liberals need to start respecting the fact that farmers and ranchers are the true stewards of the environment. When we look at all the different ways the government is trying to focus on rural people, it is more or less trying to split them off into separate groups, treating them as if they are special interest groups, patting them on the head and offering them pretty words without actually doing anything to address the real concerns that are facing rural Canadians these days.

Canadians are looking for stability and trust following times of uncertainty. They are getting neither from the Liberal government, which has decided to offer a campaign platform in place of a budget.

This budget continues to miss the mark for rural Canadians. Looking further into some of the items in the budget, it talks about boosting rural transit. We are looking at announcements from companies like Greyhound, which has now basically all but removed itself from the Canadian picture. The Liberals treat that as if there is rural infrastructure that already exists for things like transit, but the fact is it is now completely gone and there is no alternative. I look at people who have to drive four, five, six hours sometimes to find the services they need. Literally, there is not even an option for them regarding transit, yet the government has chosen to use policies that are going to disproportionately impact rural Canadians. Its own assessment of these issues shows that it knows that, but it continues to choose to ignore it.

This budget would have been a good opportunity for the government to really signal to the people in rural Canada that it under-

stands the struggles they face, but it has done absolutely nothing to address those issues.

• (1140)

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, unfortunately there are parliamentarians who feel the best way to get ahead is to blame Ottawa, feed into western alienation and spread misinformation in order to advance their own personal political agenda, whether for them or the Conservative spin. I often see that with the Conservative members from the Prairies. I was born and raised in the Prairies. I have lived in all three Prairie provinces. The misinformation that is given is sad to see.

My question to the member is related to that. How can he say that Ottawa has done nothing when in fact it has done more for the Prairies in the last six years than Harper ever did in the last 10 years, even on the issues the member has made reference to, such as rural Internet expansion and Trans Mountain? We are the government that brought a commitment to resources to the coastline, unlike the Conservatives. We have done so much more on infrastructure, financial dollars in the pockets—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands an opportunity to answer.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, the member's back must be sore, because he is patting himself pretty hard on the back. I want to highlight something. I spent 10 years working for an Internet company here in Saskatchewan. It was under the Harper government where funding came into the province to help set up Internet, broadband services and land line services on reserve for indigenous people to be able to have the same Internet access that people living in urban areas had. That was under the Harper Conservatives. I do not see any expansion of those services happening now. The dollars have been announced for the universal broadband fund, but we are still waiting. It has been years that the government has been talking about it and it is still not happening and still not getting done.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I represent rural natural resource workers. I sit here day after day and listen to this false conspiracy theory from the Conservatives that if we do not give them another couple billion dollars to build yet another pipeline, they are going to break up the country. They are willing to misrepresent facts time and time again.

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It is not a conspiracy that the energy markets are changing. All of the major hedge fund investors said they were pulling out of Alberta and Saskatchewan because the right-wing governments there believe they are still in the 19th century. Let us look at Jason Kenney trying to blow the tops off the Rocky Mountains to get at coal. We can look at the transition that is happening with the four major oil companies taken over by shareholder revolts driven by the hedge fund operators because they are sick and tired of a nation, that includes Canada and the provinces, not taking the environment crisis seriously.

When I listen to this member trying to portray it as a rural versus urban divide, it is the failure of Conservatives to be honest about the need to get ready for a transition that is coming whether they like it or not. It is the 21st century; wake up.

● (1145)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that rhetoric. To put it quite simply, let us look at the Trans Mountain pipeline. It was a private investment. It was fully funded privately and the government chased that investment away and ended up spending that money on its own. The private sector was investing in that with its own dollars; that is it.

I will remind the member that he voted against our motion yesterday to support oil and gas workers. It was a very simple, very well-thought-out motion. He voted against it, so when he is saying he is standing up for natural resource workers, he needs to take a look in the mirror to understand where he is actually putting his support.

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his intervention today. I appreciated the content of it. I just wanted to clarify, given some of the questions the member received.

How important does he think it is for Canada to play a major role in supplying natural resources to the rest of the world because of the way that we extract in a very ethical and environmentally friendly fashion? Should we not be looking at gaining market share, rather than depleting market share?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands has 15 seconds to respond.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, we have the highest environmental standards in the world and our natural resources should be the ones we are exporting to meet the growing energy demands of the developing world.

I will add something quickly about farming in the Prairies. When we look at the net carbon that it sequesters, we sequester 33 megatonnes more than we emit just through agriculture alone. When we talk about environmental—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, today I rise in the House to talk about the budget implementation bill. Talking about the bill, however, means backing up a bit and talking about the budget itself.

Members will recall that the Bloc Québécois voted against the budget on April 26, which came as no surprise because that is what the Bloc Québécois said it would do. We said we would not support the budget unless it contained two key measures.

First, the Bloc Québécois wanted the budget to increase old age security, or OAS, for people 65 and up, not just for those 75 and up, which is what the government is doing.

Moreover, the government's OAS bump for those 75 and up is happening next year, not this year. The government announced that, in the meantime, it is going to give seniors 75 and over a one-time \$500 payment this August. When the budget came out, it made no sense to create two classes of seniors because financial insecurity does not begin at 75. It made no sense then, and it makes no sense now.

As my colleague from Shefford pointed out yesterday in the House, creating two classes of seniors is bound to cause a reaction, and that is exactly what is happening: FADOQ, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons and the National Association of Federal Retirees have all condemned this move.

The Bloc Québécois's other condition for supporting the budget was a stable and ongoing increase in health care transfers. Not only are all provincial premiers who sit on the Council of the Federation calling for this, but it was also the will of the House, since the Bloc Québécois got a motion passed on December 2, 2020, that said the following:

That the House:

...call on the government to significantly and sustainably increase Canada health transfers before the end of 2020 in order to support the efforts of the governments of Quebec and the provinces, health care workers and the public.

The government missed a great opportunity to heed the repeated calls from the Bloc Québécois, as well as the community and the other levels of government, on the need to increase health transfers from 22% to 35%. Neither the budget nor Bill C-30 provides for such an increase.

What is more, it looks as though there was enough fiscal space to allow for such a measure, since the deficit that the government had announced and the actual deficit we see in the budget differ by about \$28 billion. Ironically, that is the exact amount Quebec and the provinces are asking for to increase health transfers.

The Bloc Québécois voted against the budget given the absence of these two key measures that we would have liked to see included. However, that does not prevent us from voting in favour of Bill C-30 because the measures included in the budget, although insufficient, must be implemented.

Bill C-30 also includes important measures that we would like to see applied. I will name two of them, taking the time to explain the improvements we would have liked to see.

I like the measure concerning the tourism industry. We know that the 2021 budget proposes to establish a \$500 million tourism relief fund administered by the regional development agencies. The fund could help support local tourism businesses in adapting their products and services to public health measures. We also hope that it will help the entire tourism industry recover from the pandemic.

I am thrilled to see that certain measures will be extended, in particular the Canada emergency wage subsidy, or CEWS, and the Canada emergency rent subsidy, or CERS, since this also indirectly helps the tourism industry. However, I am disappointed at the absence of certain specific measures for particular sectors of the tourism industry.

Once again, I will try to hammer it home: I would have liked to see something specific in the budget for sugar shacks, which, I repeat, suffered two years of total loss, since their season is only a few weeks long. Unlike other businesses, they were unable to make up for losses during the rest of the year when there were lulls in the pandemic. I would also have liked to see the addition of fixed costs for sugar shacks in the subsidy. Unlike traditional restaurants, sugar shacks do not replenish their stores based on the number of clients coming in. They stock up several months before the beginning of the season. As a result, in 2020, sugar shacks lost everything they had procured by the end of 2019 for a normal season.

A bill as colossal as omnibus Bill C-30 also includes a number of very precise and very specific items. Sometimes that allows us, as members of Parliament, to take a nostalgic trip back to before we were parliamentarians.

• (1150)

In my case, I was a family lawyer, and that is why I wanted to talk about family allowance, since Bill C-30 proposes an amendment to the regime. The bill allows parents with unequal shared custody, for example on a 65-35 basis, to share the Canada child benefit.

As a lawyer, I have seen otherwise successful negotiations fall apart just because of the benefit when a decision should have been made in the best interests of the child. The amendment proposed in Bill C-30 makes it possible to reframe discussions based on this principle and stop getting hung up on the benefit.

Since I am talking about the benefit, I will raise a few aspects of its administration that could have been modified. The first one was pointed out to me by a constituent who noticed a particularly archaic assumption in the law. Last September, this person received a letter from the Canada Revenue Agency that said that, according to the Income Tax Act, when a child lives with a man and a woman who are either married or de facto spouses, the woman is assumed to be the person responsible for the care and education of all children living in the house.

In this case, my constituent is a father who shares custody of his children with his ex-spouse and who lives with a new spouse. In the eyes of the law, his new spouse is assumed to be the primary care-

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giver for all of the children who live in the house. Although, as my constituent pointed out, his spouse is an extraordinary stepmother, the children are his. He found it surprising that his spouse was obliged, under the law, to write a letter to the CRA to confirm that the benefit was to be paid to the children's father rather than her.

In the words of my constituent, he thought the letter had come from 1955. He requested an amendment to the act that would better reflect our modern society and the sharing of parental responsibility, which, ideally, would be equal.

Another problem with the Canada child benefit was brought to my attention by a constituent whose child died a few years ago but who is still fighting a long battle for other parents who are currently in the same situation she was at the time. Some children with severe disabilities or at the end of their life live in specialized centres, like the Marie Enfant rehabilitation centre, so that they can receive care.

The problem is that the parent loses the child benefit, as is also the case when a child is placed in a youth centre, even temporarily.

As my constituent mentioned, when a child is placed in a facility like the Centre de réadaptation Marie Enfant, the parent does not necessarily have fewer expenses, and may have even more. In her case, since she visited her child every day, she had to pay extra travel and parking expenses. She had to change her work schedule and adjust accordingly. Today, many parents find themselves in the same situation. I am talking about this today in the hope that we can eventually resolve the situation. All the better if the debate on Bill C-30 allowed me to plant those seeds of hope.

There are many other things I could say about Bill C-30, but I will stop here. I will be pleased to answer any questions my colleagues may have.

• (1155)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure today to join you from the confines of my office in Saskatoon to speak about the budget implementation act.

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Canadians have spent the last year and a half struggling under the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic. When COVID reached Canada's shores early last year, millions of Canadians lost their jobs. Those working in retail and service industries, anyone working in a restaurant and workers in a variety of other sectors were simply told to go home. Countless small businesses had to close their doors and families were forced to completely redesign how they lived their lives.

Life has become harder, less affordable and all around more difficult. Our economy is in a bad state. Our annual inflation rate right now is rising at its fastest pace in a decade. Soaring house prices are stoking fears of a cost of living crisis. The federal deficit is flying past historical levels and the national debt is growing at a record pace, having now exceeded \$1 trillion for the first time in our history.

Canadians are well aware of the situation we are in today. According to the Nanos poll, 74% of Canadians, or three out of every four Canadians, are very worried about the size of the deficit. That is not just Conservative voters or conservative-minded Canadians. This represents concerns from voters across the spectrum that deficit spending is out of control.

I have heard those concerns in my riding in Saskatoon—Grasswood. When I asked my constituents about their top concerns, where and what they wanted to see in the recent budget of 2021, there were a few answers I heard over and over again. I heard from my constituents that a plan to get the deficit under control was the top priority. My constituents are also concerned about jobs and economic opportunities. A plan to deliver jobs and economic opportunities needs to be front and centre moving on.

Then I heard the same thing I have heard every year since the Liberal government came to power in 2015. Taxes are simply too high. Families, businesses, seniors, everyone needs relief as the cost of living just keeps going up and up. Unfortunately, when the Deputy Prime Minister finally presented her budget, 763 days between budgets, people were left very disappointed. The simple fact is that the federal budget of 2021 does nothing at all to secure long-term prosperity for Canadians.

In the 700 pages of the budget, there was little that gave Canadians the assurance that their federal government was focused on creating new jobs and economic opportunity. First, there was no plan to get our economy reopened, which would be the number one driver of job growth and economic opportunity.

While the provincial governments have begun to announce their plans, timelines and criteria to get their provinces reopened, we have heard nothing of this sort from the federal government with regard to industries and regulations within the federal jurisdiction.

Then there was the size of the deficit, which at \$154 billion this year is astoundingly high. Save last year, this is by far the largest budget deficit that Canadians have seen in decades, and for what? It is in the analysis of the budget. The Parliamentary Budget Officer noted that a significant amount of spending in the budget would not stimulate jobs or create economic growth. The PBO also raised concerns that the amount of deficit created was above and beyond what was actually needed to get the economy rolling ahead.

What does this tell us? It tells us that the Prime Minister's so-called stimulus fund is more about spending on Liberal partisan priorities than creating jobs and growing the economic. What are the Liberals going to give struggling Canadians and their families for relief? In a word, nothing.

● (1200)

In fact, the Prime Minister announced he would be moving forward with a far greater increase in the carbon tax than he indicated in the past. Despite calls for a halt on the carbon tax to provide much-needed relief at this time, the Liberals have not only pressed forward with their planned increases, but have now also announced that, throughout this economic recovery that will be taking place over the next few years, they plan to continue to increase it by well over 300%. That is 300%.

At a time when more Canadians are struggling to make ends meet than at any time in recent memory, and when more small businesses are being forced to permanently close their doors, the Liberals have decided the best bet is to further raise the tax burden on Canadian workers and their businesses. I hear this every day in my constituency office.

As well, at a time when millions of Canadian and their families are struggling due to lost wages and a skyrocketing cost of living, the Prime Minister has announced a massive increase to the carbon tax be tacked on just to add further burden. In truth, the Liberals' approach actually dumbfounds me and my constituents of Saskatoon—Grasswood.

Let us get to the facts. Let us get to what we should be seeing and what should be the top priorities of the government. That is something we are not seeing at all out west. First and foremost, we need to be focused on getting our economy reopened. Many countries around the world are beginning their reopening. We can just look south to the United States, where businesses are open right now. Sports stadiums are filled and people are returning to work each and every day.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the U.S. has even released guidelines that individuals who are fully vaccinated can safely resume their pre-pandemic activities and no longer need to wear masks. That is hard to believe because Canada is so far behind that we are still in lockdown in many places in this country. Why is that? It is because the federal government has totally failed in acquiring the vaccines necessary to get us there.

In Israel, nearly 60% of people are fully vaccinated. In the United States, it is 40%, and in the United Kingdom it is approximately 35%. In Canada, 4.5% of Canadians are fully vaccinated. Pretty much the entirety of the European Union is ahead of us, as are Brazil, Chile, Mongolia and several other countries.

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As has been the case for months, the Liberals have given Canadians no realistic indication on how they are going to get us there and when. Instead, they tried to shift the blame onto the provinces for the failures of the Prime Minister.

Alongside a plan to get Canadians vaccinated, we need to see a plan to create jobs in this country, an economic opportunity now and going forward into the recovery. We need to see programs that will spur innovation and encourage investment in this country, programs that will result in better wages for Canadian workers and help struggling small businesses get back onto their feet.

To accompany such programs, Canadians need relief and they need it now. They need to see that their government recognizes they are struggling right now. They need a lower tax burden, not a higher one. We also need to see a plan to get the economy and the budget under control.

We know the reality is that structural deficits, such as those the Liberals have created, result in long-term economic problems and a grim future for our children and grandchildren.

For all these reasons I have outlined here today, I simply cannot support this budget.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

Every time the Conservatives rise to speak, they tell us that the Liberals are spending recklessly but that the Conservatives have a plan and can quote figures for everything, regardless of what we are talking about. However, over the past few days, and especially since the start of the debate on Bill C-30, I have been asking the Conservatives to give us a number with respect to health transfers.

The Conservatives are always saying that the Liberals do not manage the public purse responsibly, which is true. However, when it came time to put a number on the only request Quebec made for this budget, only the Premier of Quebec and the premiers of the other provinces could do so. They estimated the increase in health transfers at \$28 billion, because they want to see these transfers rise from 22% to 35%.

Is there a Conservative in the House who will tell me whether their party agrees with the number the provinces came up with?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, Quebec is no different than any other province in this country. We have seen a massive downturn in the last 14 months due to the pandemic. What has the Liberal government done? It has done very little.

I am just going to point out, because I was a sportscaster, it would have been nice to see in the forum in Montreal, during the last two games against the Toronto Maple Leafs, with maybe 10% of the people to cheer on the Canadiens against the Maple Leafs. This is a failure of the Prime Minister, not of Quebec or any other province, but of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of

Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was actually a bit surprised, and I suspect the member might have surprised a few people who are participating today, when he made reference today to the carbon tax. The current leader of the Conservative Party has been doing all sorts of backflips and so forth to express to the Conservative caucus that a price on pollution is actually a good thing.

In fact, from what I understand, the official position of the Conservative Party of Canada is to support a price on pollution, yet this member wants to talk very negatively about a carbon tax, which is, in essence, the same thing. I am wondering if the member could indicate how deep the divide is within the Conservative caucus on whether a price on pollution is good or bad.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North knows in this province, and in his too, the agriculture sector has deep questions about the carbon tax. We know that in the fall they have to dry their grain, and we know they are not getting a lot of credit for the carbon sequestration that is going on in this country.

The carbon tax is talked about a lot in this country, and for very good reason. Regarding the member's statement about the Conservatives not believing in a carbon tax whatsoever, we know that is important in this country, but we also have seen the Liberals saying they are going to increase it. They keep increasing it, and right now it is out of hand for Canadians. They cannot afford it any longer.

• (1210)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is someone I have worked with on committee and someone whose insight I appreciate quite a bit.

I am an Albertan and he is a Saskatchewanian, but as an Albertan, one of my biggest concerns is jobs and jobs for people in my constituency. He, of course, will know that Alberta has suffered greatly over the last few years. Even before COVID, our economy was in free fall. It was in a very dire place.

When I read through the budget, I did not see what I wanted to see for support for Alberta workers. I did not see what I wanted to see for helping our workers move forward in a diversified economy to be able to take advantage of opportunities.

Why does the member think that is? Could he comment on things he would have liked to have seen—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona for all her work she does on the heritage committee, where we are currently studying Bill C-10.

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She is right. There is no help at all for the oil and gas industry in Saskatchewan and Alberta. We need to diversify. Both provinces know that, particularly Alberta, because of its situation it is under right now, but the government has really avoided western Canada. I was looking at the polls today. They were shut out in Alberta and Saskatchewan for a very good reason in the last election, and they are going to be shut out again. They have absolutely forgotten about western Canada, and we are going to make them play next time in the province of Manitoba.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to first acknowledge that I am joining members from Treaty 5 territory, the traditional territory of the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, from my home community of Thompson, Manitoba.

Today, I join members to speak on behalf of our region on Bill C-30, the budget implementation act.

I speak today at a difficult time for our country and especially for my province of Manitoba. COVID is spreading faster here in Manitoba than in any other province in Canada. In fact, right now, it is the worst in all of North America. I want to share my thoughts and condolences with the many people and families who have lost loved ones to COVID-19 during this crisis. I also want to acknowledge the life-saving work of the people working on the front lines right now.

However, to be clear, it should not have had to be this way, and this did not just happen. This past year of the pandemic has proven how the system is broken. The neo-liberal agenda has proven not only dangerous but deadly for many: our elderly, our indigenous communities and our workers.

Indigenous communities, including those here in Manitoba, have faced some of the highest rates of infection of COVID-19. At least six first nations in our region received full support from the Canadian Armed Forces when they called for urgent help to be able to save lives in their communities. I want to acknowledge the leadership of first nation leaders across our region, who have done everything in their power, along with advocates and people on the front lines, to keep their community safe.

We have seen strict lockdowns. We have seen the need to take incredible measures to keep people in some of the most vulnerable communities in the country safe. We have heard time and time again, and I have certainly heard that they were doing this in the face of significant odds, which were completely avoidable. These odds were the result of decades of colonized policies, paternalistic policies and of systemic racism.

At the same time that communities were fighting a pandemic, they were also fighting a third world crisis of no running water, a third world crisis of inadequate housing and a third world crisis of not enough medical personnel, let alone doctors and nurses, in their communities. So many communities across our region, so many first nations, went above and beyond to keep their people safe.

Just yesterday we heard from the Auditor General that first nations across Canada did not have the personal protective equipment needed going into this pandemic to be safe, which is particularly

the case in our region. We know that throughout this they have struggled in any way they could to access PPE.

I remember advocating on behalf of those in Sagkeeng. When they received the first test kits, they were very clear in their questioning of how could they do tests when they did not have access to personal protective equipment to administer the COVID-19 tests. This was early in the pandemic. This federal government has let first nations down time and time again, and we saw this explicitly during this pandemic.

I want to acknowledge the incredible leadership of communities and regional indigenous leaders here in Manitoba in fighting to get vaccines available to first nations, indigenous and northern communities on a priority basis. I was proud to work with indigenous and northern leaders, and colleagues in the NDP, to push the federal government to act on this front.

I am pleased to acknowledge that there was recognition and a response from the federal government early this year that first nations, and people living on reserve and across the north in particular, required priority access to the vaccine, but it is not enough. We continue to see, especially these days here in Manitoba, indigenous people be disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

I am sad to say that Bill C-30, a bill that was developed during this crisis, does not deal with some of the fundamental challenges that first nations communities face. We know that one of the key contributors to the spread of COVID-19 on reserve is the lack of housing, particularly the existence of overcrowded, inadequate, mould-infested homes.

I remember the leadership of Cross Lake talking about, of course, that there would be a significant spread when there were 15, 17 or 20 people living in a home. The leadership in Shamattawa made clear that the spread back in December was as significant as it was because of the overcrowded housing that people in that community live in.

● (1215)

This is not new. This is something for which leaders and people across the region have been fighting for a long time. Bill C-30, unfortunately, does nothing to address the housing shortage in first nations and northern communities across the region.

I also want to acknowledge that the second and third waves of COVID-19 have hit working people especially hard: front-line workers, workers in long-term care, in meat-packing plants, in warehouses, taxi drivers, migrant workers, many of them racialized and many of them immigrant. In Manitoba, people of Southeast Asian descent are most disproportionately affected by COVID-19 at this time. They are impacted 13 times the rate that white people are.

Working people have been forced to work throughout this pandemic without personal protective equipment, without paid sick leave, without targeted shutdowns and without access to vaccines. They have been forced to work by employers, corporations and governments that have chosen to prioritize profits ahead of the lives of working people and their families. Women workers have also lost significant ground. Inequality and the lack of structural supports like child care holding us all back.

I want to acknowledge that while Bill C-30 has made a historic commitment to child care, it is not as a result of the benevolence of the Liberal government. This is the result of decades of women fighting for universal child care across our country. I am proud of the work the NDP has done to push this vision forward. Yes, it is time to see a historic investment in child care, especially as a result of what we have seen in this crisis, where women have had to leave work and have taken a hit financially and economically in terms of their stability because of the lack of child care in our country. Let us get moving on turning that commitment to child care into action.

However, let us be clear that Bill C-30 does not go far enough for working people. There is no commitment on paid sick days. We know that a critical factor in keeping people and workers safe is the ability to stay home and get well.

We also know that the government has not gone far enough in changes to EI. While there are some in Bill C-30, it does not go far enough to ensure that workers are supported, especially in this day and age when the nature of work has changed significantly and the rise of precarious work is a significant challenge for so many.

The reality is that we cannot afford the status quo. The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that. If we want different results, we need to make different choices. We need to tax the rich and ensure that those who have made an extraordinary profit on the backs of working people pay their fair share. We need to go after pandemic profiteers who have made money hand over fist during a time when so many are suffering and many have lost their lives.

We need to go further and push for supports for those pushed to the margins. We need to cancel student debt, recognizing that many students right now are paying for an education that will leave them significantly in debt and are heading into a job market that is pretty abysmal. We need Canada to take a stand for students. We need to go further than that and ensure that we are committing to free education for students across our country.

We need to take on one of the biggest challenges of our time, the climate crisis, recognizing that without climate justice, we cannot achieve justice for all. We need to move in that direction as soon as possible.

The bottom line is that we need a transformative vision for our world, one that seeks to prioritize the well-being of people and our planet over profits, a vision rooted in the power of the collective, a vision that believes we can achieve the social, environmental and economic justice that we all deserve.

• (1220)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the end of her speech, my NDP colleague touched on youth and jobs for the future. This is the community I am hearing about in Oshawa with

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Ontario Tech. It is a very technologically advanced university. The member is probably aware of the 2018 study by Brock University that found that 65% of software engineers and 30% of STEM graduates were leaving our country. It is not just the investment in education, but the jobs.

In this budget, we do not see investments in our current strength as Canadians, whether it is our historic strengths in the energy sector, mining, softwood lumber or manufacturing. I wonder if the member could comment on what needs to be put forth by the government to create those jobs and allow our brightest and best Canadians to stay not only in her community but in my community and all of Canada.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, what we need to deal with the jobs crisis in our country, particularly when it comes to young people, is a green new deal. We need a vision for job creation that is premised on a green transition and the creation of jobs for the future. That is what young people want. We can do that in our communities.

I come from a part of the country that relies in significant ways on the resource sector. As a result of job-killing trade deals and foreign ownership, we have lost hundreds of good jobs. People here want jobs, sustainable jobs for the future. There is so much opportunity for creating these jobs, but we need the political will around a green new deal. Let us get moving.

[*Translation*]

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

I must admit, however, that I am having a bit of a hard time with the NDP's rhetoric. The hon. member said that the budget does not go far enough, that it is the status quo, that it does not give people what they really need and that there is not enough affordable housing for first nations peoples. However, she and her party voted in favour of the budget.

Something similar is happening at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. Since this government bill was first introduced, we have been saying that it does not go far enough because it does not propose any binding targets. The NDP, however, went so far as to say that it was not necessary to include any targets in the bill. It has refused any amendments proposed by the Bloc Québécois or the Green Party that could have improved the bill.

If my colleague does not agree with the budget, why did she vote in favour of it?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, let us first acknowledge the hypocrisy of the Bloc Québécois, which claims not to want an election, but continues to miss opportunities to contribute to the legislative agenda and get results for people across the country.

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We have to raise the problems with the budget. People back home are suffering greatly even now. There needs to be clarity on what needs to be done. However, we must also recognize the positive actions resulting from pressure from social movements, such as bringing in a national child care system, which is a necessity.

We also need to do even more. We have to learn from the COVID-19 crisis and take a far more visionary and progressive approach to improve the lives of Canadians across the country.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to expand on the comments of my hon. colleague. Manitoba is in a dire situation, with 23 people being sent out of province to ICUs, one who perished. Many are workers without paid sick leave. They are essential workers who have put their lives on the line. Some still have not been given proper immigration status.

Could my hon. colleague expand on that?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, all of us in Manitoba are so concerned and heartbroken by what we are seeing. Front-line workers, racialized workers, including, as was pointed out, workers without status, are paying the ultimate price. This is a time for Canada to step up and ensure the status of migrant workers. This is a time for Canada to recognize that for our country to move, for us to survive day to day, we rely on these workers, front-line workers and migrant workers, to do what needs to be done. It is time for status for all.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in the debate today on legislation to implement the Liberal government's collection of partisan election spending measures outlined in budget 2021.

My constituents of Red Deer—Mountain View have waited a long time to see some concrete measures from the Liberal government that would provide us with some relief from COVID-19 and help us rejuvenate our local economy, which was not doing well even before the pandemic.

Every week, over the past 14 months in Red Deer—Mountain View, we have seen more empty buildings and more for lease signs go up. Many small business owners have had no choice but to close and so many more are barely holding on by a thread, as they see their life savings dwindled, in hopes of staying open when the economy turns around. It would seem that very little help is on the way.

In fact, due to a lot of Liberal government policies designed to cripple the energy sector and drive away investments, many businesses in Red Deer had already been closing and shedding jobs before the pandemic. I will give one example, but there are many more.

McLevin Industries has been in business since 1917, almost as long as Red Deer has been a city. Over that time, the business has managed to survive a lot, including the recession in the early 1980s. Like many Albertans, the owners were prepared to get down to work and further grow before the Liberal government took office. Those plans have long been scrapped. In the years up to 2019, rev-

enues at the company plunged 40% and it shed 19 jobs. The Liberal government's legacy in communities right across this province and throughout western Canada has been unemployment, business closures and too many workers and families left without much hope for the future.

That brings me to budget 2021, the Liberal government's first budget in nearly two years. There is no question that the Liberal budget is a massive letdown for Canadians who were looking for a plan to create jobs and boost economic growth. Canada's Conservatives and all Canadians wanted to see a plan to return to normal, a plan that would secure jobs and the economy. Instead, what we have in budget 2021 is a dangerous and untested economic experiment where tens of thousands of Canadians remain out of work and many small and medium-sized businesses are still struggling to stay afloat.

The Liberal government's reimagined economy is a risky Ottawa-knows-best approach that picks winners and losers by deciding which jobs, which sectors and which regions of our country will be prosperous. This unproven and incompetent economic approach threatens the personal financial security of everyone in Alberta and all workers across the country. With unemployment running at more than 20% in rural Alberta, the Liberal government's budget throws billions of dollars toward so-called green energy industries and projects which, as we know from experience in Ontario, will neither create jobs, protect the environment nor stimulate the economy.

Canada's energy sector has consistently contributed billions of dollars to Canada's GDP and has provided tens of thousands of Canadians with well-paying jobs that allow families to put food on their tables. How does budget 2021 recognize and promote this fact? It does not. Budget 2021 continues the Liberal government's assault on our energy sector, which is also the most environmentally conscientious on the planet.

Since 2015, the human consequences of Liberal government attacks on Canadian energy have been devastating, with 200,000 jobs lost and \$200 billion in cancelled projects, and these jobs depend on the Liberal government reversing courses and policies that have already damaged the Canadian energy sector.

The oil and gas industry provides hundreds of thousands of direct and indirect jobs and is the single-largest contributor to Canada's GDP and our balance of trade. Its survival is critical to Canada's economic recovery, and the billions of dollars in tax revenue it generates pays for the social services Canadians rely on, like our schools and hospitals. Instead of supporting our energy sector and helping it recover from its worst recession in decades, the Liberal budget invests \$17 billion over the next few years in so-called green energy projects, which, as history tells us, will create few jobs and contribute very little to economic growth.

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In truth, the notion of helping generate economic growth seems to be of very little interest to the Liberal government. It is hardly mentioned in budget 2021. In fact, the words support, benefit and gender are riddled throughout the 700-page budget, but the word competitiveness appears just 13 times. Imagine that. Budget 2021 is supposed to be the Liberal government's plan for our economic future, but the words growth and competitiveness are barely mentioned in passing, amid all the \$104 billion in new partisan spending commitments.

• (1230)

Before the budget was tabled, Canada's Conservatives called on the government to stand up for Canadians and bring forward measures to ensure the improvements to productivity that a competitive economy requires. We noted that sector-specific support is required, not a one-size-fits-all approach, and that the government's focus should be on the crucial small and medium-sized businesses that have been left behind because of poorly designed support programs.

Canada's Conservatives called on the government to dispense with the talking points of reimagining the economy and realize that Canadians simply want to know that things are going to get better. Canadians want their jobs, their small businesses and their communities back. Canadians are not calling for the government to embark upon a grand social and economic experience. They simply want to return to normalcy.

In short, Canada's Conservatives called on the Liberal government to deliver a real plan for Canada's economic recovery: one that secured our future by recovering millions of jobs. It also called on the government to introduce policies that resulted in better wages, and to help struggling small businesses get back on their feet. The Liberal government refuses to listen to sound advice and instead pursues its own course of massive and unfocused spending, record ballooning deficits, stunted economic growth and unaffordable national debt that has the potential to cripple our country for generations to come.

Let me say this. Over the last few months, those of us in Red Deer—Mountain View and in communities across Canada have been hopeful that we would soon see an end to the COVID-19 pandemic and the beginning of an economic recovery. Our recovery plan focuses on creating financial security and certainty. Our plan would safely secure our future and deliver a Canada where those who have struggled the most in this pandemic can get back to work. One of the central goals of our recovery plan is to ensure that manufacturing at home is bolstered, wages are increased and the dream of affording a better life for current and future generations can be realized by all Canadians.

We urge the Liberal government to consider including at least some of those measures we put forward for Canada's recovery plan in this budget. The Liberal government instead has chosen to embark on a reckless and untested course of partisan spending and ballooning debt that does nothing to grow our economy or increase our prosperity.

Unemployed Canadians who were hoping to see a plan to create new jobs and economic opportunities for their families are being let down by budget 2021. Workers who have had their wages cut and

hours slashed, and who were hoping to see a plan to reopen the economy, are also being let down. Families who cannot afford more taxes and are struggling to save money for their children's education or to buy a home are being let down. The Liberal budget does nothing to secure long-term prosperity for Canadians.

The Liberal government has consistently ignored calls from Canada's Conservatives and from all political parties to bring forward a real economic recovery plan that would unite Canadians rather than drive wedges between them. Canadians deserve better. They deserve a real economic recovery plan, and my hope is that Canadians will soon see a Conservative government moving forward to do just that. That is what Canada's Conservatives are committed to delivering.

• (1235)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few moments before concluding his speech, the member talked about the Conservatives' plan and how it was going to increase wages for employees.

Can he explain how their plan would increase wages?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, I certainly can. The first thing that we would do is get rid of Bill C-69, which is stopping all opportunities for natural resource development. If we want to have green economies and green jobs, we have to recognize that we have to use the tool we have, which is Canada's oil and gas industry.

As we do that, we will be able to move into some of these other areas that are important to those who care so much about the environment, but we cannot shut down one part of it in order to try to promote a secondary one. From that same position, we know that there are going to be a lot of requirements for rare earth minerals. We have to make sure we get the government out of the way if we think those will be part of our future.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we all know that one in five Canadians does not take the medications they have been prescribed because they cannot afford them, yet the Conservatives voted to continue protecting the profits of big pharma and not go ahead with a pharmacare plan. We have had a promise from the Liberals for 23 years for this.

Can the member explain why the bill before us ignores the needs for pharmacare? Will the Conservative Party come around to supporting a plan so all Canadians can have access to pharmacare?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, of course, a number of people are having difficulty attaining pharmacy services in the country. Many of them, however, have plans that allow them to access pharmaceutical products. From that perspective, we have to look around the world to see what the consequences have been in those places that decided to let the government do what governments do: In their minds, it is to manage their systems. I think that is really the critical part. If the member takes a look at some of the things that have taken place in Australia and New Zealand, he will understand that there is a lot more required than a standard blanket statement that says, "Pharmacare for everyone".

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We have to look at ways to help those who have been falling through the cracks. For that, I think, if we as Canadians do not shut down the things that help us, like our oil and gas industry, it will give us an opportunity to help all Canadians.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the previous Conservative administration, real wage rates increased more than the rate of inflation. We heard just recently that the annualized CPI increase is now 3.4%.

Could my hon. colleague comment on what Bill C-30, and all of the spending that is embedded in it, will do to the inflation rate, and hence to the relationship of inflation to real wages?

• (1240)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, I am a former math teacher and business person. One of the things that we always talked about was the effect of interest rates, as far as the economy was concerned, and how the general lives of individuals were going to be affected. If we look at the amount of debt that individuals have at this point in time and then look at the incredible amount of debt the federal government is looking at, I think we can realize the issues of concern and problems.

If we look at what happened during the days of the other Trudeau government, we had a 22% interest rate. It devastated this country. The target used to be 2% and now we see that it is 3.4%. All we have to do is a little bit of calculation on someone's mortgage to see what happens when the interest rate is doubled. That is a problem that all Canadians will have to sort out if we do not get this under control.

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-30, the budget implementation act, 2021, No. 1.

The Liberals claim this budget is focused on finishing the fight against COVID, healing the economic wounds left by the COVID recession and creating more jobs and prosperity for Canadians in the days and decades to come. However, it does not do any of that and does absolutely nothing to secure long-term prosperity for Canadians.

The Liberal government has mentioned that a consequence of COVID has been women leaving the workforce. This is true. COVID forced businesses, small and large, to suddenly shut down. At the status of women committee, we heard from witnesses that women left the workforce for several different reasons. Some left not by choice but because they worked in industries such as retail, travel and hospitality, which were hit the hardest. Others left because of the additional responsibilities of having to become teachers to their kids and caretakers to family members, while for others working from home was just not an option. As well, the committee heard from these witnesses that while many men have returned to the workforce, women have not returned at the same rate.

The government came to the conclusion that the reason for this was a lack of child care spaces and the need for a universal child care package. Again, the committee heard evidence from witnesses that this was not the case. As a matter of fact, we heard that child care centres were closing because there was a lack of children to fill the spaces. Additionally, a universal child care plan is a simple an-

swer to a very complex problem. Under the Liberal plan, all children would be treated exactly the same and day care centres would be identical from coast to coast. It does not take into consideration parental choice and that parents, not the government, are in the best position to make decisions about what is best for their kids.

The Liberal budget also has not taken into account the cultural sensitivities that exist in such a vast and diverse country as Canada. For example, I am of an ethnic background where we strongly believe in the importance not just of ensuring our children get a good education, but of preserving and teaching our culture, language and religion. Canadians do not need a generic program where they drop their kids off and then pick them up at the end of the day. Instead, they need support in their choice of child care, whether that be a day care centre, grandparents or friends who teach their culture, language and values to their children. I have heard from many that, when their children were younger, their grandmas and grandpas would watch them throughout the day. That is where the children learned to do fractions, and that four quarter cups equal one cup, while spending quality time baking delicious cookies and bread their parents enjoyed when they picked their kids up at the end of the day. This is something that is extremely important to my constituents, and this Liberal budget does not achieve that.

The Liberal government's budget also discusses COVID recovery programs, including the wage subsidy and rent relief programs. These programs were necessary at the beginning of the pandemic. The Conservatives fully supported the programs, and even made recommendations and changes to the programs to improve them and ensure no Canadians fell through the cracks. While there were always challenges, and we heard from our constituents about how these programs needed to be improved, I know my constituents were grateful that all parties put their partisanship aside to provide emergency support. However, these programs have made a reappearance in this budget as they are being extended. While most of the country is grappling with an intense third wave of COVID-19, and provinces are once again instituting some of the harshest lockdown policies we have seen thus far, this is all because of the current Prime Minister's failure to protect Canadians.

• (1245)

These programs are only being extended because the Prime Minister failed to take the appropriate actions at the start of the pandemic. Examples include closing our borders to all international travellers, supplying the provinces with rapid testing and securing enough vaccine deliveries in large enough quantities to provide a successful vaccine rollout.

Instead, because of the government's incompetence, many of our frontline workers, many of whom reside in my riding, have only been given their first shot and have been told they have to wait months before they can get their second shot.

Finally, I want to highlight in the budget the focus on gender-based violence in Canada. Since the government was elected, it has constantly talked about gender-based violence and how it negatively impacts women and girls in Canada. On average, one in three women and girls in Canada will face some sort of violence in their lifetime. That is 6,373,325 women and girls.

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Each time the Minister for Women and Gender Equality has appeared before the Status of Women committee, I have asked her repeatedly when Canadian women and girls can finally see the government's national action plan to address gender-based violence. What is the answer? The minister always replies by acknowledging this is an important issue that the government wants to address, yet there comes a point when words no longer mean anything if they are not followed through with action.

Every single one of our allies who signed the international agreement that gender-based violence is a serious issue, a pandemic that needs to be addressed, at the same time as Canada did, has already published at least one national action plan. In some cases, they are already working on versions two and three. We cannot even get our first version out. This is why I was pleased to see in the budget the government's plan to address this very serious issue. However, I was completely disappointed that, after years of campaigning and promising from the Prime Minister, the government has only now decided to appoint a secretariat to develop this plan.

There were 161 women murdered last year solely because they were women and just last week in Quebec, they had their 11th woman murdered, a victim of femicide, since February of this year. This is why I have been meeting with stakeholders across this country and working with my Conservative colleagues on how we can effectively and quickly address this ever-growing crime and end violence toward women.

Conservatives have put forward solutions to better monitor individuals with a history of domestic violence and to address sexual exploitation of minors. Conservatives have advocated for giving women the ability to find out if their intimate partner has a history of violence. Canadians cannot afford more empty promises and recommendations that fall on deaf ears, not when the lives of our daughters, sisters, mothers and grandmothers are at stake.

Canada's Conservatives were very clear that we wanted to see a plan to return to normal that would secure jobs and the economy. However, the Prime Minister's budget is a massive letdown for Canadians who were looking for a plan to create jobs and boost economic growth. Conservatives have put forward a real viable plan to help get our economy going again.

Canada's recovery plan is focused on creating financial security and certainty. This plan will safely secure our future and deliver a Canada where those who have struggled the most through this pandemic can get back to work. This plan will ensure that manufacturing at home is bolstered, where wages go up and where the dream of affording a better life for their children can be realized by all Canadians.

Canada's Conservatives got Canada through the last recession and with Canada's recovery plan, we will get Canadians through this one too.

• (1250)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really concerned about why Conservatives are so set on trying to paint the child care strategy that is being proposed by this government as some kind of uniform child care drop-off centre

where every child has the exact same experience. This is not the case of what is being proposed.

We like to talk about the model that is in Quebec right now. In Quebec, subsidies for child care are for not-for-profit, family-based and for-profit. This has been going on for 20 years in Quebec. In addition to that, private for-profit child care does exist where there are provincial and federal tax credits, which make them very comparable to the subsidized ones.

Guess what? I did not know any of this 10 minutes ago. I just googled this while I was listening to the member's speech. Why are Conservatives so insistent on giving misinformation when it comes to what this government is proposing?

Ms. Jag Sahota: Mr. Speaker, over the last year, we have seen the Liberal government announce programs, and the devil is in the details. I am glad to hear the member and the Liberal government are listening.

It is important to make sure multiculturalism and diversity in our country stay alive and that culture and language are protected. It is important that parents are not required to drop off their kids at day care and pick them up at the end of the day and that parental choice is at the centre of that program, which I have not seen yet, but I am glad the government is listening to our points.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

She spoke a lot about women and the status of women. The pandemic has made it clear that women are often affected by instability and violence. The pandemic has also shed light on the situation of seniors, many of whom are women.

The government has just created two classes of seniors: those 75 and up and those 65 to 74. That is a first in this country. What does my colleague think of this sudden move by the federal government?

[*English*]

Ms. Jag Sahota: Mr. Speaker, the member is right, women have been suffering, and the pandemic has highlighted a lot of what was known previously. It has highlighted the issues that exist in our society in Canada, so it is important to focus on these issues.

I spoke about today femicide. There has been an 11th woman murdered in Quebec. This is bothering me and hurts me to my core that another woman, another mother, sister, daughter or granddaughter was murdered at the hands of their intimate partner. We need to focus on issues that impact women.

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• (1255)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Highway 11 and Highway 17 represent the Trans-Canada Highway across Canada. This is where all the economic goods of this nation travel. If we talk to anyone who travels this highway, they will tell us about the rising number of truck accidents, trucks going off the road and trucks going into oncoming traffic.

My question is about the lack of vision and rules about proper training and standards for insurance to hold companies to account so we keep the drivers of the trucks safe but also keep the people who are travelling the roads in northern Ontario safe. I have not seen that in this budget.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Mr. Speaker, this was more of a statement than a question. I hope the Liberal government heard it and will address the issue.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to rise virtually to participate in the debate on the budget and to provide the perspective of many Canadians, especially that of my constituents in northern Saskatchewan who feel left out, forgotten and, in some cases, at complete odds with the Liberal government.

It has now been 19 months since I was selected the member of Parliament for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River. During that time, my team and I have done what we could under the current restrictions to meet with as many constituents, local representatives, indigenous representatives, business owners and many others across northern Saskatchewan to keep in touch with their priorities.

For example, in an attempt to reach as many constituents as possible, my office developed an online survey, targeted through social media to the people in my riding. The results show just how out of touch the Liberal government is with the people in northern Saskatchewan. When given a list of 10 issues and asked to choose their top three, the most common issues identified by the people in my riding were: ending and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, jobs and the economy, and rural and gang crime.

This budget was an opportunity for the government to chart a clear path forward, to introduce a growth and jobs budget that would provide hope for Canadians that the fight against COVID-19 is nearly over, and that we have a path to recovery. Instead, it is a poorly crafted campaign document that plunges Canada so far into debt that my grandchildren's grandchildren will be paying for the reckless spending of the Prime Minister.

I want to touch briefly on these top three issues that were raised by my constituents for the duration of my time, starting first with ending and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. As I am sure members have noticed, several weeks ago Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe released a reopening Saskatchewan plan. This plan included vaccination targets by age groups and corresponding parts of the economy and social life that would be opened once these targets were met.

The response in Saskatchewan has been very positive. This has not only encouraged people to get vaccinated, but has done what I think is most important: it has given people hope, hope that this will soon be over, hope that there will be a return to normal, hope

that we can once again gather with friends and loved ones, and hope for business owners that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Unfortunately, we have received no such plan from the Prime Minister or his government. We have been asking for months for a plan, for targets that once achieved would lead us on a path back to life as we know it. Instead, we see Liberal minister after Liberal minister stand in front of cameras and pat themselves on the back, while at the same time attacking premiers from across the country.

Speaking of premiers, premiers across Canada came together and had one ask for this budget. It was an increase in health care transfers to deal with the pandemic, and with the hundreds of billions of dollars the Liberals are spending, they could not even provide a commitment to the provinces on this matter. That is a shame.

Next, my constituents ranked jobs and the economy. Unemployed Canadians hoping to see a plan to create new jobs and economic opportunities for their families have been let down by this budget. Workers who have had their wages cut and their hours slashed hoping to see a plan to reopen the economy have been let down by the budget.

Finally, families who have seen their taxes continually increase over the past six years under the Liberal government and who are struggling to save more money for their children's education or to buy a home have been let down by this budget.

The Prime Minister and the government will tell us over and over again, in fact he did it this week, how the first thing they did was to increase taxes on the top 1% so that they could reduce taxes for the middle class. As someone who has prepared thousands of tax returns over the last 30 years, the vast majority of them for middle-class Canadians, I can assure this House that this is simply not true. I could provide example after example of people whose personal income taxes have in fact increased substantially since 2015.

These are not people who are earning hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. I am talking about people who are earning \$50,000 to \$80,000 a year in family income and who have seen their taxes increase significantly.

Let me move on to jobs. There are two very important sectors in northern Saskatchewan that have been devastated by the government's poor handling of the pandemic, as well as its weakness at the bargaining table. These sectors are the outfitting and tourism sector and the forestry sector. Believe it or not, many members in this House may be surprised to learn that not all of Saskatchewan is flat prairies where one can see rolling wheatfields for miles at a time.

• (1300)

My riding in northern Saskatchewan is home to many businesses and jobs that depend on the forestry sector. The government's failure to secure a softwood lumber agreement with the United States over the past six years has been very difficult for them, and honestly embarrassing for Canada. Canada has not had a softwood lumber agreement with the United States since the fall of 2015, and the Liberal government failed to negotiate softwood lumber into the Canada-United States-Mexico agreement recently.

My very first question in the House, after I was elected, was on this exact issue. Nearly two years later, Canadians have yet to see any meaningful action on softwood lumber by the government. In fact, we are now seeing a step backward with the United States Department of Commerce's announcement last week of increased duties on softwood lumber imports from Canada.

I do not think the Prime Minister nor his ministers understand the importance of businesses like NorSask Forest Products in my riding. This is a lumber mill. It is owned by nine first nations. As I have stated in the House on previous occasions, dividends paid from this entity provide integral funding for critical programs to the ownership first nations. For this mill and many others that are not owned by first nation entities in my riding, these duties are doubling with the announcement last week. The stakes are too high for the government to continue to fail on this issue.

Let me move on to the outfitting and tourism sectors. The government's total failure when it comes to the border with the United States has continued to leave outfitters and other tourism operators in my riding in the dark. These businesses operate during hunting and fishing seasons. They are seasonal businesses, mostly with customers who travel from the United States to enjoy beautiful northern Saskatchewan. As I said before, the government's lack of a plan is severely hampering these businesses and the many other northern tourism operators.

Many will write this off as partisan, however the Parliamentary Budget Officer has been very clear in his analysis of the budget. Not only will a significant amount of the Liberal spending in this budget not create economic growth or jobs, the Liberals and their budget greatly overestimate their growth prediction. To use a very technical term from my days as an accountant, it seems the Liberals may be fudging the numbers to make themselves look better. I am sure it is not the first time and I am sure it will not be the last.

It is very clear that the Liberal government's stimulus fund was more about spending on Liberal partisan re-election promises than creating jobs or growing the economy. With their uncontrolled spending, the Liberals have made it clear that they have no plan to return to a balanced budget. Once again, this is just another example where the Liberal Party is completely out of touch with Canadians. In fact, a recent poll by Nanos found that 75% of Canadians were worried about the growing deficit.

I realize I have used most of my time on the first two issues, so let me quickly comment on the third priority of my constituents, those in northern Saskatchewan, and that is the rural and gang crime issue. The Liberal government has spent more time and energy going after law-abiding firearm owners like hunters and sport shooters than they have on illegal gun importing and organized

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crime. Tomorrow and next week, we will have more opportunity to debate the Liberals' disastrous bills, Bill C-21 and Bill C-22, that would decrease penalties for dangerous gun, drug and gang-related crime, while simultaneously criminalizing behaviour like hunting, which many indigenous and non-indigenous people in my riding rely on to provide for their families.

It does not take much to notice how the government has failed Canadians. One need look no further than the current NHL play-offs, games south of the border with fan-filled arenas and life returning to normal, while in Canada, my beloved Toronto Maple Leafs are handily putting a beat down on the Montreal Canadiens in front of empty arenas. It is time for the government to admit its failure and introduce a plan to return to normal, one that focuses on jobs and the economy, and does what it takes to keep Canadians safe.

• (1305)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member is worried about anybody accusing his speech of being overly partisan, he should probably go back and watch it.

The member and many other members have talked about this budget being nothing more than an election platform. If that is the case, could he tell us what parts of the budget in particular are election platform items that the Conservatives do not support? Is it child care for Canadian families? Is it perhaps the extended supports for Canadians during a pandemic? Is it supports for small and medium-sized businesses? Is it the supports for the provinces? Which parts of this "election platform" he is not in favour of?

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Speaker, I would answer that question with the vast majority of my speech, which spoke to jobs and job creation. For two years in my riding in northern Saskatchewan, I have promoted and advocated for the creation of jobs as a solution to many of the challenges faced by the people in my riding. In this budget, I see a significant lack of anything that would create jobs in my riding. That is what I would change.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. He spoke about job creation and tourism, but then he quickly moved on to the issue of health transfers.

I would like to know if he agrees with the Bloc Québécois and supports increasing the health transfer from 22% to 35%.

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[English]

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Speaker, it is not my place in my role at this time to determine the percentage and amounts of transfers for health care. I would suggest that as a government in waiting and somebody who wants to be part of government, we would commit to having a positive relationship with all provinces. We would work with those provinces to find answers and solutions to these issues rather than work against them.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the budget had no line for investment in, for example, VIA Rail. We know Greyhound is in the tank. These are critical and vital transportation links, particularly for remote communities. Many seniors, for example, use the bus and rail.

I wonder if my colleague is supportive of making massive investments in VIA Rail and Greyhound?

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has consistently created policies and introduced provisions that divide Canadians, whether it be regionally or urban versus rural. Even today, there is much discussion about the division in categories of seniors. As somebody who represents a very northern riding, unlike my colleague asking the question, I very much understand the need for transportation for people in my riding.

If there is a lack of support for things that are important to my New Democratic colleague, why did she choose to support this budget in the first place?

• (1310)

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not to give any secrets away, but I suspect my colleague is of a similar vintage as me. I remember when my first mortgage, for example, was 13%. The interest costs in this budget are admittedly quite low, and we are in a low interest rate time, but they will go up.

I would like the member's comments on the impacts of higher inflation and interest rates and whether there is significant risk to our country with the massive amounts of debt that has been brought on by the Liberal government.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is the exact vintage as me, I am pretty certain, so we have very similar memories of our journeys in Saskatchewan.

I remember in the early 1980s when my dad was buying farmland and interest rates were 17% or 18% in a lot of cases. Just to put that in a really simple perspective, which is how I explain it to constituents, if we end up with a 1%, 2% or 3% increase in interest rates, the impact of that on the ability of government to support many of the programs it currently does would be significantly affected. For example, a 2% increase in interest rates is what is spent on national defence in a year. A 3% increase in interest rates is the amount of health transfers to the provinces every year. When we put it in terms like that and with interest rates rising 1%, 2% or 3% not being unrealistic, it would have a huge impact on our ability to support very important programs in our country.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have an opportunity to speak to the budget bill, because I have a lot of concern about the budget.

I will start with the amount of debt the government has added. The Prime Minister has added more debt to Canada than did all the prime ministers, together, since the beginning of Confederation. We are now at a debt of \$1.3 trillion and the government has asked to raise the ceiling of that to \$1.8 trillion.

People may wonder why that matters to me. The amount of debt that has been added to each Canadian is about \$30,000. Let us think about this. That means for people who are watching, they will have to pay the government \$250 a month every month for the next 10 years to pay off just what the government has spent so far. As we continue to spend, those numbers will go up. Let us think about in terms of a family. Partners and their children, everyone, will be paying \$250 a month for 10 years. That is a lot of money.

There does not seem to be a plan. I asked the finance minister last night and she was unable to articulate a plan that would resolve this in the longer term. Nobody certainly expects an immediate adjustment, because we are trying to exit the pandemic, but where is the plan to exit the pandemic and restore the economy?

If we look at some of the substance in the budget, we will see that the Liberals have extended many of the programs that were put into place to help people during the pandemic, and that is great. The Conservatives always supported that. However, a lot of the programs had flaws and people were falling through the cracks. Those things were identified early on, even in April and May of last year. Therefore, I do not understand why the government has extended programs without fixing the things. Many people had start-up businesses. This was a clear area where folks who had unfortunately started up just prior to the pandemic or a few months in advance of the pandemic did not have the revenue to show for the previous year. If the government really wants to help people, why are these little holes in the programs not fixed?

It is the same situation for a lot of the women entrepreneurs. We have heard how disproportionately affected women were in the pandemic. We have seen the maternity leave issue. Women who were going to take maternity leave in the future but then had to stay home from work because of COVID were unable to get their maternity leave. The Liberals have not sorted that out in a whole year. The government knows about these issues and it needs to fix them. I do not understand why they were not fixed for the budget.

The member for Kingston and the Islands talked about the accusations that the Liberals were vote-buying and electioneering with this budget. It is hard not to think that is the case when we see money for everybody. Certainly, the Liberals will continue to give money away until they run out of the taxpayer money, and we are just about there.

I have looked at some of the promises in the budget. In particular, I want to talk about child care because that was flagged as a huge need. We have certainly heard that at the status of women committee which I chair. However, it is contingent on the provinces paying half. What if the provinces do not have the ability to pay? With the pandemic and the expenses they face, that may be the case. I asked the finance minister last night what the plan was if provinces could not afford to pay and she was not able to articulate a plan. It is very concerning when the person who is supposed to be in charge of the financial plan cannot say what it is.

We need to ensure that there is something to address the child care need because women have left the workforce and many of them will not return because they are unable to get child care.

In terms of some of the other things, this was put forward as being a growth budget. Again, last night when we looked at the estimates, I asked the finance minister about the plans for growth in the oil and gas sector and if she could point to measures that would achieve that. There was really nothing in the budget for that. It is the same for the natural resources sector. That is about 17% of our GDP. Again, there was really a blank space where there should have been some kind of a plan to grow that sector. This sector could really bring in revenue that would then pay for a lot of the social programs we are wanting.

I asked the same question about agriculture and where in the budget were the plans to spur growth in the agriculture sector. Again, there was no answer.

Therefore, this is not a growth budget. The only thing growing in this budget is the debt, and that is not what we need.

• (1315)

We really need to start to create jobs and get people back to work: the million jobs that were lost in the pandemic and those that will continue to be lost. We need to find help for the sectors that are struggling, and the tourism sector is well recognized as one that is struggling.

The government picked its favourite, Air Canada, and did something there, but nothing for WestJet, nothing for Air Transat and nothing for the other carriers. At the same time, the \$1 billion for fairs and festivals is woefully inadequate for one of the hardest-hit sectors, which employs many people in the country. The plan needs to be realistic, and we need to appreciate that it could be a two-year recovery for the people in that sector.

At the same time, high-speed Internet is known to be a need across the country. In fact, it is essential to do business today. There is \$1 billion in this budget for high-speed Internet, but I would point out that in the last few years \$1.5 billion has been spent and that is a drop in the bucket compared to what is needed. This is something that the government is saying it wants to accelerate.

Again, in terms of the priorities of the spending, there are some things that I think we need to stop spending on and other things that we need to divert to and accelerate, like high-speed Internet.

I was happy to see long-term care being addressed, and certainly that is important. In the area of seniors, the increases to OAS that we have long been calling for are appreciated, for those over 75

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years of age. We have seen that during this pandemic the government did two carbon tax increases, and the cost of everything is going up: food, groceries, etc. Seniors are on a fixed income in many cases and are very hard pressed. While the government is busy spending, why only the 75-plus? What about the people between 65 and 75? I should point out to the Liberals that those people do vote, so that could be a consideration for them.

The other thing I see here is a top-up for low-wage earners. To me, that looks like a basic guaranteed income that just was not called a basic guaranteed income.

Of course, in this long budget bill, the omnibus budget bill that the government always promised it would never do, the government has decided to sneak in something about the Elections Act, which has nothing whatsoever to do with the budget. What happened was that, in the last Parliament, Bill C-76, a bill to change the Elections Act, tried to introduce measures to make it an offence to say false things about a candidate or a public figure, but the court struck that down as being a violation of people's freedom of speech.

Instead of challenging the court's decision or respecting the court's decision, the government has decided to take the sneaky approach and stick it in a 720-page budget bill, and put the provision in there that this would take effect on any election that occurs within six months of the coming into force of this budget. Well, that certainly sounds like the Liberals are intending to have an election in the next six months, does it not? This is just more evidence that the Liberals are desperate to have an election and that they do not keep their promises, because this is an omnibus budget bill.

At the end of the day, when we look at the measures in the budget, what did we get for it? I have just a few questions that remain.

First of all, I do not see the plan to exit the pandemic. We thought maybe the vaccines would be it, even though that has been badly bungled. Now we are saying, "Well, you know what, even if you get the vaccine you might still be able to transmit COVID and might still be able to get it, so you are not going to get your freedoms back there." I really do not have a lot of confidence that the government is going to give back Canadians' freedoms, and if it does, that it would restore the economy. Because there is no growth plan in this budget and there are no adequate sector supports defined, there may be nothing left to reopen to, if the government does not address this. The government has to come up with a plan to address the unsustainable debt. We cannot continue to operate in this way.

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Finally, the government needs to stop the war on freedom of speech of Canadians in this country.

• (1320)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the member referenced the question that I had asked previously. However, I found it fascinating that in her follow-up response to my question on what this budget had promised, she said that it seems as though there is “money for everybody in here”, as though it is a bad thing to create a budget that strives to take care of all Canadians and make sure that everybody is reflected in it.

I will rephrase my previous question and put it to the member in a much simpler way: Whom would she like to see not being taken care of in this budget?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, certainly the member opposite would know that the Conservatives have supported to assist people to get through the pandemic.

However, the government failed to close the borders adequately from the beginning, when it still allowed planes in from China, Iran and Iraq, and learned nothing from that. I was the shadow health minister. I read the pandemic plan. Border control is number one. The next thing we know, the variants came, but the government still allowed people in from the U.K and South Africa. Then the next wave came along, with India and Pakistan. Again, the borders were not closed. Then there was the bungling of the vaccines.

With all of these things, that is what is dragging out the pandemic recovery that is needed. People do not want a government hand-out. What they want is their jobs back and to get back to work, and that is what the government should be focused on.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. Like many people, she is concerned about returning to a balanced budget. However, there are some in our society who are not paying their fair share. I am thinking of all those companies and people who send their money to tax havens.

Bill C-30 has some specific measures to deal with tax avoidance. The government is presenting them as a major effort to counter tax avoidance but, in reality, these measures are just highly specific, minor tweaks related to ongoing cases. What are the member's thoughts on the fight against tax havens?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the good question. It is very important for everyone to pay their fair share. I think that the Liberals do not have a good plan for recovering money from the wealthiest people.

• (1325)

[English]

When we look at the measures the Liberals have taken when they tried to raise taxes on the 1%, they actually got less tax revenue overall. That did not work out. They have done nothing that I can see to follow up on the paradise papers and the Panama papers and all the different lists of people who are definitely sheltering things offshore.

Clearly, rules exist but are not even being enforced. We probably need more stringent rules to prevent other people from hiding their money.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was delighted to hear my colleague speak about the importance of child care. I know she has worked very hard on supports for families and for women in particular. It plays an important role in that committee. She talked about the idea that a universal child care program is something that we need to make sure the provinces are onside with. She will know that Premier Kenney in my province has already said that he is not onside with it, despite the Royal Bank, chambers of commerce and all kinds of advocates saying that child care is probably the best way to get our economy back up and running.

In Alberta, we have not even spent the money in our budget for child care. What does the member think would be the solution to provinces that are not willing to put in child care for their populations, knowing that it is so important? I know she knows it is so important.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, what a great question that is from my colleague. It is a big fail for the Liberal government to announce that it is going to have this big child care thing without even checking with the provinces first, when it has made it contingent on the provinces participating. Clearly, this is just an empty promise, then.

What we ought to do is make sure that the federal government can do something that does not require the provinces necessarily to intervene. There are a number of different ways we can make child care more affordable. A lot of people who are paying for child care, if they could get all that money back, then not only have we made child care more affordable for them, but we also have all the people who are working in the child care sector who are paying taxes and all of the businesses associated with that. There is a revenue stream there.

I would argue that getting more women into the workforce and getting them all working is going to generate the revenue to offset having quality child care and having a variety of solutions that will work—

The Deputy Speaker: We can take just one more short question.

The hon. member for Prince Albert.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the member has been working tirelessly on Line 5 and the jobs in Sarnia. Did she see anything in this budget that would actually be there for the people of Sarnia in those jobs if Line 5 was to close?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question from my colleague, who works hard on the Canada-U.S. committee. There is nothing in this budget. In fact, not only is there nothing for oil and gas and for natural resources, but there is no contingency in this budget in case Line 5 does shut down. That will certainly drive the costs of everything up, including fuel that the government uses.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to rise in this House on behalf of my constituents of Edmonton Mill Woods.

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In the lead-up to this budget, the longest lead-up ever, as we went over two years without a budget, there were dozens of news stories and trial balloons talking about how innovative this budget was going to be. We heard time and again about how this budget would be a stepping stone for the Liberal government to build back better, whatever that means. Instead, at 739 pages and nearly a quarter of a million words, the longest budget in the history of our great country is also the greatest disappointment.

There is no plan to deal with inflation. There is no plan to make the dream of home ownership more attainable for Canadians. There is no plan to create new jobs and economic opportunities for families and young people across this country. Instead, we are left with a budget that says so much, proposes so little, and leaves Canadian jobs, productivity, and economic growth behind.

Let me start by looking at the full picture. In my riding of Edmonton Mill Woods and right across Canada, there are countless families and businesses on the brink of losing everything. The jobs numbers that came out earlier this month revealed that another 207,000 people across Canada had to come home and tell their family and loved ones one of the most difficult things to hear, that they had lost their job.

To be clear, Alberta's economic problems didn't just start because of this pandemic. The Liberals' Bill C-69, which many people called the "no more pipelines" bill; Bill C-48, the tanker ban; and general disregard for the energy sector have driven away billions of dollars of investment and, with it, thousands of Canadian jobs. The government has failed to produce a plan for one of Canada's largest economic sectors, the energy sector.

There are some things in this budget that we and our Conservative team are in favour of. For so many Canadians who continue to struggle throughout this pandemic, the budget does have the extension of emergency programs that our Conservative team supports, measures like the wage subsidy, rent subsidy and other recovery benefits, but there are still issues that remain with some of these programs. My office has heard from so many Canadians. It has heard repeatedly from small businesses that opened just before the pandemic or during the pandemic, which have been left behind by these wage subsidy and rent subsidy programs. When asked about it, the Liberals continue to repeat what everybody already knows, that small businesses are the backbone of our community, yet they continue to do nothing to rectify this issue, leaving many small businesses, and the Canadians employed by them, behind.

One thing that I know would bring jobs to Alberta and to Canadians from coast to coast is pipelines. Our natural resources sector accounts for nearly two million jobs and nearly one-fifth of Canada's GDP. There are mentions of pipelines in this budget. They talk about a vaccine pipeline, a talent pipeline, an innovation pipeline and a PPE pipeline, but no mention of a pipeline to carry our natural resources. Once again, the Liberal government continues to ignore our energy sector, which will be instrumental in our economic recovery coming out of this pandemic. Instead, we continue to import oil from the likes of Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, where there are much lower environmental standards and horrific human rights records. Talk about a failure.

Perhaps the biggest failure, and the focus of my speech today, is the government's failure to take inflation seriously. Canada's inflation rate in April was 0.6%, or roughly 7% on an annualized basis. For the average family in my riding of Edmonton Mill Woods, that means the inflation tax is going to take nearly \$6,500 out of their pocket this year. This has been seen right across the board, as Canadian consumer prices are climbing at the fastest pace in a decade. The average family will pay nearly \$700 more in groceries this year because of inflation. Everything from meat and vegetables to cereals and bread has increased by about 5%. Gas prices are continuing to increase dramatically. As Bloomberg reported last week, they have increased more than 60% in a year.

• (1330)

Perhaps the most explicit case I can make here is with lumber prices, which have increased by 300% over the last year. As Kevin Lee, the CEO of the Canadian Home Builders' Association, points out, this drastic rise in lumber costs will add tens of thousands of dollars to the average price of a home.

This leads me to another area of failure in this budget, which is the lack of any semblance of a plan to address overwhelming housing affordability issues in Canada, which has pushed the dream of home ownership further out of reach for far too many Canadians. Prices across Canada are skyrocketing, with young families who were saving for their first home at the beginning of this pandemic even further behind than when they started.

This has led to feelings of hopelessness. A poll from the Royal Bank of Canada released last month revealed that 36% of non-homeowners under the age of 40 have given up on ever buying a home and 62% of respondents said they expect the majority of people will be priced out of the market over the next decade.

What is the government doing to address this concern of people being left out of the market? The hallmark of this budget's efforts on housing affordability is a 1% tax on foreign owners of vacant housing, which will simply be seen as a very minor inconvenience for wealthy foreign investors who have seen their investments appreciate by 42% this past year. This will not solve the problem at all. Instead, the current government should be focused on the root of the problem, which is the shortage of supply right across Canada.

As a recent Scotiabank report points out, Canada has the lowest number of housing units per capita of any G7 country. If Canada set the modest goal of simply catching up to the United States, Canadian builders would have to complete an extra 100,000 homes. To catch up to the U.K., it would require an extra 250,000 homes. To put these gaps in perspective, we have had an average of 188,000 home completions in the last 10 years.

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I believe this serves as a perfect microcosm of the government's philosophy. When it identifies a problem, it does not address the root cause. Instead, it takes a small reactive step, creates a new government agency or program for it, and then dumps millions, if not billions, into it.

The budget introduces another \$101 billion in new spending, pushing our debt-to-GDP ratio to over 50% over the next few years. What are we getting out of this increased spending and debt? The budget predicts that the growth rate will slow steadily starting in 2022, all the way down to 1.7% growth in 2025.

As Robert Asselin, the former policy and budget director to Bill Morneau and policy advisor to the Prime Minister, said of this budget, "it is hard to find a coherent growth plan... [S]pending close to a trillion dollars [and] not moving the needle on...growth would be the worst possible legacy of this budget." While the budget is entitled, "A Recovery Plan for Jobs, Growth, and Resilience", there seems to be much concern about whether or not it will deliver on jobs or growth.

The budget has no investments to address the structural problems that have plagued productivity and our ability to compete on the global stage. There is no plan to address the unprecedented level of investment that is fleeing Canada. There is no plan for regulatory and tax reform to help us win on the global stage. There is no comprehensive innovation strategy to ensure Canadian tech start-ups keep their job-creating investments here at home.

This budget is not meant for the growth of the economy. I believe Canadians are looking for hope that things will soon get better and they will still have a bright future to look forward to. They want their jobs and small businesses back. They want their lives and communities back. They want the hope of being able to afford a house. Simply put, they want to return to normal and live the Canadian dream.

This budget fails to deliver. There is no growth plan. It is not meant for the people of Edmonton Mill Woods, Alberta or our future generations. It is a failure. That is why we will not be supporting it.

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Edmonton Mill Woods for his speech, which gives me an opportunity to ask him a question about the environment and natural resources.

My colleague talked a lot about oil and gas, but there are other natural resources, including the sun, wind and bioheat. Simply by transforming forest resources into bioproducts, we can create thousands of jobs, and it is good for our health as well.

There are 15,300 premature deaths in Canada every year, the cost of which is equivalent to 6% of the GDP. If we are going to talk about money, let us talk about it as part of the bigger picture.

[*English*]

Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question on support for our energy sector and the different types of energy sectors there are across Canada. The fact is that we do not

have to shut down one industry to support another. We can continue to support the different aspects of our Canadian energy sector.

The oil and gas sector has improved its global greenhouse footprint significantly now that it is running much better environmental processes. The new technology of carbon capture and storage is something Conservatives believe we could have invested in to help improve things and create jobs in a way that would be better for the environment. Unfortunately, the Liberal budget did not deliver on that.

• (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that Conservative members continue to say there is no plan. If one reads the document, one will find there are many different measures within it to continue to support Canadians through the pandemic and beyond.

As the Prime Minister often references, we are learning from what occurred during the pandemic in order to build back better. There are ample examples of it, and I will reference a specific one. For the Prairies, we are now talking about a prairie diversification fund, which will be far greater than the western diversification fund Stephen Harper had years ago.

Does the member not agree that having a prairie investment fund and advocacy for the three prairie provinces is a positive step forward?

Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Speaker, the problem is that, even just yesterday, our shadow minister asked the government about its plan, how many jobs it would create and when the budget would be balanced. The government had no answers to any of those questions. The unfortunate thing is that Liberals can call it a plan, but they really do not have the answers to very basic questions.

What we need is a plan to create jobs, especially in Alberta. The Liberals' policies, such as Bill C-69 and Bill C-48, and their overall disregard for the energy sector have hurt investments. Thousands of jobs have left. We need a plan to bring those jobs back. We need to bring investor confidence back, and this budget does none of that.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives of course do not talk about the fact that hedge fund operators around the world are pulling out of Alberta because Jason Kenney is refusing to get serious about an environmental plan. On the other hand we have the Liberals, who promised us two billion trees. We are still waiting on those.

As well, they have this great renovation plan. I love it. It is the best plan since 1992. It is five thousand bucks. Thirty years ago that was also the plan. One would get \$5,000 to fix their house and make it energy efficient. What is \$5,000 going to get someone today? A person could not build a deck for \$5,000.

I did not know Justin Trudeau was so old that he lived in the pre-economy of the monies of 1992. How much does my hon. colleague think a \$5,000 investment is actually going to do to save the planet?

The Deputy Speaker: I will remind to the hon. member about the use of other hon. member's given or family names.

The hon. member for Edmonton Mill Woods.

Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Speaker, this is part of the problem with the government. It makes a lot of announcements. It talks about how many billions of dollars it spent. It actually has thrown a lot of money around, but the problem is actual results.

How many jobs have been created, and how much has this helped the environment? Liberals just do not have the answers because they have not done the studies or had have proper follow-through on these answers.

If we think about it, one would figure that any organization that has increased its spending, and the government has considerably increased its spending, would increase its auditing as well. This is because one would want to make sure the spending one has done has ticked the boxes and is getting results. With the government, audits of its spending have actually gone down, so there is less transparency and fewer results. We need more results and fewer big announcements from the government.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would just like to thank everybody who lives in the riding of Huron—Bruce for their tremendous work over the last year and a half in combatting COVID. The rates in Huron County and Bruce County are some of the lowest in Ontario, and may be some of the lowest in Canada.

This is because of everybody, not just one person. Everybody's efforts have made the difference. I thank them. We are all proud of everyone's efforts. That is likely the best news of this speech.

When I look at this budget, I think maybe we could call it the "lack of vaccine" budget. Here we are. Just a few days ago, we had our May long weekend. We are near the end of May. We are in Ottawa today. Sparks Street should be full. The markets should be full. The patios should be out. The restaurants should be busy. There should be kids here on class trips, coming on tours. The hotels should be full.

Why are they not? By and large, the reason, and this is just the microcosm of the entire Canadian economy in the service industry, is that we did not have vaccines quickly enough and we did not have enough of them. That is the reality of why we have spent so much more than we ever would have thought we would have needed to spend.

In the process, the Liberal government, in its lack of action, has decimated tens of thousands of people's equity in their business,

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their savings and equity in their home. That is the truth. There is no bank manager in the country who would argue that fact.

Maybe someone who sells four-wheelers as a business has had the best year of all time. However, certainly for those in the service sector, this has been a humbling experience, to say the least.

The Bank of Canada, and this is unprecedented, has purchased over 250 billion dollars' worth of bonds. Who would have ever thought that we would be doing this? Who would have ever thought? A high of \$6 billion a week, currently around \$3 billion or \$4 billion a week. Clearly, we cannot sustain this at all.

We all know there is inflation. We could go up and down the streets in our communities and see the homes for sale, going for \$100,000, \$200,000 or \$300,000 over the list price. I talked to a builder the other day. A two by four that is 16 feet long, I think he told me it was \$28. It was \$7.50 last May. To the member for Timmins—James Bay, \$5,000 to spruce up a home is not going far.

The printing of money, the Bank of Canada buying, is creating inflation. The other day I saw some commentary about how, compared to the U.S. dollar, ours is looking pretty good. The U.S. is probably printing more than we are right now. I think last week I saw the fed bought \$92 billion in the United States. The Canadian dollar is doing well against the American dollar, but if we look at it as a Canadian dollar and what could be bought, we can buy less.

What the government has tried to do is it has tried to help. I believe the government has tried to help people, but maybe in the wrong ways. This inflation has cost the very people it was trying to help the most, the ones in the service industry, the ones earning an hourly wage who maybe do not have benefits. In Ontario, the province I am from, that wage is \$14 to \$15 an hour. The last year and a half has made that \$15 an hour more like under \$10 an hour. Certainly, if anybody had any hopes of buying a home or a condo, almost 40% to 50% has been added to what people thought would reasonably have to be paid.

For a country that had 75% ownership, when Europe has about 25%, in short order we have almost taken away the opportunity for the middle class to ever own a home. That is a shame.

● (1345)

For the ultra-wealthy, the people who have multiple homes, investments and all sorts of apparatus to accumulate wealth, this has been the absolute best time of all time. If we think about it, the last two or three years should have been the opportunity to raise up everybody. The Prime Minister, his finance minister and the party have diminished the middle class and the poor working class. That is an absolute fact. People are now in bidding wars for rental properties, not to buy a home, but to rent. It is not sustainable and will probably go down as one of the darkest moments of the government.

Government Orders

I live in a rural community, a hard-working, resilient rural community, and I have been mystified for the last five or six years as to how the government continually gets it wrong in rural Canada. Money for rural infrastructure is a pittance compared to what urban centres receive. Rural areas do not carry the burden of so many people, but they also have the biggest burden of protecting the most precious resources. In my area, Lake Huron has fresh water. For rural infrastructure, water, sewage, culverts, bridges, just name it, there is not enough money.

Members do not have to think I am biased. They can talk to the mayors or CAOs of Huron County or Bruce County and they will say it is not enough. It is a bidding war to even get it. By the way, the way it works is backward. One has to pitch it to the federal government, it picks over the bones, then says it is approved, but does not even tell the MPP or MP for the area. It should be the other way around. It should be that the federal government allocates money to the provinces, the provinces pick their priorities based on what the mayors and wardens tells them and then they approve the projects. This is just common sense. We have been doing this now for six years and it does not work.

As for low-income and social housing, forget it. Members can talk to any community in my riding, Saugeen Shores, South Huron or Goderich. They apply, apply and apply and it is never approved. No one has to take my word for it because the mayors call me to complain.

Then there is strategic infrastructure. We are going beyond my riding, looking at other areas and what rural areas produce. In my area there are soybeans, corn, red meat, all those different things, and we are constantly under the pressure of not having enough capacity at the ports and other areas.

As for broadband, the SWIFT project was working. The minister changed it and what a mess. We had consistent funding for rural projects and they were starting to work. Now it has changed and what a mess.

There is a chronic labour shortage throughout Ontario, which is certainly exacerbated in my riding. We need workers. We need to motivate people to get to work. We need to speed up the process of bringing in new Canadians to work in our sectors, such as, for example, meat processing. Just name it and we need it.

God bless the trade minister, but she has made a mess of trade, in my opinion. The U.S. is running roughshod over us. Everybody thought that when Trump was gone, Biden would be Canada's best friend. We do not need friends like Joe Biden, the way he has treated us with buy America and softwood lumber tariffs.

How is it that Canada has a beef trade deficit with the United Kingdom? There are those who do not think we are getting treated poorly. We are getting treated poorly. We have a pork and beef deficit with the European Union. That is not fair trade. That is not a fair partner.

I would love to talk about our borders. What a mess the government has created at our borders. Port Huron is about an hour and a half from my hometown and I know there are a lot of business people awfully disappointed with how they have been treated at the border in an arbitrary way. It is not the officials. It is not the hard-

working men and women who work there. It is the mixed messages they receive from the health minister and the public safety minister.

• (1350)

It is not a good situation. If they cannot fix it, we will do the heavy lifting. I am saying we are prepared to do it. They let Line 5 go to this state when in Huron—Bruce and many other ridings we need it. We need it to dry our crops and heat our homes and it is willy-nilly with the current government. I know the Liberals send out the resource minister and he has some things to say, but behind the scenes there is no way the message is getting drilled home to the United States. If they want to shut us down, they are going to shut us down.

• (1355)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to begin, there are so many different items listed there that are just factually incorrect. I guess I will go to the one that I know the best from my time as a municipal politician in Ontario and from working at the federal level.

The member's description of how money is allocated for infrastructure is just wrong. It does not work like that at all. The feds set up different funds of money that can be applied for, but the projects have to be prioritized by the province. The province has to sign off on them first. I know that with infrastructure projects in my own riding alone. First the provinces sign off on it and give their blessing and then the federal government will review the project to make sure it meets the criteria. That is just how it works.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, just in the definition right there, it shows the member does not know. If he walked down the aisle and talked to the infrastructure minister, it would be that the provinces have to go on their hands and knees to her and then she maybe does or maybe does not approve it based on the priority.

How could they go through that many steps and then have her say it does not meet the criteria? It has taken months at that point. If it does not meet the criteria they should not be allowed to apply for it. If the member wants to, as a former mayor, he can come on down to Huron—Bruce and I will let him talk to all the mayors.

You can come on down and bring your Miller Genuine Draft and we will go down and have a chat with all the mayors and they will tell you that you are wrong.

The Deputy Speaker: I just remind the hon. member to direct his speech to the Chair.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

Statements by Members

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for alerting us to inflation and the risks there too. I wonder if he has any comments about interest rates rising to combat inflation and what that will do to the debt-servicing costs for the federal government.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, it is going to be out of this world, and it will be more than anything they could spend money on.

What else costs a lot of money? It is raising a family these days, and the proposal the Liberals have for day care is ridiculous. People who are pregnant today will never receive the big \$10-a-day day care. Their kids will be in SK. If they have a one-year-old child today, there is this big promise of day care for \$10 a day, but their kid is going to be in grade 1, so big deal. If the Liberals really want to do something, help the poor families today.

I talked to my neighbour who pays \$2,000 a month for day care and \$2,300 a month for rent. How are people getting ahead on that? If the Liberals want to help somebody, help him and his wife out and put it to \$10 and give them a chance.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for such an excellent speech. I really do not know where to start. He has really pointed out the incompetence of the Liberal government and there is so much to talk about here, but I would like him to focus on one thing he brought up about the quantitative easing, the printing of the money.

I wonder if he could comment on the Liberal inflation tax, which we are all starting to see. I am getting complaints about groceries and the cost of living. It is happening a lot quicker than any of us would have thought. Could he please talk about the secret inflation tax that the Liberals are putting in that Canadians are unaware of?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, with respect to inflation, if they want to talk about something, how about OAS to seniors age 75? How about 65? Who has been hit the hardest? It is seniors on a fixed income, and the Liberals are offering \$500 if they are over 75. My parents are 73 and 75. They laughed. How can my mom not get it and my dad does? I have had more calls on this 75 business than on anything.

Regarding inflation, seniors are hit on gas, groceries, rent, heating. They are getting hit literally every which way. Only the guys across the aisle would be oblivious to this, they would be the only ones. If we talk to any real Canadians out there, they will tell us they are getting hit hard.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I am just curious if the member can tell us what a “real Canadian” is.

The Deputy Speaker: I think we are in the debate category there. Members are trying to extend questions and comments. That is what they seem to be doing.

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I will ask for a recorded division, please.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until later this day at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

SPCA FUNDRAISER

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for many, changing the way we treat our climate and animals are tasks so daunting that they do not know where to start. This was not so for 10-year-old Cody Kelso who, inspired by Terry Fox before him, walked 115 kilometres from Gibsons to Powell River with his mother, Megan, to raise money to make change.

After four days of walking in the rain and through blisters, ups and downs, Cody and Megan reached the finish line an entire day early. Cody succeeded in raising a total of \$33,500 for the B.C. Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to enable it to install the solar panels needed for the local branch to reach net-zero emissions, and to bring the B.C. Sustainable Energy Association's Cool It climate leadership training program to the Sunshine Coast.

Cody's journey not only made a meaningful difference in his community. It also inspires others that they can accomplish anything they set their minds to. While the walk was certainly challenging, Cody and his mom have a motto that kept them going on their journey and that we can all use to keep ourselves motivated to make a difference in our communities: Believe. Do. Achieve.

*Statements by Members***CANADIAN HERITAGE**

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our nation has a legacy of being a prime destination for immigrants and refugees because we enjoy many liberties and freedoms here that many around the world do not have the luxury of. Things such as freedom of expression, religion and choice and free enterprise make us a beacon of hope and prosperity for many. However, that is under attack with the Liberal government's Bill C-10.

The government flaunts supporting diversity in media and representation, but the bill could affect many ethnic and marginalized media outlets that have small budgets. This bill muzzles freedom of speech and expression. This is similar to what dictatorships do to their citizens. The heritage minister's agenda to silence ethnic and marginalized groups is unacceptable.

I stand here today for freedom and for diversity in media, and against Bill C-10.

* * *

ITALIAN CANADIANS

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): [*Member spoke in Italian and provided the following translation:*]

Mr. Speaker, during World War II, over 600 Italian Canadians were interned, and thousands of others were declared subjects of an enemy country for the simple reason that they were of Italian origin. The whole Italian community at the time experienced this injustice and had to endure suffering, hardship and discrimination.

As the son of Italian immigrants, I am deeply moved to witness today the official apology presented to the Italian community by the Government of Canada. With the redress of this injustice, a whole healing process begins for this painful part of our history.

As a Canadian, I am proud to be part of this federal government that finally recognizes this injustice conflicting with our Canadian values. It is our duty as legislators and citizens to ensure that such injustice does not happen again.

* * *

● (1405)

[*Translation*]**GUY PAQUETTE**

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 1921, the Irish people were celebrating the end of the war of independence. That was the same year that some well-known Quebecers, like Maurice Richard and Janine Sutto, were born.

It was also the same year that Guy Paquette, a lesser-known but equally exceptional Quebecer, was born in Montarville, a little closer to home. Mr. Paquette celebrated his 100th birthday on May 20.

I have had the huge privilege of meeting this extremely kind and sprightly man and hearing him talk about all of the things he has witnessed over the course of his very full life, such as the development of air travel, film, television and space exploration, to name just a few.

I envy his friends and the people who are around him regularly to hear the countless stories he has to tell. He has a real wealth of memories, having lived through nearly one-quarter of our people's history, which is truly remarkable.

Mr. Paquette, once again, thank you helping make Quebec what it is today.

* * *

LOCAL FAIRS

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is Tourism Week.

In rural Canada, local fairs and exhibitions play an essential role as tourist attractions. I am thinking of the fairs back home, in Vankleek Hill, Maxville, Riceville, Russell and Navan.

[*English*]

I want to thank the Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions, which plays an important role in promoting and supporting our local fairs across Canada. More than 17,000 events are hosted by fairs and contribute more than \$2.9 billion to Canada's economy.

[*Translation*]

Although this year might be a bit different for some fairs, I want to thank the volunteers who are reimagining these events so that we can still enjoy them safely.

As a child, I rarely missed the Vankleek Hill Fair. We cannot say we have had the true fair experience unless we have eaten a pogo and a doughnut, followed by a ride in a spinning strawberry to aid digestion.

I invite all Canadians to visit their local fair this summer, be it in person or virtually, while staying safe, of course.

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CONSERVATIVE PARTY RECOVERY PLAN

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are well aware that the Prime Minister wants to call an election as soon as possible. That is why the Conservatives are offering Canadians a recovery plan now, since Canada has changed. We have watched as the government made all kinds of decisions without any transparency. By putting our country first and passing stricter accountability and transparency laws, we will deliver on that promise.

Our Conservative vision is to protect jobs and give entrepreneurs the means to rebuild their businesses, because our economy has suffered over the past year and many sectors have been affected. We need our entrepreneurs, because they are the ones who create our wealth. We need to protect this wealth and thereby reduce our dependence on foreign countries, like China, in order to face future threats.

It is imperative that Canadians have confidence in their government. That is why I am proud of our recovery plan for Canada, which will be implemented under a future Conservative government.

* * *

[English]

HASMAT ALI AND JATINDER SINGH RANDHAWA

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pay my respects on the passing of the former president of the B.C. Muslim Association, Brother Hasmat Ali. His work since the 1960s was pioneering as he was instrumental in establishing the first B.C. Muslim school, constructing masjids across the province and serving in all facets in the operation, governance and development of the B.C. Muslim Association. Brother Hasmat Ali will always be remembered for his leadership and selfless service.

I also want to send my condolences to the parents and family of Jatinder Singh Randhawa. Jatinder was a passionate advocate for traditional Punjabi arts. Through his love of bhangra, he spread joy to everyone he met. He was a pillar of our community who inspired countless youth to help keep Punjabi culture and heritage alive.

* * *

COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY AGAINST RACISM IN CONSTRUCTION

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last summer, nooses were found on an EllisDon construction site at Michael Garron Hospital. Community members came together to show their support for Black construction workers and for the need to take action against anti-Black racism on construction sites. Out of this community response, a group was formed: Community Solidarity Against Racism in Construction, or CSARC.

Members of CSARC are taking on the larger issue of racism on construction sites across our country, because the nooses in our community were not an isolated event. The group started a petition calling for the creation of a national task force on racial violence, and requiring recipients of any federal construction contract to conduct anti-racism training and have an anti-racism strategy. The group's activism is having an impact. Our most recent Ontario transit funding announcement included a condition requiring that contractors have in place an anti-racism strategy.

We thank CSARC.

Statements by Members

• (1410)

CHINA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the global week of prayer for China, initiated by Cardinal Bo and marked by Catholics and other Christians throughout the world who wish to see the advance of justice, human rights and, in particular, religious freedom in China. This week falls within Asian Heritage Month when, here in Canada, we celebrate the immense contributions of Canadians of Asian ancestry.

During this week and this month, we must stand with Chinese Canadians, and people of Chinese origin all over the world, in opposing all forms of racism and all actions by governments that deny fundamental human rights. We must recognize in this context the racist policies of the Xi Jinping regime, attacking ethnic minorities at home and threatening Chinese diaspora communities abroad.

People of Chinese ancestry, like all people, are individuals with their own beliefs, preferences and hopes. They are not extensions of a state, as the Chinese government claims. Essentializing any group of people in this way, ascribing attributes, connections, opinions or obligations that deny their individuality, is a form of racism. Therefore, to be truly anti-racist one must, by necessity, be highly critical of the Chinese government while also always standing with its victims.

* * *

[Translation]

COLLÈGE BORÉAL

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in July 1993, it was announced that a new French-language college would be created in London, Ontario. Two years later, Collège Boréal opened its doors.

The youngest of 24 colleges in Ontario, Collège Boréal is a vital force that anchors the French-speaking community everywhere it has a campus. Collège Boréal trains and prepares students for the workforce, which eagerly welcomes them every year.

For the 19th time in 20 years, Collège Boréal achieved the highest graduation rate in the province as well as a 100% satisfaction rate from employers, also the highest rate in the province. Its motto, “nurturing knowledge and invigorating culture” is central to everything it does. It not only offers exceptional post-secondary education, but it also excels at applied research, settlement services and customized training.

This year we are celebrating 25 years of excellence at Collège Boréal. I choose Boréal.

*Statements by Members**[English]***HOUSING**

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, greater Vancouver, Toronto and Hamilton have the dubious honour of being some of the least affordable housing markets in North America. It is cheaper to buy a house in Los Angeles or New York City. The Liberals continue to fail to take real action and address the overwhelming housing affordability crisis in Canada.

The finance minister admits Canada's lack of housing supply is a serious problem right after releasing a budget that does nothing to address it. The recent increase to the mortgage stress test proves the Liberals are choosing to push the dream of home ownership further out of reach for regular Canadians.

The national housing strategy is behind schedule. Last night, the finance minister could not even tell me how many units the government had built. The first-time home buyer program is a complete failure, reaching fewer than 10% of the people promised.

Canadians cannot afford more inaction. Only Canada's Conservatives are focused on securing Canada's housing future.

* * *

COMMENTS BY THE PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister suggested that asking questions about the threat from China's government is anti-Asian racism. I am an Asian-Canadian and I am deeply offended by this. How dare the wearer of blackface and brownface use the painful experience of racism to shield this government's callous dereliction to protect Canada from hostile foreign regimes?

Pointing that out is not racism. Suggesting otherwise plays into the propaganda effort of our opponent. That is something of great concern in my home of Richmond. To see our national leadership downplay these concerns is simply shameful. Many critics of the CPP are of Asian descent themselves, either born as equal partners in Canada or having joined the equal partnership as immigrants.

Expressing dissent is not hatred. Iranians disapprove of the Ayatollah, Russians of the state kleptocracy and Hong Kongers of the SAR government. Even today, I am expressing disapproval of my government. This is not out of hate for, but rather my deep love of, Canada.

* * *

*[Translation]***IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEES**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at this very moment, thousands of people who want to come live here are in distress because of unacceptable delays at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

Here are three people in my riding who want to share their story so they will no longer be invisible to the Liberal government.

Othniel Bernardin is a Haitian refugee who cannot wait 39 months to be reunited with his children, who are on their own in Haiti. Brice Biampondou has been waiting to be reunited with his

family since 2017. That is four years. His financial situation is precarious, and he has to pay another \$5,000 to have his medical exams redone because the first ones expired before his application was processed. Céline Magontier has been living and working in Quebec for 13 years. She is worried she will be forced to go back to France because IRCC has not acknowledged receipt of her application to extend her work permit.

The government is tearing lives and families apart. We need a concrete reunification plan and a courageous minister who is committed to going ahead with it.

* * *

● (1415)

JOHN GOMERY

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to offer my condolences to the family and friends of John Gomery, who passed away last week at the age of 88.

He was originally from Montreal but had been living in Have-lock, which is in my riding, for the past few years. Simplicity, humanity and sincerity were his hallmarks, but history will remember him most for heading the commission of inquiry into the sponsorship program. The commission exposed the turpitude of the Liberal Party, which was diverting public funds to friends of the party on condition that they make donations to it and undermine Quebec's sovereignty.

I was fortunate enough to meet him a few times, and I will remember him more for his intrinsic honesty than for his aversion to corruption. His lengthy career as a lawyer and judge dedicated to noble causes made him a prime example of a citizen who is engaged, free and determined to live in a society that honours the principles of justice. May he rest in peace.

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*[English]***COMMENTS BY THE PRIME MINISTER**

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Conservatives asked the Prime Minister about the infiltration of scientists from the Chinese Communist regime's military into high-security Canadian labs. This breach of security is serious and deserves a serious response.

To my shock, the Prime Minister conflated our legitimate concerns about national security with racism against Asian-Canadians. He spun an inflammatory narrative that implies Conservatives are stoking intolerance. By using this false narrative, he has cheapened and undermined the ongoing efforts to combat the rise of anti-Asian racism.

All members should call out racism wherever it exists, but no member, especially the Prime Minister, should ever use this kind of hatred as a tool to distract from his own incompetence. As an Asian-Canadian MP who has combatted racism my whole life, I am appalled by the Prime Minister's audacity to belittle the seriousness and sensitivity of anti-Asian racism.

I call on the Prime Minister to make a public apology and retract these unacceptable statements.

* * *

ITALIAN CANADIANS

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the honour of being a member of Parliament in the House for over 20 years, even though it seems like yesterday, but today is a very special day. It is something I have worked toward for some time.

To hear an official apology given by the Prime Minister of Canada in the House of Commons is a historical event. A black mark on the government has finally been removed through an apology to the families of the Italian internees of World War II.

May 27 will surely be a day that all Italian Canadians, especially those watching from my riding of Humber River—Black Creek, will always remember as I will. I know we cannot undo what has been done, but this apology will bring closure for the families I have heard from for many years.

I am proud of the Prime Minister and our government, and on behalf of myself, my wonderful husband, Sam Sgro, all those from Humber River—Black Creek and all those impacted, I say “Thank you, *grazie, mille grazie.*”

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 15 months into a pandemic and Canada still does not have a national rapid testing regime, even for areas of federal jurisdiction.

In Taiwan, rapid testing has been in place for over a year. In the U.K., teenagers administer rapid tests themselves. However, the government's contract with Switch Health has been a complete failure.

After 15 months, why has the government failed on national rapid testing?

Oral Questions

• (1420)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a lot mixed into that question. On rapid testing, as the member opposite knows, we have sent millions and millions of tests to provinces and territories so they can deploy them quickly. We encourage the provinces and territories to do so.

We have also been working with many corporate partners to ensure that rapid tests are available to corporations and to small and medium-sized businesses. I have to thank the Minister of International Trade for her work in this department, and the Minister of Small Business. There is a lot of work going on to ensure that rapid tests are deployed across the country.

I would encourage the member opposite to check in with his premier colleagues to understand how these tests could be further deployed.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the minister to check in with her top corporate partner, Switch Health.

One in six of its tests have failed to deliver a test result within the 14 day quarantine period. Since a test is needed to get out of quarantine, that failure rate is unacceptable. Switch Health has also had almost 5,000 tests that were unable to be processed and it could not have the people back to be retested.

The minister's corporate partner that she just talked about, its top one, its exclusive one, Switch Health, is failing. What is she going to do about it?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with Switch Health and other partners, including adding partners, to testing at the border. I will remind the member opposite, however, that those tests are indeed PCR tests and they do take longer than a rapid test, which is turned around in 15 minutes or so.

As the member opposite knows, there are many different testing technologies in play in Canada and that is because of the federal government providing millions upon millions of resources to provinces, territories, businesses and corporate partners.

Yes, this is a team Canada approach. Testing is important and so are vaccinations. We will get the job done.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has talked about her top corporate partner, Switch Health. Well, it has a 17% failure rate, which means thousands of Canadians have been stuck in quarantine longer than the 14 days. These tests were conducted on the 10th day after a return to Canada. It did not need 15 minutes; it had many days and it could not make it. It was clear that Switch Health messed up the process, so the Liberals actually changed the law to accommodate it.

Oral Questions

Why did the federal government change its own program rather than change the company?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, those allegations are incorrect. As the member opposite knows, every step of the way we have been guided by science and evidence in regard to protection at the border. Switch Health has been improving its services. We have been working with it. We have added additional providers at the border to ensure that Canadians can get prompt results on day eight testing.

We will stop at nothing to ensure we do full due diligence to ensure travel is safe and Canadians are protected.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see that after 15 months, they are starting to improve.

[*Translation*]

Fifteen months into this pandemic, Canada still does not have a national testing regime.

In Taiwan, rapid testing has been in place for a year. In the United Kingdom, teens can administer the tests themselves. The contrast with Switch Health has been a complete failure.

After 15 months, why has the government failed on rapid testing?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet again, the member opposite is conflating two different kinds of testing; one a PCR test that is deployed at the border through partners like Switch Health and DynaLIFE; and, second, rapid testing that can be deployed by trained volunteers. In fact, we have seen, for example, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, exactly that use by volunteers testing residents before they go into bars, pubs and restaurants.

We urge all provinces and territories to use the millions upon millions of rapid tests that we have shipped to them. We have provided guidance. We have provided best practices. We will continue to work to ensure that all forms of testing are deployed to protect Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at a time when there is a lot of talk about bilingualism, we have learned that French is not being respected at our borders. Switch Health, a company hired by Ottawa, admitted that wait times and quarantines are longer because of a lack of access to services in French. That is unacceptable.

What is the government waiting for? When will it enforce bilingualism at our borders?

• (1425)

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite that it is essential that services are available in either of our official languages. Switch Health has doubled its French language capacities. Yesterday, a second provider was selected to provide dedicated testing support for temporary for-

eign workers arriving by air in Quebec. This will help meet the increased demand for testing over the coming months.

We will make sure that testing is available in both official languages.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we had a historic opportunity to come together to unanimously recognize the Quebec nation and its common language of French. Unfortunately, it was a missed opportunity.

All the motion did was confirm that section 45 of the Constitution exists and point out that Quebec chose to use section 45 to state that it forms a francophone nation.

Will the government confirm that the Constitution enables Quebec to define itself under section 45, and will it acknowledge Quebec's choice to identify itself as a francophone nation under the Constitution?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure my colleague. It goes without saying that, for us, protecting the French fact in Quebec and across Canada is extremely important.

In 2006, under a former Conservative government, the House also recognized that Quebecers form a nation within a united Canada.

Of course, we respect the will of the Quebec government in this matter. At the same time, we will act in accordance with our own jurisdiction not only to protect French in Quebec and across Canada, but also to protect linguistic minorities, including the anglophone community in Quebec.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is being cautious and evasive in her answer, but I would like to reassure her that this is not an ambush. We are seeking a consensus.

I am simply asking her whether she agrees that the Canadian Constitution exists and, if so, whether it contains a section 45 that allows Quebec and the provinces to amend their respective constitutions.

I am then asking her whether she agrees that Quebec has decided to rely on this section to include in the legislation the existence of the Quebec nation and its common and official language, French.

Does the minister agree on these two facts?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to see my colleague in the Bloc Québécois recognize that the Canadian Constitution exists. I would like to thank her for saying so in the House.

Of course, we will work together to protect the French fact in Quebec, because French is Quebec's common and official language, as well as the fact that Quebecers form a nation within a united Canada.

That is a fact. Parliament recognized that fact in 2006 and, of course, we will work with the Quebec government on these issues while protecting the linguistic minority in Quebec. I have had several conversations about this with my counterpart, Simon Jolin-Barrette.

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FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the biggest Canadian banks have made huge profits. During this pandemic, they have doubled or even quadrupled their profits.

While people are having trouble making ends meet, banks have made huge profits. Now, they are increasing banking fees in the middle of a pandemic. Worse still, the Liberal government has the power to stop them, but it is letting them do as they please.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to stop banks from gouging their customers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

I want to emphasize that our government agrees that all Canadians must do their part, especially now during the economic crisis caused by COVID-19.

That is why our budget increases taxes on luxury vehicles, on vacant property owned by non-Canadians and non-residents, and on large digital service providers. In addition, our budget includes measures to combat tax evasion.

• (1430)

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am talking about banks in Canada that have doubled or quadrupled their profits in a pandemic and in this pandemic are increasing bank fees. They are gouging Canadians. What is worse is that the Liberal government has the power to stop them.

My question very specifically is this. Why is the Prime Minister allowing banks to gouge Canadians in a pandemic?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me just underscore that our government absolutely believes that, particularly now during the pandemic and the economic pain caused by it, everyone in Canada needs to pay their fair share. That is why we are introducing in this budget a luxury tax, we are introducing a tax on digital service providers and we are taking unprecedented steps to fight tax evasion and tax avoidance.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is still refusing to release the procurement contract documents requested by the Standing Committee on Health.

So far it has provided us with less than 1% of the required documents. Meanwhile, those documents contain deeply troubling information about patronage, attempts to cover up shortages, and the general mismanagement of resources during one of the most critical times of the pandemic.

Why does the government continue to withhold information requested by the committee?

[English]

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we are working very hard to comply with the motion and the parliamentary process. We have disclosed millions of dollars' worth of contracts on our website and we will continue to provide documentation as required. We have indeed turned over thousands of pages of documentation to the House of Commons in this regard. We will continue to work hard to comply with our parliamentary obligations while bringing vaccines to Canada for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are playing a dangerous game. They even tried to hide their risky practices by asking agencies to focus only on promoting the government's success stories.

The Auditor General reported that a number of suppliers received funds in advance. However, the Liberal government did not look into the financial situation of half of these suppliers.

Why did the government gamble with Canadians' money?

[English]

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take issue with those comments. I am wondering if the hon. member read the report of the Office of the Attorney General, because what it stated is that PSPC managed risks when entering into its contracts in a very competitive global environment and by managing those risks was able to secure 2.7 billion items of PPE for our frontline health care workers. We will not stop standing up for Canadians and we will continue to work hard for them during this—

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

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's mistakes have already caused some disasters.

First, it paid Tango Communications Marketing \$80 million for faulty masks.

Oral Questions

Second, the cabinet knowingly sent the provinces expired medical supplies.

Then, the Liberal government paid hundreds of millions of dollars to presumed friends of the party.

Did the Liberal government take advantage of the urgency of the pandemic to benefit its friends, at the expense of Canadians' health? [English]

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that categorization of our contracting process is absolutely false. The officials at PSPC undertook checks relating to all suppliers before entering into contracts with them.

In regard to the one contract that resulted in defective product, we have filed a statement of claim and will be seeking recompense for the defective product that was provided because we will stand up for Canadian taxpayers and Canadian taxpayers' money every single step of the way while bringing in PPE and vaccines for all Canadians.

* * *

• (1435)

HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Switch Health, the company the Liberals contracted to do post-arrival PCR testing for international travel, reported that a whopping one in six tests took longer than the 14-day quarantine to complete.

Initially, these tests were conducted on the 10th day after a traveller returned to Canada, but after it was clear Switch Health could not turn around these PCR test results in four days, the Liberals changed the law so the test would happen on day eight.

Why did the minister unilaterally change the testing day instead of the company that could not do the job?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way the measures at the border have been guided through the lens of public health, science and evidence, and we will continue to do that. It is our commitment to Canadians to reduce importations, to test travellers to make sure travellers are protected and the communities they are returning to are protected as well.

We will continue to rely on science and evidence. Unlike the member opposite, we understand it evolves. This is a new virus. There are new understandings about the virus and how best to protect Canadians against the virus every single day. I am on top of it. I work with my officials. I will continue to provide that guidance to Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what science did the minister use to change the testing date from day 10 to day eight?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member opposite is aware we have a very fine team of scientists and researchers who are advising the Government of Canada, both from the Public Health Agency of Canada and through a number of independent panels. I will tell the member opposite we will continue to rely on the science and evidence as it

evolves to inform our stance not just on the border but on how we can best protect Canadians from COVID-19. This is the way forward. Canadians expect us to do this work for them.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thousands of doses of vaccines in Detroit are set to expire next week. Shamefully content to let these doses go in the garbage, the Minister of Health, Stephen Lucas and Iain Stewart have blocked every effort of the mayor of Windsor to bring these vaccines into Canada. The mayor is now preparing to close the Windsor Detroit Tunnel to allow his residents to walk to the border line and receive a vaccine from an American vaccinator standing on the U.S. side of the border.

Will the Liberals finally help border communities or are they content to allow Pfizer vaccines to be thrown in the garbage?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me just talk for a moment about the number of vaccines we have managed to procure for Canada. In fact, over 26.1 million were shipped to Canada, and in Ontario, over 10 million were delivered and eight and a half million were administered. There are enough vaccines in Canada for Canadians.

I will also point out the United States has deemed vaccination is not an essential reason to cross the border. We are working very closely with our American counterparts to manage travel at the border, and indeed, we encourage the mayor to refocus his efforts to the Premier of Ontario for the doses he requires.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the National Assembly of Quebec is calling on Parliament to pass Bill C-10. Quebec's cultural sector is calling on Parliament to pass Bill C-10. The Bloc Québécois is telling the government that it will do everything it can to get Bill C-10 passed.

We do this is in the spirit of collaboration, but the government does not seem to be in any hurry. It does not seem to be taking this very seriously, and I must admit that we are concerned. What is the government doing to ensure that the modernization of the Broadcasting Act gets passed?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

We have been working hard for months to get Bill C-10 passed. We have defended it at every forum across the country, while the Conservative Party has been fearmongering by spreading misinformation.

We have worked with the cultural sector. There is a petition that has been signed by thousands of artists in support of the bill. We will continue to do what we can to get the bill passed as soon as possible.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is easy to blame that on the Conservatives, but the Conservatives are not the ones who put the bill on the back burner for months before bringing it forward. The Conservatives are not the ones who dragged their feet when it came time to call ministers to testify in committee.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage himself said that the cultural industry is losing millions of dollars a month because Bill C-10 has not been passed. This is urgent. What is the government actually doing to ensure that Bill C-10 is passed quickly?

• (1440)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-10 is a top priority for the government and the cultural industry.

We have brought it forward more than once and debated it in the House. We have done everything in our power to send it to committee as quickly as possible, but the Conservatives are holding things up. For their own reasons, the Conservatives are going against the consensus in the cultural industry in Quebec and elsewhere.

The cultural industry needs Bill C-10. My colleague, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, has done an extraordinary job in that regard, and I am asking the Conservatives to stop blocking this bill.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, he said it is a top priority. We will keep that in mind.

Not long ago on *Tout le monde en parle*, the Minister of Canadian Heritage seemed open to working with the Bloc Québécois leader to expedite passage of Bill C-10, but it has been radio silence since then.

The Liberals are refusing to discuss this issue with the Conservatives, and the cultural industry is paying a heavy price for their ideological unwillingness to communicate. It is paralyzing committee work. The committee wants two ministers to appear. One agreed to show up, but the other requires some arm-twisting. The committee called for a new charter statement, but the Minister of Justice decided that was not really necessary. We are reaching out, but that arm is starting to get a little tired.

When the government tells the cultural sector that Bill C-10 is a priority, does it really mean that?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rather shocked by my hon. colleague's question. I did not hear the Bloc Québécois speak out in forums all across the country against the Conservative Party and in support of Bill C-10.

I spoke with over 4,000 artists from across the country over the last few months, and they told me they want Bill C-10 to be passed.

We are doing everything we can. Obviously, the bill is in the hands of the committee. We are working with a party that does not want to collaborate and that has said in the past that it did not want this bill to see the light of day.

Oral Questions

There is a certain guile—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

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[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to questions about China's threats to Canada and the government's Winnipeg lab, the Prime Minister suggested that by simply asking these questions, we were fomenting anti-Asian racism. Does the Prime Minister realize that when he conflates criticism of China with anti-Asian racism, he plays into Beijing's propaganda? For example, China accused Canada and its allies of white supremacy simply for calling for the release of Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor two years ago.

When will the Prime Minister quit playing into Beijing's hand and answer questions about the government's Winnipeg lab?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has very clearly said, the employees in question at the Winnipeg lab are no longer there and we are not at liberty to provide any more details at this point.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister labels us as racists when we ask him a legitimate question on a serious national security issue because he is trying to evade the question.

His government was negligent in allowing scientists with ties to the Chinese People's Liberation Army to work in a Canadian laboratory with the intention of sending secret research information to the Chinese army.

If it was the Canada Public Health Agency that sounded the alarm and asked the RCMP to investigate this matter, will the Prime Minister also be calling that agency racist?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just explained in the other official language, the scientists in question who worked at the Winnipeg lab are no longer employed there and, as I said, we are not at liberty to provide any further details on this question.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister says he cannot provide the information, but his own parliamentary secretary is on the record disagreeing with him. His own parliamentary secretary voted to disclose these documents and said that the Public Health Agency and the justice department have it wrong here.

The Globe and Mail has reported that scientists from China's Academy of Military Medical Sciences were working openly in the lab. "Academy of Military Medical Sciences" should have set off alarm bells. We should not be co-operating on research with a foreign military that is committing genocide.

When will the minister listen to his parliamentary secretary, listen to the Liberals on the committee and support the disclosure of this document so we can get to the bottom of this grotesque failure by the government to protect national security?

• (1445)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I will be saying for the third time, and I hope my colleague is listening, the employees in question at the Winnipeg lab are no longer employed there and we are not at liberty to provide any further details on this question.

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HEALTH

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Auditor General reported the government's mismanagement of Canada's emergency stockpile resulted in serious shortages of protective equipment for essential workers. She found the Public Health Agency failed to keep a proper inventory of PPE and ignored a decade of warnings. She questioned PHAC's governance and oversight saying, "You don't wait for a rainy day to rush out and buy an umbrella." This is an inexcusable failure of emergency preparedness.

How does the minister explain her record of negligence that failed to keep Canadians safe at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, we thank the Auditor General for her report, and we are pleased to say that many of her recommendations are already under way.

Indeed, there was a scramble for personal protective equipment at the beginning of the pandemic. We worked with provinces and territories to understand their inventory, and when it became clear we would need volumes and volumes of PPE that were not in stock at any level of government, we went out and ordered that equipment. We are pleased that Canadian health care workers and others were protected throughout this pandemic, and it is because of the collaboration across all levels of government.

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DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister likes to make symbolic gestures when

it comes to fixing systemic racism in Canada. Last year he took a knee at a Black Lives Matter protest, then failed to follow it up with any real action. Yesterday Radio-Canada reported that a Black federal public servant was paid thousands of dollars in exchange for withdrawing her racial discrimination complaint.

The Liberals love to paint the picture that they are allies to racialized people, all the while erasing the stories that do not fit their narrative. When will they actually show up for Black Canadians and take concrete action to end systemic racism?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we cannot ignore that biases, barriers and discrimination are an everyday reality for Black Canadians, racialized Canadians and indigenous peoples. The work of eradicating biases, barriers and discrimination, which have taken root over generations, demands an ongoing and relentless effort. We are committed to this effort, and we will continue to take deliberate steps to remove all discrimination from our institutions.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the Prime Minister and the Minister of Natural Resources announced the launch of the Canada greener homes grant to enable Canadians to retrofit their homes for a low-carbon future. From the beginning, our Liberal government has said that economic growth and the fight against climate change must go hand in hand, and this announcement brings this policy into the homes of every Canadian.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources inform the House how this program will benefit both our economy and the environment?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to save money, and we are giving Canadians up to \$5,000 to make their homes more energy efficient. This will lower their energy bills, and it will also lower greenhouse gas emissions, so climate action can start at home.

Retrofitting homes also creates jobs for energy advisers and local trades workers, as well as manufacturers of energy-efficient windows and doors, solar panels and heat pumps. The Canada greener homes grant is good for Canadians' wallets. It is good for our economy and good for our planet. Canadians will lead the way by taking part in net-zero solutions right from the comfort of their own homes.

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Trade met with the U.S. trade representative last week. It was noted that she “reiterated that it was in the best interest of both countries to reach an agreement on softwood lumber.” Instead of coming out of that meeting with a win, such as making progress on an agreement, on Friday we learned that U.S. tariffs are set to double on our softwood exports.

On trade, every single file we have with the U.S. is getting worse. Why is the minister failing so spectacularly to manage the trading relationship with the new U.S. administration?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are disappointed by last week's announcement, but I want to reiterate that the duties imposed are unjustified. They hurt workers and businesses on both sides of the border. I have raised this issue at every opportunity, including with the president and, of course, with my U.S. counterpart in the U.S. trade representative.

Our government continues to press for a negotiated settlement. It is in the best interest of both of our countries, and we will vigorously defend our softwood lumber industry and our workers.

• (1450)

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade has repeatedly assured our forestry sector that negotiating a softwood lumber agreement with the United States is a priority. However, U.S. trade rep ambassador Katherine Tai was recently quoted as saying, “In order to have an agreement and in order to have a negotiation, you need to have a partner. And thus far, the Canadians have not expressed interest in engaging”. Now the U.S. Department of Commerce has announced it will double tariffs on Canadian softwood lumber imports.

Why is the government refusing to come to the table to negotiate a new agreement?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's forestry sector supports hundreds of thousands of good middle-class jobs for Canadians in communities all across the country. We will vigorously defend their interests. I have had the opportunity to speak to the U.S. trade representative, and have reiterated that Canada is ready and interested in getting to a negotiated agreement. That is in the best interest of workers and businesses on both sides of the border, and I look forward to working with the United States on this very important issue.

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ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning Mark Carney appeared before the industry committee and told the committee members that he has been advising ministers on climate policy. According to the blues, he said, “I have talked to some ministers about climate finance.”

Oral Questions

We have seen that it is standard practice for the Liberal elite in this country to have unfettered access to ministers and even the Prime Minister. Will the government tell Canadians how many times Mr. Carney has lobbied, and for what?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government believes in consulting widely and listening to the perspectives and thoughts of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Mark Carney is obviously an eminent Canadian who has deep experience with respect to issues around climate finance. In fact, he is presently advising the Conservative Government of the United Kingdom with respect to climate policy and climate finance.

We certainly look to him, and to many others in many sectors across this country, to ensure that we are addressing the issue in a thoughtful and substantive way.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it looks like the Liberals are taking their marching orders from Mark Carney before he is even crowned, but based on his access to cabinet and top Liberals, that seems like a foregone conclusion here. The problem with the minister's answer is that Mr. Carney represents one of the largest renewable energy companies in the world, and, surprise, surprise, he is not registered to lobby.

How many times, and to which ministers, has Mr. Carney lobbied to date? I do not mean in the United Kingdom or in other countries, but here in this country where the Lobbying Act applies.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have conversations with Canadians from all walks of life, including many corporate people, people in the labour movement and people in the environmental community, about their ideas and suggestions on how we should think about climate policy going forward.

That is fundamentally what Canadians would expect their government to do, to be open to the ideas and the aspirations of Canadians across this country. That is exactly what I and my colleagues do each and every day.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the House of Commons passed the Bloc Québécois's bill to increase special EI sickness benefits to 50 weeks. The bill is named after Émilie Sansfaçon, a young mother who was let down by EI while fighting cancer.

Oral Questions

She has since passed away, but the government has the power to ensure that her nightmare never happens to anyone else. Will it give the royal recommendation to the *Émilie Sansfaçon* act to extend EI sickness benefits to 50 weeks?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want and deserve to have an employment insurance plan that is flexible and meets their needs. Employment insurance sickness benefits are an important support for Canadians who have to stay home from work because of an illness or injury.

Workers who receive major treatments or who need more time to heal from an illness or an injury face financial pressures. That is why with budget 2021 we are extending EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks.

• (1455)

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what the government is proposing represents barely half of what some people need in order to heal in peace and with dignity. Sometimes it takes 50 weeks of employment insurance for people with a serious illness such as cancer. No one should have to worry about their financial situation when they are fighting for their health or their life.

Yesterday, every party called on the government to increase sickness benefits to 50 weeks by passing the bill introduced by the Bloc Québécois, but that will take a royal recommendation from the government. Will the government do that?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, EI sickness benefits are a very important support for Canadians. Workers who receive treatment need financial assistance and that is why we are extending EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks. We will also continue to work on modernizing EI. Everything is on the table.

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[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Matthew Jelley is the president of Maritime Fun Group, which has the popular tourism attractions Shining Waters Family Fun Park in Prince Edward Island and Magic Mountain in New Brunswick.

When budget 2021 was announced, he did some math and quickly realized he will be worse off under the proposed Canadian recovery hiring program compared to the existing Canadian emergency wage subsidy. While the pandemic continues, why are the Liberals threatening to end essential support programs such as CEWS for tourism businesses, which have been hit the hardest?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the tourism industry, our government absolutely understands how essential it is to the Canadian economy and how it was hit particularly hard by COVID. That is why the budget includes \$1 billion specifically to support tourism. When it comes to the hiring credit, it has been designed such that it will provide particular support to seasonal businesses such as tourism businesses.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a one-dose summer means a locked down summer for the tourism industry. Canada's closed borders mean that tourism businesses continue to suffer. This industry was the first impacted, and it will be the last to recover, yet there has been radio silence from the federal government.

What is the benchmark to restart travel? Is it 70% fully vaccinated, 80%, or cases under a certain number? It has to be something, and tourism businesses need time to be able to be ready to safely reopen for visitors. When are the Liberals going to table a plan with benchmarks for a safe reopening?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his ongoing advocacy for the tourism sector. Obviously, as a government, we have been there since the beginning of the pandemic and the economic crisis to help the tourism sector, including tourism operators, hotel owners and restaurant owners. We have been there to make sure they can get through this crisis, have access to the different supports we are offering them, and eventually get out of this pandemic stronger.

That is also why we are investing a billion dollars in the budget to make sure they can have access to new forms of support. I look forward to making good announcements to make sure they can have access to that support very soon.

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, another woman in Quebec was attacked and murdered by her partner, making it the 11th such attack since February. Unlike our allies, Canada has lagged, resulting in women across this country continuing to be victims of violence. The Minister for Women and Gender Equality has had years to produce a national action plan, yet we have nothing.

How many more women need to be murdered before this minister gets serious about addressing violence against women and produces a national action plan?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Canada, let me offer my condolences to every family grieving loved ones lost to an entirely preventable crime.

My colleague's compassion is commendable, but her facts are wrong. Our government has done more to support women in crisis, those living in violent homes, and more to address and prevent gender-based violence than any other government before.

Our response to COVID has been recognized as having the best feminist intersectional lens, and about a million Canadians have received supports in their hour of need through gender-based violence organizations—

• (1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

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[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that climate change is real. They understand that investments in clean technology will create thousands of well-paying jobs and also build a more sustainable future.

Could the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry tell us today how the government is supporting Canadian innovators and helping Canada meet its climate targets for 2030 and the goal of net-zero emissions by 2050?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her excellent question and also her hard work on this file.

Canadian innovations in clean technology are at the core of our green recovery. That is why I announced \$44 million in funding for innovative Canadian businesses earlier today. With our investments in firms such as Optel Group in Quebec City or PyroGenesis in Montreal, we are enhancing support for Canadian innovators and entrepreneurs while helping to reach our climate targets.

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[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Liberals voted against Motion No. 61, an initiative to promote our energy industry. For example, Newfoundland and Labrador's oil and gas sector represented 35% of its GDP and was the second-largest employer in the province in 2018.

Newfoundland and Labrador's energy workers, like all Canadian energy workers, are disappointed with the Minister of Natural Resources for failing to support this crucial industry. How could the minister vote against Motion No. 61?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would never shy away from defending the record of this government on Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore, but I think it is an important opportunity to also speak to the member's province of Alberta.

Since 2010, Alberta has doubled its wind capacity. It is on track to double it again by 2023. Just last week, BluEarth Renewables in Calgary announced the Hand Hills wind farm project, which is part

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of four solar and wind projects backed by \$500 million of investment in Alberta.

Oil and gas workers built this country. I agree with the hon. member on that. They are the same people who will help build renewables and lower emissions. We support them and we are building that future with them.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks back, I sent a letter to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans asking for details on the possible indigenous fishery beginning June 1 and how she and her department would respond. The minister's statement about regulations and seasons in March was what coastal communities had been waiting for since tensions blew up back in September. Nobody wants a repeat of that.

Will the minister allow tensions to blow up once again, or have there been meaningful negotiations with all sides to avoid another fisheries crisis in St. Marys Bay?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the ongoing situation concerning moderate livelihood, we are continuing to have negotiations with first nations, as well as making sure that industry is well communicated with. We have put a plan in place for this year where fishers are able to get out on the water with the moderate livelihood fishery. It is a flexible plan. It is a plan that allows them to develop their own fishery plans.

We are committed to finding a path forward. I look forward to working with the hon. member opposite to make sure that we do that.

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EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a new mom-to-be in my riding was temporarily laid off in December after working throughout the pandemic as an essential worker. She is pregnant with a June due date. Under the Liberals' CERB-to-EI transition, this young lady was forced to claim EI against the hours she banked from her maternity benefits. As a result, she will not be eligible to receive a full year of maternity leave. According to the minister, this was by design.

Why did the Liberals approve a benefits program that discriminates against new mothers?

Business of the House

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a really important question. We know that individuals want to work, and we have been there through a variety of emergency and recovery benefits to help those who are not able. We have tried to align our EI system with our recovery benefits in order to make the transition seamless back and forth. I am aware of the issue the member is speaking about. We are trying to figure out a way forward for women, particularly new moms, who are in the difficult position of not having work at this time.

* * *

● (1505)

HEALTH

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after a difficult pandemic, almost 70% of adults in Peel have received their first dose. However, these vaccines are not made in Canada, and Canadians want a reliable domestic supply of vaccines so we are not dependent on foreign manufacturing.

Can the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry tell this House how our government is working to strengthen domestic vaccine manufacturing in order to improve our security and make us more resilient and independent for any future pandemic?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Brampton South for her leadership on this very important file.

Members will be interested to learn that last week I was pleased to announce a historic \$200-million investment in Mississauga's Resilience Biotechnologies to help increase manufacturing capacity for a range of vaccines, including those that use the mRNA technologies. This is yet another important step to support Canadian leadership in this vital sector and will help grow our life sciences ecosystem as an engine for economic recovery.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this past week, the City of Timmins and the community of Moosonee declared a state of emergency because of the spike in COVID cases. We had 77 cases in the Porcupine Health Unit in a single day. That includes communities like Timmins, Cochrane and Matheson. We have over 70 cases now in the Cree communities of James Bay, which represents a potential medical catastrophe. We need to get the rapid surge capacity funding approved now.

What commitment will the Minister of Health make to the people of Timmins—James Bay to get us through this crisis and safely to the other side?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my heart is with the member's community. I know in my own riding and region of Thunder Bay—Superior North we experienced a very similar alarming surge. We know that smaller rural communities have fewer health care resources. That is why I have urged the Public Health Agency of Canada to work closely with the member opposite's medical officer of health to ensure that we get those rapid response programs, including isolation housing, in place as soon as possible.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, GERD, is causing tensions among Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia. Egypt and Sudan depend solely on the Nile for their commercial and residential uses. Having met with the ambassadors of both Egypt and Ethiopia, it appears they need a facilitated solution to avoid a conflict. All three countries consider Canada as an honest broker. Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs advise if he has engaged with the three countries for a peaceful resolution?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada recognizes the importance that countries in the Horn of Africa place on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam as a means to foster economic prosperity and development. Canada also believes that the best solution to this issue is a peaceful, fair and negotiated agreement among all parties. Canada will continue to monitor the situation closely and remains hopeful that the parties involved in the ongoing negotiations will remain committed to a constructive dialogue and peaceful co-operation.

The Speaker: That is all the time we have for Oral Questions today.

[Translation]

The hon. House leader of the official opposition, for his weekly question.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Thursday, and as per tradition, I invite my ministerial counterpart, the hon. minister and member for Honoré-Mercier, to share with us what Parliament can expect to be working on in the coming days.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my kind colleague for his important question.

This afternoon, we will begin report stage and third reading of Bill S-3, regarding offshore health and safety. Tomorrow, we will resume second reading debate of Bill C-21, on the Firearms Act.

On Monday, we will resume third reading stage of Bill C-6, on conversion therapy. That evening, we will consider in committee of the whole the main estimates for the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.

Government Orders

On Wednesday, we will consider Bill C-22, on criminal justice reforms, at second reading.

Tuesday and Thursday will be allotted days.

Once again, I thank my colleague for his very important question and wish him a great afternoon.

• (1510)

The Speaker: The Minister of Canadian Heritage is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 53(3) of the Privacy Act and to Standing Order 111.1, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a Certificate of Nomination, and biographical notes, for the proposed reappointment of Daniel Therrien to the position of Privacy Commissioner for a term of one year.

I request that the nomination and biographical notes be referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order regarding remarks made by the Prime Minister yesterday in this House over unparliamentarily and inappropriately exploiting an issue impacting the Asian community in Canada and the members representing it.

As members know, the official opposition has been questioning the Prime Minister on the topic of security at Canada's top microbiology lab and the partnership of scientists with ties to the Chinese military. Instead of addressing this important issue, the Prime Minister made accusations of racism against those members asking these vital questions of national interest.

Page 619 of Bosc and Gagnon states:

Remarks which question a Member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order. A Member will be requested to withdraw offensive remarks, allegations, or accusations of impropriety directed towards another Member.

Page 623 describes some general principles:

The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all Members. Thus, the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden. Personal attacks, insults and obscenities are not in order...

In dealing with unparliamentary language, the Speaker takes into account the tone, manner and intention of the Member speaking, the person to whom the words at issue were directed, the degree of provocation, and most important, whether or not the remarks created disorder in the Chamber.

In addition to the Prime Minister casting aspersions upon members of this House who are only trying to do their job, I find it offensive that the Prime Minister is diminishing the significance of the anti-Asian crisis in Canada by using it to deflect attention away from an unrelated political issue of national security. Canadians of Asian descent do not appreciate being used in this way, since they, too, are concerned about the national security of their country and want answers. They are not political shields. They are Canadians

who expect their Prime Minister to address their questions separately, respectfully and with sincerity.

The Prime Minister's remarks are provocative, divisive and destructive to the House, and I ask that the Prime Minister apologize.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member. I will take it under advisement and return to the House should I see necessary.

I want to take this opportunity to remind all members in the House and members who are joining us virtually in the House, when using words, to please be very conscious and judicious of the words they use as they affect people differently. Members should try to put themselves in the shoes of the person receiving the words and how they would feel. Please, take that into consideration so that we can make this House a House that all Canadians can be proud of.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2021, NO. 1

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

The Speaker: It being 3:12 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-30.

Call in the members.

• (1525)

[English]

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

(Division No. 123)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bergeron	Bérubé
Bessette	Bibeau
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bratina	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Champagne	Champoux

Government Orders

Charbonneau	Chen	Spengemann	Ste-Marie
Cormier	Dabrusin	Tabbara	Tassi
Damoff	Davies	Thériault	Therrien
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens	Trudeau	Trudel
Desilets	Dhaliwal	Turnbull	Van Bynen
Dhillon	Dong	van Koeverden	Vandal
Drouin	Dubourg	Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Duclos	Duguid	Vignola	Virani
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duvall	Weiler	Wilkinson
Dzerowicz	Easter	Wilson-Raybould	Yip
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Young	Zahid
Ellis	Erskine-Smith	Zann	Zuberi— 212
Fergus	Fillmore		
Finnigan	Fisher		
Fonseca	Fortier		
Fortin	Fragiskatos		
Fraser	Freeland	Aboultaif	Aitchison
Fry	Garneau	Albas	Alleslev
Garrison	Gaudreau	Allison	Arnold
Gazan	Gerretsen	Baldinelli	Barlow
Gill	Gould	Barrett	Benzen
Green	Guilbeault	Bergen	Berthold
Hajdu	Hardie	Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Harris	Holland	Block	Bragdon
Housefather	Hughes	Brassard	Calkins
Hussen	Hutchings	Carrie	Chiu
Iacono	Ien	Chong	Cooper
Jaczek	Johns	Cumming	Dalton
Joly	Jones	Dancho	Davidson
Jordan	Jowhari	Deltell	d'Entremont
Julian	Kelloway	Diotte	Doherty
Khalid	Khera	Dowdall	Dreshen
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Kwan	Lalonde	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Lambropoulos	Lametti	Fast	Findlay
Lamoureux	Larouche	Gallant	Généreux
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Genius	Gladu
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Godin	Gourde
Lefebvre	Lemire	Gray	Hallan
Lightbound	Long	Harder	Hoback
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Jansen	Jeneroux
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor	Kelly	Kent
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Kitchen	Kmiec
Manly	Marcil	Kram	Kurek
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Kusie	Lake
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Lawrence	Lehoux
May (Saanech—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon	Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
McDonald	McGuinty	Lloyd	Lobb
McKay	McKenna	Lukivski	MacKenzie
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Maguire	Martel
McPherson	Mendès	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Mendicino	Michaud	McColeman	McLean
Miller	Monsef	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Melillo
Morrissey	Murray	Moore	Morantz
Ng	Normandin	Morrison	Motz
O'Connell	Oliphant	Nater	O'Toole
O'Regan	Pauzé	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Perron	Petitpas Taylor	Poilievre	Rayes
Plamondon	Powlowski	Redekopp	Reid
Qualtrough	Ratansi	Rempel Garner	Richards
Regan	Robillard	Rood	Ruff
Rodriguez	Rogers	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)	Scheer	Schmale
Saini	Sajjan	Seeback	Shields
Saks	Samson	Shin	Shipley
Sangha	Sarai	Sloan	Sorka
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia	Stanton	Steinley
Schieffe	Schulte	Strahl	Stubbs
Serré	Sgro	Sweet	Tochor
Shanahan	Sheehan	Uppal	Van Popta
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Vecchio	Vidal
Simard	Simms	Viersen	Vis
Singh	Sorbara	Wagantall	Warkentin

NAYS

Members

Waugh
Williamson
Zimmer— 119

Webber
Wong

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

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

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by another 12 minutes for a total of 53 minutes.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OFFSHORE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Offshore Health and Safety Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no motions at report stage on this bill, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

[*English*]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

• (1530)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I would request that this carry on division.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I therefore declare the motion carried on division. (Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today from my home on the island of Newfoundland, which is the ancestral homeland of the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk peoples.

[*English*]

It is also one of Canada's three proud oil-producing provinces.

Before getting into my remarks on the legislation before us today, let me start with this. We just came out of a vote and question period and when we debate in this place, they are debates of great

Government Orders

importance. They are issues that matter to us, who have the privilege to sit in this hallowed chamber, and to Canadians across the country. There is a lot of passion around these issues, particularly around issues of energy, oil and gas, climate change, the economy. We are at a particular moment in time, a defining moment, one where globally we are charting pathways now to net zero.

Over the past couple of weeks, there have been several significant developments. The International Energy Agency issued a report on pathways to net zero, the first analysis that is compliant with limiting a rise in global temperature to 1.5°C. Canada called on the IEA to conduct the report, because the world needs to know what it will take to get to net zero.

In my province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Dame Moya Greene issued a report on our future. It is an unflinching look at a dire situation. There is no sense beating around the bush there. There is a lot of hard work ahead of us and a lot of tough decisions.

Just yesterday, a landmark decision by a court in the Netherlands ordered Royal Dutch Shell to cut emissions by 45% by 2030. Shareholders of another major oil producer, Chevron, backed a proposal to cut emissions generated by the use of the company's products. ExxonMobil shareholders voted just yesterday to install two new independent directors in a rebuke of the company's efforts to address climate change to date. Some have called May 26 "big oil's day of reckoning".

What all these events demonstrate is that the world is calling for increased climate ambition. The market is demanding it. Investors, we learned yesterday, are demanding it. Governments are taking action and companies are taking action. Suncor has committed now to net zero in a clear sign of Canadian leadership. There is a clear direction in which the world is heading. We know where the puck is heading. It is heading toward net zero, and we will have many important debate and conversations on Canada's pathway to net-zero emissions by 2050, how that will change our energy mix in the future, the economic opportunities that it presents, particularly for oil and gas workers who will lead the effort to lower emissions. They are already doing it.

There will be tough conversations, difficult and passionate debates, but the debate before us today on this legislation is one that we can all agree is of the utmost importance and cannot be derailed by the broader conversations about our energy future. This is about the people at the heart of the country, about our workers and protecting them. That fact is what needs to guide our debate here today.

This issue is important to me. It is personal. It is about an industry that has brought so many benefits to my province. It impacts the workers here, my neighbours and friends who work in the offshore.

Government Orders

I remember vividly the industry's nascent days. I was a young fellow working for Brian Tobin, when he was premier some 20-odd years ago, when the first platform, Hybernia, was under construction. Hopes were sky-high after so much despair over the cod fishery collapse. It was a bleak time. Families were split because so many young people had to go west to make a living.

Today, it is a proud and mature industry. It is one that has accounted over the years for 30% of our economy and one out of every 10 jobs, 10% employment over the years. It has provided the provincial government here with more than \$20 billion in royalties between 1997 and 2019, funding key public services, from health and education to highways and hockey rinks.

The offshore industry in the Atlantic has also created jobs and wealth for Nova Scotians prior to and during the recent decommissioning of its two gas projects: \$8.5 billion in capital spending over 20 years, producing \$1.9 billion in royalty payments between 2000 and 2017. It was a long road to get to that point, to realize the economic benefits of this industry, and there were many doubters along the way.

For starters, low world oil prices made the whole notion seem like a fantasy prior to the energy crises of the 1970s, but we also had to deal with monumental challenges posed by safely extracting oil in a treacherous and unforgiving North Atlantic. We owe it to these workers to protect them and to do so with the best occupational health and safety regime in the world. We must protect these workers.

How best do we do that? By adopting a world-class safety regime. I believe that and I support that. Bill S-3 will help.

Let us be frank about what we are debating today. This is a three-clause bill. It extends health and safety regulations for workers in the offshore, for workers who work in a high-risk environment.

• (1535)

I know my colleague across the way, the member for St. John's East, understands, very well, the risks that these workers face. In fact, I remember the CEO of ExxonMobil Canada telling me that the Newfoundland offshore is the harshest environment in which his company operates in the world.

Bill S-3 would give Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia an additional year, to December 31, 2021, to finalize the numerous health and safety regulations that stem from the 2014 legislation, regulations to make our workers safer. Should Bill S-3 become law, the transitional regulations from 2014 will apply retroactively to January 1, 2021.

As I said, it is a three-clause bill. We all agree that no worker in any workplace should go unprotected. Therefore, I would hope that this bill would pass easily. It should pass quickly and today. It should be the last day that it is debated in this House.

In fact, my office has reached out to my opposition critics and colleagues across the way so that we could do just that every step of the way. To the member for Calgary Centre, the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, the member for Jonquière and the member for St. John's East, I am happy to report that these were constructive conversations and that we had a constructive relation-

ship between us on this. I urged them to work with the government, in the spirit of protecting Canada's workers, to send the bill to the standing committee and urged the standing committee to study it at its earliest opportunity. I appeared before the standing committee alongside departmental officials. Before Bill S-3 was introduced in this House, it went through a similar process in the other place and I appeared in front of our hon. colleagues from the other place, who held committee hearings on this bill, to explain why we are where we are today.

The extent to which this three-clause bill continues to be debated is not because of the substance of the bill. As I mentioned, I think there would be unanimity across all parties in this House to support the passage of the legislation. If they read a Hansard of the second-reading debate on this bill, they would be forgiven for thinking that the debate was circular.

Nearly every speech by every member of every party in this House agreed on the importance of the bill and the importance of passing it quickly. Nearly every speech by every member of every party in this House referenced the 1982 *Ocean Ranger* tragedy that left 84 dead and the royal commission of inquiry that led to many safety improvements. Nearly every speech by every member of every party in this House referenced the fatal crash of Cougar Flight 491 in 2009 and the ensuing commission of inquiry that Mr. Justice Robert Wells conducted, which led to the sweeping reforms contained in the Offshore Health and Safety Act passed in 2014. These were raised in nearly every speech by every member of every party in this House.

There is no daylight between us in terms of protecting our workers, and there should not be, so why are we still debating this? Why does a three-clause bill merit hours of additional debate, when there is unanimity on the importance of protecting workers here, while Canadians expect their Parliament to get on with the business of building back better and recovering from COVID-19? Simply put, there is a load of politics afoot, let me say that. There is a concerted desire to delay debate on anything and everything, regardless of the issue; and, in this case, ironically, to further delay the very thing that the opposition members are lambasting this government for delaying.

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Many speeches referenced that it has taken far too long to put in place permanent regulations, that a further delay of 24 months would be far too long, and we listened and we agreed. We accepted the amendments from the other place to drop it to 12 months. We heard that the delay in having a permanent occupational health and safety regime for protecting offshore workers is unconscionable. To the members across the way today, I say, “look, fair game, I agree”; I say “yes, it has taken far too long”. It is frustrating. I am frustrated. I said it during the committee hearings in the other place, I said it before the standing committee, and I will repeat it today: This has taken far too long.

Now, I could list the reasons why the complex work of drafting regulations in partnership with two provincial governments and two offshore boards, respecting our joint management frameworks and the jurisdiction of provinces, all takes time. I could speak about the 15,000 pages of documents that they have to go through to align with and incorporate by reference the over 173 domestic and international health and safety standards. I could speak to the time that we lost by needing to fix the initial interim regulations because the industry told us it did not work for them, that it burdened them; I could speak about how that fix set us back. I could also speak to how this very pandemic that we are in has set us back; how the sudden, abrupt shutdown of workplaces forced us to adapt to working from home, how adapting took time. Mr. Speaker, just think of how long it took this House to adapt and put in place measures to safely continue with our work. Those are all very legitimate and contributing factors as to why we are where we are today, but those reasons do not make workers safer, they do not support workers and they do not advance this legislation.

● (1540)

We need to pass this bill. We need to get on with the business of finalizing these permanent regulations with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Government of Nova Scotia, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board and with industry.

Despite these challenges, our officials and their counterparts in Newfoundland and Labrador, and in Nova Scotia have passed many milestones. We are close. I instructed my officials to get this work done by the new proposed deadline. I am confident we will. I know we will.

[*Translation*]

However, we need to pass Bill S-3 today, without further delay. If the opposition members really want to protect workers, they now have the opportunity to do so by putting partisan politics aside, doing what needs to be done and passing this bill.

[*English*]

As a son of Newfoundland and Labrador, I am proud of what we have achieved in this industry since it began to take root in the 1960s. The offshore industry has made life better for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It has kept families from separating in order to find work on the mainland. It also gave some of them the expertise so that they could find good work on the mainland.

I am also proud of the reality that not since the time of Brian Mulroney and John Crosbie has there been a federal government that has done more for the offshore. It was this government that gave \$2.5 billion to Newfoundland and Labrador as a part of the renewed Atlantic Accord in 2019. It was this government that supported workers in the offshore during a pandemic with close to \$400 million to maintain jobs and lower emissions. It was this government that reduced the time for exploratory drilling assessments from over 900 days to 90, without losing an ounce of environmental integrity.

I recently announced 16 projects funded through the offshore component of the emissions reduction fund with an eye to the future; projects that use carbon capture, wind and other renewable sources of energy to power the industry's operations; projects that will lower emissions; real projects that are creating real jobs for the workers who are building our low-emissions energy future right now.

As I conclude my remarks, let me plainly state that the only thing that matters during debate on this bill is the people involved, the workers: protecting them, supporting them and believing in them. The workers on those platforms in the North Atlantic, the workers who service them, the workers who are at the heart of this industry that made our province what it is and the workers who are building our prosperous and cleaner future need to be protected. We need to protect them with a safety regime that is world class. They deserve absolutely nothing less.

Bill S-3 will help us get there. Let us do our jobs. Let us pass Bill S-3.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was quite shocked by the minister's remarks. This bill came through the Senate. It was passed in a single sitting at second reading. I sit at the natural resources committee. We passed it in a single meeting. Now, today, it is going to have less than a couple of hours of debate and it is going to pass in this House.

Does the minister think that five years of inaction from his government is acceptable? Why does the minister think that democracy is inconvenient? We have fast-tracked this bill. We have worked together to get this bill through. How can the minister say that there have been delays?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Mr. Speaker, these regulations are very complex. In total they are nearly 300 pages. We did not want to take shortcuts, as I have told the hon. member at committee. We owe it to our workers. We owe them to keep them safe. We had to consider 173 domestic and international standards, which amounts to over 15,000 pages in total. They are developed to be consistent with the joint management framework that characterizes the Atlantic offshore.

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Regulations must be vetted and agreed upon by Canada, by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and by the Government of Nova Scotia. It is three governments. It is not something that happens with the snap of someone's fingers. It is complex. It takes time and that is precisely why the original bill in 2014 included a five-year period to get it done.

There has been extensive engagement of stakeholders, particularly through 2016 to 2018. In fact, there was an amendment of the transitional regulations in 2017 to address a number of administrative irritants. That fix set us back some time.

Then there is COVID. No one can ignore the impacts of that, which we are confronting. It has forced us to change everything that we do. For institutional processes like regulation drafting, adapting to virtual working was challenging. It took time, but I am confident that the work that remains can be completed with the time that this bill will provide, if passed.

I am grateful for the thorough going-over that it has received at committee and I thank the hon. member for his work.

• (1545)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I, too, am very surprised by the minister talking about the delay of the passage of this legislation.

First of all, the fact is we are almost into June and the regulations expired in December. Is he suggesting that nothing has been done in the last four or five months? Has everything stopped? The only thing that stopped was the government actually ensuring there was no gap and there was no gap in the regulations.

Offshore workers have been waiting since 1992, when offshore health and safety was passed over to the C-NLOPB for permanent enforceable regulations in the offshore. This minister and his government have been responsible for six years of that, and he is blaming it on a failure to pass the bill? This will pass today, as the previous speaker pointed out. Is the minister saying the delay is the fault of this House?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Mr. Speaker, as I have stated before, and not only am I opening comments now, but as I also stated in committee, I have been frustrated with the delays involved. I accepted the amendment as suggested by the other place, and accepted that it should be 12 months and not 24 more months.

There cannot be any shortcuts when it comes to the health and safety of workers in our offshore. We can take no shortcuts when it comes to keeping them safe. While the bill may only have three clauses, I think we can all agree the regulations that they address are far more substantial.

We have a detailed implementation schedule in place with the Department of Justice and with our provincial partners in Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. As I have noted, there is a number of statutory requirements, as well as stakeholder engagement and provincial coordination that has to happen. Particularly in the current pandemic environment, this is not something that we can take shortcuts on.

We need to get these regulations right. That is what the workers in our offshore deserve, nothing less.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the minister. We want to make sure we get this right. This Parliament wants to make sure it goes through the process in an appropriate fashion, and it will be passed today.

However, what we are seeing over and over again from the Liberal government is this ramming through of bills, creating a crisis and not reacting until it is a crisis. For example, the CUSMA, we rammed that through before COVID. The Canada-U.K. trade agreement, we rammed that through in the last minutes. Again, time was never given to Parliament to properly do the appropriate job.

We do want to get this right, and this will get passed. However, the government knows the deadlines. Why can the government not say, "Okay, the deadline is X, I need to start two years before that, five years before that." Why does the government wait until the last minute, dump it on Parliament, and then force us to react and scrounge and give up our liberties here in Parliament to properly vet something on a piece of legislation?

Why can the government not be more proactive and less reactive in the event of a crisis?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Mr. Speaker, I would not want to misjudge or mischaracterize the amount of work that has gone on outside of this chamber. All parties and both chambers of Parliament have worked expeditiously on this bill, doing their due diligence. In a minority Parliament, there has been co-operation, collaboration and regular communication. I am grateful for that.

When it became clear in the fall of 2020 that the final regs would not be completed by December 31, the governments of Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia each took legislative steps to extend the transition period so that workers would be protected under the existing occupational health and safety framework.

For the federal government to signal our intent, this bill was introduced in the Senate on December 1. The bill was amended, and it was passed by the Senate in mid-February. It was then introduced in the House. In a similar time frame, it has now passed through committee.

This is something that we understand to be very serious. Once again, I am grateful for the amount of work on all sides of this House, behind the scenes, to make sure that we are in the place where we are today.

• (1550)

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the minister, first on all, on his work on this particular issue.

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I want to ask him about all the work that has been done vis-à-vis the institution known as the C-NLOPB. This is a unique situation that we have within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as in Nova Scotia and their board as well. I would like the minister to illustrate all the work that has been done by them in light of the dual jurisdiction that they have. Could the minister explain the C-NLOPB's important input into this process?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows very well, the C-NLOPB and the C-NSOPB are true examples of shared jurisdiction and co-operation between provinces and the federal government. I am extremely familiar with the C-NLOPB. What we have managed to do is create one of the finest regulatory regimes for offshore oil in the world, in an area of shared jurisdiction.

It does mean, of course, that we have to be very careful and make sure major changes like this are done in concert and done together. This government has always respected the jurisdiction of the C-NLOPB, and it is seen in Newfoundland and Labrador as a significant accomplishment. We have not only respected the C-NLOPB, but we have strengthened it. In terms of what we have done for the offshore, no federal government since the time of Brian Mulroney and John Crosbie has done more here in Newfoundland. I do not make this statement loosely. I make it sincerely and truthfully.

There was \$2.5 billion given through the renewal of the Atlantic Accord in 2019. Another \$320 million went to the province to support workers and increase environmental performance of the offshore, and on top of that we put \$75 million for the emissions reduction—

The Deputy Speaker: We are going to try to leave enough time to get one more question in here.

The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people at the centre of this, and the people who have been really affected by this, are the offshore workers. They are represented by unions, most of them by Unifor, yet they have not been consulted properly on this. They should be allowed to choose their own representative on the health and safety council.

I just wonder this: Would the minister be open to making that change? It would not require legislative change, but change to the mandate so that there is greater transparency and more access for the workers to have a say in their own safety.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Mr. Speaker, certainly we have worked hand in glove with unions and have consulted with them vigorously. It is important that I make the point that we have consulted with them. I know at committee they have spoken about such consultations, and it is important also to remember that they remain protected. The North Atlantic is a harsh environment to operate in, but it is not the wild west out there. The legal framework continues to be in place: It has been since 2014, and workers in the offshore are protected under the best health and safety regulatory regimes in the world. As I mentioned, we need to continue to improve the C-NLOPB. That is why it is the best: because we are continually working at it to make sure it works for our workers.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the interests of getting this important legislation passed so we can get it to the next stage and provide these protections for workers I could give a 20-minute speech, but I will be giving a significantly shorter speech on this.

There is one personal note I want to add. I was texted this morning, after I completed my speech, that my first niece was born today. Her name is Maeve Elizabeth Danielle Penner, and her mom is doing great. We are all very happy and blessed to have this new beautiful baby girl in our family.

I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill S-3, an act to amend the Offshore Health and Safety Act. It is about time this important legislation to protect the safety of workers made its way through the House of Commons.

The Liberal government failed to get this legislation passed in a timely manner, which has put the safety of offshore workers at risk. We debate a lot of important issues in the House, but out of the many pieces of legislation I have seen the government put forward over the past few years, few bills could be more important than ensuring the safety of workers. In this case, we are talking about offshore energy workers.

How did we get to this point? We are now in a situation where important safeguards have been allowed to lapse. These safeguards were put in place by a previous Conservative government over five years ago, but not acted upon by the current Liberal government until it was too late. Thankfully, no one appears to have been harmed by the lack of action on this file, but it remains inexcusable that we have come to this point in the first place.

At the end of last year, the Liberals allowed the existing temporary safety regulations for our offshore oil and gas workers to expire. In effect, this stripped key health and safety protections for these Canadian workers who risk their lives every day to ensure we have the resources to heat our homes and drive our vehicles to work. These workers, in this case primarily from the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, are a pillar that supports the economy of the province and this country.

The province has elected a lot of Liberal MPs. The Minister of Natural Resources comes from the province, yet it appears that little attention has been paid to this important issue.

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Most people would not know it, but I had the privilege of working in our onshore energy sector. I donned my personal protective equipment and H2S monitor and went to work in Canada's energy industrial heartland in Edmonton, Alberta. I spent two summers in university working the shutdowns at the Imperial Oil refinery in Strathcona. On site we had plenty of heavy equipment moving around and we did the jobs that needed to be done to ensure the facility could run smoothly, create jobs and support our economy. I remember working the night shift, 12 hours a day, day in and day out, for weeks. I picked up extra hours at the end of each shift and put on a HiVis vest to do traffic control and ensure that the tired workers would not accidentally be run over as they went home from their shifts. I stood watch as skilled workers went deep into systems to ensure that first aid would be readily available for them in case of danger. This was on the land. I can only imagine the dangers faced by those on the east coast who get on a helicopter and head out to platforms far at sea, sometimes in bad weather.

Tragedies from our past demonstrate just how critical it is for these safety regulations to be in place. Canadians were devastated in 1982 by the news of the *Ocean Ranger* rig and 84 workers who lost their lives when it capsized during a storm, and again in 2009 by news of Cougar Helicopters Flight 491 crashing into the North Atlantic, resulting in the tragic deaths of 17 offshore oil workers. This tragedy led to the Cougar inquiry, the results of which were taken by governments to pass this important legislation. After each of these disasters, there were investigations into their causes and recommendations on how to avert these dangers in the future. I am sure that politicians spoke to the devastated families, promising that never again would this be allowed to happen, yet here we are today debating legislation that should have been passed months, if not years, ago.

- (1555)

It was the previous Conservative government that recognized the very real need for these protections. That is why, in 2014, the government passed safety regulations through the Offshore Health and Safety Act. That is exactly the kind of leadership that we need in this country: We need a government that is proactive and not reactive, and that takes prompt action to protect the safety of our workers.

These temporary regulations were set to expire in 2019. They gave the Liberal government years to implement permanent offshore energy safety regulations. The Liberals had to extend that deadline for another year. They extended those temporary regulations to December 31, 2020. The Liberals had time to get the job done.

For many of those years, they had a majority. The fact is, even now in the current minority government, the Liberals have the political support to get the job done but they have not, until now, and that is inexcusable. It was not days, and it was not the month of the deadline in December, that the Liberal government finally introduced Bill S-3 in the other place. Where was the Liberals' sense of urgency? It really feels like an afterthought, as if the safety of these workers was not of great importance to the government. Why did the Prime Minister, the Minister of Natural Resources and the Liberal government wait until the last minute to do their jobs? An important deadline has been missed. Key protections are missing. The

Liberal government dithers. Perhaps if the government had not chosen to prorogue Parliament and waste many additional days of productive debate, we could have had this passed before the deadline. We will never know, but what we do know for sure is that the Liberal government did not care to make this a priority.

I am also disappointed, for another reason, that this legislation was not introduced until last year. It would have been a fitting tribute to Judge Wells from Newfoundland and Labrador, who did so much to advocate for the safety of offshore workers. Sadly, in October 2020, Judge Wells, who headed the Cougar inquiry, passed away at the age of 87. Judge Wells was a former Progressive Conservative cabinet minister provincially, and was a Rhodes scholar. As commissioner, his key contribution to the inquiry was the recommendation that helicopters have 30 minutes or more of run-dry capability. He also recommended founding a full search and rescue base in St. John's. I wish the government had its act together and had passed this legislation in advance of the deadline so that Judge Wells could have seen his legacy put permanently into action. All the same, I want to commend him for his service to our country and to his province. He will be remembered for his commitment to the welfare of offshore energy workers and their families.

The delayed passage of Bill S-3 is just another example of how the current Liberal government has failed to prioritize the needs of the men and women who work in our oil and gas sector. In fact, I noted with some surprise that the minister said the words "one of three oil-producing Canadian provinces", seemingly unaware that more than three provinces in this country produce oil. If it was not bad enough that the government was failing to get key safety legislation passed by the deadline, it also seems intent on phasing out the livelihoods of these oil and gas workers.

We know that Newfoundland and Labrador relies on the energy sector more than every other province, including Alberta. We know that the future of Newfoundland and Labrador requires a strong offshore oil and gas sector. In fact, it is so important to that province that the word "oil" is mentioned nearly 150 times in the recent Greene report outlining the economic future of Newfoundland and Labrador, yet the Liberal government continues its attack on the oil sector with bills like Bill C-69 and Bill C-48 in the previous Parliament, and by not acting on key legislation like Bill S-3, which we are debating today.

Something close to 147 days have passed since the Liberal delays allowed for the existing legislation to expire. That is 147 days that hard-working offshore oil and gas workers have been left in limbo without protections.

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• (1600)

I want to recognize the hard work done by those in the other place in passing Bill S-3 as expediently as possible. Recognizing the urgency of this bill, it is unacceptable that after passing in the Senate so quickly, the bill waited in the lineup to get through the House of Commons' agenda. We knew that members in the House were intent on getting the legislation through quickly at second reading and passed immediately.

I sit on the natural resources committee, and we moved with unprecedented speed to get this bill through. It was one meeting. It is my sincere hope that we can push forward with the debate today, get the bill passed and secure these key protections for our offshore oil and gas workers.

As members of the House, protecting Canadian workers must be a key priority. That is why the Conservatives have been co-operative in working to get this bill passed as quickly as possible. The failure to protect offshore energy workers is unconscionable and must end. It is time that we finally get the job done and secure these protections so these workers can continue going about their jobs safely and so we can ensure the prosperity and future not only of Newfoundland and Labrador but of our nation, Canada.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, members will recall that, in June 2020, the Prime Minister of Canada exempted all exploratory drilling in the marine environment off the coast of Newfoundland from the existing environmental assessment process. My question is very simple. What does my colleague think about that?

[*English*]

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, we know, in the context of June 2020, that we had an unprecedented drop in the value of oil. I do not understand quite fully the context of the government's decisions in this case, as the member said, to drop certain protections, but I can assure him, speaking for myself and the Conservative Party, that we understand that strong environmental and regulatory protections are absolutely vital, not only to protect our environment but to protect the safety of the workers who risk their lives every day when they get on these platforms.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his excellent speech on the importance of the industry to Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada. I join him in his praise of Justice Wells, who I knew well. He was an excellent jurist and a fine man to boot. He recommended in his report on the Cougar helicopter crash and safety inquiry on the offshore that there be an independent board to deal with safety on the offshore just as exists in Norway, Australia and the U.K. He said that it was his most important recommendation.

Why did the Conservative government, in 2014, refuse to follow that recommendation and left us with a board that is responsible not only for safety, but also for the environment, production goals and promoting the offshore? Could he tell us that?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I was elected as a member of Parliament in 2017 and was not privy to the discussions and the back

and forth among the province, the industry and the federal government under the previous Conservative government when this legislation came forward. I am not in a position today to make any commitments on this issue.

It is important that we continue to consult with industry, the province and the workers, as the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay suggested, to ensure that we not only have a viable, sustainable industry that can provide economic benefits for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, but also an industry that is responsible, promotes the highest levels of safety and the highest levels of environmental protection.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly echo the comments of the hon. member for St. John's East in lamenting that we do not have an independent board for worker safety.

I would also point out for my hon. colleague that both the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board and the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board have embedded within the legislation a conflict of interest in that the regulator for environment and for worker safety is also mandated to expand oil and gas production.

This inherent conflict of interest made it very inappropriate that both the Harper Conservatives and the current Liberal government have embedded an environmental assessment, but the offshore petroleum boards can also run the environmental assessment hearings as well as promoting the expansion of oil and gas.

I think it is unlikely my hon. friend for Sturgeon River—Parkland would agree with me, but I find the record of the government entirely on the side of expanding oil and gas in the offshore of both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador, failing to provide the kind of independent regulators that were put in place in the United States after the Gulf of Mexico disaster, the Horizon disaster, and in the case of the Cougar helicopter crash, failing to protect the workers.

I wonder if my hon. colleague has considered it from the point of view of this embedded conflict of interest.

• (1610)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the member. She is right that we will not be agreeing on this issue, necessarily.

Being a member of Parliament from Alberta, I am a strong champion of our oil and gas sector and of the workers who work in it. The member opposite has her own constituency of which she is thinking.

I respect the work that these resource boards do. I know they want to uphold the highest levels of environmental protections. It is critical that we support an industry in a responsible manner, protecting the safety of workers and protecting the highest levels of environmental safety, because this is such a key component of the economic prosperity of our country.

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As we saw with the green report in Newfoundland and Labrador, it is simply not a question that the future of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador will rely upon the sustainability and future of the offshore oil and gas sector.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during his debate, the member continually promoted a falsehood, which that side of the House has promoted time and time again. He kept saying that if we had not prorogued in the summer, we could have dealt with this issue then.

Does the member not realize that the special rules of the House, put in place between March and September, were that anything that was discussed had to be specifically with respect to COVID?

What he is saying is actually false. Perhaps the member wants to stand, correct the record and apologize for misleading Canadians.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, the member is certainly entitled to his histrionics in this place.

However, we have a case where we saw the government waste a number of productive days of debate when it prorogued the House. Maybe this bill would not necessarily have been talked about. In fact, I know it would not have been talked about, because the government did not have its act together and did not get it introduced until December.

What we do know is that we have a full legislative calendar in this place. Having to restart the agenda on all the legislation after the prorogation certainly backed up the legislative agenda of the country and this Parliament and made it that much harder for us to get this legislation passed in an expedited manner.

I will not apologize to that member.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debate this afternoon, and I am very concerned. We are ramming through something that is very important to the workers who work in this industry.

One of the questions I have for the member is this. Did the committee do any pre-studies? Did it have any pre-warning? Was there some work done a year ago or two years before to set the stage so we could actually feel confident that we had done the proper due diligence as parliamentarians to move this bill through, which we are being told has to be done today?

I am curious about what the committee did beforehand and what the Liberal members of the committee suggested it do to allow the committee to do the full function it was there to do.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I did join the natural resources committee earlier this year.

We knew the legislation was coming in December, but we did not have an idea of exactly when it would come. I am not aware of any pre-studies that were conducted. I know the minister stated that there was a lot of work being done in the back room on this.

However, given the importance of this legislation, I would reiterate from my speech that it is very disappointing it took the government so long to bring this important legislation to the House. It really did not give an opportunity for members of Parliament to deeply study this issue, which forced us to really work hard to ex-

pedite this legislation so we could get it passed and bring forward these key protections.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a Senate bill, not a government bill. It did not come through the Order Paper or through the government.

What are the member's thoughts about how this speaks to the priorities of the government and why it had to come through the other place first, that it was not one of the first items on the government's agenda, knowing there was a deadline to get this done?

• (1615)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to serve with that member on the natural resources committee where we both worked hard to ensure this legislation would pass in an expedited manner.

I cannot speak to the negotiations that the government had or the reasons it had for trying to move this through the Senate. However, I will commend the work of our senators, particularly one of the Conservative senators who called for a common-sense amendment to lower the timeline from 24 months down to 12 months. This shows that there are a lot of positive things the other place can do.

I know in the House, the Conservatives are going to work as hard as we can to ensure the legislation gets through today.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to say I am happy to be able to speak today to Bill S-3 at third reading, which would extend the transitional offshore occupational health and safety regulations for one more year to allow the finalization of the permanent regulations.

That is to say I am happy to speak to it, because I hope it will pass today. We certainly want to see it pass today because we have been waiting a very long time to see the governments, both federal and provincial, come up with permanent occupational health and safety regulations in the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore. We have been waiting for this since the early nineties. There is a long and sad history of an attitude toward offshore health and safety, which does not in any way compare to the kind of health and safety regulations that have been available to onshore workers in this country for many years.

We have heard all sorts of excuses about the delay. We have to pass this legislation, and I am happy to pass this legislation, but I would have been very happy if we did not need this legislation. In fact, we would not have needed this legislation if the government had been more diligent in pursuing the object of the legislation that was passed in 2014, which itself was very late.

The minister talks about the delay and all the complications and consultations that have to take place. He lamented on several occasions that there were 300 pages of regulations. I wonder what page they are on. I really do. They have been working on 300 pages of regulations since 2014. That is six years at 50 pages a year. What page are they on now?

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I do not mean to be flippant about it, but I think to use that excuse entirely misses the point that there does not seem to have been a serious effort to actually put in place permanent regulations. They are very necessary, and there is a reason for it.

I am afraid the reason is that the companies thought the regulations were too burdensome. That debate has been going on since the early 1990s, when occupational health and safety was taken away from the federal labour department and the provincial labour department and given to the C-NLOPB. It has already been pointed out that they have divided obligations to ensure they are looking after offshore health and safety, environmental protection, production schedules, and the promotion and development of the industry.

As has been pointed out by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and others, there is an inherent conflict there and, at the very least, a lack of focus on the important things. There are good examples of why that is a problem, and I will come to a specific one that illustrates that problem and also the problem of the lapse in the regulations. This lapse has been allowed to happen by the failure of the government to bring in this legislation before the regulations expired, which they did on December 31 of last year.

We have no enforceable regulations now in the offshore. They have been given instructions to follow them, and the companies have agreed to follow them, but it is very clear that they are not enforceable. No one can be charged or convicted of an offence under regulations that are not in force.

Starting way back in 1992, they had draft regulations, and the draft regulations were used as a guideline. It was believed at the time that the companies, and the companies had convinced the governments, knew best about how to manage safety in the offshore. They understood the industry, and they understood how it works. They would have used them as guidelines, but there was no right to refuse unsafe work, no enforceable obligations for occupational health and safety tests, and no ability of inspectors to lay charges in case something went wrong.

The excuse was always that we could take away their permits and stop them from operating, but that never happened. That did not happen in the offshore because that was too big a step to take. There were no inspectors regularly inspecting offshore, looking for infractions, dealing with them or even performing investigations after incidents had taken place. It was basically left up to the companies.

We have experienced, and we have seen, great disasters. The minister mentioned them. Everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador who was around at the time can remember vividly the sinking of the Ocean Ranger in 1982 and the loss of 84 lives.

● (1620)

It was a great and horrendous tragedy in Newfoundland and Labrador, and it, as was pointed out, led to an inquiry. The inquiry found the causes of the disaster. As always, there were multiple causes, most of which involved a lack of proper safety and a lack of proper planning for safety in the event of something occurring.

The same thing happened in 2009 with the Cougar Helicopters crash, flight 491, where 17 individuals lost their lives. That was the

result of the failure to adequately ensure the helicopter was operated properly, even though there had been a crash in a similar helicopter a couple of years prior in Australia, and the cause of that crash was known.

This is something that we see happening in the offshore. Unfortunately, we see very serious incidents, but luckily, not many more disasters have taken place. The offshore companies have placed an emphasis on safety. I will not take that away from them. They continuously talk about it, but they also want to be in charge of it. They do not really want anyone else telling them how they should be behaving or making sure they are doing things right.

When it came to the helicopter inquiry by Justice Wells, who was a fine jurist and very fine man, he made a series of recommendations with respect to the offshore. The most important one, he said, was that there ought to be an independent regulator that would only have responsibility for looking after offshore health and safety.

An independent regulator would be able to focus on that, and it would not be subject to regulatory capture. This is a well-known term for when the companies have control over the process with ongoing consultation. They ensure that their voices are the loudest and heard by all who have a say. They also delay things, if necessary, to see if they can have a better opportunity to get the regime they want.

I very much believe that this is part of the delay that has led to where we are today. In the case of the government, I think it is shameful to have a lack of diligence in ensuring that there would not be a lapse in the regulations during which they cease to be enforceable, which has happened.

Yes, they are revived retroactively, but that does not do anything to provide enforcement to take place if something happens in the interim. In fact, the legislation that is before us today, which will pass, has a very specific reference to that issue. There is a clause in the bill that specifically says:

No person shall be convicted of an offence under a provision of a regulation revived under subsection (1) if the offence was committed during the period beginning on January 1, 2021 and ending on the day before the day on which this section comes into force.

This means that this section would not come into force until it is passed by the Governor General. Therefore, we have a lapse which specifically makes it impossible to charge anyone for something that may happen in the interim. This may be a technicality, but nevertheless, that is the reality of leaving that gap in place.

I will illustrate this point with an incident that was made known to the public on May 17 of this year by the Hibernia Management and Development Company, HMD, the operator of the Hibernia platform. It reported that on May 13, 2021, two workers were engaged in the lift of a container when part of the crane rig assembly was dropped. There were no injuries, but there was a 10-metre drop, which could have been fatal.

The incident had the potential for a fatality, based on the dropped object prevention scheme calculator, which is an industry standard. This resulted, of course, in the ceasing of operations and an investigation to be carried out.

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I will read from the last two paragraphs of HMDC's report, which says, "HMDC ceased all crane operations and has initiated an investigation into the root cause of the incident", and rightly so. However, the next line reads, "The C-NLOPB is monitoring HMDC's investigation of the incident."

• (1625)

Is it not interesting that the investigation into a safety incident that was a potential fatality was done by the company? Is it not the role of the body responsible for health and safety on the offshore to conduct an investigation and determine what the cause is? Is it not its role to find out from an independent objective body, responsible for health and safety investigations and ensuring that adequate systems are in place, if there was a violation of a regulation so it could potentially lay a charge?

No, it was being conducted by the company itself. That situation exists now under the current regulations, which were put in place in 2014. They are the ones we are discussing as to whether they should be made permanent or what the permanent regulations should be. To me it is illustrative of the whole history of the ongoing regime of offshore health and safety in the offshore in Newfoundland and Labrador, and in Nova Scotia as well.

This has been complained about in legislatures. When I was in the legislature in Newfoundland and Labrador as a member of that House of Assembly, I complained many times about the inadequacy of offshore health and safety regulations. The same thing was happening in Nova Scotia. It was under the same regime.

Only after the results of the Wells inquiry into offshore safety was it decided that there ought to be enforceable regulations. These transitional regulations, which are there now, were brought in. It was decided there would be a consultation to make permanent regulations, but we still do not have permanent regulations six years after that legislation was passed.

As has been pointed out, not only did a delay take place, and we can list all the reasons why, though I will not rehash them, as the minister did a great job listing all the reasons why 300 pages of regulations could not be dealt with in six years, but it was to the point that it was not until the first week of December, with the regulations about to expire on December 31, that the government acted to extend these regulations for another year to allow it to complete the process.

That is obviously a failure of diligence, priorities and taking seriously the need for what we have been calling for for more than 25 years, which is that workers be protected by an effective, enforceable offshore health and safety regime. That is just not good enough. It shows a terrific disrespect for the importance of the health and safety of Newfoundland and Labrador workers and workers from all over the country who work offshore. We need to make sure that proper regulations are in place.

I say with some regret that we have not seen the proper respect for the recommendations that were made by Justice Wells. We have not seen a proper respect for the need for employer-employee involvement. There were advisory boards that were part of the legislation in 2014. This is 2021, and we do not have an offshore health

and safety advisory board in place in Newfoundland and Labrador because the governments have failed to appoint them.

Only recently did the federal government appoint anyone on their side. The province has not done so yet. What is going on? Why is it that the workers in the offshore of Newfoundland and Labrador do not get the respect they deserve from government? Why are they not treated the same as workers would be on land?

Health and safety advisory committees are standard fare. There is supposed to be consultation. The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, the union representing two of the rigs offshore, has told me it has not been consulted on who the appointment should be representing workers. It is written into the legislation, but it has not been consulted.

• (1630)

What is going on? This is a serious case of neglect of the importance of this issue. It is a serious case of undervaluing the need for a regime, which has been recommended by Justice Wells. As I pointed out, he was a very thorough, considerate, judicial personage who, with a tremendous amount of experience and respect, made these recommendations and said they ought to be in place, they ought to be enforceable and they ought to be done by an independent board. This would ensure there is no opportunity for regulatory capture and ensure there is a focus, specifically in this case, on the health and safety of workers. We have tried everything else, so let us follow the example of Norway, Australia and the United Kingdom. They suffered in some cases from very serious disasters in their offshore and understood that it was necessary to have an independent body, which they now have.

I have a few minutes left, but I do not intend to use all of my time. We are agreeing, of course, to pass this legislation speedily today. We have been consulted on this for quite some time and have indicated our intention to support the bill, with speedy passage. However, we do want to take the time to ensure that people know that this is, in fact, a very black mark on the Government of Canada, both this one and the previous one, since it failed to take up the proper recommendations and follow through. Indeed, there is a mark on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador as well for not appointing people to the offshore health and safety advisory board and insisting that the government play a role as well.

There are partners in this process and they all have their obligations to fulfill. In the case of the Government of Canada, it is the lead on this. It is the one with the experts and expertise. It has been putting its shoulder to the wheel, but it has not been putting its shoulder to the wheel very quickly, and the delays are unconscionable.

Government Orders

I would like to see this passed today, but I hope that despite whatever has happened between December and today with the passage of the bill, the people who are working on these 300 pages have gone through a few more pages. I certainly hope they were not waiting until we passed this legislation to get down to brass tacks and finish the job. We are prepared to finish the job today with respect to the legislation, but I wanted to point out the failings of the government in not getting the job done earlier and leaving the gap in place.

In the case of the incident that I referred to, if there was a reason for a violation of the regulations that existed, although I am not suggesting that there was at all, no charges could be laid because the bill we are passing today says specifically that we cannot do that. This points out and illustrates the difficult problems, as well as the government's failure in not properly bringing this legislation before the House in a timely fashion.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. It is so fortunate that we have someone with such a depth of knowledge on this issue. He has been involved with it for the last 30 years, ever since the offshore sector started in Newfoundland. He has been working with the workers to make sure they have these rights, and I can only imagine how frustrating it is for him to be here today talking about this.

The representative of one of the unions involved, Unifor, called this whole process an epic failure. I can ask a bunch of questions, but I will ask the member to zero in on the issue of the joint offshore health and safety advisory council. Apparently the federal government has appointed members to it, but Newfoundland and Labrador has not. There seems to be no process for the unions and workers to select their representatives.

I am wondering if the member can go back to that and explain some of the timelines. Why is this happening? Why can we not have that independence, with workers representing their rights for a safe workplace on that council?

● (1635)

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I have been involved for many years and I know some of the players involved. I knew people who were victims of the *Ocean Ranger* tragedy. One was a classmate of mine from grammar school. In the case of the Cougar helicopter crash, a cousin of mine was one of the victims.

Most people in Newfoundland and Labrador have some connection to someone who died in one of those incidents, such as a member of their extended family. It is a well-known and excruciating reality that this is important to our province, yet we have seen a failure since 2014 to even appoint a board and do what Nova Scotia did. Its board was delayed, but it was appointed in 2019 and has been meeting twice a year since.

Why there is a failure in Newfoundland I cannot explain. It is up to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to do so. The failure to consult with workers shows disrespect for the process. It does not say that the board must be appointed by them, but they have to be consulted. I do not think they were even consulted in this place.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was good to hear the member from Newfoundland and Labrador, and I listened closely to his speech.

One concern I have with the general history of the current Liberal government is that it seems quick to talk the game when it comes to federal and provincial negotiations, but it does otherwise. This seems to be another example. Although at press conferences and meetings they say the right things, when it comes to actually accomplishing the objectives that are needed for the best interests of Canadians, the results look very different from what is noted in a press release or question in question period, whatever the case may be.

I am wondering if the member has further comments on that.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I think there is a serious disconnect between what is said and what is done when it comes to the Liberal government. Essentially, the kind of work we are talking about here is the work of government. It needs to make sure we are doing the work in the background and that what is happening is supposed to be happening. It is important in this case to the workers in Newfoundland and Labrador. We need to keep our eye on the obligations to ensure that we do not have a lapse in regulations, as we saw here starting on January 1.

I am shocked to see this, and I think the member put it well: We see lots of pretty talk about what the government stands for and what it believes in, but when it comes to following through, often we do not see anything.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to provide a couple of comments and a question. The legislation we have before us is a priority for the government. We care deeply about the health and safety of workers. We have a very strong advocacy group within the Atlantic caucus, and it would not take anything but a government to deal with the issue.

Does the member recognize that we should try to get this done before the summer? It appears that we have the political support to do that.

Also, in the last year there has been a great demand for other types of legislation and a legislative agenda to deal with the pandemic. For the government, a balancing is required, but this does not mean that the government is being insensitive to the workers. After all, we do want this legislation passed, and we appreciate the support and co-operation that is coming from the opposition.

● (1640)

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that a lot of legislation needs to be passed, but my concern here is different. The member talked about the forceful Atlantic caucus. How did this end up falling through the cracks? This could have been put in place in the fall. The co-operation the government is getting now would have been readily available in the fall because no one wants to see these regulations lapse.

Government Orders

There was no need for this kind of debate, frankly, and for accusing the government of falling asleep at the switch, failing to take seriously the rights of offshore workers and allowing legislation to lapse that was enforcing offshore regulations. That seems to be the problem I am concerned about.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Red Deer—Lacombe, Public Safety; the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable, Rail Transportation; and the hon. member for Vancouver East, Health.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill S-3, which is before Parliament today. As a member of Parliament from Newfoundland and Labrador, this issue is obviously important not only to me as a parliamentarian, but to many across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Let me start by saying that, unfortunately, there are many tragic events that shape the history, culture and strength of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Most of them have happened in the offshore industry or are somehow linked to the ocean, as ours is an ocean province of Canada.

One of them is definitely the *Ocean Ranger* disaster. That itself was a catalyst for safety in the offshore oil and gas industry. On February 15, 1982, the drilling and exploration of the industry off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland and Labrador resulted in a tragedy like none other we had seen in our history. Just 267 kilometres from St. John's, 84 crew members tragically lost their lives. There were no survivors.

On March 13, 1985, we had the Universal helicopter crash in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador, which killed six people. It is another tragic, sad and unfortunate event in our history.

That brings us to March 12, 2009, just 12 years ago, when Cougar flight 491 crashed, killing 17 people en route from St. John's, Newfoundland, to the oil fields off our coastline. It is another sad, historic and tragic event that has shaped the province that we are proud of and call our home.

Those of us who live in Newfoundland and Labrador and work in occupations in the offshore oil industry, the offshore fishery or the many other industry sectors know that we work in a climate that is rugged. We work in an environment that is often harsh. We also know that in our history there has been tragic loss. We would like to think that in some cases we can do more to prevent tragic loss in the future.

In 2009, when the accident with the Cougar helicopter happened, I was the leader of the opposition for the Liberal Party in Newfoundland and Labrador. I remember that day very well and remember the days that followed. A regulatory body was appointed to look at safety in the offshore industry. I watched as many families crumbled in the midst of the tragedy and as they mourned their loss and the province mourned its loss. They were difficult days, and it was difficult to look into what needed to be done to create more safety and more protection for workers in that industry.

It has been a long and difficult road. I was an opposition leader at the time. I have served as much of my career politically in opposition as I have served in government. It is always easy to point a finger and ask, "Why was this not done?" or "Why could that not have been avoided?" Realistically, we live in a world where, unfortunately, we have come to learn from tragedy and to do better. That is what we are trying to do today in this country. We are trying to do better. We are trying to ensure that the safety, welfare and protection of people in the offshore oil and gas industry, whether in Newfoundland and Labrador or anywhere else in this country, are considered and that the safety regulations are upheld.

Earlier, one of my colleagues, who I work with at the natural resources committee, spoke about the work of Chief Justice Wells, as did my colleague for St. John's East, who was in the Newfoundland and Labrador legislature with me. Hansard can be checked, but I think between the two of us, not a day was missed to raise the issues of health and safety in the offshore industry.

• (1645)

Chief Justice Wells was appointed to do a job, which, in my opinion, he did well. He had a team of individuals who really worked hard to ensure that the recommendations and regulations around this industry would be sufficient, at least a starting point, to where we needed to go. The regulations came into force to a certain degree and, as the member for St. John's East outlined, some of them we still work toward. Just recently, the federal government made the first appointments to the health and safety board, and I am assured the province is falling in line and this board will be active in short order.

There are several things I want to highlight today.

This bill came to the natural resources committee, on which I sit as a member. We had an opportunity to question the minister, to evaluate the bill and study it on its merits. It absolutely got dealt with in short order and was supported by the entire committee, which is made up of all parties. I want to extend thanks to my colleagues on the natural resources committee for doing just that. They understood the importance of this and the task at hand for us. Therefore, we moved ahead.

For those who are not sure what this debate is about today, Bill S-3 would extend the application of six transitional occupational health and safety regulations under the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act. The transitional regulations were implemented in 2014 under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, along with a five-year automatic repeal date to allow for the development of permanent regulations, which is where we are today. The repeal date was subsequently extended by one year via the Budget implementation Act, 2018, No. 2.

I want to assure members today that we are very committed to ensuring that the highest priority of health and safety and environmental protection in all aspects of our natural resources industries, most definitely in the sectors we are debating today, is held up and given the priority and interest that it deserves. I have heard different people in this debate ask why the bill has not moved forward more quickly and why it was not done a year ago. There is some legitimacy in the question and I accept that, but this bill is one that cannot be taken lightly.

The transitional occupational health and safety regulations under that act, as we know, were extended. We also know that these regulations are very complex and are to be looked at in tremendous detail and implemented in a course of action that reaches, protects and secures those who work in the industry to the greatest extent of our ability.

We launch many pieces of legislation in the House of Commons that we wish we could do in record time. A lot of times we set deadlines that cannot always be met, but no one should ever doubt our commitment to the safety, welfare and health of the offshore workers in every industry sector in Canada, in this case, the offshore workers in Newfoundland and Labrador. We know that occupational health and safety regulations are important to all employees in all industries and workplace settings in Canada, including those in the offshore, and we need to do what we have a responsibility to do as a government to ensure they are enacted and followed.

● (1650)

In 2014, when the government amended the accord's act to clarify the legal framework for offshore occupational health and safety and to establish the transitional regulations, that was a highlight for us. Since that time, we have worked diligently with the government and industry in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Nova Scotia to develop permanent regulations that are tailored to the offshore, one of the most remote and dangerous places to work in our country today.

Will I be offended by those who feel we should have done it much more quickly than we have? I will not be, because these permanent regulations are there to protect lives. It is not a political gain and no one is playing games here. This is very serious business. Protecting the lives of those who work in a dangerous industry like we have in offshore oil and gas in Newfoundland and Labrador needs to be done cautiously and to the greatest extent possible to ensure that lives are protected in all aspects.

I am very proud of our record as a government when it comes to responding to the oil and gas industry in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I was around in the days when the C-NLOPB was created, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board. It is a world-class regime. We have grown to be proud of it in Newfoundland Labrador because we built it. It is ours, and it is working for people in our industry and for our industry as a whole. Can we improve upon it? Of course, we can. There is always room to improve.

Government Orders

When we look at the oil industry in this province, we have some of the lowest emissions per barrel in the world. It is sweet light crude. It is oil that will be a part of the mix for a very long time. When we are looking at future dependency on the oil industry itself, we are looking to sweet light crude. We are looking to places like Newfoundland and Labrador where we can produce low-emissions oil, where we can contribute to a world that is carbon conscious. That is so important for us in this industry, in this province.

I would like to mention the Atlantic accord, which we renewed. We all know that the Atlantic accord has been one of the most positive negotiations to have occurred between Ottawa and Newfoundland and Labrador since our Confederation. I will always compliment those who had a hand in it doing so, just like I am proud of our government for renewing the Atlantic accord for Newfoundland and Labrador, a \$2.5 billion renewed accord.

We invested \$400 million for workers and in lowering emissions in the oil and gas industry. When we were going through a pandemic, we did not walk away from workers in the oil and gas industry. We held on for them. They were not always easy days or easy negotiations, but through a lot of support and tremendous leadership of groups like the C-NLOPB, the Newfoundland and Labrador Oil and Gas Industries Association and many others, we were able to work with them on the industry recovery assistance fund and make other investments in the offshore oil industry for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Therefore, we did invest \$400 million for workers in this province and to help lower emissions in the industry.

We helped move the environmental assessment for exploratory wells from 900 days, as it was, to 90 days. That in itself was a tremendous shift for the industry, allowing it to monopolize time and to invest money in different ways and to protect workers in this province.

● (1655)

We are proud of these things. As the members all know, this past year, since March 2020, we have been living in a different environment and a different climate. Whether it is in governance, investment, oil development or environmental protection, we have all been living through a different time. Yes, maybe we would have liked to move things around the regulations a lot sooner, but we are moving them, and we are moving them in the right direction.

When people live in a province like I do, that has had to succumb to so much tragedy and challenge in industry sectors, they will understand how very important it is to ensure that the health and safety of workers in the offshore industry and the oil industry in Newfoundland and Labrador are protected. When people work in an industry like this, they know it is built on pride but they also know it is an industry that can suffer tremendous loss, and that is the unfortunate thing about it.

I have a few more points to share.

Government Orders

I want to commend the minister, the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl, for the work he has done in leading this industry for us in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Canada and for the contributions he has made both in investment and in changing environmental legislation and, in this case, in providing the regulations for the protection of workers in the offshore industry. I appreciate the work he has done and his leadership on this issue. I also appreciate the work of all MPs in Newfoundland and Labrador and for their support on this, raising their voices over many years to ensure the protection of safety for workers in the industry.

I also want to commend the private sector, and I speak of Cougar Helicopters. I know that in the aftermath of what happened in 2009, it did a tremendous amount of work and made investments to ensure the health and safety of all its workers who travel with it and are affiliated with the company and the offshore industry. I have met with them many times. I am confident when I say the company has some of the best search and rescue capabilities today that exist anywhere in the country and probably anywhere in the world. It has not only emerged as a company that protects the rights, health, well-being and safety of workers in Canada, but it has brought those lessons and precedents for good, safe operations to many other jurisdictions around the world. I want to recognize it for what it continues to do day in and day out in this province.

Last, I want to recognize the work of Noia and Charlene Johnson, who I have dealt with on a number of occasions when dealing with the oil industry and listening to the messages of workers and industry stakeholders within the province. We have certainly respected their voices. We respect the tremendous amount of knowledge and the depth of experience their organization brings to issues like this and to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and for always being aware that we work in an industry that is tragic, an industry that is relentless on most days.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have a history, from the early days of going to the ice in the seal hunt to today going to the offshore oil rigs. We have had a history of working in difficult and challenging environments. We have had a history of working in some of the most weather-beaten areas of the world.

• (1700)

When one walks the shores of Newfoundland and Labrador, one recognizes that. One only has to look at the geology that encompasses this land we call home to see the ancient rock, to see the wear and tear of our shorelines over many years and see how rugged the ocean can be and how difficult and harsh the environment is that we often work in as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I thank my colleagues, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Government of Canada, the Senate, everyone who has had a role to play in this, including the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, and I hope we can see the passage of these amendments and this bill today so we can move on with doing the important work that needs to be done in protecting the health and safety of offshore workers in Newfoundland and Labrador's oil industry.

I am happy to take some questions.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened quite attentively to the member's speech. I recognize that in some of these more remote parts of Canada there are specific needs that need to be addressed, and I appreciate her outlining that. I am just wondering if the member could explain to the House why Unifor, the union representing 700 of the 1,200 workers on the offshore, was not consulted on the labour representative for the occupational health and safety advisory committee.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the support the NDP is giving us toward this bill. Obviously, the committee is now being appointed to look at health and safety within the offshore board. We also know that the C-NLOPB is made up of representatives from across the province with different backgrounds and different skill sets who are able to represent the industry and the interests of workers as well. I really believe there is always room to make improvements, but I also believe that the people who make up these boards and those who are being proposed for appointment are people who have tremendous knowledge and skills and are able to make valuable contributions toward the interests and the protection of safety of workers.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly totally agree that this legislation needs to be passed, but in the context of the debate today, I heard something of a fairy tale about a wonderful agency that works well and regulates to protect workers and protects the environment. The fairy tale says that this is the Canada-Newfoundland & Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board. Unfortunately, we know from the Wells report that it should have been much more vigilant when 17 people died in the Cougar crash, but I want to focus also on the negligence of the agency in protecting the environment.

As I said earlier, it has a built-in conflict of interest in that its job is to promote offshore oil and gas. Many scientists, including Professor Ian Jones at Memorial University, whom I am sure the hon. member knows of, and a number of scientists within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, have lamented that the Canada-Newfoundland & Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board seems to have a fictitious approach to protection for marine mammals from seismic testing. Seismic testing causes noise levels of as much as 260 decibels 24-7 in the offshore.

I wonder if the hon. member would not agree that it would be better to have separate agencies protect workers and protect the environment.

• (1705)

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her always insightful comments in to debate.

Government Orders

Obviously, in the oil and gas industry in Newfoundland and Labrador, when we look at the C-NLOPB, we look at it as something that was built in Newfoundland and Labrador. Very seldom in our history have we had autonomy or control over any resource development sector within our backyard. The C-NLOPB was the world-class regime that was created to do that. Is it perfect? Absolutely not. Can it be improved? We all recognize that it can be improved, even going back to the recommendations of the regulatory review that was done. We are looking to try to make those transitions and to look at those improvements.

When it comes to the environmental protections, we did complete overhauls with regard to environmental regulations and legislation as it relates to Canada's resource development sector. That is governed by legislation. While many may feel that this process is too lenient, there are others who feel it is not lenient enough. There is always a crossover in terms of whether there is a happy medium here or not.

I think the only thing that really makes concrete sense is ensuring that we have environmental regulations that are well-thought-out, that look to the protection of the marine environment and the natural environment itself, and that ensure there is cohesion between resource development and the environment. Any time those targets are not being met, I think there is always room for re-evaluation and for further discussion.

We need to ensure that parties are always open to that and that these things are not done to the detriment of other interests.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the parliamentary secretary's speech with great interest and certainly will be curious to go back to listen to some of her comments regarding resource development and provincial jurisdiction. I am not quite sure of the context in which those comments were made, but it certainly will be interesting.

A number of individuals have highlighted the fact that this seems to have been delayed quite significantly. This is simply another extension on top of a number of other extensions. I am curious to ask the member specifically, is this something that we are going to see come before the House again before the end of the year, looking for another extension on top of this? Does it appear that the negotiations are going along at a rate that can see that this transition is actually a transition and not simply another step that will require a further transitional agreement?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, what we are doing today is basically an amendment around a time process to establish the transitional regulations as was introduced previously. We have been working very diligently as a government with Newfoundland and Labrador, and with Nova Scotia, to develop permanent regulations, regulations tailored directly to the offshore industry in those particular regions.

As I have said, we are dealing with some of the most remote and dangerous places in the country to work, and the workers there deserve to have the amount of time, interest and knowledge invested into ensuring that these regulations are not only tailored to the dangerous and remote working conditions that they find themselves in, but they are also there to ensure that they are safe.

We know these are complex regulations. It is our hope that it will be completed in the timetable outlined. We are not foreseeing, at this stage, that there could be further delays.

• (1710)

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have heard many times in this debate that the government's top priority is this bill, as it has said about many other bills. I have also heard many times that the Liberals have the backs of the workers, but the problem is that they let this legislation lapse. Where is the workers protection? They go to work to earn an income, they come home to their families and they want to be safe. Now they are risking their lives because there is no legislation to back them up.

Why should workers believe you now, that you have their back and this is a priority, when you have failed them since December 2020?

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind hon. members to direct their comments to the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I will point out once again to the member that these are complex regulations and, as I said, they are being tailored to a very unique industry in the offshore in Newfoundland and Labrador. The accord also acts to establish a joint management framework where Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia are equal partners. All three governments must have the opportunity to vet the regulations through their approval processes, not just the Government of Canada.

There have been unanticipated events. The global pandemic had an impact on the delay, let us not kid ourselves. It has had an impact on everything we have been doing as citizens in this country and around the world. There are sometimes going to be unanticipated events like this pandemic. The timing of the bill reflects the recent delays that we have seen as part of COVID. I think the member knows and understands that.

These amendments would provide continuity in the regulatory framework for the transitional regulations that were automatically repealed on December 31, 2020. As the member will see, clause 3 of the bill ensures that the regulations will be revived and retroactive to January 1, 2021 and—

The Deputy Speaker: We have come to the end of the time allocated for the hon. member.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be able to enter into debate on this important subject, certainly when it deals with one of the most important industries in this country and specifically Bill S-3. It deals with the safety of workers within Canada's oil and gas sector, specifically the offshore oil and gas sector. I will get into some specifics around this bill and highlight some of the realities faced by an industry that I am quite familiar with when it comes to the onshore side of oil and gas. I am less familiar with the offshore, but certainly am proud of the contribution that it makes to the Canadian economy.

Government Orders

I want to start by addressing a number of things that the minister stated in his remarks when we opened the debate on Bill S-3 a bit earlier this afternoon. I do find it quite tragic, actually, that even the minister's own department talks about all of the provinces in this country that produce oil and gas, but he seems to reference quite often that there are three oil and gas-producing provinces in this country. In fact there are more than seven, with some further legacy production associated with it, and the impact of oil and gas is truly national whether on the revenue side of the government's balance sheet, through royalties or the fact that the economic impacts are truly significant.

When we have an industry like the oil and gas sector, in any of the dozens of communities that I represent small businesses are impacted by oil and gas. In many cases, we see a truly national impact through that economy. I want to specifically address that and a couple of other things that I will get to. Whether intentionally or not, either way, it is troubling that the impact of the oil and gas sector is seemingly diminished in both our current national economy but also the important place that I believe it has in the coming years and decades. Even as the members opposite like to often talk about this transition, the reality is that oil and gas still plays a key role, and I will get into some of the specifics around that.

Further, we are seeing a bit more often, especially when the Liberal hypocrisy on Line 5 and KXL is being called out, that the Liberals seem to up their rhetoric when it comes to the transition side. It seems to be the trend of left-leaning parties to bolster and talk about the impending energy transition. They will talk about the tough decisions that have to be made, and, yet, they refuse to acknowledge the reality that exists within an industry that is not going away anytime soon but can lead the world when it comes to an industry that will see demand. Even the most conservative estimates see oil and gas demand increasing for about two decades. We saw a significant decrease in demand during the COVID-19 pandemic, but that is estimated to exceed pre-pandemic levels in the coming months, maybe sooner, depending on the rate of economic recovery.

I find it troubling that there is a lot of talk around how tough decisions have to be made, how we have to somehow punish the proud workers within these sectors in the offshore side of the industry off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, the workers in a factory that has contracts with oil sands companies, or the constituents whom I represent who travel to work in camps up north or check wells locally, some even part-time. In fact, I was speaking to a retiree here recently who still checks a few wells on a part-time basis to help supplement their income. It is troubling that there is such a narrow focus and a refusal to acknowledge the reality that exists in Canada's energy sector.

• (1715)

Finally, politics are being played with the talk around the delay. It could not be further from the truth that the Liberals are quick to blame the opposition for all the ills of the world, that is simply not true. The reality is the government has mismanaged the legislative agenda and, in fact, not just in this Parliament. Canadians have a lot of understanding, given the fact we have faced a global pandemic and that there are significant challenges associated with a number of bills that nobody could have anticipated.

Canadians and the opposition acknowledge that. However, here is the reality, the government, time and time again, has demonstrated that it does not negotiate in good faith, that it is willing to play political games, and that it is more reactive than anything when it comes to the issues it faces.

I will point back to prior to when I was elected. About halfway through the last Parliament, it seemed like the government got busy on the legislative side of things. I remember reading a column about halfway through the last Parliament. I am paraphrasing but the headline was something along the lines of it being the least effective legislative majority government in recent history, and it even pointed back to some previous minority Parliaments, saying they were more effective at getting legislation passed.

Then all of a sudden, in the final couple years of the last Parliament, it was almost like the Liberals forgot that Parliament even existed. There are a lot of examples I could get into that showed they truly show contempt for Canada's national democratic institutions. I will try to hold back on that front today, as we are working diligently to get this legislation passed. It is troubling that the trend seems to be continuing, and that the minister simply plays politics. The parliamentary secretary and members stand up and simply blame opposition members, because they want to speak to important issues, like Bill S-3. The Liberals are saying that if the opposition even wants to debate, then somehow it is holding up important legislative issues, delaying the process, and on and on with those sorts of excuses.

It is very troubling. This was prior to the pandemic, and I saw it first-hand. Shortly after being elected, I saw the way that the Liberals and previous minister responsible dealt with the new CUSMA, the renegotiated NAFTA. It was astounding to listen to the government trying to blame the opposition for its failures on a trade agreement that had true and significant impacts. That is one thing, but instead of taking responsibility, the Liberals blamed their political opponents, trying to pivot and explain it away. Instead of answering questions, they simply blamed delay, and we saw the poor outcomes that were the result.

It was before the pandemic that I started to see this trend as an elected parliamentarian. It is unfortunate that we saw it time and time again throughout the pandemic. The members opposite like to say how prorogation only lost a day and a half of Parliament, making these sorts of declarations, pointing to the legislative calendar. They know full well that the reality is very different. I could go into that, but I do want to get to the specifics of this debate on Bill S-3, an act to amend the Offshore Health and Safety Act.

When I first saw this bill introduced, specifically because it had to do with the energy industry, which is a personal interest of mine, I looked into it. I was surprised to see that this was an extension of transitional regulations that had been extended a number of times before. There is the need for certainty for workers, as has been pointed out quite a number of times throughout the course of the afternoon. Workers deserve certainty around the environment they are asked to work in.

One of the changes that took place, as was pointed out earlier, was the change from a 24-month extension to a 12-month extension.

Government Orders

• (1720)

I hope that the government is working proactively and not reactively. I hope we do not have to debate another bill like this come next fall, because the government was not able to get some of these agreements done on what is, admittedly, a very complex set of regulations that deal with provincial and federal jurisdiction and health and safety in a very challenging work environment. However, this is not to say that the bill speaks to the importance of time to ensure that there is respect for the stakeholders in Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia to ensure that there is that fulsome and proper agreement.

I would note that the bill seems to anticipate that there would be delays, and we are debating it now close to the end of May. I anticipate that the bill will likely pass today, but it anticipated the fact that this probably would not get done and so it would make these transitional regulations retroactive to the end of last year where they had expired previously.

I would note, and a number of others have made some good points about this, that it is so important to respect our democratic institutions. Certainly, I do not think there is any question that all members of Parliament want to ensure that workers have a safe workplace. I do find it troubling that the government would take for granted the legislative process to the point where that would be forced to be written into legislation. I truly believe that had the government been more proactive, had it been more willing to work through the processes that evolved, we could have come to a much better agreement that would not have left that uncertainty that exists when it comes to the retroactivity and ensuring that there is no lapse, because workers certainly deserve that.

We see, as is often the case, that when workplace measures are brought into force, it is in the context of tragedy. Although I am not as familiar with the offshore industry as I am with the onshore in Alberta and Saskatchewan, I do believe that it is important to note a couple of the disasters that I have read about and learned more about since this debate came forward.

For example, there was the 1982 *Ocean Ranger* disaster when more than 80 people passed away and the tragedy associated with that, the 2009 Cougar Helicopters Flight 491 crash, and a number of other incidents where, tragically, Canadians have lost their lives. Closer to home, to translate some of these losses, I am aware of individuals who have lost their lives working in what is a challenging environment, the oil and gas sector. I will get into some of my experience with that in a moment.

Certainly, the demands to keep the lights on require risks. It is important to ensure that, as parliamentarians, we create the frameworks required for the certainty of those workers, the corporations and all those involved with the extraction of these resources to ensure that there is accountability, certainty and clarity as to how that works.

This brings me to the conclusion of some of the specifics on why I think Bill S-3 is so important and why I look forward to being able to support it. As mentioned by the previous speaker, the parliamentary secretary, the government is hopeful that it can complete these negotiations and have an agreement so that these transitional regulations are able to be replaced with permanent ones within the

next year. I do hope that is the case, but there is part of me that is very pessimistic when I look at the history of this government.

I want to take advantage of the few minutes left of my time to talk about a number of things that are incredibly important for the context around this discussion.

• (1725)

I will start by simply saying this. I was made aware recently that a state employee pension fund had decided to divest itself of Canadian oil and gas shares. I had my staff look into that. Certainly, I was curious. That pension fund is entitled to do that, obviously. Its job is to ensure security for pensioners, but I had my staff look into the reasoning behind it. What I found was that this pension fund, under the guise of environmental protection and environmental social governance, was divesting itself of Canadian energy. The fund managers talked about it in the context of net zero by 2050. They wanted to ensure their fund was acting in a way that would encourage net zero by 2050.

Here is what was very troubling about that pension fund. When we looked a little bit more into some of the other holdings that fund has, there was hypocrisy. It has significant investments in oil and gas production in other parts of the world, and in companies that do not have nearly the same environmental record as Canadian companies that this pension fund had divested from, specifically. A number of these companies had even committed and laid out a specific framework saying how they would be at net zero going forward, yet the pension fund sold off its investments in those companies that were environmentally responsible. I would suggest that was largely because of a type of environmental activism that is more focused on image than on the reality that exists on the ground. On the other side, the fund was still invested in other corporations that are extracting oil and gas from other jurisdictions with no plan to get to net zero by 2050.

Canada's oil and gas sector is about 10% of Canada's GDP. It has contributed about half a trillion dollars directly to government coffers. About 500,000 Canadians have direct and indirect jobs from it. A lot of Canadians do not even realize how absolutely significant those indirect jobs are. Some of the vehicles produced at a factory in Ontario are being sold because of oil and gas. The buses at a factory in Quebec are being used, and large contracts are being given to oil sands producers. When it comes to the energy industry, including offshore, there is a lot of specific technology aiding in research and development, including the fact that energy can and should be a part of our green future. One of the most troubling realities is the hypocrisy in the conversation around oil and gas, and Canada's role in it. Canada can be the supplier of choice and I hope that we remain so.

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I will wrap up my speech with some facts about Atlantic Canada's offshore oil and gas industry. More than 5,000 people are employed in it directly, and there are 600 supply and service companies. In the last two decades it has had cumulative expenditures of almost \$70 billion, and more than \$20 billion of cumulative royalties. These are industries worth supporting. These are industries worth fighting for. That includes ensuring that the workers have the protections that they need, which is what Bill S-3 is about.

Overall, I would urge parliamentarians to take seriously the reality, and the place that this sector and its workers have in Canada's present and Canada's future.

• (1730)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have two quick questions for the member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

First, has anything happened from December 31 of last year, when the regulations for offshore lapsed, to today that would give even one hour of delay to the government in producing the permanent regulations in the offshore that it has talked about it being important to pass this legislation for?

Second, I know the member is a new member of Parliament. Did he ever think that he would see a government allow regulations that provide for occupational health and safety, that provide for enforceable regulations for inspections and charges, if necessary, to lapse and no longer be in effect?

• (1735)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, those are a good couple of questions, and I certainly appreciate serving on the public safety committee with the member.

I think that he brings up a good point: I have been astounded, since being elected, by the government's lack of management whether with the legislative timetable or simply the reactive nature that it takes to everything it does. The Liberals seem to be more worried about the present polling than they do about ensuring Canadians have good governance. That is troubling, because that does not result in the best interests of Canadians, and in this case Canadian workers, being respected.

With respect to some of the regulations, over the last five or six months thousands of oil and gas workers in Atlantic Canada have been going to work with uncertainty surrounding the regulations that are required in order for them to be protected in their workplaces. That is troubling, and it speaks to some of the challenges.

Although I have never worked in the oil and gas sector offshore, I spent close to 10 years driving a pressure truck in east-central Alberta's oil patch. It is how I paid for my college and university. There is a reality around sour oil and gas, the specifics around that, and having to deal with changes in regulations because of tragedy. There is no question that it is dangerous, both in terms of the immediate dangerous activities one has to do on a daily basis and also the longer-term effects that we are learning more about when it comes to chemicals and whatnot. I had a thankfully small workplace accident that resulted in some changes being made at the company that I worked for, in terms of practice, to ensure that sort of thing did not happen again, so I thank the member for his questions and his

advocacy and for the opportunity to highlight some of the challenges that are faced because of the present circumstances we find ourselves in.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I put my hand up at the last minute. I figured I would get one more question in and hear from my colleague. Could he elaborate just a little further on how vital health and safety regulations are, and how seriously the industry at large takes it? Obviously, he has experience working in the prairie regions in the oil and gas sector, but not so much offshore. Could he elaborate just a little further on that? I think it is extremely important to show just how serious it is, and why it is appalling that the government would take so long to actually move on something like this and wait until the last possible minute, even after the deal had expired, as the previous member who asked a question on this topic alluded to.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from my friend and colleague just across the border. Certainly we have lived some of the realities of the economic benefits and impacts of the current government's management of the energy sector, specifically the cancellation of the KXL pipeline, which exclusively went through the constituencies of Cypress Hills—Grasslands and Battle River—Crowfoot to where it was to cross the border into the United States.

The member makes a really good point. The energy industry takes these things very seriously, and the government needs to ensure that there are strong regulations and that workers are protected. I saw first-hand, during the 10 years that I worked in the energy industry, some more lax regulations in the beginning, and in some cases tragedies. I believe there was an oil and gas worker from the member's constituency who tragically passed away because of exposure to sour gas that led to some pretty radical changes, to the point of workers needing to carrying SCBAs and additional testing equipment to ensure that other workers in similar situations would not be exposed to the same threat that led to the tragedy.

I go back further to my late grandfather who helped build one of the first gas facilities at Gooseberry Lake, in the region that I now have the honour of representing. My late grandfather, Felix Kurek, helped physically build it and was then hired to help run it. He spent his entire working career in the energy sector. I heard some of the stories from the early days: if a float on a tailings pond was stuck, they would simply dive in the tailings and go to the float. That was back in the sixties. Things have obviously changed. Now we have world-class environmental regulations and world-class safety regulations that have shown what can be accomplished when industry, government and workers have mutual respect and work together to accomplish something.

I would simply conclude with this. I think that speaks to why the energy industry is so important in this country. We lead the world. People care about where their food comes from, whether it is organic or not, and they care about whether their coffee is fair trade. They care about diamonds in their wedding bands. We need to be the supplier of choice. We can be the supplier of choice when it comes to energy and ensure that there is a strong mutual respect for workers, industry and the governments involved to encourage that development. That can be done. We have seen it done in the past in this country. I lament the fact that we are having some of these conversations today that would question that this can in fact be our future.

• (1740)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate. Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I would ask that the bill be carried unanimously.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member asked that the bill be carried unanimously and seeing no objections, I therefore declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:23 p.m.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Accordingly, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1745)

[English]

PROTECTION OF FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE ACT

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC) moved that Bill C-268, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (intimidation of health care professionals), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise today to begin the debate on my private member's bill, Bill C-268, the protection of freedom of conscience act. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge this bill is built on the hard work and determination of former members of Parliament. The first iteration that sought to address

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this issue was introduced by the late Mark Warawa in 2016, but it did not progress when the government introduced Bill C-14.

I do consider it a tremendous honour that my bill is the same number, C-268, as his was. After Bill C-14 was passed into law, my former colleague David Anderson introduced his private member's bill, Bill C-418, which died on the Order Paper when the election was called in 2019.

I would like to thank all those who have been championing this issue for many years and for their willingness to work with me.

Experts throughout Canada provided information and advice, while thousands of Canadians have voiced their support for protecting our fundamental freedoms. While there are numerous dictionaries that define conscience, they are consistent in defining it as an individual's inner sense of knowing the difference between what is right and wrong and that guides their behaviour.

An article by Cardus called "The Imperative of Conscience Rights" references the following:

"Conscience" traces to the Latin *conscientia*, and is related to the Greek *synderesis*. While *conscientia* refers to the application of our moral knowledge to particular situations, *synderesis* refers to the moral awareness built into each person and that urges us to do good and avoid evil.

Bill C-268 is straightforward as it seeks to enshrine in law a minimum national standard of conscience protections for medical professionals while respecting the jurisdiction of my provincial colleagues to expand on it. It is a response to calls from disability rights groups, first nations, the Ontario Medical Association and many hundreds of medical and mental health professionals to protect conscience rights.

It would ensure the medical professionals who choose to not take part in, or refer a patient for, assisted suicide or medical assistance in dying would never be forced by violence, threats, coercion or loss of employment to violate the freedoms protected in section 2(a) of the charter. This bill also serves to protect the rights of patients to receive a second opinion, and by doing so, would protect our health care system.

In my consultations, I spoke with disability rights advocate Heidi Janz. She told me about being born in the Soviet Union. Doctors told her parents that Heidi would never walk, talk or think and that she would be dependent on others for the rest of her short life. They told her parents to put her into an institution and forget they ever had her. Heidi Janz has severe cerebral palsy.

Her parents did not listen to the dominant narrative of their day. They loved their daughter and believed her life had value. Eventually, they found the support they needed. Today, Dr. Heidi Janz holds a Ph.D. and is an adjunct professor of ethics at the University of Alberta. In her spare time she is a playwright and author, and somehow, despite how busy her life is, she also serves as the chair of the ending of life ethics committee for the Council of Canadians with Disabilities.

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Dr. Janz is a remarkable woman. While some might pity her, she will have none of it. She says that everyone talks about how bad it must be to have a disability, but that she chooses daily to live in opposition to that narrative. She also says that disabled people can be so much more than their diagnosis, and that she is proof of that fact.

If it had been up to the dominant view of her day, she would never have had the chance to disprove that narrative. If her parents had not had the option to find the help they wanted to get that crucial second opinion, none of my colleagues in this place would be hearing about this marvellous woman. This is not just a theoretical story.

In a similar vein, earlier this year the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, who is a doctor herself, wrote to her constituents about her experience of ageism in our health care system as it related to her 93-year-old father.

● (1750)

While I will not repeat the whole story, I will just quote her last two sentences:

My Dad got better without needing the ICU, but I remember thinking that as an MD I had been able to firmly take a stand. I worried that other families wouldn't have been able to question the clear ageism in the choices being put in front of them.

The minister's father and all Canadians have the right to find a doctor who will offer them hope, offer them another choice, offer them a second opinion. All Canadians deserve that same right.

Now, this is anything but a guarantee in Canada. We have passed laws that have the unintended consequence of forcing doctors and medical professionals to provide patients death, regardless of whether they believe it is in their patient's best interest. Bill C-14 and Bill C-7 create a federal standard for medical assistance in dying and assisted suicide, but not for conscience protections. Despite the claims of some, it is patently absurd to argue that a conscience rights bill would somehow interfere with the role of the provinces while the legalization of medical assistance in dying does not.

We are speaking of the very first fundamental freedom laid out in the charter. Ensuring that conscience rights are protected is the responsibility of Parliament and of the Government of Canada, which is why I introduced this bill and why it should be passed. Above all, it is the right thing to do for patients and medical professionals.

Some have tried to frame conscience rights as the rights of the patient versus the rights of the doctor. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, conscience rights are critical to how our health care system works. Patients have the right to a second opinion, but there can be no second opinion if every medical professional is forced to provide the exact same list of options.

Health care is fundamentally about the doctor-patient relationship. Take the case of a psychiatrist who supports MAID in certain circumstances, but who has spent 15 years counselling a patient who suffers from bouts of depression and suicidality. For 15 years, they have built up an understanding and trust. What would happen if that patient, suffering from a bout of suicidality, should demand assisted suicide? Under the current law, that psychiatrist would be forced to refer the patient to someone else so that the patient could die. The psychiatrist must do this, despite knowing that the suicidal

thoughts are temporary, that otherwise the patient is joyful and loves life, and that ending that life is wrong. The psychiatrist's hands are tied. Is that what passes for medical care?

Some might claim that there are safeguards in place to prevent such tragedies, but I ask, are members completely sure? With the passage of Bill C-7, many of the safeguards have been removed. We are talking about ending a human life. There is no room for "maybe" when a life hangs in the balance. Should the first line of safeguards not be the expertise of the medical professionals who know best? If they do not believe death is the answer, should we not at least consider if they are right? This is, after all, a matter of life and death.

Medical assistance in dying and assisted suicide are readily available throughout all of Canada. There are information phone lines, hospitals staffed with willing medical professionals, even email addresses to help set up appointments. In a word, MAID is becoming the status quo. To claim that protecting the conscience rights of medical professionals will somehow block access for those who truly want it is both misleading and nothing but baseless fearmongering.

The Canadian Medical Association stated clearly that conscience protections would not affect access, because there were more than enough physicians willing to offer MAID. This is further reinforced by a McGill study that showed that 71% of recent medical school graduates would be willing to offer MAID.

Every court case on the subject, as well as common sense, has stated clearly that the charter rights of medical professionals are breached when they are forced to either offer or refer assisted suicide or medical assistance in dying. Surely, we are clever enough to ensure access to MAID while still protecting the fundamental charter right to freedom of conscience.

● (1755)

I believe it is no accident that former prime minister, Pierre Trudeau, placed conscience rights as the first of the enumerated rights in our charter. It is an acknowledgement that the state cannot and should not attempt to force any one of us to do what we believe is immoral.

Dozens of first nations leaders wrote to every MP and senator. They said that, "Given our history with the negative consequences of colonialism and the involuntary imposition of cultural values and ideas, we believe that people should not be compelled to provide or facilitate in the provision of MAiD."

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We claim to be a pluralistic, free society. If that is true, it demands of us a tolerance of the moral views of others. Some have argued that protections already exist in Bill C-14. While I applaud the former minister of justice, the hon. member for Vancouver Granville, for ensuring that conscience rights were acknowledged in that legislation, acknowledgement is no longer enough. There are examples of medical professionals being forced or bullied into participation in assisted suicide against their conscience.

Dr. Ellen Warner, an oncologist who has served her patients for 30 years, told me about her experiences. She said:

I think it will shock Canadians to hear of healthcare providers being coerced into participating in MAID, yet such coercion has been happening frequently. A brilliant colleague of mine was bullied into becoming the physician legally responsible for MAID on his hospital ward. It was a great loss to us when he left for a different position. Two other co-workers told me that, despite strong, moral objections, they would carry out MAID if asked to do so for fear of losing their jobs. At one of our staff meetings, a psychiatrist stood up and announced that any physician who does not actively support MAID should not be working at our hospital.

Finally, some have suggested that medical professionals should leave their morality at the door. However, no one truly believes or wants that. As an example, no one would want a doctor to forget their morality if they were offered a bribe to move someone up on a waiting list. If we hold our medical professionals to a higher standard, we cannot then tell them to ignore their personal moral standards. As Dr. Ellen Warner stated, "In the absence of conscience protection, the group with the most to lose are the patients—the people we are all trying to help,"

This bill would protect the doctor-patient relationship by ensuring that doctors and other medical professionals are always able to recommend and provide the care they believe is best for their patient. Canadians need this bill to pass. Canada's medical professionals need this bill to pass. Additionally, they will need individual provincial governments to protect their rights through provincial regulations and legislation.

I encourage all members in this place to do our part and pass the protection of freedom of conscience act.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in light of the extensive protection for conscience rights in the charter; in the statute originally passed, Bill C-14, which the member opposite mentioned; and in the Carter decision, I am personally unaware of a single instance of a prosecution having been levied against an institution for compelling a doctor or nurse to provide MAID.

I wonder if the member opposite can provide this House a single example of such a prosecution, a human rights complaint at the provincial level or a wrongful dismissal suit. I am struggling to understand the problem she is trying to identify and address with this private member's bill.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I introduced this bill as it addresses the very real challenges that doctors and other medical professionals are facing regarding their conscience rights as defined in the charter and as a result of the legalization of medical assistance in dying in 2015 and the recent expansion of it through Bill C-7.

Doctors have come forward to tell us that they are being forced to offer death as a treatment option regardless of a patient's medical history. In my discussions with stakeholders, I heard that, without conscience rights, some medical professionals may choose to leave their field or the profession altogether. Furthermore, we have heard that there are doctors who are not necessarily opposed to MAID in theory but who are deeply concerned as to where the law has gone.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, Quebec's legislation on medical assistance in dying requires that a doctor who does not practise MAID refer the case to a doctor who does.

The bill my colleague has introduced would make this requirement in Quebec illegal.

I do not need the details, but I would still like to know whether my colleague agrees that the bill not only interferes in Quebec's jurisdictions but also specifically tries to do indirectly what it cannot do directly.

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I would completely disagree with the member when it comes to the bill trying to do indirectly what it cannot do directly. That is exactly what compelling a doctor to refer someone to do would actually be doing. It is important to understand that a referral is a medical procedure and is essentially an endorsement by the referring doctor of the treatment in question. It is the same as a doctor saying a treatment is right for someone.

In every court case regarding rights and MAID, the courts have clearly stated that forcing doctors to refer patients is a violation of their charter rights. If we do not protect conscience in referrals, we end up with the same ethical issues we started with, which is what we are hearing from physicians.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I respect that the member has introduced this bill out of a clarity of conscience of her own. It always distresses me when we distort the law on medical assistance in dying by calling it assisted suicide, since people must have a terminal condition before they can even be considered eligible. When the member refers to people being required to refer, what she is referring to are the professional standards set by the College of Physicians and Surgeons in most provinces.

Is she saying that we should take away the ability of doctors and nurses to regulate their own professions and substitute her judgment in her bill for that of professional associations?

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Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, what I am saying is that freedom of conscience is entrenched in our charter. It must be protected. Support for legislated conscience rights protection varies between associations and colleges as well as from province to province, and that should come as no surprise.

What is becoming more clear every day is that medical professionals are calling for conscience protections as a result of the legislation that has been introduced over the last six years.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-268, the protection of freedom of conscience act.

[*English*]

This bill proposes to create two new offences to protect the freedom of conscience of health care professionals in the context of medical assistance in dying, or MAID. The first offence would prohibit using violence or threats of violence, coercion or any other form of intimidation to compel a health care professional to take part in MAID. The second offence proposed would criminalize persons who refuse to employ or dismiss from employment health care professionals because they refuse to take part in MAID.

Protecting the freedom of conscience of our health care professionals is obviously a laudable goal. We have all recently debated Bill C-7, which amended the Criminal Code's MAID regime to remove the reasonably foreseeable death criterion. Some Canadians are very much in favour of MAID for anyone with decision-making capacity, others are profoundly opposed to it in any circumstance and many have opinions that fall somewhere in between those two positions. Many of my constituents in Parkdale—High Park, for example, are largely in favour of MAID, in favour of providing autonomy to Canadians and to empowering them with the tools to reduce suffering, with important safeguards being put in place to protect those who are vulnerable.

Our government understands that medical assistance in dying is deeply complex and personal. We were proud to have passed Bill C-7 in March of this year, which responded to the Superior Court of Quebec's September 2019 Truchon ruling and to the emerging societal consensus on the specific issues relating to MAID. We remain committed as a government to protecting vulnerable individuals and the equality rights of all Canadians, while supporting the autonomy of eligible persons to seek medical assistance in dying. We are working with the provinces and territories to implement the changes in Bill C-7 and ensure adequate access to health care support services and medical assistance in dying to all Canadians who wish to seek it.

This range of views also exists among health care professionals who are the ones directly involved in MAID, whether it be providing MAID, assessing a person's eligibility, dispensing the substances, being consulted or supporting the patient. Clearly there are practitioners who do not want to be involved in MAID at all and there are others who find meaning in responding to the wishes of their patients who are suffering by providing MAID.

Let us get to the heart of what is being moved by the member opposite. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects freedom of conscience and religion from government interference. That is subsection 2(a) of Canada's charter. That freedom is subject to reasonable limits prescribed by law that can be justified in a free and democratic society. It is important to keep in mind that the charter, not the Criminal Code, is the source of that constitutional protection for freedom of conscience and freedom of religion.

I also think it is critical to underscore that the Criminal Code does not in any way compel anyone's participation in MAID. Let me be crystal clear on this point, because it was raised by the member opposite. Concerns about conscience protection also arose in 2016 when she and I were both members of this House, when we enacted Canada's first MAID regime. In order to be abundantly clear, while the preamble already articulated this, our government supported an amendment to Bill C-14, which added to the Criminal Code. I am going to read it for the purposes of clarity. This amendment was to subsection 9 of section 241.2, which states, "For greater certainty, nothing in this section compels an individual to provide or assist in providing medical assistance in dying." We have the charter, we have the preamble and now we have subsection 9.

This provision exists to protect the conscience rights of medical practitioners, but it will not stop there. The entire MAID regime was prompted by the Supreme Court's decision in Carter. I will read from paragraph 132 of the decision of the court, which said, "In our view, nothing in the declaration of invalidity which we propose to issue would compel physicians to provide assistance in dying." The court itself has been crystal clear on this issue.

When I asked the member, in the context of the debate this evening, whether there is any evidence of criminal prosecutions against institutions that are compelling physicians or nurses to provide MAID, instances of a wrongful dismissal suit or a human rights complaint, the member was not able to provide a single instance of such a situation arising, which begs the question whether there is actually an acute problem that the member is trying to address or whether, apropos of the question posed by my Bloc colleague, this legislation is simply an attempt to address a broader concern about MAID generally that perhaps is held by the member opposite and members of her caucus.

While there may be requirements for practitioners to participate in MAID in some form, it is at the level of regulation of these practitioners as professionals. That was raised by the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke. For example, in Ontario, The College of Physicians and Surgeons has an effective referral policy for MAID. It requires that practitioners refer their patients in good faith to a non-objecting, available and accessible physician or agency if they do not personally want to participate in medical assistance in dying. That policy was challenged in court under subsection 2(a) of the charter, the very provision that I put to members in this chamber. In 2019, the Court of Appeal for Ontario upheld the policy and that policy was never taken to any higher level of court afterward. That is the highest example of a court ruling in this country on whether effective referral violates the charter. It does not, according to Canadian jurisprudence.

This is one example of an effective referral policy from a regulatory body created by provincial legislation that aims to reconcile patient access to MAID with physicians' freedom to refuse participating in MAID. As the Ontario Court of Appeal noted, it is a solution that is neither perfect for the patients nor perfect for the practitioners, when questions like MAID raise difficult moral issues that are hard to reconcile with absolute perfection.

I would also note that neither of the offences the bill proposes would have an impact on an effective referral policy from a regulatory body. Such policies are not using violence, threats or intimidation to compel participation in MAID and the colleges that would issue them are not the health care professionals' employers. The offences proposed in this bill are not aligned with that particular objective of the bill.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

I also have some questions about the proposed offences. The offence of intimidation reflects an opinion that I think we all hold. Health care professionals should not be the victims of violence, threats of violence or intimidation, whether it is to force them to provide medical assistance in dying or for any other reason. That is such a fundamental principle that the Criminal Code already sets out offences that prohibit such behaviour, regardless of who the victim is and regardless of the objective of the violence, threats or intimidation.

What is more, we have not heard about any doctors being forced by threats, violence or intimidation to provide medical assistance in dying, or MAID. Although the offence of intimidation set out in Bill C-268 may send a message regarding the importance of not engaging in such behaviour to force a health care professional to provide MAID, it would duplicate the offences currently set out in the Criminal Code, such as assault, uttering threats, extortion and intimidation. In fact, it would not provide any additional protection and seems to target a problem that we have no proof even exists.

[*English*]

The employment sanctions offence raises questions about the appropriateness of using the criminal law, which is a very blunt tool that brings about significant consequences, including the deprivation of liberty to punishing employers who refuse to hire or who

would fire health care professionals because they did not want to take part in MAID.

Again, I think many of us would agree that practitioners should not face employment consequences if they object to participate in medical assistance in dying, but this seems to me like an improper use of the criminal law to try and push feelings of conscience and religion in the workplace.

I reiterate that our government is committed to the protection of health care workers, now more than ever, given how much they have worked for Canadians during this pandemic. As well, we are committed to ensuring that all Canadians have access to the right of medical assistance in dying. Our government is proud of what we have achieved in Bill C-14 in the last Parliament, and Bill C-7 in this Parliament.

I look forward to working with the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying to review where medical assistance in dying in Canada will be going with respect to the laws on MAID in Canada and recommending any necessary changes.

[*Translation*]

I urge all members to keep these things in mind as we continue our study of Bill C-268, a private member's bill.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-268 is part of a movement we have seen a number of times in recent years, especially in committee, to prevent individuals from accessing medical assistance in dying.

This is deplorable because the roots of the current system, which was brought in when Bill C-7 was passed in March, go back a long way. The idea was not to please certain lobby groups. The idea was to meet the needs of the general population and satisfy the courts' requirements.

Seven years ago, on June 5, 2014, under the leadership of MNA Véronique Hivon, Quebec passed Bill 52, the Act respecting end-of-life care. The bill contributed to a palliative care continuum.

Earlier, my Conservative colleague urged us to think twice because this is important, this is about terminating a human life. I would argue that this is not about ending a life. We are not talking about ending a life. We are talking about helping people who opt to end their own life do so with dignity and without pain. Those are two very different concepts. This is not about murder; this is about helping people exercise their rights as set out in our charters and laws. Quebec dealt with the issue on June 5, 2014, with Bill 52.

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In February 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada added in Carter that criminalizing a person who wishes to end their days is contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In April 2016, Parliament passed Bill C-14, which was the first iteration of Canada's medical assistance in dying legislation. That legislation had some flaws; it was not perfect, but it was a step in the right direction. It was consistent with the decision of the Quebec National Assembly and the values of all Quebecers and Canadians.

Subsequently, in September 2019, the Quebec Superior Court issued a ruling in Truchon. Based on that ruling, a criterion in Bill C-14, specifically the provision requiring a reasonably foreseeable natural death, was inconsistent with our laws and charters, and we were told that it had to be removed.

Just recently, on March 17, Bill C-7 received royal assent. Finally, the criterion requiring a reasonably foreseeable natural death was removed. This is a concept that I myself had been struggling with since 2016. In my view, from the moment one is born, death is reasonably foreseeable. We just do not know when it will happen. It is a bit of an odd concept.

Bill C-7 put an end to the debate, so that is good. Since March 17, we can proceed not only in accordance with the wishes of certain lobbies, but also while respecting the wishes of the vast majority of the population and in compliance with the charters and the court decisions.

• (1815)

Secondly, introducing Bill C-268 into our debates is simply an attempt to upset the fragile balance we achieved with Bill C-7 at the federal level and with Bill 52 in Quebec. Bill C-268 upsets the balance between freedom of conscience, freedom of religion and the right of patients to dignity and comfort in their most difficult moments. This fragile balance was difficult to strike and I think we must avoid taking any action that might upset it. We do not have the right.

Bill C-268 is worded in such a way as to relieve health care professionals of any responsibility to a patient who says that they have an incurable disease that they are certain to die from unless they die of other causes first, that life is intolerable, that they want to end their suffering by dying and that they need help. Indeed, the bill says doctors are not obligated to help patients end their suffering by dying. Therefore, this is a way to release doctors from any responsibility related to their duty, and I find that absolutely deplorable.

Beyond all the human considerations I just raised and of which my colleagues spoke before me, there is also the jurisdictional issue, which is of grave concern to us. The federal government must refrain from interfering in areas of jurisdiction belonging to Quebec and the provinces, as Bill C-268 would do.

The way the physicians' code of ethics is managed and the way physicians process MAID requests are already set out in Bill 52 in Quebec and Bill C-7. I do not think we can tell a physician who is helping a patient end their suffering and assisting in their dying in accordance with Quebec law that he is committing a crime.

Criminalizing something that is under Quebec jurisdiction and already enshrined in Quebec law has no place. It cannot be allowed. We must ensure that the House of Commons respects the jurisdictions of the provinces and Quebec, especially when it comes to end-of-life care legislation.

What does the Quebec law say? The first part of section 30 states, and I quote:

A physician practising in a centre operated by an institution who refuses a request for medical aid in dying for a reason not based on section 28 must as soon as possible notify the director of professional services or any other person designated by the executive director of the institution and forward the request form given to the physician, if such is the case, to the director of professional services or designated person. The director of professional services or designated person must then take the necessary steps to find another physician willing to deal with the request in accordance with section 28.

If a doctor refuses to administer MAID, Quebec's Bill 52 provides specific directions to ensure respect for patients' rights and compliance with existing charters and the decisions of the Superior Court and the Supreme Court. In my opinion, Bill C-268 must not be allowed to interfere with Quebec's legislation.

I urge my colleagues in the House to think carefully about the need to respect jurisdictions and, most importantly, respect a patient's right to put an end to their suffering for which there is no other viable option.

• (1820)

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):
Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-268.

This bill picks up a tiny portion of the extensive and important debates on medical assistance in dying that took place on Bill C-14 in the previous Parliament in 2016 and again on Bill C-7 in this Parliament. I want to start today by restating the principle that has guided the New Democrats through these debates.

We believe that medical assistance in dying is an important tool for helping to end unnecessary suffering for patients facing end of life issues and for avoiding the unnecessary suffering of their families, who have to accompany them on this journey. This is the reason the New Democrats will always defend the right of access to information about MAID and access to the service for all those who qualify for assistance and choose to proceed.

In the debate on Bill C-7, many issues arose concerning the challenges Canadians face at the end of life, some of which Bill C-7 addressed and some of which have not yet been addressed. Two important concerns were front and centre, and these, for me, were very important. The first was to help alleviate unnecessary suffering by eliminating the waiting period, which was a cause of great concern for patients who feared loss of capacity before they could complete the waiting period, as this would make them ineligible for medical assistance in dying. The second was allowing a waiver of final consent, which deals with the same issue. It was often known as “Audrey's amendment”. This is a provision that I knew quite personally, as a friend of mine chose to go earlier than she would have liked because of a brain tumour and her fear that she would lose capacity to consent at the last moment. Bill C-7 would make some important improvements on eliminating suffering at the end of life.

A second challenge was debated: How do we preserve as much autonomy as possible for Canadians who are dying? Most of the issues related to this still have to be dealt with at the special joint committee on medical assistance in dying that will begin its work next Monday. This includes questions of advance directives and whether protections for people with disabilities from being pressured to seek MAID are adequate. I was disappointed that Conservative senators spent a lot of time holding up the establishment of this new joint committee. It was very frustrating because the five-year statutory review of Bill C-14 was supposed to have started over a year ago. However, it is good news that this committee will commence its first regular meeting next Monday and will deal with the outstanding issues that were not dealt with in Bill C-7.

A third challenge that came up in the debate on Bill C-7 was access to services at the end of life. We learned there are a great many gaps in services in our Canadian health system for those who are facing death. There are gaps in diagnostic and treatment services, depending on where one lives, whether it is in a major city with excellent facilities or in a rural and remote area. We learned of important gaps in palliative care. Again, depending on where one lives, access to palliative care is highly variable. Of course, we also learned of gaps in the ability to access information about medical assistance in dying and the ability to access the service.

There are some very important questions here about the absence of services in rural and remote areas, about the inadequacy of services and about the shortage of trained professionals. Very important to me was the testimony we often heard about the complete absence of culturally appropriate services for indigenous Canadians and for new Canadians from different cultural backgrounds.

However, instead of addressing these challenges, the challenges of autonomy and the challenges of access to services, Bill C-268 is about something else. What this bill would do is override a patient's right to access information about, and to have access to, legally provided medical services, based on the personal beliefs of a service provider.

Let us put that in plain language. Let us suppose there are a variety of treatments available to a patient. It does not really matter in this case what they are. If a medical professional believes that one of them should not be available, this bill says there is no obligation to make sure patients find out all the options available to them. Pro-

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fessional organizations like colleges of physicians and surgeons and colleges of nurses have found this to be unethical behaviour, so they have required doctors, to varying degrees, to refer patients to someone who is supportive of those services and is accessible to them.

● (1825)

This requirement to refer, as mentioned in a previous speech, has been upheld by the courts. That is the main reason I cannot support this bill. It would result, on a practical basis, in the denial of access to necessary health services for many Canadians.

Many communities have a very limited number of doctors, and if one of those doctors, or even more than one of those doctors, is unwilling to let their patients find out about medical assistance in dying, then we are condemning those Canadians to suffer at their end of life in ways that other Canadians would not have to suffer. No health care professionals are, in fact, required by the law to participate. It is the professional associations who require some form of referral. Whether a referral is actually participation, I will grant to author of this bill, is debatable. I do not really believe it is.

An equally important reason for opposing this bill is the dangerous precedents that this bill would set. Its role as a potentially precedent-setting bill has already been noted by anti-choice advocates who have been vocal in their support of this bill. They recognize it would provide a precedent for denying referrals for access to contraception and abortion services. I want to point out that denials of service and denials of information are very real in our existing Canadian medical care system.

Just this year, Providence Health Care, which runs St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver and is building a new hospital with \$1.3 billion of public money, announced that in this new facility, abortion and contraceptive services will not be provided, nor will medical assistance in dying. I find this particularly problematic. I know of several cases in Vancouver where those who wished to access medical assistance in dying were forced to leave the hospital where they were being cared for and transfer to another facility, at a time when they and their families were already in a great deal of distress.

This bill would also be a very bad precedent for the current attempts to deny trans minors the counselling and medical services they need to affirm who they are. Without access to the services that others may think are appropriate, this will leave families with trans minors struggling to find the information and support their kids need. If this kind of precedent is allowed, medical professionals would not have to provide a referral to someone who would be providing a medically necessary service.

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As a gay man who lived through the AIDS epidemic, I am also concerned about any precedent that allows the denial of access to medically necessary services. The AIDS crisis was generally ignored by the public, and treatment for those suffering from HIV and AIDS was regularly denied to members of my community, who quite often suffered very painful and tragic deaths as a result of that.

As I approach the end of my comments today, I cannot end without mentioning yet another unfortunate precedent set in this bill, and that is its use of inflammatory language. I have no doubt, as I said in my question to the sponsor of this bill, of her personal convictions and their strength.

However, as sincere they may be, the language used in this bill conjures up a spectre of the use of violence to intimidate medical professionals, something of which there is no evidence of happening in Canada. Using the kind of language that involves violence is certainly not conducive to an informed debate on the real principles that are in question here.

I will close my comments today by restating that on principle, New Democrats are opposed to any legislation that would limit access for Canadians to medically necessary services based on the personal beliefs of others, no matter how strong the beliefs the others hold are. There is a right in this country to access legal medical services, and that right can only be effective when, as professional organizations have recognized, doctors who do not wish to participate make referrals to doctors who will provide those services.

There is no doubt that the end of life is a difficult moment for all families and medical assistance in dying, I still believe, is an important way of ending unnecessary suffering, both for patients and families at the end of life. I would not like to see anyone denied access to the information they need to make a choice that protects their own autonomy about how their lives end.

● (1830)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in strong support for Bill C-268.

This is a straightforward piece of legislation, the objective of which is extremely important, namely to ensure that the charter rights of health professionals who conscientiously object to participating in medical assistance in dying, or MAID, are protected, charter rights that include freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, those rights being not any rights but fundamental freedoms guaranteed under the charter.

For that, I want to commend my colleague, the hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, for her steadfast leadership in bringing forward this timely and targeted bill to address an issue of charter infringements on health care professionals. I would also acknowledge my former colleagues Mark Warawa and David Anderson for their leadership in bringing forward similar pieces of legislation in previous Parliaments.

Contrary to the assertion of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, the infringement of charter rights of health professionals is not a hypothetical. It is real. It is happening in Canada and has been happening since the Supreme Court of Canada struck

down the blanket Criminal Code prohibition against physician-assisted death in the Carter decision.

Many health professionals have been pressured or coerced into participating in MAID, notwithstanding their conscientious objection to doing so. At the justice committee, on Bill C-7, we heard many witnesses who came forward and spoke about serious concerns about coercion and pressure, the need for clarity in the law and a set national standard. That is precisely what this legislation seeks to do by amending the Criminal Code to see that no one will lawfully be able to coerce or pressure health care professionals for the purpose of compelling them to participate in MAID, or refuse to hire or terminate one's employment on the basis of a health care professional objecting to MAID.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice made reference to Bill C-14 in his speech. It is a piece of legislation that I am very familiar with, because I sat on the special joint committee leading up to Bill C-14, and I sat on the justice committee when Bill C-14 was studied. At that time, there was much discussion around protecting conscience rights.

The parliamentary secretary is correct that the preamble of the bill was amended to include an expressed recognition of conscience rights. He is further correct to note that at subsection 241.2(9) of the Criminal Code, there is a "for greater certainty" clause that simply provides that no one shall be compelled to participate in MAID.

In that broad sense, there was an expressed intention of Parliament to protect health care professionals. However, what is missing is teeth. There is no enforceability mechanism provided for in the legislation. That was something that I saw as a problem at the time, and it has borne out to be so. That is precisely what this bill seeks to do, to fill that very real void.

● (1835)

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice as well as my colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, spoke at varying lengths about the Ontario Court of Appeal decision in *Christian Medical and Dental Society of Canada v. the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario* and the issue of access, that somehow this bill would interfere or undermine access to medical assistance in dying.

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I say two things to those who would raise the issue of access. Manitoba passed Bill 34, which provides for conscience protections, not dissimilar to what this bill proposes. There has not been one instance that has been brought forward where access has prevented a willing patient from accessing MAID in that province, a law that has been on the books for more than four years. With respect to the Ontario Court of Appeal's decision, although the court, in its analysis, looked at hypothetical issues around access, the court actually incorporated the divisional court's finding into its ruling. The divisional court said on the question of physicians who object on the basis of conscience, "...there was no direct evidence that access to health care is a problem caused by physicians' religious objections to providing care". There we have it right from the Ontario Court of Appeal that on the issue of access, when it came to providing direct evidence, it simply was not there. At the justice committee, when we studied Bill C-7, it was not there either.

When we talk about the Carter decision, it is important to emphasize that it is predicated upon two things: number one, that there be a willing patient; and, number two, and equally important, that there be a willing physician. Too often over the last five years, we have focused singularly on the issue of a willing patient, which is very important, to the exclusion of a willing physician notwithstanding charter rights of those physicians that are very much at play.

In the Carter decision, the Supreme Court did expressly acknowledge the rights of health care professionals in terms of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, but the court actually went further. The court warned against compelling health care professionals to provide or otherwise participate in MAID. More specifically, at paragraph 132 of the Carter decision, the court said:

However, we note...in addressing the topic of physician participation...that a physician's decision to participate in assisted dying is a matter of conscience and, in some cases, of religious belief.

Now, the foundational principles that underlie freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, guaranteed under paragraph 2(a) of the charter, were set out in the Big M Drug Mart Ltd. decision; and, in enunciating those principles, this is what the Supreme Court had to say:

Freedom can primarily be characterized by the absence of coercion or constraint. If a person is compelled by the state or the will of another to a course of action or inaction which he would not otherwise have chosen, he is not acting of his own volition and he cannot be said to be truly free.... Coercion includes indirect forms of control which determine or limit alternative courses of conduct available to others.

Those are precisely the principles that this bill seeks to uphold and on that basis I urge its passage.

• (1840)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to this private member's bill on a topic that I know has been discussed a lot in the House. I look forward to having the opportunity to conclude my remarks when it next returns to the House.

From the outset, this is a very hotly charged issue, one that I have spoken very passionately about in the House after going through the experiences of watching my father-in-law suffer through an extremely painful death just before Christmas last year.

I always admire any member for bringing forward legislation to the House for debate and I can appreciate that we might not always assume that it will become law. However, the House and members have made it very clear what their position is on this. I cannot help but think that the sponsor of the bill must have known its fate from the outset, particularly when I know that members of her own party support the MAID legislation. Trying to amend it in this manner is really contributing to fuelling the fire of the debate we continue to have in the House.

There are two sections in the bill. The first is on intimidation and making it an offence, and prohibiting any form of intimidation to compel a health care professional to participate in MAID. However, I would also point out, as the parliamentary secretary did, that the Criminal Code already prohibits all forms of this type of intimidation.

More important, the parliamentary secretary asked the question directly of the sponsor if she was aware of any cases where this may have been the case to which she was unable to reply. Not only did she not answer that, she completely deflected and went off onto another course instead of addressing his question.

If members are bringing forward legislation like this, it has to be backed up by reason and purpose that is quantifiable.

• (1845)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have seven and a half minutes the next time that this matter is before the House.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business is now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to join the proceedings virtually to seek clarification from the Liberal government on the response from the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to my question regarding the government's firearms buyback program. Unfortunately, when asking this minister a question, one almost never gets an answer or gets an answer to a completely different question.

Contrary to what the Liberals like to claim, many of the firearms that were banned were rifles and shotguns that are used around farms for predators and pest control, for putting food on the table through hunting or for legitimate sport shooting activities. I have heard from many Canadians whose favourite grouse gun or target-shooting rifle has been banned. These Canadians feel demonized and stigmatized by the Liberals for having the audacity to lawfully acquire a firearm and safely operate it in the first place.

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When this ban was first announced, I asked the minister for clarity about the fate of the Nine O'Clock Gun. Manufactured in 1816, it is a 12-pound muzzle-loaded naval cannon in Vancouver's Stanley Park that clearly fits this minister's gun ban. He was so confused by his own regulations that he seemed to think I was talking about a modern-day grenade launcher. It is clear this minister is shockingly out of touch with which firearms actually pose a problem to public safety. We know that these are not the firearms that are being used in gang shootings and organized crime.

Law-abiding firearms owners are among the most heavily scrutinized and vetted Canadians in our country. If people are licensed firearms owners, their names are checked daily against the criminal record database to ensure they have not committed a crime, but that does not seem to matter to the Liberal government because its crusade against hunters, farmers and sport shooters is driven by ideology and not a desire to increase public safety.

If the Liberals were actually interested in public safety, they would not be eliminating minimum penalties for several serious firearms offences. They would not be passing legislation to ensure that actual criminals spend the least amount of time in jail possible, even if they are repeat offenders. Instead, they are focusing on taking firearms from people who embrace the outdoor way of life to provide for their families or who enjoy sport shooting. It is far easier for the Liberals to go after law-abiding citizens who pose no threat and already go above and beyond to follow the law than it is to go after hardened criminals who are actually terrorizing Canadian communities.

The Liberals like to say they are strengthening gun control, but that is simply not true. If they were actually strengthening gun control measures, there would be a public safety objective they would be trying to achieve. Instead, they are simply trying to score cheap political points. They are going to spend billions of taxpayer dollars on a firearms ban and seizure that will do nothing to reduce violent crime. The real objective of the government is to have a flashy fundraising email that the Liberal Party headquarters can put out in an attempt to fill its coffers for the election it so obviously and desperately wants.

Meanwhile, as the Liberals count the dollars rolling in after misinforming their donors, Canadians will not be any safer. In fact, they will almost certainly be worse off, because all of the money wasted by the Liberal plan could have been allocated to programs that would help reduce crime, like social diversion programs, addictions treatment and greater resources for front-line officers and border agents.

Given how long the minister wore a gun on his hip, one might think he would know the difference between the good guys and the bad guys. Why does he not?

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in response to the hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about the development of a buy-back program for newly prohibited firearms and the government's plan to reduce violence and gun-related crimes.

While the Conservative Party continues to make promises to the gun lobby that will weaken gun control by eliminating enhanced background checks and making military-style firearms more accessible, we are listening to the experts such as law enforcement officers and physicians who treat victims of gun-related violence.

For decades the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has been asking the government to take action and prohibit military assault-style weapons except for police or military use. In fact, the current head of the association said that the measure establishes a balance and ensures the safety of its members when they respond to calls for service. He believes that this does not limit recreational hunting activities or the activities of those who live off the land.

Doctors for protection from guns have said that our ban and the new legislation that increases penalties for gun smuggling and trafficking will save lives.

Speaking of costs, I think it is important to point out the cost of inaction. These weapons, which were designed for warfare, make killing quick and easy. That is why we banned them.

To give just a few examples, these types of firearms were used at the École Polytechnique, the Quebec City mosque, Moncton, the two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, and the elementary school in Sandy Hook, Connecticut.

There has been enough talk and prayers. We took action. Our government recognizes the legal civilian ownership of firearms by hunters, sport shooters and collectors. It is not our intention to unfairly target law-abiding Canadians. We acknowledge them and we respect them.

Accordingly, our government remains committed to implementing a buyback program that provides fair compensation to affected owners and businesses. A contract was awarded to ensure that the program is implemented and managed effectively.

The prohibition is an important step in our efforts to combat gun violence, but it is not the only step.

Street gang violence has had a tragic impact on our communities. In response, our government has given \$327 million to the provinces and territories to come up with plans to combat this violence while ensuring that law enforcement has the necessary resources to hold the perpetrators accountable for their actions.

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RAIL TRANSPORTATION

I note that the Conservative Party voted against that funding. In budget 2021 we are also offering to provide \$312 million to implement legislation to protect Canadians from gun violence and to combat gun smuggling and trafficking. What is more, \$250 million will be paid annually to the municipalities and indigenous communities to protect Canadians from gun violence and support the street gang prevention program.

I would also like to take a minute to talk about the bill that we introduced to strengthen gun control. Bill C-21 represents a comprehensive set of measures to combat gun crimes and establish a legal framework to ban assault-style firearms. I am pleased to be able to share some of the key elements. These measures are long overdue and will help keep Canadians safe.

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Speaker, the notion that the government respects law-abiding firearms owners like hunters and sport shooters is laughable. The member opposite has helped the minister and the Prime Minister scapegoat law-abiding firearms owners and demonize anyone or any organization who stands up for law-abiding citizens.

The proof is on the Public Safety website. On the landing page for its anti-firearms campaign is the title, “Reducing gun violence together”, followed by, “Violent crime involving firearms is a growing threat to public safety across Canada. The Government of Canada is taking action to address the issue — and you can, too. Together, we can keep guns out of the wrong hands.”

Immediately next to that is the picture of a man in camouflage, a blaze orange vest and a cap, with a bolt action rifle over his shoulder and binoculars in his hands, otherwise known as a hunter. Next to that image is one of a woman with earplugs in and shooting glasses on, otherwise known as a sport shooter. The message is not even subtle. Liberals think law-abiding firearm owners are the problem. It is shameful, and the Liberals should be embarrassed.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate a few points.

Military-style assault weapons were designed for soldiers to shoot other soldiers. They simply have no legitimate place in civilian society.

We know that the gun lobby is opposed to these measures, but the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and emergency room physicians all called for these measures.

We kept our word. The program we plan to introduce is not designed to hurt law-abiding owners. It is designed to make our society safer now and in the years to come. We will do more to keep our communities safe, and that is why we will keep putting a number of initiatives forward to strengthen gun control in general in collaboration with the provinces and territories, municipalities and first nations. We are doing what is best for all Canadians.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to speak about a matter that is very important to the people of Lac-Mégantic, Nantes, Frontenac and the entire Granit RCM. I am referring to the Lac-Mégantic rail bypass.

In 2018, the Prime Minister of Canada and member for Papineau and the Premier of Quebec, together with the then transport minister, announced the construction of the Lac-Mégantic rail bypass to stop the train from passing through downtown Lac-Mégantic, the site of the tragedy that occurred in July 2013, which unfortunately no one can forget.

There have been many changes in the past weeks and months. There is a new minister and there are all kinds of rumours and discussions in the Lac-Mégantic region concerning the 2023 deadline for construction of the rail bypass, which was announced in 2018. The train should stop running through the downtown area by 2023.

One of the concerns was that there were delays in the land acquisition process and that the landowners still did not know how much money they were entitled to for having to give up their land because of the new route for the rail line. As I said, a new minister was appointed and, just recently, the president and CEO of Canadian Pacific stated in a letter that if significant legislative changes were not brought in and if the government did not proceed with its share of the work by fall, the 2023 deadline would be unrealistic and the project could not be completed within the time frame announced in 2018.

As a result, several things happened last week. Last Monday, the mayor of Lac-Mégantic had the town council adopt an emergency resolution calling on the government and CP to agree to meet the 2023 deadline. The town council also asked all the parties in the House of Commons to agree to work together to ensure the 2023 deadline will be met.

I followed up on the request from the Municipality of Lac-Mégantic and moved a motion calling on all parliamentarians to support the people of Lac-Mégantic and their town council. I am very proud to say that this resolution was adopted by all parliamentarians. The governing party, the official opposition, the Bloc Québécois, the NDP, the Green Party and the independent members all adopted this motion calling on the government to make every effort to get the project completed by 2023 and to provide the House with a detailed plan of the project by tomorrow.

That deadline is tomorrow, and I have faith that the government will present its plan soon. Perhaps the parliamentary secretary will announce something in a few moments, and I certainly hope so, but I have faith that the government will heed the call of the people of Lac-Mégantic and all the parliamentarians in the House on behalf of those who endured this tragedy.

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Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable for his question and for his interest in the Lac-Mégantic bypass project. I share his commitment to this project, which will help restore the communities in the greater Lac-Mégantic region.

I recently met with the mayor of Lac-Mégantic and the mayor of the municipality of Nantes. I understand the concerns of the local elected officials and the community members who want to see the project completed as soon as possible. I want to reassure them that this project is of the utmost importance to our government. It is very important for me to know that the bypass project is moving forward quickly, and that the needs of the families and citizens of Lac-Mégantic, Frontenac and Nantes will be taken into consideration.

Since the project was announced in 2018, significant progress has been made. The provincial environmental assessment process, including public hearings by the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement, or BAPE, has been completed. The feasibility study conducted by AECOM on behalf of the Town of Lac-Mégantic was also completed in late summer 2020.

Over the past few months, additional engineering work was done by Canadian Pacific in co-operation with Transport Canada in order to relocate rail activities in the Lac-Mégantic industrial park. That was not part of the feasibility study, but it is now part of the project. This addition to the project responds to many requests from the community and local elected officials. The Government of Canada responded positively to this request because it was another measure that supported the well-being of the people of Lac-Mégantic.

I would like to provide a detailed plan in response to the motion that was unanimously adopted by the House on May 25. Today, May 27, the Government of Canada and Canadian Pacific reached an agreement that makes it possible to launch the planning and specifications phase of the project, which involves working on construction plans, conducting additional environmental studies and obtaining all of the necessary authorizations for construction. This is a major phase and another step toward this project's implementation.

This social reconstruction project is and will remain a priority for the Government of Canada until it is complete. The construction phase should begin in the spring of 2022, once the regulatory authorizations have been obtained. I would like to reassure the mayors and residents of the greater Lac-Mégantic region and tell them that we are working hard on this project in order to complete the work in 2023, as we announced.

● (1900)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague and parliamentary secretary for her comments.

I understand an agreement was reached with Canadian Pacific on the next step, which is the development of plans and specifications. I want to remind the parliamentary secretary that there are still many steps left for the Government of Canada and Transport Canada to take, one of them being to purchase the land.

I would like to point out that this is not a highway extension project. It is a rail bypass project brought about by a national tragedy. The people whose property will be expropriated must be treated properly and fairly, as were the people whose properties had to be expropriated in downtown Lac-Mégantic. We still have a lot of work to do.

I want to assure the secretary that I will be there to co-operate to ensure the project is brought to fruition for the good of the people of Lac-Mégantic and of the region of Nantes and Frontenac. We are looking after everyone's interests, but the project must be completed as quickly as possible.

We have waited long enough.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, rail safety will always be a priority for the Government of Canada. That is why we are reiterating our commitment to supporting the people of the Lac-Mégantic region and moving forward on this project as quickly as possible.

This bypass is much more than a rail infrastructure project. It is an exceptional response to fostering the well-being of the residents of the municipalities of Lac-Mégantic, Frontenac and Nantes. We will continue to provide information to the communities at every step of the project so we can understand and respond to concerns. We will work hard to ensure that this project moves forward according to the established schedule.

The community of Lac-Mégantic can count on my unconditional support for reaching this objective. I invite my colleague to work with me. He can count on my support to get this bypass built.

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals have promised to deliver universal public pharmacare to Canadians for 24 years. While the Liberals talk a good game, the fact is they have failed to follow up with action time and again. The fact is, the Liberals have delivered red book after red book of broken promises. In 1997, it was a campaign promise. In 2019, it was a pledge to implement the Hoskins report. In 2020, it was in the throne speech and most recently it was made at their own convention.

Liberal members prioritize pharmacare as their number one policy resolution, yet when offered the opportunity to vote for the NDP's Canada pharmacare act last February, Liberals voted it down. Budget 2021 is no different. It includes no new funding or measures to implement universal public pharmacare. It is clear that the Prime Minister has abandoned any intention of meeting the Hoskins advisory council's call for the establishment of a national pharmacare program by the end of 2021.

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With millions of Canadians without pharmaceutical coverage and more Canadians losing their employment-based benefits every week because of COVID-19, this is unconscionable. The lack of coverage results in one in five Canadians being unable to afford the medication their doctors prescribe. Sixteen percent of people in Canada went without medication for heart disease, cholesterol or hypertension because of the cost. At a time when the need is so great, it is inexcusable that the Liberals refuse to get Canadians the affordable life-saving medicines they need. It is clear that Canadians cannot trust the Liberals to deliver on the promise of universal public pharmacare that has overwhelming support from the Canadian public.

Related to universal public pharmacare, I am also calling on the Liberals to provide dental coverage to millions of Canadians who cannot afford to visit the dentist. The NDP has proposed a plan that is completely costed by the Parliamentary Budget Officer and would benefit 6.7 million people in Canada whose household income is less than \$90,000 a year. No one in this country should have to go without dental care because of the cost. Right now, one in three Canadians do not have access to dental coverage and more than one in five say the cost stops them from visiting a dentist. Left untreated, poor dental hygiene is linked to many serious health conditions like cardiovascular disease, dementia, respiratory infections and diabetic complications.

Emergency rooms across the country are struggling to meet the demand caused by COVID-19, yet every nine minutes, in Ontario alone, someone visits an emergency room for dental pain when what they really need is to see a dentist. The estimated cost of these visits across Canada is more than \$150 million per year. It does not have to be this way. The NDP's dental plan proposal will help precarious workers, people who are self-employed and seniors across the country. Getting these people dental coverage will unquestionably increase their overall health. Our dental care plan is a down payment on Tommy Douglas' vision: comprehensive dental care as part of our health care system. It is time to get it done.

● (1905)

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we recognize that Canadians should not have to choose between buying groceries and paying for medication. That is why our government is committed to implementing a national pharmacare program that will ensure all Canadians have access to the prescription drugs they need. This commitment was outlined in budget 2019 and reiterated most recently in budget 2021.

The foundational elements to help Canada move forward on implementing national pharmacare includes the development of a strategy for high-cost drugs for rare diseases, the creation of a Canadian drug agency and a national formulary.

Budget 2019 proposed to invest up to \$1 billion over two years, starting in 2022 and 2023, with up to \$500 million a year ongoing for a strategy for high-cost drugs for rare diseases. In budget 2021, the government announced that it would proceed with its plan.

Working with provinces, territories and other partners is key to developing a national strategy for these complex and important

drugs. Those important discussions on the strategy are well under way.

Since last November, federal, provincial and territorial officials have been meeting regularly. In addition, stakeholder consultations were launched this past January. Over 400 stakeholders have been invited to engage virtually on the strategy and over 100 Canadians have completed the online questionnaire, with more to come. Through deliberate and focused collaboration, our aim is to launch the strategy by 2022.

Another foundational element of pharmacare is the Canadian drug agency transition office. Announced in budget 2019, \$35 million have been used to create a transition office within Health Canada to provide dedicated capacity and leadership to advance work on pharmacare-related priorities. The transition office will work with key partners and stakeholders to strengthen and better align all parts of the system in keeping with the government's commitment to establish a Canadian drug agency.

For example, we can build on the recent efforts of Health Canada and the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health to better align their drugs review process, so Canadians have timely access to safe and effective prescription drugs. The transition office will assist in providing the dedicated capacity needed to advance important work.

A third key element of national pharmacare will be a national formulary; that is, the drugs that will be covered under national pharmacare. The development of a comprehensive evidence-based national formulary will provide the basis for a consistent approach to formulary listing and patient access across the country.

There is important work that needs to be done before bringing forward legislation on pharmacare. As we can see, based on these initiatives, we are in fact moving forward with recommendations from the final report of the Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare and working to make national pharmacare a reality for all Canadians.

● (1910)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, all we have heard from the Liberals are promises and platitudes, whether it is universal public pharmacare or dental care, more consultation and more studies. They say that they understand Canadians need help with their medical and dental care. They said in their throne speech or during the campaign that they would deliver, but time and again, the Liberals fail to deliver head-to-toe pharmacare.

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What is it about the Liberals, who never have any problems perpetuating the tax giveaways for the ultra-rich? They have no problem catering to big pharma or providing subsidies to big oil. Their door is always open for the rich and powerful, but when it comes to everyday Canadians, seniors, people with disabilities, low-income workers and families, they just do not show up.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, we were clear in the Speech from the Throne, the fall economic statement and budget 2021 that we are committed, now more than ever, to accelerating the implementation of pharmacare. In doing so, we will continue with our measured and considered approach. We must proceed in a way that respects provincial and territorial jurisdic-

tions and leverage their expertise. That is why we are moving forward with willing provinces and territories, without delay, in accelerating steps to achieve this system, including establishing a Canadian drug agency, a national formulary and a national strategy for high-cost drugs for rare diseases.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:13 p.m.)

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